

# A PRIVATE CATHEDRAL : A DAVE ROBICHEAUX NOVEL

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A Private Cathedral: A Dave Robicheaux Novel. A PRIVATE CATHEDRAL. A Private Cathedral.



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James Lee Burke  
384 pages  
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**A Private Cathedral (Dave Robicheaux #23) by James Lee Burke**

Whether or not he plans to keep Isolde as his personal plaything, wealthy Mark Shondell clearly has a finger in any number of unsavory pies, and during a semiofficial visit to his home, Dave ends up beating the tar out of him. Murder most foul and mayhem most entertaining. Another worthy page-turner from a protean master. The ever prolific King moves from his trademark horror into the realm of the hard-boiled noir thriller. His days of raping children and murdering sons and God knew what else were over.

A tasty, if not always tasteful, tale of supernatural mayhem that fans of King and Crichton alike will enjoy. Are we not men? We are—well, ask Bigfoot, as Brooks does in this delightful yarn, following on his bestseller *World War Z*. A zombie apocalypse is one thing. Taking up our resources, our time to care for you. Already have an account? [Log in](#). Trouble signing in? [Retrieve credentials](#). [Sign Up](#). Pub Date: Aug.

Show all comments. More by James Lee Burke. Reader Votes He hated evil and waged war against it everywhere he found it. I sometimes wondered if he was an archangel in disguise, one with strings of dirty smoke rising from his wings, a full-fledged participant in fighting the good fight of Saint Paul. All the women and girls are mothers, whores, lovers, or children, and in some cases more than one of the above. No woman comes into the stories on the merit of her occupation, her character, or her abilities, aside from Helen, a long-running character that is exempted by virtue of being a lesbian and androgynous in appearance.

God forbid she be gorgeous and gay, or gorgeous and straight and completely sexually uninterested in Dave. Moving on. A teenager named Isolde is being sold by her parents, and Dave is attempting to rescue her. Meanwhile, Clete is kidnapped and hung upside down and tortured by a being that seems otherworldly to him—mostly because it is. And this is a departure for Burke, a good one, as it turns out. And I can only bow in awe at a writer—even one with residual sexist attitudes—that can take a long-running, iconic series like this one, a series that has run for more than 30 years, and decide to expand it across genres now. I also enjoy the way he develops the side character, Father Julian, who is heroic and who pursues pedophiles and brings them to justice. Way to fight stereotypes. I love the ending. This audio! Patton's performance is so amazing as Robicheaux!

I can listen to this forever! I've seen *Armageddon* a dozen of times but didn't know this actor's name until I started this book. In this case it's book Most of the time this method works for me, not thi Omigosh. Most of the time this method works for me, not this one. A Private Cathedral has interesting lead characters that makes me want to check out book one to fully appreciate Dave Robicheaux.

The south is charming. I have little clue of what's going on in this book though, pretty confusing. Sep 26, Sue rated it it was amazing Shelves: favorite-authors , mystery , net-galley , crime , louisiana. Very well

done! Dave Robicheaux and Clete Purcell are exemplars of flawed good. And in this painful outing they become embroiled with some of the more, if not most evil families of Louisiana.

The evil is both human in the chiefs of these families and their hired arms, and spiritual, seeming to have existed for centuries. As always when Dave and Clete are joined in a cause, there is violence. Dave is also challenged by his personal devil, alcohol, constantly. His wives are both deceased and daughter is on the West coast so his supports are slim. As always with a James Lee Burke novel, the prose is wonderful. While parts can be brutal, they are reflecting the evil that exists.

I continue to recommend this series with the caveat that some do not want violence in their reading, which I understand. A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review. The star-crossed lovers here are Isolde Balangie and Johnny not Tristan! But are they following their own hearts or has something been arranged between the respective capi of the two families: Mark Shondell and Adonis Balangie.

Only a brave or foolish man would dare to come between the Shondells and Balangies. Sadly, when it comes to brave and foolish, Dave and Clete score full marks all around. Then there is the mysterious and serpentine Gideon Richetti. Seemingly a man from another time with magical powers, but whose side is he on and what is his real mission? As always, the prose style is sublime. No-one else could describe scenes of cruelty and depravity with such poetic grace since, probably, Shakespeare. Another classic offering from an author who really is in a league of his own. Aug 15, Bookreporter. James Lee Burke has gradually aged Dave Robicheaux and his best friend, Clete Purcel, to the point where both men are much closer to their sunset than their sunrise, possessed of the somewhat diminished physical abilities that age brings to all of us.

