



This Was a Man

Jeffrey Archer

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In Whitehall, Giles Barrington discovers the truth about his wife Karin from the Cabinet Secretary. Is she a spy or a pawn in a larger game? Harry Clifton sets out to write his magnum opus, while his wife Emma completes her ten years as Chairman of the Bristol Royal Infirmary, and receives an unexpected call from Margaret Thatcher offering her a job. Sebastian Clifton becomes chairman of Farthings Kaufman bank, but only after Hakim Bishara has to resign for personal reasons. Sebastian and Samantha's talented daughter Jessica is expelled from the Slade School of Fine Art, but her aunt Grace comes to her rescue. Meanwhile, Lady Virginia is about to flee the country to avoid her creditors when the Duchess of Hertford dies, and she sees another opportunity to clear her debts and finally trump the Cliftons and Barringtons.

This Was a Man Details

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Girish says

The sunset book in the Clifton Chronicles is an average fare. Yes, it showed brilliance in parts, the cliché at places - but as the 7th book in the series it was much less dramatic.

I do not blame Archer since there are very few exciting plots one can design when your heroes are turning great grand parents and the villains have stopped concerning themselves with the Cliftons due to their own problems.

Harry has become Sir Harry and writing his masterpiece, Emma is in the house of Lords trying to pass the Health bill and Seb just goes on to make money. **It almost seemed - too real life (where nothing much happens)!** Even Jessica had been sidelined as an arrogant brat who comes back to her senses and falls silently in love as if as an afterthought.

I guess the parts I liked the best were the House of Lords debate, the cricket match (though expected), Karin's marathon and Victoria's auction. As for prose the workings of an author's brains and habits seemed autobiographical.

On the whole the series is 4 stars - for creating characters that display Archer's wizardry. This book is just a check in the box.

Nilesh says

There are two good things about this book: it is better than at least five of its predecessors and finally the Chronicles end. The book works in parts where the author sticks to the family and their interactions with each other.

That said, the book suffers from great negatives. As I have written before in the previous series book reviews, the Clifton family was not just unsuitable for a series of tales but did not even deserve a story. There are two reasons why one typically would read/write a series of narratives with a protagonist individual or family in the lead. One, when the central character(s)' unique skills help provide a base for different stories like Sherlock Holmes. The second is if the series has a strong, common theme like in the Lord of the Rings. The saga of the Cliftons had no such overarching purpose or trait to be serialized. The only reason one can find is in the tie-up between the author and the publisher: the publisher must have made the author sign a seven-book series like the fashion today with most franchise authors who publish every year.

In any case, the author continued to struggle with a coherent story in the final episode too as he moved nearly twenty years to reach the logical full-stop. As in the last few books, there are way too many stories up front without purpose, coherence or sufficient thrill. The worst of the book is upfront when the baddies are present. Mr Archer's villains remain vacuous, stupid and without any guile to create any sufficiently prolonged intrigue. The author's struggles with his villains are most obvious when he resorts to the same trick twice: unexpected, humongous windfall from hidden art to suddenly make the debilitating vamp come back to life. If this silliness, twice deployed, is proven insufficient to prove how hapless the gang is, the readers are made to bear the most childish murders, eavesdropping, boardroom drama and (if you can ever

believe it) gold-digging love affair.

Surprisingly, and thankfully, the villains keep dropping off unceremoniously on their own. As always, Mr Archer is at his best when he has only holier-than-thou, goody-goody aristocrats in their usual settings. Unlike before, the Cliftons are not made to travel much outside their houses - and it works. Even when they disagree, or commit minor crimes, or fall ill, it is full of elegance, grace, and charm. One may feel sick with the sugariness of the kind of fairytale people, but in the author's hands, they do come up with some enjoyable quick-wits and heart warming scenes.

All in all, the book, like every other, is for the diehard fans who has stuck with the series despite repeated disappointments.

Arvind says

3.5/5 Starting with something personal and a bit unrelated (anyways doubt if I can add to my reviews of the 6 earlier books :) - Often when I see witty speakers, I used to envy them and used to think that wit (and not substance) is all there is to public speaking. Thankfully, the Emma vs Giles scenes in the novel, in particular at the end has dispelled that notion once and for all from my mind.

A good end to the series. If u r a Jeffrey Archer fan, u will enjoy the series. If not, u may want to stay away.

