



The Twenty-Three

Linwood Barclay

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The final book in the Promise Falls trilogy, *The Twenty-Three* is a pulse-pounding, race-against-time thriller.

The day begins like any other Saturday - a shower, coffee, breakfast. But suddenly, all hell breaks loose in the town of Promise Falls. People are dying in the street - the hospital and emergency services are overwhelmed by sheer numbers. Is it mass food poisoning, a virus, or something more sinister? Has *someone*, rather than *something*, caused this?

Detective Barry Duckworth is already investigating two murders and an explosion at the town's drive-in. He starts to wonder if these crimes and the new attacks are connected to the mysterious incidents in Promise Falls involving the number twenty-three.

But who is sending these deadly messages, and how can they be stopped?

The Twenty-Three Details

Date : Published September 22nd 2016 by Orion

ISBN :

Author : Linwood Barclay

Format : Kindle Edition 465 pages

Genre : Mystery, Thriller, Fiction, Mystery Thriller, Crime

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From Reader Review *The Twenty-Three* for online ebook

Matt says

First and foremost, a large thank you to NetGalley, Linwood Barclay, and Berkley Publishing Group for providing me with a copy of this book, which allows me to provide you with this review.

In the finale of his *Promise Falls* trilogy, Barclay ties everything together while impressing the reader with a fast-paced novel that is sure to leave as many questions lingering as it supplies answers. Still smarting from the recent drive-in bombing, *Promise Falls* must face another life-altering event. The water supply appears to be causing scores of residents to become ill, some showing flu-like symptoms while others die from the severity of their exposure. As the hospitals fill up, mayoral candidate and local businessman, Randall Finley, is on hand to provide bottled water as he shows his compassionate side, while trying to win over the electorate and regain his place as mayor. However, the authorities remain baffled by events, especially Detective Barry Duckworth, who traces the contamination back to the water treatment facility. Even after he learns what's gone into the water supply, Duckworth is no closer to learning who might be responsible. Across town, on the campus of Thackeray College, a student in the middle of intercession classes is found murdered in her dorm room. What makes this all the more disturbing is that her body is found with the same wounds as two other *Promise Falls* women over the past few years. These women played a prominent role in the community (as well as in the past Barclay novels) and with the killer still on the loose, Duckworth and the rest of the limited police force must juggle this case as the city teeters on the edge. The further Duckworth probes, the stronger the connection to past events that have baffled the authorities, all tied to the number twenty-three. Two cases, hundreds of bodies, and a city on the verge of collapse. Barclay has laid the groundwork for an explosive final novel in this series and he lives up to all expectations. A stellar piece of work that forces the reader to remain attentive to the final sentence.

Barclay's writing abilities have never been in doubt, but this collection, three novels and one short story, proves to be some of his best work in years. Parachuting the reader into small-town New York State is one thing, but his ability to present a powerful set of storylines that all come together so effortlessly makes this reading experience one that surpasses many novels on the market together. While some authors are able to sustain great characters throughout a series, Barclay not only offers up a collection of unique and interesting individuals to push the story along, but utilises them all in some form or another. The reader will rarely come across a character whose importance is not highlighted at some point in the series. While the novels have been spaced out over time to allow the author and publisher to develop them for their timed release, the narrative pulls past events into the present, giving the reader a brief recollection of what has happened to keep them from becoming too lost. Additionally, that the three novels take place in the span of a short period of time makes the intricate nature of the narrative all the more powerful. Barclay is able to literally pick up where the previous story left off and keeps the reader as enthralled as if they had put down one book to begin the next. This is surely the sign of a talented wordsmith and one who has honed his craft over many years. Few readers will leave this series feeling let down or underwhelmed. Quite the opposite, as they are sure to beg for more, even though it's quite apparent all good things must come to an end.

Kudos, Mr. Barclay for this wonderful novel and the larger trilogy. I am highly impressed with this and cannot wait to read more of what you have to offer.

Like/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

Jody McGrath says

As if things haven't been crazy enough in Promise Falls, the crazy is about to racked up to extreme. Somehow the town's water supply has been poisoned, killing hundreds and making hundreds more sick. On top of that another body is found with a smile cut abdomen, just like the others. With city resources stretched to their limits, police are in a hurry to figure out the water supply, but one detective starts putting the clues together. What does 23 mean? Are the serial killings and the rest of everything related? How many killers are in Promise Falls?

