



Scott, Darcy
MATINICUS
manuscript (330 pp.)

A botanist retreats to a remote island to escape a complicated sex life, only to find himself tangled in a string of suspicious deaths.

When he last spent time on Matinicus, an island off the coast of Maine so isolated its inhabitants refer to the mainland as "America," Gil Hodges (named after the baseball player) developed an intense crush on Rachel Leland, an artist who lives in the old Burgess place, the island's oldest house. Five years later, under the pretense of completing a study of the island's rich plant life, he's staying at Rachel's house again, even though she's away. Of course, the botanical study is only part of the picture. Gil, a chronic libertine, is on the run from an ugly relationship and trying his best to put his old ways behind him. Unfortunately, he arrives on Matinicus during turbulent times, landing smack in the middle of an old dispute between local lobstermen and a former inhabitant of the island suspected of poaching. Without a resident police force, the citizens of Matinicus have to mete out justice on their own, so a string of seemingly random and accidental deaths starts the residents asking questions. Meanwhile, Gil must figure out how to deal with a local teen in the midst of a crisis, a sexy widow bent on making him revert to his former ways and a restless ghost who seems to be trying to tell him something. Scott's prose crackles with energy, and her sense of place is superb. The characters, even the minor ones, are well wrought, as is her detailed evocation of the book's unique setting. Sections set in modern times are interspersed with entries from the diary of an early 19th-century inhabitant of the Burgess house, and both plot lines are well executed and intertwine perfectly. Scott brings the action to a head, then ends with a brilliant twist sure to leave readers' jaws hanging.

The kind of book readers will tear through, only to find themselves hungry for more.