Matt says

Archer completes his heptalogy in fine form, coming full circle with the Cliftons and Barringtons, while peppering the narrative with other key characters and their plights from 1978-92. As the novel opens, the reader is left to wonder what has become of Karin Barrington, revealed to be working with the East German Government and in the clutches of her step-father and handler. Shots ring out and a body falls, but it turns out that MI6 has Karin protected and the ultimate traitor lies bleeding to death. While Karin's revelation is key to opening the novel, her importance fades as husband, Lord Giles Barrington, forges ahead in the House of Lords. Crippled by a Labour loss in the General Election and subsequent backing of the wrong candidate to take over the Party, Giles is shuffled to the back benches to live out his meagre political life. However, while they are unable to wrest the reins of power out of Thatcher's Conservatives, failure at the top breathes new life into Giles and offers an opportunity to serve in the Shadow Cabinet, with a new opponent in his crosshairs. Meanwhile, Emma Clifton has been enjoying her time as Chairman of Barrington Shipping, but when there is a takeover offer, the money cannot be ignored and she sells the family business to a competitor, which leaves her open to rise amongst the ranks of a hospital board, acting as Chairman of the largest NHS hospital in the country. Emma immerses herself in the intricacies of the hospital while remaining on the radar of PM Margaret Thatcher. Seeing potential in her friend, Thatcher elevates Emma into the Lords as well, opposite her brother, who is only too happy to show her the ropes before he vows to hang her with one of the political variety. Emma is given Undersecretary of State for Health and the entire NHS program rests firmly at her feet. While she seeks to steer a major piece of legislation through the Lords for the Government, Giles will stop at nothing to see Labour triumph as he bandies the legislation around and bullies the sister he knows all too well, leading to a face-off of epic political proportions. Harry Clifton, patriarch of the family, remains pleased resting his his wife's shadow, waging his own form of war with the characters in his latest novel. Deciding to fulfill a lifetime promise to his mother, Harry embarks on writing his magnum opus while coming to terms with the passing years around him. The idea that germinates is one

that he uses to weather personal storms in his own life, things he wishes not to reveal to the rest of the family. Sebastian, son to Emma and Harry, continues his meteoric rise in the banking industry, though he is called on to make a play for a major company, filled with nemeses from his past, in order to protect the virtue of a young woman who is gifted shares in a Last Will and Testament. Sebastian straddles time on both sides of the Atlantic in order to see truth and virtue restored, while keeping Lady Virginia Fenwick from sullyng the reputations of anyone else, but more on her in a moment. Sebastian's precocious daughter, Jessica, has an eye for art and finds nothing that can stand in her way. Nothing, that is, until a Brazilian man turns the future of this nineteen year-old into something that comes crashing down in short order. Jessica's life goes to tatters and teeters on the precipice, all she has worked towards lost after a night of bingeing and recklessness. There is a glimmer of hope, which comes in the least likely of relatives. While Jessica tries to right herself, Lady Virginia Fenwick continues to plot in order to elude the taxman and his hefty fines for past legal and financial transgressions. As Lady Virginia barely survives the scandal of her faux pregnancy at the hands of a rich American, she sinks her teeth into the 13th Duke of Hertford. Lady Virginia weasels her way closer to fortune, though the Duke's family can smell a rat, especially when Lady Virginia makes a quick play after a rushed codicil to the Duke's will. With her long track record of deception and few friends to call her own, Lady Virginia might have to pull out all the stops to keep herself from flirting with financial ruin and becoming destitute. As Archer meanders through his various characters and uses history as a backdrop, he takes the narrative down some truly interesting avenues, which allows him to remind the reader of how far things have come in the last seventy odd years, including putting to rest the lingering question of Harry's parentage. Offering his three central characters one last encore at centre stage, Archer lays the groundwork to end the Clifton Chronicles, ensuring that there is not a dry eye left in the house... or wherever the reader chooses to devour this truly amazing piece of writing. A powerful novel to end a stellar series, it will be one that readers will want to revisit repeatedly and recommend at every opportunity.

Jeffrey Archer is more than a man! He is surely one of the twentieth century's greatest storytellers with his vast array of plots and countless characters that breathe life into his ideas. The Clifton Chronicles became an epic seven-novel series that needed every page to deliver the impact that it had to offer. Rich characters who survived against a backdrop both of history and personal growth, strong narratives that meandered across continents, and dialogue that kept the story moving at a clip that was both comprehensive and realistic. Archer told his epic story that took characters seven decades to present and offered lingering after-effects in which the reader sought just a few more chapters of delightful storytelling. While potentially hinting at his next writing assignment, Archer drew parallels between Harry Clifton and himself at times, teasing the reader, and left the door open for all to wonder. The smooth writing style and attention to detail throughout the series attracted scores of new fans in addition to those who have admired Lord Archer for decades. While some may bemoan that things became too predictable in this final novel, lacking the essential thrill to get them out of bed and grabbing for their copy, these are the same people who spend all their time looking for errant acorns in the wilderness as the vast majority enjoy the majesty of the forest. To have had the chance to read such a wonderful series and feel for all of the characters within, I was not surprised when I found myself tearing up at points, especially towards the end. This was a man, a family, a series, and an epic journey. Do consider embarking on the adventure from beginning to end and lose yourself in Lord Jeffrey Archer, as you raise a pen in literary victory.