Okay so I have two confessions to make. Confession #1: I did not read the first two books in this trilogy. I deeply regret this now. Confession #2: I have never read a book by Linwood Barclay before this one. That I will be rectifying very soon. This book was fantastic. It was fast pace, action right from the beginning. The POV changed frequently, but I actually liked that in this story. Often I hate POV changes. I loved Barclay's writing style. It was gritty and sophisticated at the same time. His characters leapt off the pages, becoming real people that you know in your community. I cannot wait to read another of his books.

Even though I did not read the first two books, I was able to figure out part of the conclusion. The twists though were mind boggling. The psychological warping of the story made it riveting. I cannot really say any more than this, due to spoilers. I think everything in the book could be a spoiler. If you are a Barclay fan, you need to read this book. If you have not read a Barclay book before, you need to start. If you don't like Barclay, what is wrong with you? Just kidding. A+ book!

*I voluntarily read an Advance Readers Copy of this book and have given an honest review *

Chelsea Humphrey says

:(I know I'll be in the minority, and I'm a huge Linwood Barclay fan, so I hate to give this a less than glowing review, but I can't overlook the many issues I had with this one. This trilogy required a great deal of time and energy to have as much fluff and filler as it did and for it to end how it was left.

Gary says

This is the 3rd book in the 'Promise Falls Trilogy' by author Linwood Barclay.

I have read the previous books in this series and although I think it certainly helps make sense of everything I don't consider it essential and can be read as a stand alone.

In this 3rd instalment hundreds of people are taken to hospital suffering from flu like symptoms and many have died. It's the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, May 23rd, and the small town of Promise Falls, New York, is in a state of panic. Investigators suspicions quickly focus on the water supply, but who is responsible. Meanwhile, Detective Barry Duckworth is faced with another problem when a college student is found murdered, and it appears to be the same killer as in the unsolved homicides of two other women in town.

This is a fast moving thriller that is definitely a page turner and will keep you guessing and trying to unravel

the clues and red herrings. Questions are answered from previous novels in this series and everything starts to make sense. The story is cleverly constructed and explained expertly and Linwood Barclay shows his skills off in this climax to this series.

I love Linwood Barclay's books and they are always entertaining and exquisitely written giving the reader a thrilling experience. Certainly one of my favourite authors.

I would like to thank Net Galley and Berkley Publishing Group for supplying me with a copy of this novel in exchange for a honest review.

Mary Beth *Traveling Sister* says

I really do love this trilogy. and this is the third book in the Promise Falls Trilogy. I was surprised that there actually is a fourth book that comes out this November.

I really love this author too. I suggest that when you start to read this trilogy that you binge read it because if you don't I really think it would be hard to follow.

More mass mayhem awaits Barclay fans in the final installment of his Promise Falls trilogy, in which bodies stack up "in the morgue like firewood before the winter."

Upstate New York detective Barry Duckworth already has his hands full dealing with the sex crimes, campus murders, and drive-in disaster of Barclay's previous novel, *Far from True*. The new book opens with an elaborate cross-section of town residents getting violently sick and falling over in critical condition. In one of the worst disasters in New York history, more than 100 people die. The immediate thought is that someone tainted the town water supply. Could it have been the loathsome former mayor Randall Finley, who operates a water bottling company? But water isn't the only thing killing people on this Memorial Day weekend. A knife-wielding criminal is on the loose, targeting women. With so many more people losing their spouses, their boyfriends and girlfriends, their parents and grandparents, you wonder how Promise Falls can possibly survive—though as orphaned 11-year-old Crystal says to DI Cal Weaver, aware of the murder charges that had been hanging over her mother before she died of the tainted water, "I guess there's one good thing....My mom won't ever have to go to jail. But there are so many characters, most of them thinly drawn, that it's difficult to keep up with who's who and even who killed whom. (It's best to read the series from the beginning.)

The motive for harming the people of Promise Falls points to the number 23—and working out why will bring Duckworth closer to death than he's ever been before...

