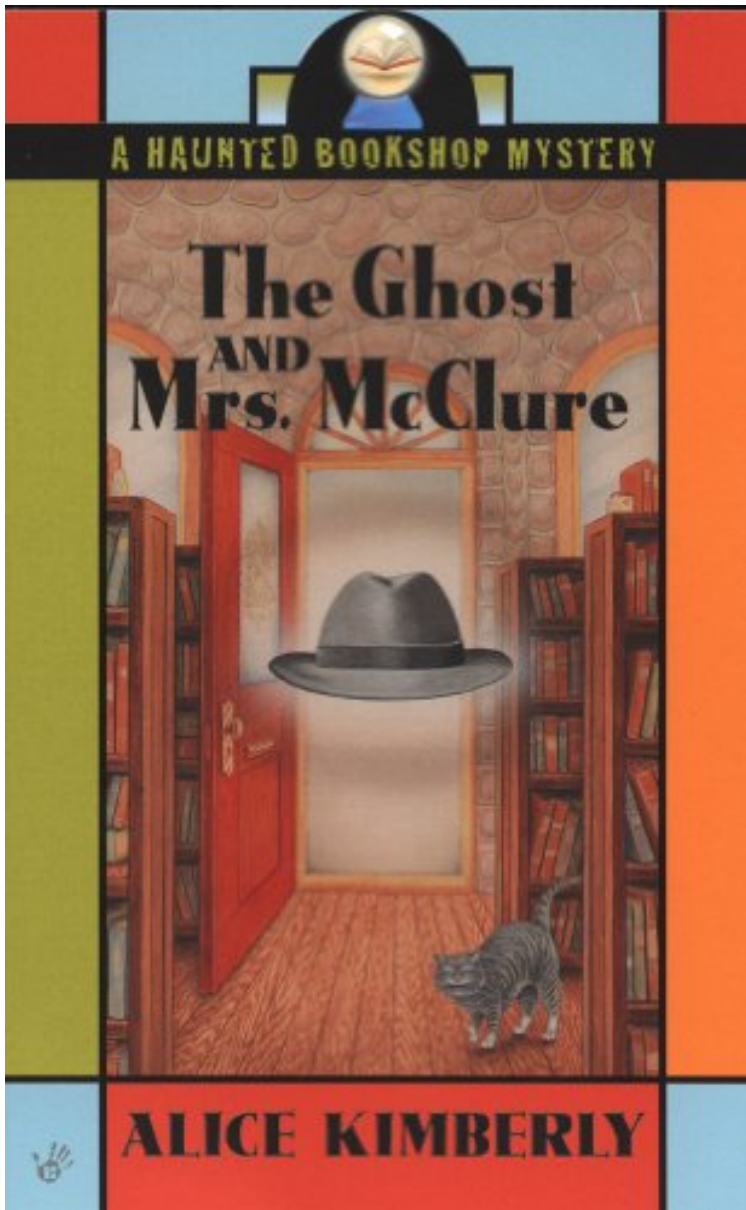


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Description : Description du produitPenelope Thornton-McClure manages a Rhode Island bookshop rumored to be haunted. When a bestselling author drops dead signing books, the first clue of foul play comes from the store's full-time ghost-a PI murdered on the very spot more than fifty years ago. Is he a figment of Pen's overactive imagination? Or is the likable, fedora-wearing specter the only hope Pen has to solve the crime?

Prsentation de l'diteurPenelope Thornton-McClure manages a Rhode Island bookshop rumored to be haunted. When a bestselling author drops dead signing books, the first clue of foul play comes from the store's full-time ghost-a PI murdered on the very spot more than fifty years ago.Is he a figment of Pen's