Kudos, Lord Archer for never letting your readers down. While there will be naysayers, it is likely an inherent need to play the role of Lady Virginia that fuels their bitterness.

Like/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

Graeme Stuart Waymark says

While I waited for this last of the Clifton Chronicle Series to be written and published, I built up my expectations based on the overall four stars I gave to the series up to and including the penultimate one; however I believe I simultaneously developed an alternate reality of let down faced by many when reading the last in a series of few. In particular I recall spending over \$30 for the pre-publishing rights to be mailed the last of the "Clan of the Cave Bear" series by Jean Auel. I was one of many that were shocked by its lack of quality - apparently, a novel to complete a contract. On the other hand, most readers are aware of the quality of JK Rowlings through to the last word of her last novel of her entire series.

So I began and found myself letting the feeling of 'oh no' overtake my rational thoughts of 'hold on, wait for it', 'let him put out the lures and bring everyone back into the lives of the whole Barrington clan, plus, plus, plus, Archer had many internal stories going side by side in this epic, not the least of whether Harry should kill off the hero of his own novels or.....?'

Halfway into the novel, about the time we are all thinking or should be thinking about Lady 'you-know-who', she arrives as conniving as Archer can realistically make her and oh my gosh, does he do a good job.

But, NO SPOILERS here.

Other, than to hint that the final act is a delightful mixture of fictional writing, political speech writing, and poignancy written from the mind and heart of an author who has surely lived and experienced that of which he crafts his ending. It is courageous, eloquent, humanitarian, and worthy of the high ovation he places around those characters of whom he created to demonstrate what faith, courage, and seeking the truth can reap for all communities, which fosters that character.

Excellent novel, but I AM SURE it was difficult to write, perhaps even more so than the last in the series for Harry!

Wendy says

This Was a Man

What an incredible series. I can't remember reading a series that I couldn't wait for the next book to be published every year. I wish I could have waited and read the whole story one book after the other but I don't have that kind of willpower when it comes to reading. This whole series was a masterpiece and I believe that Jeffrey Archer is one of the very best authors alive today. With all of that being said this book the last book in the series didn't have any big twist like the other books but just set the story for the wonderful and beautiful ending that this story deserved.

Aditi says

"My dear young cousin, if there's one thing I've learned over the eons, it's that you can't give up on your family, no matter how tempting they make it."

----Rick Riordan

Jeffrey Archer, the international bestselling author, is back with the final installment in *The Clifton Chronicles* called, *This Was a Man* that yet once again brings alive our favorite characters alive with new shocking twists and turns that will overthrow both the powerful families, the Barringtons and the Cliftons along with some supporting cast of characters, thereby giving the readers a closure from this extremely enticing and slightly heart breaking tale.

Synopsis:

This Was a Man is the captivating final installment of the Clifton Chronicles, a series of seven novels that has topped the bestseller lists around the world, and enhanced Jeffrey Archer's reputation as a master storyteller.

This Was a Man opens with a shot being fired, but who pulled the trigger, and who lives and who dies?

In Whitehall, Giles Barrington discovers the truth about his wife Karin from the Cabinet Secretary. Is she a spy or a pawn in a larger game?

Harry Clifton sets out to write his magnum opus, while his wife Emma completes her ten years as Chairman of the Bristol Royal Infirmary, and receives an unexpected call from Margaret Thatcher offering her a job.

Sebastian Clifton becomes chairman of Farthings Kaufman bank, but only after Hakim Bishara has to resign for personal reasons. Sebastian and Samantha's talented daughter, Jessica, is expelled from the Slade School of Fine Art, but her aunt Grace comes to her rescue.

Meanwhile, Lady Virginia is about to flee the country to avoid her creditors when the Duchess of Hertford dies, and she sees another opportunity to clear her debts and finally trump the Cliftons and Barringtons.

In a devastating twist, tragedy engulfs the Clifton family when one of them receives a shocking diagnosis that will throw all their lives into turmoil.

