

DRAGON'S CLAW (MODESTY BLAISE SERIES) BY PETER O'DONNELL



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About the Author

Peter O'Donnell created Modesty Blaise as a strip cartoon that was syndicated in more than 42 countries. The strip led to a series of novels about Modesty and her faithful lieutenant, Willie Garvin.

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This crime adventure begins when heroine Modesty Blaise finds Luke Fletcher, one of Britain's greatest artists, lost on a raft in the middle of the ocean. This discovery leads Modesty to an island called Dragon's Claw, where the evil Sam Solon has kidnapped the world's leading art experts, keeping them prisoner to admire his collection of stolen art treasures. Along with Willie Garvin, her loyal lieutenant, Modesty begins to unravel a complex set of murder mysteries until she is suddenly held captive herself. Modesty relies on her ingenuity and resourcefulness to escape from Solon and his two hired killers, Revered Uriah Crsip and Beauregard Browne, as well as solve the crimes and lure the evil men into an inescapable trap. With Modesty's adventurous character and a thrilling plot, this novel is an exciting addition to this acclaimed series of crime fiction.

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Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Chasing the Dragon

By Mr D Trasler

You can't keep a good girl down, and Modesty's the best. Lose her in the middle of the ocean, alone on a yacht and you can bet she'll find trouble. This time round a rescue at sea pitches Modesty into the hands of some daring Art Thieves. Who is their mysterious backer, and where is the loot being stored? Leave it to Modesty and Willie to turn the tables on the bad guys and come out (relatively) unscathed. They even have time to practise their latest hobby in the middle of a fight for survival. That takes dedication. Dragon's Claw is hard to find, harder than most Modesty titles, but go find it: you'll be glad you did.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

"Yes, he's pretty good for a vicar. Who gets first crack at him?"

By Rennie Petersen

"Dragon's Claw" is the ninth book in the Modesty Blaise series, and was first published in 1978. This book, like the others in the series, features Modesty Blaise and her loyal sidekick Willie Garvin in an action thriller, pitted against some really nasty bad guys.

The story is fairly satisfying. The bad guys are kidnapping and killing people from the world of the arts for a reason that is unusual but not totally farfetched. Modesty, while sailing a yacht single-handed from Australia to New Zealand, rescues Luke Fletcher, a world-renowned painter. Luke Fletcher had disappeared in the Mediterranean Sea several months previous and was presumed dead - how in the world did he end up adrift in a dingy in the Tasman Sea?

This rescue leads to a relationship between Modesty and Luke, and eventually to a hunt for the bad guys, and finally to an action-packed climax on Dragon's Claw Island. A high point is a Wild West style duel with handguns between Modesty and the Reverend Uriah Crisp, a gun-toting minister who has proven that he is faster on the draw than Modesty!

The quotation that heads this review, "Yes, he's pretty good for a vicar. Who gets first crack at him?", is Modesty's remark after Uriah Crisp has demonstrated his prowess with a six-shooter, and Modesty and Willie have been told that they are scheduled to die in duels against the Reverend Crisp. (page 235)

Although I found the story satisfying, I also found it a bit contrived. If one bothers to analyze the plot in the last four chapters one realizes that there are several more obvious ways in which Modesty and Willie could have escaped from captivity on Dragon's Claw Island. But then the story wouldn't have had such a nice climax, so we accept the contrived story as a minor negative point.

A more serious problem is the portrayal of the bad guys, in particular Beauregard Browne (with an "e"). Peter O'Donnell was obviously striving for an interesting combination of an upper class Englishman with campy/gay tendencies (and frilly lilac shirts and painted toenails) who was still a deadly and formidable opponent for Modesty and Willie. For me it doesn't quite work. I find Beauregard Browne (with an "e") more silly than scary. A thriller depends to a large extent on the nastiness of the bad guys, and this is the weakest aspect of "Dragon's Claw".

Otherwise the book has the usual mix of very positive elements found in all of the Modesty Blaise books. This includes the unusual relationship between Modesty and Willie, the intelligent and humorous slant on things and Modesty's and Willie's inventiveness and their amazing fighting skills.

The book is very well written, and Peter O'Donnell has a great command of the (British) English language and a wonderful way with words. Consider the following sentence:

"There was an almost unlimited number of vexations she (Mrs. Rigby) found insupportable, such as abstract art, amateur psychologists, association football, and Australian cricketers, to name only the first few alphabetically, but when she declared her inability to tolerate these affronts, she invariably described them as unique in this respect." (page 80)

In conclusion, not one of the best Modesty Blaise books, but still recommended, even after all these years. If you've never read a Modesty Blaise book then do yourself the favor of starting from the beginning of the series, both because there is a developing background to the stories and because the first six books in the series are the best.

Rennie Petersen

7 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

No Modesty involved

By A Customer

Peter O'Donnell has done it again! I love his Modesty stories, and this book just made me want more. Willie Garvin and Modesty are the ultimate daring duo. No matter the situation, they always come through and with style and class....and of course with their customary wit and humor. Keep up the good work and Please Please write more!

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