Brenda says

The holiday weekend started with a bang! Emergency services were being called until they weren't answering – the emergency department at the hospital was overrun with sick and dying people. What was happening? Why were the residents of Promise Falls becoming sick and dying where they stood?

Detective Barry Duckworth was already run off his feet investigating murders and explosions in his town – now with this latest horror, the department couldn't work out what was happening – or why? Calling in help from nearby towns was imperative as the small police department, and crime scene investigators, plus forensics, were in over their heads. Duckworth still had his suspicions about the number twenty-three, wondering if any of these latest events tied into that. Was it some sort of macabre message for the town? But

why?

The Twenty Three is the final in the Promise Falls Trilogy by Linwood Barclay, and as such, I was shocked by the abrupt ending with a few loose ends still floating around. I actually went back a couple of pages to see if I'd missed anything, but no. It was a brilliant novel, fast-paced and intense. I flew through the 451 pages in a matter of hours! Plenty of twists, lots of action and until the final reveal, I had no idea! Highly recommended – but definitely in order!

With a post script to that comment, as it says on the front cover of my copy “The final book in the Promise Falls Trilogy” – I just had a look and there is another to follow! Parting Shot is Promise Falls #4 – so I’ll be reading that one sooner rather than later! Thank goodness for that!

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

Wow Mr Barclay - you have me hooked!

The Promise Falls Trilogy is an exceptional read, the weak link being the middle book, Far from True, where there was quite a bit more back story than was required.

I couldn't put The Twenty-Three down. I literally walked around with it in front of my face. Mr Barclay writes twisted plots. I gave up trying to second guess him in the end and just enjoyed the read. Every time I thought I knew where he was heading, he would do an about face and throw another red herring at me.

I loved the characters - even the unlikable ones. I hope there is more to come for these characters. There are still questions that need to be answered.....

Thank you to NetGalley and Berkley Publishing Group for a digital ARC of The Twenty-Three by Linwood Barclay in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

Mary Beth *Traveling Sister* says

Review to be done shortly, behind in reviews.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I haven't read the first two books in this trilogy, but it didn't seem to bother this book as a stand alone. There were references and I would like to read the first two so I can know what all went on, but I was fine with what was going on here.

I thought the blurb sounded really good but I misread it a little bit and some of it was from the first two books, so once again, I need to go back to those books.

All of these people drink the water, in coffee, plain, etc and many die before they can get help from the hospital. I was thinking it was this one person doing it but it was too obvious to have been them and of course it was someone else. lol I can understand the person's reasoning and not understand it at the same time. I can't tell you why because that would be a spoiler.

There are some murders that lead back to other murders. Well, okay so everything leads back to things that happened in the past.

There was also an attack on a man and his shop because he is different so he is being blamed as a terrorist killing everyone. I mean, I don't trust a lot of people, but the stuff that was going on in this book didn't seem like no terrorist to me.

Overall I liked the book, but maybe I would like it better if I know the back stories. I'm happy for all of those that love it though :-)

I would like to thank First To Read for a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

MY BLOG: [Melissa Martin's Reading List](#)

Jackie Ullerich says

I deeply appreciated Linwood's vivid, detailed writing. Small town politics, sex, murder. The dialogue made these characters come to life. There are a lot of them, so I would highly recommend that you read this series one book after another so that you can keep track of them. You will get information about each characters' personal lives. One of this series' strengths is how Linwood delves into the backgrounds of even minor characters—not to the same extent as the main characters, so it doesn't overwhelm the reader, but it does make a difference.

The number 23 comes up throughout the entire series and readers will be intrigued.

Also, the ending!!! I loved it. It had an unexpected conclusion. And who doesn't appreciate that?

If you love thrillers, Linwood Barclay is an author not to miss!

Jan says

3.5 stars

A really good ending to the Promise Falls Trilogy.

I rated the first 2 books a solid 4 stars each. While the series ending did provide satisfactory closure, I rated this one lower because about a quarter of the way through, I realized I was over all the cray cray going on in this small messed up town.

With so many characters and sub plots, it took me awhile to remember who was who and who did what. I

think this took some of the fun out of this long awaited finale. I think I would have enjoyed it better had the entire story been told in one book, maybe 2 max.