overactive imagination? Or is the likable, fedora-wearing specter the only hope Pen has to solve the crime?ExtraitTable of ContentsTitle PageCopyright PageAcknowledgementsEpigraphCHAPTER 1 - The Big EndingCHAPTER 2 - The Author ArrivesCHAPTER 3 - A Postmortem PostCHAPTER 4 - A Drink before DyingCHAPTER 5 - Hard-Boiled Bogey ManCHAPTER 6 - The Morning AfterCHAPTER 7 - Crime SceneCHAPTER 8 - Curious JackCHAPTER 9 - Dying for ProfitCHAPTER 10 - Inquiring MindsCHAPTER 11 - Shadow BoxingCHAPTER 12 - Dark and Stormy NightCHAPTER 13 - Dont Know JackCHAPTER 14 - Strangers in the NightCHAPTER 15 - An Open BookCHAPTER 16 - RevelationsCHAPTER 17 - A Worthy SuspectCHAPTER 18 - To Quibble or Not to QuibbleCHAPTER 19 - Things That Get Bumped in the NightCHAPTER 20 - The Girl in the Frame-UpCHAPTER 21 - BookedEPILOGUEDont miss the second charming mystery in the Haunted Bookshop series.The Ghost . . .When Jack had been alive . . . the very blood in his veins pulsed to the beat of the city streets (when hed had bloodand veins, that is).Why couldnt he have spent eternity in a place like that?Instead he got eternity in cornpone alley.Now the only excitement Jack ever had was scaring the crap out of small-town operators . . .and Mrs. McClureHer name was Penelope Thornton-McClure. And he had to admit she showed more moxie than a lot of grown men hed pranked in the past fifty years.Certainly, she was the first living entity hed even considered shifting himself toward since hed crossed over, which was hilarious because, if hed read her thoughts right, she didnt even believe in ghosts.Well, he hadnt believed in them either . . .This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the authors imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.THE GHOST AND MRS. MCCLUREA Berkley Prime Crime Book / published by arrangement with the authorPRINTING HISTORY Berkley Prime Crime mass-market edition / February 2004Copyright 2004 by The Berkley Publishing Group.All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission. The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the authors rights is appreciated. For information address: The Berkley Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014.eISBN : 978-1-101-01044-0Berkley Prime Crime Books are published by The Berkley Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014. The name BERKLEY PRIME CRIME and the BERKLEY PRIME CRIME design are trademarks belonging to Penguin Group (USA) Inc. ACKNOWLEDGMENTSThe author wishes to thank Senior Editor Kimberly Lionetti and literary agent John Talbot for their valued support in giving this distinct physical incarnation to what began as the ghost of an idea.Andvery special thanks to Major John J. Leyden, Jr. Field Operations Officer, Rhode Island State Police for his helpful answers to procedural questions.AUTHORS NOTEAlthough real places and institutions are mentioned in this book, they are used in the service of fiction. No character in this book is based on any person, living or dead, and the world presented is completely fictitious.You mean there is a hell? asked Lucy. Some people might call it so, said the captain. Theres a dimension that some spirits have to wait in till they realize and admit the truth about themselves.R. A. Dick, The Ghost and Mrs. MuirPROLOGUEMy life is my own, and the opinions of others dont interest me . . .Carroll John Daly, Three Gun Terry, Black Mask, May 1923 (cited as the first published appearance of a hard-boiled detective)Quindicott, Rhode Island 1949Cranberry. What kind of a cornball name was that for a street?Jack Shepard hauled his powerful frame out of the black Packard and slammed the heavy door, sending a violent shudder through the mass of metal.Five hours. Hed just spent five dusty hours behind the wheel of this boiler, hunched up like some luckless clipster trying to crack a bag mans safe.With easy fingers, Jack buttoned-closed his double-breasted jacket. The suit was gunmetal gray, rising in a V from his narrow waist to his acre of shoulders. Closing his eyes, he imagined a pretty set of hands working over the kinks and knots. Tonight, thought Jack. After the drive back to Manhattans crowded dirty noise, hed find a willing pair in some suds club, like he always did.Casing the scene, Jack scanned the two- and three-story buildings that lined this lanea kiddie version of the towering steel and glass where he usually ranged. Town, he muttered. Thats what two farmers had called it about ten miles back, out by the cow pasture and old mill, where hed asked for directions. The Welcome to Quindicott sign came next. Farmland after, more of the monotonous rolling green hed driven through on the way up. Then came the gradual density of houses. Trees and lawns and hedges trimmed by do-right guys. Barking dogs and chubby-cheeked kids. You had your quaint town square, your manicured lawn, and your white bandshell with red trim. The