All the doubts of Giles Barrington comes to an end, when he learns the bitter truth about the love of his life, Karin's background that gives him closure whereas overthrows Karin from her path to confessing her husband, Giles, about her past and the nature of her work, and challenges her to confront the hurdle of facing her husband who has already learnt the truth about her. Sebastian Clifton's dreams of becoming the chairperson of the Farthings Kaufman Bank has finally come true, but a shocking news comes his way that threatens to disrupt his whole family, as his daughter, Jessica is expelled from a reputed institute. Lady Virginia can no longer support herself as her beneficiaries close in on her, and she is no longer finding any suitable way to support her finances but a sudden death of someone she wanted to be dead, holds her back in the country and helps her to scheme and hatch more devious plans against the Cliftons. Emma Clifton receives to head a prestigious as well as royal position after her hard work and dedication for so many years, on the other hand, Harry, the man of the book, the bestselling author, is getting all set to put the pen down with his final book before he sets sail for a book tour, and that is when a sickening news about his wife's health overthrows his happiness in one sweeping move, yet the love between the two is going strong for so long and will be going strong, no matter what. Even though yet another shocking revelation about the parents

of Harry and Emma pushes them over the edge.

Archer concludes *The Clifton Chronicles* with his signature style grandeur, flair and yet more intriguingly, that will not only give closure to the fans of this series but will justify the tale thoroughly. The author yet once again surprises his readers with his mind blowing twists and turns that will not only take the readers by surprise but will also make this tale riveting enough to be a hard core page turner. The author concocts the family drama with secrets, deceptions, treachery, conniving challenges of the two historic families, the Cliftons and the Barringtons through many obstacles and mysteries. And before picking up a copy of this book, make sure, you have read the previous six novels from the very same series, as this book is hard to comprehend with, if read it as a standalone book.

The author's writing style is flawless, polished and strong yet easy to contemplate with from the readers' own perspective. The emotions forever lacked from the author's prose, yet somehow, the thrill and the rush of the story line will make up for the missing emotional attachment. The narrative is highly absorbing and it is free flowing with a smooth and moderate pace as the author peels away one after another layer until the readers get to the very depth of the story line.

The characters yet once again excel with their striking demeanor. They are real to the very core, flawed, and extremely believable. All the characters are distinct from one another, and even the bad ones, like Lady Virginia too will make the readers fall for her constantly plotting ideas against the Cliftons, and also the weaker ones who make the story interesting. Each and every character is like a rare piece of gem that brightens up the whole story with their individual glow and aura.

The one thing that every fan of Archer will agree with the author's ability and extent to go as far as possible to include anticipating twists and plot them at the right moments thereby making the story one hell of a roller coaster ride filled with adrenaline rushing moments, edgy twists and nerve racking scenes that will grip the readers until the very last page. The climax will satisfy the readers and at the same time, will break a million hearts.

In a nutshell, the story is extremely enticing, captivating and highly exciting despite being sympathetic in its own way. The author devised one hell of a spellbinding tale that won't disappoint any of his readers.

Verdict: *The best possible way to say goodbye to the Cliftons and the Barringtons! Long live Mr. Archer!*

Courtesy: *Thanks to the publishers from Pan Macmillan India for giving me an opportunity to read and review this book.*

Donna says

This is the 7th and final book in the Clifton Chronicles series by Jeffrey Archer. Three years ago, I stumbled on to the first one by accident (I liked the cover) and I have been hopelessly drawn to this series and the author ever since. This was the perfect ending to the series, even though this was slow to start.

I like the writing so so much. He has such an ease in this writing. The dialogue makes the characters shine. The details didn't feel laborious. There is always depth to the story and depth to the characters. It is always a good thing when the writing is as good as the story and I've come to expect that from this author.

The narrator also did a fantastic job with the series.

Tim says

A bit too long on politics and a conniver to bring the rating any higher. 7 of 10 stars

Monnie says

Fans of the author's *Clifton Chronicles* series, like me, may hate to see it come to an end - it's rather like losing an old friend. For those who aren't familiar with the series, though, my suggestion is to pass on this one (or better yet, go back and read at least a few of the previous six). Why? Because while the author does a great job of wrapping up all the loose ends in the lives of the main characters, I think enjoyment and appreciation of the final product just won't be as satisfying for those who haven't been following along.

And while I absolutely loved the book, I will note, as I've done in describing other of these books - it is reminiscent of the *Stone Barrington* series by Stuart Woods (even the Barrington name is common to both). Mostly, it's the matter-of-fact presentation; no matter what happens, no one gets excited, bent out of shape or otherwise emotionally unhinged. Lost your job and your fortune? Bloody sorry, old chap. Unmarried and pregnant? Dreadful. Do you prefer Earle Grey or camomile?