He uses the voice of Robicheaux to tell a haunting, disturbing and mesmerizing tale James Lee Burke has gradually aged Dave Robicheaux and his best friend, Clete Purcel, to the point where both men are much closer to their sunset than their sunrise, possessed of the somewhat diminished physical abilities that age brings to all of us.

He uses the voice of Robicheaux to tell a haunting, disturbing and mesmerizing tale set just after the turn of this century that ripples even further back in time. During the course of the book, Robicheaux is dealing with his status as a two-time widower, as well as his constant struggle against the inner demons that threaten his hard-won sobriety. Still, this does not prevent Robicheaux from getting in the middle of a feud, which has lasted for hundreds of years, between the Shondells and the Balangies, two south Louisiana crime families. Purcel is there to help but is soon dramatically caught in the crossfire as matters play out across south Louisiana, from the streets of New Orleans to the fishing camps and stilt houses on the Gulf of Mexico.

Longtime readers are aware that the Robicheaux novels have intermittently explored the fragile divide between the living and the dead to great effect. Reviewed by Joe Hartlaub Oct 28, Barry rated it it was ok.

For the first two-thirds of the book, it was a pretty typical Dave Robicheaux story full of New Iberia, Louisiana history real and contrived, Burke's philosophical rambling, some mysticism, terrible villains, wonderful friends, those who were both terrible and wonderful sometimes simultaneously and fabulous word pictures of South Louisiana and its residents. As has generally been the case in these books, Dave and his pal Clete Purcel were trying to right wrongs, including the occasional one that had not yet been committed.

But then the mysticism became a central theme Burke's philosophical ramblings got completely out of control.

In fact, it seemed like Burke was trying to show the readers how profound he could be when he put his pen to it. This overload made the book extremely ponderous for the last third and, in fact, I began to skim large portions in the last ten percent and that is about the gravest insult that I can pay an author. And I was doing it to one of my all-time favorites. Not surprisingly, I won't recommend the book and, if I read another James Lee Burke book, it will almost certainly be one of the few early books that I have missed.

Over and Out Jul 07, Vonda marked it as to-read. After starting to read this one I found out it is book 19 in the Dave Robichaux series by James Lee Burke and the first I have ever read. Oh my what a ride! This book gripped you from the very beginning and I had a hard time putting it down. A gritty hard core detective he is in the bayous of Louisiana with all the mysticism and voodoo gris gris La. The only problem I had was

some of the names he used and the political stance he gave. Having lived in the After starting to read this one I found out it is book 19 in the Dave Robicheaux series by James Lee Burke and the first I have ever read. Having lived in the area a long time I can't agree with his views on racism in the area.. He probably has lived in Montana too long and forgot how it is here. Now, that part was miniscule on the scale of the storyline so I still give it a 3.

Aug 15, Robert Intriago rated it really liked it Shelves: crime-noir , The basics are there: the darkness, the violence, the usual cast of characters and great writing. The setting is right before hurricane Kathrine and prior to his marriage to Molly. It is still a great series. Apr 14, Kathleen Minde rated it liked it Shelves: beautiful-prose , dark-dark-dark , detective-series , meanders-a-bit , mystery , crime-fiction , got-an-arc , that-s-some-wierdass-shit , face-in-palm-plant , whaaaaaaa. James Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux series has always included a certain level of mysticism, whether Louisiana Voodoo or medieval arcane, and though he constantly questions the source of his faith, Robicheaux's deeply religious beliefs. A flawed man, Robicheaux is a recovering alcoholic with a paradoxical anger problem, he is still a southern gentleman who will tip his hat, address all women by "miss", and beat the crap out of anyone showing disrespect to a female.

He's an intuitive detective with James Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux series has always included a certain level of mysticism, whether Louisiana Voodoo or medieval arcane, and though he constantly questions the source of his faith, Robicheaux's deeply religious beliefs. He's an intuitive detective with a vast knowledge of history, religion, the arts, and his beloved south, specifically Louisiana.

He's a renaissance man with a badge. Burke's lush and evocative writing makes the stories, though always dark and intense, that much more complex. I don't know long it took me to figure out this book takes place in the past, sometime after Bootsie's death but before his marriage to Molly, with Alafair still in college, and Tripod bless his heart is still alive.

I was confused by the references to his two dead wives weren't there 3? And it took me even longer to recognize that as the book was building in intensity so was the weather, which finally gave me a timeframe: right before Hurricane Katrina. That was a minor quibble on my part. I was never sure what this book was about. It had the usual ultra-rich, old money families, the usual out of control violence, the usual alcoholic longings and dry drunk episodes, the usual Clete trying to destroy himself and take the world with him, and the usual almost overdone colloquialisms-both southern and tough guy detective-type.