The stand out? The last 50 pages...they are everything I was hoping for.

Barclay's ability to take all the sub plots and weave them seamlessly together to answer any question you might have had is perfection!

If you haven't started the series yet, I think I would recommend binge reading them for a more smooth and entertaining read.

ARC through NetGalley

Paromjit says

This is the explosive finale to the Promise Falls trilogy set in New York State. It is told from multiple points of view and all past events have been leading to this. Promise Falls and its residents are about to experience a catastrophic fallout from previous events that results in the deaths of hundreds amidst which are a number of murders. It all begins on the Saturday of the Memorial weekend, and people are suffering from extreme nausea, vomiting and other flu like symptoms. Many are dying and the emergency services are overwhelmed, they just cannot cope.

Trying to find out exactly what is happening is Detective Barry Duckworth and Angus Carlson. With so many unable to access medical help and a hungry media, the police investigation is operating under heavy stress. Slowly it begins to become clear that the water supply has been tampered with and compromised. It has been poisoned with sodium azide. Could it be terrorists? Who has a motive for such a heinous crime? Amidst all this, George Lyedecker is missing and at Thackeray College, a female student, Lorraine Plummer has been gruesomely murdered in exactly the same manner as the murders of Olivia Fisher and Rosemary Gaynor. This worries Duckworth as it seems previous suspects could not have committed Lorraine's killing. Who could it possibly be? The story is packed with a variety of twists. It emerges there are connections with the murders and the water poisoning. And it all revolves around the twenty-three.

Short chapters heighten the sense of tension and suspense right up to the final reveals. This is such a well written novel and the plotting is impressive. You get a real feel for the mayhem and the pressure which the police and the emergency services are operating in. Part of that is achieved with the myriad of characters, from a politically ambitious mayoral candidate, Randy, and Cal Weaver, a PI who has lost everything, yet trying to protect a little girl, Crystal, when her mother dies. Wonderful book. Highly recommended. Thanks to Orion for an ARC.

Monnie says

Wow! And when I add it to the other two books in the Promise Falls Trilogy, it's wow, Wow and WOW!

The title refers to the number 23, the number of a Ferris wheel car in which bloody mannequins were found,

and on the back of a fiery bus (see *Far From True*, the first in the trilogy, and *Broken Promise*, the second. In this one, all hell breaks loose on May 23, when hundreds of Promise Falls residents are becoming violently ill - many dying - suspected to be a result of something nasty in the water. Test results are affirmative - someone who knew what he or she was doing definitely poisoned the city's water supply. A former mayor who's running for the office again owns a bottled water company and immediately offers free bottles to the residents (as long as someone from the media is present), making a couple of his opponents - including former journalist David Harwood, who now works for the ex-mayor - suspect he might have had a hand in the disaster.

But that's not all that's going down. A female student at Thackeray College is found murdered in a pattern similar to that of two other women (see previous books). Is there a serial killer in their midst? Could the murders somehow be related to the poisoned water? That's an answer Detective Barry Duckworth (and concerned readers) want to know. He's been working on solving the first two murders since Book One, and the latest prompts him to step up the investigation before someone else bites the dust.

As the end of this book approached, most of the loose ends were tied and cliffhangers resolved from the first two books. Great, I said, nodding my head vigorously - and then in the final couple of chapters came big surprise after big surprise, making my mouth drop as well. The ending left a bit of the future of Promise Falls and at least one major character to the imagination, but since this is the third book in the trilogy, I made an educated guess that there won't be any more and came to my own conclusions.

A word to the wise on that score: I advise (make that strongly advise) reading all three books in order - and timewise, as close together as possible. I read the first two in succession, and when I was offered an advance copy in exchange for an honest review by the author and publisher (via NetGalley), I was elated. But as soon as I started it, I realized I'd forgotten a ton in the nearly nine months between it and the second one. Granted, I'm old and have to consult my computer to be sure what day it is, but I really struggled to remember what happened and who did it from the other two books even though the author does a pretty good job of providing background.