whole thing looked so doggone cheery, Jack expected to see a Norman Rockwell signature in the sidewalk. The townsfolk in this homespun little picture looked cheery enough, too, soaking up the last hours of the orange suns late-summer juice. Young men in flannel. Old men with clay pipes. Farmers wives in gingham, and shop girls with bare legs. These people were off the cob, all right, Jack thought, starting a casual stroll. Corny as they came. Some rocked on porches, some gabbed on benches, some ambled along the cobblestone lane and all eyes were on him. Who are ya, fella? Curious eyes. Waddaya want? Small-town eyes. Ya dont belong. Jack lit a butt from his deck of Luckies, then used a single finger to push back his fedora. You people want a look at my mug? Go on then, look. Jacks face wasnt pretty, but no dame ever complained. His forehead was broad with thick sandy brows; his cheeks were sunken, and his nose like a boxers slightly crooked with a broken-a-few-times bump. His jaw was iron, his chin flat and square with a one-inch scar in the shape of a dagger slashing across it and his eyes were sharper than a skiv. Freddie once told him they were the color of granite and just about as hard. Maybe he was hard, thought Jack. But baby, this was one hick town. No painted dolls or groghounds here. No nickel rats, cheap grifters, or diamond-dripping dames looking to have their husbands set up. Just clean air, families with kids, potluck socials, and farm-fresh moo juice. A town for settling down. Thats what this place was, thought Jack. A few of those bare-legged, unpainted country dolls passed him, gave him the shy version of the whats-your-name-big-fella? once-over. Nice, thought Jack, eyeballing them right back. Shapely gams. Milky skin. Curves the way he liked them bountiful. Jack took a long, slow drag from his Lucky and turned away. A man like him had to be careful in a place like this. Say the right thing to the wrong broad and hed make her about a thousand times more miserable than he was. With a slight limp, Jack continued his slow stroll casual, easy, hands in pockets, the ache in his shin an unwanted souvenir from that underpaid job hed done for Uncle Sam over in Germany. Jack ignored it. Continued to case the scene. Ahead of him, a row of shops beckoned. Bakery, grocery, dress joint, beauty parlor. There it was: one twenty-two. A little more class than the other places. Probably did business with that fancy Newport set not far away. Wide plate-glass window. Words etched in: We Buy and Sell Books. Yeah. But did they have the book he was looking for? The one they were looking for? The one they killed Freddie for? The sun was sinking like a popped balloon now. The day was done, the lights nearly out, and just around the corner, a shadow stained the sidewalk, a city-suited figure, waiting. Jack cursed low. Thought hed shaken that tail. He turned the brass handle, pushed. The shops bell tinkled like a bad girls giggle. A chill up his spine like a foot on his grave. The shadow moved closer. Jacks hand rose, dipped into his suitcoat, caressed his rods handle, smooth from wear. He got a bad feeling, but Jack had gotten them before. And when he started a thing, he never turned back. Besides, this job was for Freddie, and Jack promised his dead friend hed ride this train out. All the way to the end of the line. I stake my everlasting life on it. When the shadow receded, Jack refocused his attention on the job at hand. Investigation and interrogation were things hed polished as a private eye, but hed learned as a cop back before hed joined up. In the service, hed learned a lot more: About men and the things theyd do and say under pressure. About the enemy: how and why theyd lie, and, more importantly, what methods would pry the truth out of them. The moment of truth came today. For Jack it came sharp and hard and quick, landing at the back of his skull. But the blow didnt kill him. The gunshots did. To the head, to the face, to the heart. Enough to make sure Jack Shepards everlasting promise to his friend began today . . . along with his everlasting life. CHAPTER 1 The Big Ending Murder doesnt round out anybodys life, except the murdered and sometimes the murderers. Nick Charles to Nora Charles in *The Thin Man* by Dashiell Hammett, 1933 Quindicott, Rhode Island Today We killed him! I was beside myself. In a frantic state of hand-wringing and head-shaking, I paced the length of the bookshops aisle from Christie to Grafton and back again. Calm down, dear, said my aunt, her slight frame tipping the Shaker rocker back and forth with about as much anxiety as a retiree on a Palm Beach sundeck. How can I calm down? I asked. We killed a best-selling author on the first night of his book tour! Well, the milks gone and spilled now. No use crying over it. If you need help calming down, why dont you have a belt? I was not surprised by this rather unladylike suggestion from my aunt. Sadie may have been seventy-two, and barely four feet eleven, but for an aging bantamweight she had a big mouth and a good right hook. The Quindicott Business Owners Association never forgot the day shed spotted a shoplifter at ten yards (putting a Hammett first edition down his pants). Shed taken him out with one sharp Patricia Cornwell to the head. Presentation de l'diteur Penelope Thornton-McClure manages a Rhode Island bookshop rumored to be haunted. When a bestselling author drops dead signing books, the first clue of foul play comes from the store's full-time ghost—a PI murdered on the very spot more than fifty years ago. Is he a figment of Pen's

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