In A Private Cathedral, it seems like Dave is trying to save a teenaged girl who has been sold from her wealthy family to a rich racist pedophile, and no one cares but Dave. There's a time-traveling reptilian assassin with superhuman powers no joke. Dave is disappointingly dimwitted and absurdly foolish when it comes to the women he chooses to sleep with this time I actually yelled, "You moron!"

Somehow, despite his all-encompassing alcoholic pastime, Clete can still afford two offices, one in the French Quarter. Dave revisits a lot of his childhood and past relationships and possible relatives and remains ageless I think he's in his 60's in this one. But I'm still not sure what the book was about. Yeah, I appreciate Burke's beautiful writing and deep philosophical ponderings, and I absolutely love Dave, I can never get enough of Clete, but I found myself drifting a few times. And, yeah, I definitely know who that "rich-boy gutter rat with ties to the Russian mafia" is. But no amount of Dr. Pepper with shaved ice and cherries, or Po' Boy shrimp sandwiches, or Four O'locks, Wisteria or Live Oaks dripping with Spanish moss could keep me focused.

I felt let down by his last novel, New Iberia Blues, and was sure it was Burke's swan song, but this was just a head scratcher for me. Will I read the next book? I have an affinity towards flawed recovering alcoholics who try to flush a guy's head down the toilet while wooing the man's wife, so yes, of course I will. Apr 10, Stephanie rated it it was ok. I really did. But that should really provide adequate time to read, even things we might not love, right? Like I said, I tried. Looks like many fans of Burke loved it Oct 27, Patricia Williams rated it really liked it.

This was a very interesting book. Set in LA where most of these books are set this story had a lot of mysterious things going on that were very beyond reason and sensibility but you had to go along with the story because you enjoy Dave and his stories so much. This is 23 on the list of these books and as always I definitely recommend. Aug 08, Susan rated it really liked it Shelves: net-galley. I have not read a James Lee

Burke novel in awhile and have forgotten just how graphic his books are. They are graphic in every sense—language, violence, sex, subject matter that they are not for the faint of heart. For some reason I picture them more of a male novel but I could be off on that.

The other thing to remember is Burke is an achingly beautiful writer. He wraps you up and takes you to Southern Louisiana with descriptions of food, geography and people so on target that I am transported I have not read a James Lee Burke novel in awhile and have forgotten just how graphic his books are. He wraps you up and takes you to Southern Louisiana with descriptions of food, geography and people so on target that I am transported there. Dave Robicheaux is an off and on cop. He is always getting fired or suspended as he only listens to his own moral voice. And he will do anything, and I mean anything, to accomplish his goal. His best friend is Clete, a former cop and now a P. This book deals with two criminal families who trade a young girl in one family to the other family. This sex trafficking enrages Dave and starts a war like no other. There is lots of mysticism and a bad guy who travels through time to accomplish his horrible goals.

He rides a big ship with black masts and only certain people can see him. This deals a lot with death and good and evil and making choices in life. Among them is the hour when you make your peace with death,"

Dave says at one point. It's a book that really makes you think. I was so shaken that I couldn't sleep last night. As I said, it's not for the faint of heart. Thanks to NetGalley for a copy of this book in exchange for a fair review. Sep 24, Donna rated it really liked it. Johnny Shondell is a rock and roll singer. Robicheaux is watching him play at a club when Isolde Balangie tells him that Johnny is delivering her to his uncle.

When Clete hears about this, it doesn't sit well so he enters himself in the situation, one that becomes violent fast. I recall from previous books how Burke has a way with words. I like his writing - so full and rich. In this book, the literary writing is there and the action is great. This is not my favorite story line due to all of the Johnny Shondell is a rock and roll singer. This is not my favorite story line due to all of the supernatural. However, Robicheaux and Clete make the book worthwhile. I still rate it a 4 even though it was a little far out there for me.

Btw, the name reminded me of Tommy James and the Shondells music from the 60s. Just showing my age Mar 21, Eric rated it it was amazing. As I have written in previous reviews of books in the Dave Robicheaux series, I am biased when it comes to the writing of James Lee Burke, but not so biased as to purposely write a positive review when the novel does not deserve one. On the contrary, Burke's writing in *A Private Cathedral* is fully lush in its descriptive nature, just as with his other novels. Reading a Burke novel is like looking at a painting mixed so well and so rich in vibrant color, describing the painting is almost impossible to adequately do.