Bottom line? This is a don't-miss trilogy that, IMHO, ranks right up there with Stephen King's Bill Hodges Trilogy that got rolling with *Mr. Mercedes* back in 2014.

Barbara says

In this third book in the 'Promise Falls' trilogy, the water in Promise Falls gets poisoned, which causes havoc in the town. The books in the series can be read as standalones but it's best to read them in order for a full understanding of the story arc and the characters.

If you haven't read the first two books this review might contain some (minor) spoilers.

The upstate New York town of Promise Falls has no end of troubles. An unknown perpetrator has been orchestrating all kinds of havoc related to the number 23, including: hanging 23 dead squirrels on a fence; giving three mannequins a ride in car 23 of a defunct ferris wheel; sending a burning #23 bus careening down the street; blowing up the screen of a drive-in theater at 23:23 (military time); and more.

On top of that, several women in Promise Falls have been killed in a ritualistic fashion - possibly by a serial killer.

Unfortunately there's worse to come. On Saturday, May 23 - at the start of the Memorial Day weekend - hundreds of people in Promise Falls become violently ill. The victims become weak and disoriented; vomit profusely; become hypotensive (low blood pressure); and in many cases die. Detective Barry Duckworth - a capable cop - traces the cause of the outbreak to the town's water supply, which has been poisoned.

As sick and dead people pile up Detective Duckworth and his newly promoted assistant, Detective Angus Carlson, have their hands full - dealing with victims, talking to family members, interviewing witnesses, etc. To add to the mayhem, a teenage boy is missing and a college girl has been stabbed to death - possibly by the serial killer.

So Detective Duckworth is very busy - investigating the 'number 23' crimes; looking into the water debacle; and trying to solve the 'murdered women' cases. To add to the sleuth's troubles, his wife and doctor are trying to get him to go on a diet....but it's hard to give up those morning donuts.

Many colorful characters from the first 2/3 of the trilogy are on hand, such as: Randy Finley - the sleazy former mayor of Promise Falls who'd do anything to get re-elected; private investigator Cal Weaver - who has a moral conundrum about outing a murderer; Crystal - a smart autistic 11-year-old girl; Samantha (Sam) Worthington - a laundromat manager whose in-laws tried to snatch her son and have her killed; David Harwood - a former journalist who's romantically involved with Sam and (reluctantly) works for Randy's mayoral campaign; Don - David's father who has a guilty secret; and Marla - David's cousin who recently acquired a baby son (it's a long story).

For me "The Twenty-Three" is just okay. It's a workmanlike conclusion to the trilogy but lacks a certain level of excitement. Moreover, the solutions to the mysteries feel a bit anti-climactic.

One thing I do like about the trilogy is the author's technique of resolving dangerous situations quickly. If a character gets in trouble it's over pretty fast....for better or worse. I like this much better than hostages being locked in a basement for months.....or other plot devices of that nature.

Overall, the three books of the trilogy tell an engaging story. Recommended to mystery fans

(Note: there are some minor unresolved issues at the end of book three, which apparently will be resolved in a future volume. This is cheating, since this is a trilogy.....not a quadrilogy. Can anyone say \$\$\$?)

You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

Brenda says

I just reviewed my reviews for the first two books of this trilogy, and I could basically say the same things for this book. Linwood Barclay has done an exceptional job of refreshing my memory of happenings from the first two books.

I highly recommend reading this trilogy from the beginning. I would even suggest binge reading these three books. Once again, there is a LOT of activity in Promise Falls! I suspect Mr. Barclay had a floor-to-ceiling

flow chart on his wall for several years. If you haven't read the first two books, you might be totally confused!

All the same characters are in this book, doing what they do. Barry Duckworth, Cal Weaver, and David Harwood are all scrambling with their own storylines, but they also mix into the major story. Randall Finley does have a couple of redeeming qualities. And I still love little Chrystal!

Some reviews I've read mention plot holes in this book. I looked at each character and the story surrounding them, and I believe everything was concluded satisfactorily. Maybe not in as much detail as some readers might want, but I was happy to make inferences.

Mr. Barclay mentions in one of his newsletters that another book is coming that will be set in Promise Falls with Barry and Cal, but it will not be part of this trilogy. I'm looking forward to it.