The prologue here takes place in 1978, followed by a section on Harry Clifton and his wife Emma from 1978 to 1979, and at the end are chapters on Harry and Emma in 1992. In between are looks what's happening in the lives of other characters like Sir Giles Barrington and his wife Karin, Sebastian, Samantha and Jessica Clifton and Lady Virginia Fenwick (when it comes to the latter, I'm sure most readers are hoping she finally will get her comeuppance - but whether or not that happens isn't for me to reveal).

Early on, Harry brings an end to his popular book series, deciding instead to turn his attention to writing his best-ever work. Emma, who's spent the last 10 years as chairwoman of the Bristol Royal Infirmary, gets a call from none other than Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who offers her a job. Sir Giles, meanwhile, is ramping up his efforts as a member of Parliament on the opposing side - pitting him squarely against his sister Emma.

One of the endearing points of this book to me, in fact, is the inside look at British politics, some of which, as a personal aside, could well be applied to the current state of affairs here in the United States. Sir Giles, for instance, quips to his wife Karin: "...you have to understand that being a scoundrel is simply part of a politician's job description."

Then there are flashes of the past; Sebastian, who while waiting to visit a jail prisoner, reads a copy of the *Daily Mail* filled with photos of Prince Charles and Lady Diana talking at a garden party. "Diana looked really happy, while the Prince looked as if he was opening a power station," the accompanying story noted.

Indeed.

Simone says

I knew what to expect with Book 7, and my review is pretty much the same as Book 6 however this time around I was not as into it. The “collection of short stories” feel was too high and I didn’t feel like there was a solid plot running through the book to tie everything together. It felt too random for me.

Here is what I wrote about Book 6:

“I’ve said before that you have to be in the right mood when you reach for a Jeffery Archer novel, and if you are you won’t be disappointed because you’ll get EXACTLY what you expected. I had trouble with the start of this story (which is Book 6 in the series) because I barely remembered anything that happened in Book 5 – even the exposition just served to confuse me more than anything else! But if there is one thing I know about Jeffery Archer’s stories, one thing I can always rely on, it’s the fact that it doesn’t matter if you don’t know what’s going on because it probably won’t be crucial in the next chapter anyway. I’ve likened his books to collections of short stories with reoccurring characters, each individual snippet is interesting yet contained in its own episode.”

Tim says

Too long on politics and a conniver to bring the rating any higher. 6 of 10 stars

Jeanne says

Some authors do not know when to stop at a good point when working on a series, and Mr Archer went one too many with the Clifton Chronicles. In my opinion, a more appropriate title for this story would have been "This Was Lady Virginia" as it seemed the story revolved around Giles Barrington's first wife. Significant life events were handled with a mere mention, like it was nothing at all. And the time spent on describing the details of a cricket match was such a waste for someone like me who has no clue about the rules of the game or terminology. Honestly, a very disappointing finale to what was otherwise a very enjoyable series to listen to. The best part of this story--the last two tracks of the last disk of this audio CD. A fond farewell to Harry Clifton. 1 out of 10.

Sean Smart says

An entertaining series ends with this rather flat conclusion where little is actually really concluded and a lot of Tory bias. I didn't really enjoy it as much as the others in the series and to be honest you don't really need to really this book, lots of things go unanswered

Archit Ojha says

And Jeffrey Archer does it again!

“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Giving anything away of its synopsis would be an injustice to others. So I'll only talk about what I felt throughout the book.

Well, to start with, This Was Fabulous.

Yes. FABULOUS.

Since the first few words to the ending, it was a roller coaster ride.

There was no stopping to the adventurous expedition I had with the last series by Jeffrey Archer.

What I found extremely striking about the author's writing was that he first gets his readers surrounded with the thoughts of only his characters and one by one, he asks you to choose your comrade among them.

Whether you are selecting them or they are choosing you is still a matter to be pondered upon.

There is always a bit to say about the way the writer accumulates everything in the climax. Beautiful thing was that even if you might have been thinking about some other endings, you will finally be satisfied with the author's perspective. *Atleast I was.*

In presenting the various features of the characters, the author is impeccable.

All of them are likable in their own way. As one goes on reading the series, chapters after chapter, he sees himself getting dissolved in the flawless fabrication weaved by the author.

Slowly and carefully, he unfolds the story before you.

This series would be definitely my suggestion to anyone I meet.

I'm yet to get out of the shocks and thrills I had when I came across the twisting secrets and exciting events.

One thing is for certain : **Jeffrey never disheartens his readers.**

The way he carries the readers' attention cannot be matched.

My advice to the readers who have never read anything of Jeffrey would be to read the first parts of this series before this one and your favorite thriller/drama writer would be decided then and there.

Verdict : I felt short of adjectives for this one. What else can I say!