Especially to a person that is not viewing the painting. With that, writing the review of *A Private Cathedral* is probably one of the most difficult reviews I have yet written. For one thing, writing a concise and adequate description of what is between the covers is difficult to do and to reveal too much may cause newer readers to move away from *A Private Cathedral* I would recommend readers read the Dave Robicheaux novels in order, but especially read a handful of the novels from the series before the taking on the last three Robicheaux novels.

In the simplest of description, *A Private Cathedral* is a story where Dave Robicheaux and Clete Purcel return and because of trying to help a young couple, they end up caught in between two wealthy and influential families with centuries of violent and deprave discord between them one reviewer described the relationship between the two families as a "rivalry," but that is too genteel of a word to describe their bizarre relationship. As the story unfolds, after Purcel and Robicheaux gain the attention of the two families, they run afoul of mafia gangsters, killers, and a mysterious assassin named Gideon Richetti. Richetti has a background and abilities almost too terrifying to contemplate and when spoken of by Purcel and Robicheaux, both are looked upon as if they are on the verge of mental breakdowns and insanity.

The novel is mystical and spiritual while refusing to bend to the physical world of science, land, earth and all things we think are true just because our senses tell us so. *A Private Cathedral* continues on with Robicheaux ruminating on true fairness and justice in the world and what it means to one edging closer to end of life mortality, especially when those apparently exempt from justice keep escaping what they deserve in a humane world.

One last comment about the writing of James Lee Burke and what he does so well is it is so refreshing when an author refuses to always explain every aspect of characters in a novel, both in speech and deed and not be afraid to leave it to the readers' interpretation or imagination. A Private Cathedral is highly recommended. Netgalley provided an ARC of this novel for a fair review. Apr 04, Diane rated it it was amazing. Is it because Dave is an honest but troubled soul, or because each novel has some new scene which could have come from the headlines of a Louisiana newspaper. In A Private Cathedral, Dave and Clete are concerned about Isolde Balangie, a young teenager who approached Dave to tell him she was being delivered to her family's rival, Mark Shondell as if she were chattel. They know from the four-hundred-year-old hatred between the Balangie's and Shondell's that Isolde is not going of her own choice.

She is in love with Johnny Shondell and they had hoped to record their latest duets together. As Dave and Clete investigate further into the disappearance of Isolde, they are each confronted by unexplainable paranormal events. An unworldly man appears to them at different times and they can not decide if Gideon is a man out of their time or a product of them being drugged with LSD. I won't post spoilers, but there are so many interesting characters and scenes in this book! I always enjoy highlighting Dave's reasoning and philosophies of life he has learned from hard experiences. He has memories that haunt him, but he made the best choices he could for the situation. A Private Cathedral must be added to a Dave Robicheaux book collection. Sep 05, Nick rated it liked it Shelves: suspense , historical , audio-version , mysteries , popular-fiction.

I've been addicted to Burke's florid style of detective fiction since he started, and so there's no way I'll ever skip a Dave Robicheaux entry, this being 23 in the series. Much of the attraction is the sheer power and appeal of the central character, a barely recovered drunk detective in Louisiana and his damaged knight errant of a friend Clete Purcell. The interplay between the two is lovely, even as they confront evil in all of its forms by making choices, some inspired, many less so. The ti I've been addicted to Burke's florid style of detective fiction since he started, and so there's no way I'll ever skip a Dave Robicheaux entry, this being 23 in the series.

The step daughter of one is in love with a rock star son of the other, and all of them are involved in some kind of ancestral ritual of child swapping that is probably just the tip of the iceberg of child abuse, human trafficking, and deep psychological damage. OR, they could be pawns in a supernatural world-historical cycle driven by a horrifying snake-like man named Gideon who may or may not be years old. As we navigate our way through the characters and strands of story we encounter anti-semitism, racism, classism, various forms of religiosity and social activism, political opportunism, greed and evil.

The usual, for Robicheaux. I like his heart and his commitment, but I'm less enamoured of the global historical spiritualism that drives the tale and muddies up the finale. I've read that such things 'explain' the series. For me, there's no 'splaining necessary. As always, the narration by Will Patton is superb. Sep 13, Cate M rated it did not like it Shelves: crime.

