



Already Dead

Stephen Booth

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Some sins won't wash away . . .

A summer of endless rain in the Peak District leaves the officers of Derbyshire's criminal investigation department with a problem. They have discovered a man's body lying in shallow water, but torrential downpours have swollen the rivers and flooded the roads, making travel difficult and forensic examination impossible.

And that's not all. The absence of Detective Cooper, on extended leave after an arson attack, has left a serious gap. Detective Fry is a reluctant temporary replacement, but now their makeshift team is about to be tested to the limit. The fatal events of one damp August night are likely to remain shrouded in mystery if they can't track down a car glimpsed only as a dark outline in the rain by a passerby.

When the drops turn into a deluge, loyalties among the officers will be put under intolerable strain as they try to solve their toughest case yet. And that's before it emerges that Detective Cooper is not at home recuperating, but has vanished into thin air . . .

Already Dead Details

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From Reader Review Already Dead for online ebook

Jane Lee says

Excellent addition to the wonderful series. I only ave two more until Stephen writes more..

Gary says

I have managed to read all of the books, in this series, despite the presence of the much hated (by me) Diane Fry. Anti-social, paranoid, ill tempered, possessing a slight God complex, probably, a sociopath. No people skills, with either other police officers or civilians, why is this woman a DS? Why is she here? Perhaps the author wants me to feel sorry for her but I cannot imagine why I would or should.

But, up to this point, I have found the stories to be good enough to make me put up with this dreadful character. Until now, that is. With this book, I feel that the writing has gone down hill. For the first two thirds of the book, every second chapter has Ben Cooper wandering, aimlessly, over hill and dale with long drawn out descriptions of every rock and tree, ad nauseam (an aside, why, why, why does every British mystery writer feel compelled to kill off the significant other if the main character?).

At times, I wondered if I was reading a mystery or a travelogue of Derbyshire. And to add to this, the actual crime and investigation was pretty flat.

Although it picks up, somewhat, closer to the end, it is still well below the standards of the previous books. Frankly, I was bored.

Herzog says

This is one of my favorite series; however, I don't remember Diane Fry being quite the shrew that she's become. Originally I thought that her character was both more nuanced and more appealing. The whole tone here was very dark between the floods and Cooper's psychological scars. Compelling, but dark.

Laura says

I really love this series, but Diana Fry is starting to wear on my nerves. She's gone from cranky and reserved to just unlikeable - and after the last book, with what happened to Ben, you'd think she'd lighten up a little.

The mystery itself is rather slight, as if the author is allowing himself, his readers and characters to catch their breath a little. Only one death, and seemingly little chance of more. Ben, of course, is on compassionate leave but still gets involved. Is he truly going off the rails? It seems more like getting into character and hiding in plain sight than anything more. I am getting a little tired of his overwhelming local knowledge and

ability to make connections, and then being told he's something of a mess and not as good as he could be. Huh?

One of the things that always grabs me is the sense of place, how Edendale and surroundings play such a large role not just in the mystery but in the lives of the characters. The history we get, from hill forts to plague villages to walking tours, really adds. But at times, less is more. Less angst from Fry, less assuming Cooper's going to mess up, and less scenery - more mystery, more enjoyment.

Monika says

Detta är faktiskt den sista boken av Booth som jag har i hyllan, den trettonde delen om Cooper och Fry. Tyvärr så har nog inte böckerna kommit riktigt till sin rätt när jag i stort sett har läst en i månaden under hela förra året. Det blir nog lite för mycket av allt då. Läs mer på min blogg

Corrinne Hills says

Too many characters and too many story lines made for confusing and unenjoyable reading. even the resolution of all the storylines into the final outcome was unsatisfying. It was like a big nasty secret that the reader was left out of. Not clever plot twists just unenjoyable. I finished the book because I wanted to know what the point was not because I wanted to find out what happened to the characters or solve the crime... and I was disappointed.

Jennifer says

Let's be clear. My four star delight in this novel derives considerably from my familiarity even for a Stephen Booth with the settings for this particular story . There is a spot where a dramatic event occurs and yesterday I was in it eight times. It is an intense experience to read dramatic fiction about a real place in which you are so immersed.

There were other familiar things: the very difficult character of Diane Fry about which I can't decide: is Booth's writing clunky, reminiscent of a bad soap setting up artificial conflict or are there people like that? The information-giving was there too - even more of it but broken up more. I thought I was going to smile indulgently and allow him this slightly irritating foible, half expecting him to go the whole journalistic hog and put an age in commas after every name but in the end it reminded me of myself giving guests a running commentary on a driving tour of the area and I loved it. Once, that is, I'd got beyond a few clangers - PeliDeli has not been open for coffee in that town since several Stephen Booth books ago, the murder victim's mother seems an unlikely Mango card user on the 6.1 bus, potentially too old not to have a free bus pass but certainly not sounding savvy enough to put money on the card.... and last but not least the wind turbines he mentions are not actually up yet. There is also a most peculiar incident of wedding invitations arriving from the printer apparently shortly before the date of a well-planned wedding.

The police end of things was a bit messy - quite possibly an expression of the nightmare that current British policing is for the contemporary crime writer - but the story was a good one. It does lead on from the tragic events of Dead and Buried and it is worth reading in order.

Mary says

I was still spitting angry about the last book for the first part of this one! When I cooled off, it was up to the usual standard. Booth does amazing setting; I still feel wet. I love Ben Cooper, but I still can't stand Diane Fry!

