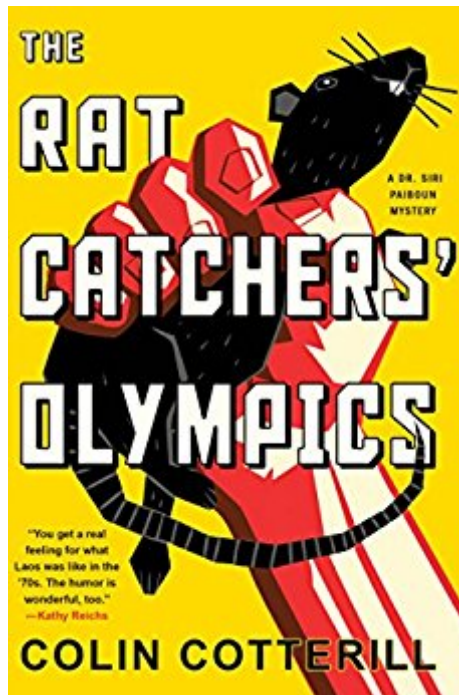




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The Rat Catchers' Olympics (A Dr. Siri Paiboun Mystery)



Synopsis

The boycotting of the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow has given the Democratic People's Republic of Laos the chance they needed to field their first-ever team. It's also just the sort of opportunity the now retired, and therefore very bored, ex-National Coroner of Laos, the venerable Dr. Siri Paiboun, to visit a city he has long wanted to see. He just needs to get the band back together first.

1980: The People's Democratic Republic of Laos is proud to be competing in its first-ever Olympics. Of course, half the world is boycotting the Moscow Summer Olympic Games to protest the Soviet Union's recent invasion of Afghanistan, but that has made room for athletes from countries that are usually too small or underfunded to be competitive—like Laos.

Ex-national coroner of Laos Dr. Siri Paiboun may be retired, but he and his wife, Madame Daeng, would do just about anything to have a chance to visit Moscow, so Siri finagles them a trip by getting them hired as medical advisers to the Olympians. Most of the athletes are young and innocent village people who have never worn running shoes, much less imagined anything as marvelous as the Moscow Olympic Village. As the competition heats up, however, Siri begins to suspect that one of the athletes is not who he says he is. Fearing a conspiracy, Siri and his friends investigate, liaising in secret with Inspector Phosy back home in Laos to see if the man might be an assassin. Siri's progress is derailed when a Lao Olympian is accused of murder. Now in the midst of a murky international incident, Dr. Siri must navigate not one but two paranoid government machines to make sure justice is done.

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Customer Reviews

As usual, lots of strange fun with some of the most interesting literary sleuths around. Rat Catchers is not my favorite of the series, but nevertheless I enjoyed reading it. Didn't tell us much about Moscow or the Olympics, actually, and some of the story line seemed pretty implausible. Many hints and references to characters and situations that weren't developed. But - Dr. Siri fans will enjoy the wit and insight here - which Cotterill's stories typically offer in abundance. The visit to Lenin's tomb by two former "old reds" was a hoot!(Would love to see George Takei star in a tv version of these books)

Dr. Siri solves another one with the help of his loyal cohorts. The participation of Laos in the Russian Olympics is an adventure for all,

An excellent, fun read... exactly what I've come to expect from Colin Cotterill.

I have been reading the "Dr. Siri" series since I stumbled on the first one ("Coroner's Lunch") when it first came out, and I've thought they were terrific. While I've never thought that they were great literature, I think that Cotterill has managed to grow the central characters over the years and move some of the peripheral characters (such as Detective Phosy) in and out so that the character focus can change while staying familiar. Most of all, he has avoided that trap wherein the characters are always exactly the same with the specifics just changing, as so many series do. There have been a couple of them that got dark enough that I had a hard time enjoying them, and there are others I haven't liked as much when they excluded characters such that I missed the expected 'ensemble'. In fact, there was one recent one that I started about six months ago and never finished. I probably will, but it didn't catch hold. Part of that is that while I understand the need to change the setting to some place outside of Vientiane to avoid things getting stale, I usually prefer it when things are set there. Having said all of that, I think that "Rat Catchers'...." is back to form: If you like the series this one is back to pressing all of the right buttons: The setting is Moscow for most of it, which works

really well, as does the 1980 Olympics, and having Phosy doing things back in Vientiane also works well. And while Bad Things Happen, this one isn't as dark as some and I enjoyed it. As is always the case with novelists who add important characters during the series and develop the relationships, if you're new to the Dr Siri series you will enjoy this one more if you have read a couple of the earlier ones first

... and a motley crew formed by Dr Siri, Madame Daeng, Nurse Dtui et al are going where never a Lao sports team has gone before: To the Olympic Games in Moscow. 65 countries are boycotting the games because the USSR have made an unexpected and armed visit to Afghanistan. But the Russians have everything built in extra-large, because they thought to house and vine and dine all those Western World athletes, too. So they are desperately scraping together even such small and underdeveloped Socialist countries like Botswana - and Laos...Normally Dr Siri would not have the opportunity to accompany the Laotian sports team, being in retirement. But with a bit of a dirty trick he managed to get himself and Madame Daeng a place on the Aeroflot plane to Moscow, together with Comrade Civilai the flag-bearer and leader of the group, Nurse Dtui who is fluent in Russian and the athletes - in the disciplines of shooting, boxing and running. But even before the plane takes off, there is an unexpected change in the shooter's team. Which puts an always suspicious Dr Siri even more on edge. And the readers know at this point that there will be an attempt on the life of a Laotian citizen who lives permanently in a luxury flat with all comfort possible. But the rest of Dr Siri's friends, Policeman Phosy and Geung have their own problems. Phosy is shot and stone-dead, so the adversaries have to believe. And then starts a traffic of news in code over Telex lines between Moscow and Vientiane to make them go near to overheating. But as Dr Siri thinks to have everything together, the assassination takes place. Booom...Now there is the question what to do with the culprit. But there will be a solution. And the Rat Catcher's Olympics can take place - and that is really a competition that only the most shrewd, cunning and clever athlete can win...And here we have another winner by Colin Cotterill - the worldwide acclaimed author of the Dr Siri and Jimm Juree series. I will never know where he gets those ideas from. I have the strong suspect that there is someone like Auntie Bpoo who flusters around in his head. Because all those ideas, those twists and turns - at the end they all are totally wired together the way they should be. Friends of Dr Siri & Merry Company AKA his Nearest & Dearest - news from Southeast Asia, together with more inside information about the Olympics 1980 You ever wanted to know. Read and learn... and laugh!

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