I have been a fan of James Lee Burke for many years but I think this might be the last time I sit down with a new Dave Robicheaux novel. The storyline for A Private Cathedral is thin at best and frustratingly obtuse at worst. I'm still trying to determine the main plot and its key driver. Was it the 'Romeo and Juliette' romance of Isolde and Johnny that goes nowhere? Was it Dave, sleeping with two female characters, one of whom may or may not be married to yet another wealthy, nefarious Louisian I have been a fan of James Lee Burke for many years but I think this might be the last time I sit down with a new Dave Robicheaux novel. How about the absurd time-traveling 'revelator' who lurks in the background but never fully comes to fruition as a character? Perhaps it's Father Julian who was, in my opinion, the most interesting character in the whole novel.

God forbid it should be the relationship between Clete Purcel and 'big mon' Dave because that just traipsed along the same old beaten track with absolutely zero development. I'm also very confused as to when this novel is set because if it's present times, then Dave, and Clete for that matter, perform impressive feats of physical strength, endurance and violence for a pair of something year olds! Oct 14, OutlawPoet rated it it was amazing. So somehow, I discovered this series at book 23 and how the heck did I miss this???

This book was everything — seriously, it was just about the most perfect read ever. It was dark and mysterious, a wonderful mix of noir and supernatural, and had that wonderfully gritty crime feel mixed with

eloquence. This is the book that made me read when I should have been sleeping. I have to read books now. Five perfect stars. Aug 11, Debra rated it it was amazing Shelves: mystery-thriller-suspense , audiobooks. James Lee Burke writes very stylish if brutal crime stories. Narrator Will Patton is perfectly matched to do these audionooks.

Aug 19, Pam Mezaraups rated it liked it. This ,of course, was a good read but not a great one. Gideon Richetti and torture devices from left me a little cold, straining my sense of credulity. Frankly it seemed like a filler and not a believable part of the story Magical thinking and magical realism is a trend of late and one that I could do without I could hear the clunk, clunk of the wheels turning. Aug 28, Tom S rated it it was amazing. JLB is the absolute best. Dave and Clete are dealing with some more bad guys and a supernatural element. Readers also enjoyed. Magical Realism. About James Lee Burke. James Lee Burke. James Lee Burke is an American author best known for his mysteries, particularly the Dave Robicheaux series. He has worked at a wide variety of jobs over the years, including working in the oil industry, as a reporter, and as a social worker.

Shortly before his move to Montana, he taught for several years in the Creative Writing program at Wichita State University in the s. Their daughter, Alafair Burke, is also a mystery novelist. The book that has influenced his life the most is the family tragedy "The Sound and the Fury" by William Faulkner. Other books in the series. Dave Robicheaux 1 - 10 of 23 books. Books by James Lee Burke. Articles featuring this book. The prolific and beloved author John Grisham, known for his courtroom thrillers, is back this month with a new pageturner, A Time for Mercy, Read more Trivia About A Private Cathedr No trivia or quizzes yet. Add some now ».

#### A Private Cathedral: A Dave Robicheaux Novel |

Once your hearing is gone, who cares how much longer the band plays? Burke makes it all work for those willing to go along for the ride, but that may be easier for readers of his earlier works than it would be for newcomers Positive Carole E. Barrowman , The Star Tribune. Humanity's 'predilection for inhumanity' is a dominant strand in the DNA of all James Lee Burke's novels, particularly his exceptional series featuring Louisiana detective Dave Robicheaux, of which A Private Cathedral is the 24th Like all Burke's novels, this one is lush and lyrical and poignant and pretty damn brutal. It's a journey into Robicheaux's heart of darkness and America's.

The Stolen Hours. Dead by Dawn. Suburban Dicks. A Study in Crimson: Sherlock Holmes Get the Book Marks Bulletin Please enter an email address so you can get access to our awesome newsletter!

Graphic Novels. Literature in Translation. He also writes lyrical description and deep-rooted character analysis. Those are here, too, but sometimes, he seems to use them as vamps while he figures out where the story is going next. Richetti, who originally has a snake-like head and no nose, gradually morphs into more human form, but he needs Clete and Robicheaux, both of whom he almost kills during the book, to forgive him. Ironically, Leslie Rosenberg, the prostitute, saves Clete from burning. Only the doomed and the damned see it, and that adds to the distance between Robicheaux and Clete and their frenemies. Robicheaux is twice-widowed, which makes his loneliness and desire a poignant obstacle as he tries to do the right thing for people who are on a highway to hell.

Once your hearing is gone, who cares how much longer the band plays? Burke makes it all work for those willing to go along for the ride, but that may be easier for readers of his earlier works than it would be for newcomers. He is also an editor, writing educator, and former actor and theatrical director. Enter your keywords. Author s :.