Bev Taylor says

the peak district is awash with the worst rainfall they have known for a long time. rivers r overflowing, roads flooded - some impassable - and homes in danger

into this the cid find a man lying dead in shallow water. was it natural causes, a suicide or murder?

ben cooper is still off sick and diane fry is bought in as his replacement. the officers r placed under immense strain as they try to get to the bottom of this mystery, added to which cooper is not recuperating at home

into this mix we have adultery, insurance fraud, claims against a paintballing firm, restrictive mothers and officers who r not sharing all their activities

this is obviously a sequel but what killed it for me was the old adage - a reader should be gripped by the first few pages. it took me well over 100, way too much narrative!

added to this if u deleted all the history, topography and geology of the peak district plus repetitiveness the book would have been halved and by this it was impossible to really get into the characters and understand them

couple of questions - no mention of identifying the body; surely the first question to ask the insurance firm would have been what case turner, the dead guy was working on

3.5 stars

bev

Quillracer says

Every reader of this series knows Liz Petty, Ben Cooper's fiancée, died in the last book, yet Booth brings it up over and over in this one. We get it.

Like many English authors, Booth feels the need to record every nuance of every emotion felt by every character. Slogging through them gets tedious after a while and slows the story down.

There's too much everything – description, geology, geography – except action. Do we really need to know the view from a house's front window? How the Peak District came to have so much limestone? The exact

route a particular road has? Answer to all three: not really.

Cutting the emotion, description, geology, and geography excesses could pare a hundred pages from this book (and every other one in the series) make for tighter, tauter, more engaging stories.

And once, just once, it would be nice if Cooper and Fry actually said exactly what they were thinking instead of dancing verbally every time they say anything to each other. It's getting very tiring and makes both main characters come across as petulant brats, not the professional, experienced police officers they are *supposed* to be. I'm also beginning to wonder how someone as distrustful and suspicious of her co-workers as Diane Fry is keeps her job.

Then there's the matter of Ben Cooper's 'vanishing into thin air' according to the cover blurb. For someone who has vanished, Ben is remarkably visible to the reader and almost every character in the book.

The only thing that kept me from giving this entry in the series 1 star is the intriguing crimes Fry and the others are investigating that end up merging into one complex case.

Mel says

Pros - The mystery was interesting and the secondary characters felt very real.

Cons - Diane Fry literally pulled her hair more than once and Ben Cooper's crisis felt a bit heavy handed.

Carol Jean says

Unusually awkward, alas, and the bit with extremely late arrival of some wedding invitations caused me puzzlement, rather than sympathy. Not his best, but psychologically interesting and involving. I'm still looking forward to the next one. But really, I wish Diane Fry would move along....I loathe that woman!

Sarah says

Did like it - but think perhaps he has gone a bit overboard on the description of place. Wirksworth deserves to be immortalised in fiction but not all of it moved the story forward, some of it felt like padding and some like a tourist guide. Liked the twist at the end. Sending Ben Cooper off the rails over his fiance's death rang quite true - as he seemed to have sleep-walked into the engagement (disturbing shades of The History of Mr Polly sleep-walking into marriage and then literally burning the house down). If the relationship had been better grounded then he might not have felt so disorientated when she died - although to be fair, if the relationship had been better grounded Stephen Booth might not have killed her off!

John Lee says

I do enjoy my e-reader but every so often it is good to go back and here, once again, I was lucky enough to

hold a new copy of a new release by a favourite author.

It is hard to believe that it was just over a year ago that I read 'Dead and Buried'- the previous book in this series. May be it is a sign of age starting to take its toll, but as I started this one, I couldn't remember the exciting finale of the last. I needn't have worried because most of it was soon relived. You could read this book as a stand alone but I couldn't recommend that. Get hold of Dead and Buried (or the rest of the series) first , if you can.

It is difficult to say much about the narrative without giving something away about this or the last book,(and I dont think it is appropriate to leave spoilers) so suffice it to say that it felt good to be back with the crowd at Edensfield police station and up on the moors again. I also enjoyed the subtle humour that creeps into the stories , particularly this time the episode concerning the 'biblical names'.

I dont think that I have read a more recently written book before. There are several events mentioned that are still quite fresh in the memory- not least of which was last summer's rain and the flooding it caused.

Finally, I see from the cover notes that there is a TV series in preparation. Bringing detective novels to the screen has had mixed success, we wait to see who will be cast as Ben Cooper and Diane Fry. Whoever it is, I am sure it wont be how many of us have imagined them. I wish everyone luck with this.

Tinika says

I can't believe that I am only giving 3 stars to a Stephen Booth novel. The Cooper/Fry mystery series is my favourite but this, the thirteenth outing is the weakest so far. The earlier books were mainly procedurals with strong character development throughout the series. Already Dead was more character driven with an incidental murder thrown in and it only partially worked. It picks up where the last, Dead and Buried, leaves off. Ben is recuperating from the events in the previous book and not coping very well, which is highly understandable. His sense of loss and grief is well depicted. Still, as a member of the public, he gets involved in the latest case. Diane is torn between wanting his insight when he is not around and rejecting it to his face when he is. While Ben's character has continued to evolve, Diane's character feels stuck. I find her hard to believe in as a successful senior police officer when her people skills are so poor and her lack of insight is so high. After all these years, she still does not know the district. With the help of Booth's strong sense of place and Google maps, I, who live on the far side of the world, have a better idea of the Peak District than she does. And, finally, with her paranoia that her team is plotting against her, it is a wonder she gets anything accomplished at all. Will I read another Cooper/ Fry mystery? Definitely. I liked Already Dead; it just didn't go to the wow level I was expecting.
