



The Baby-Snatcher

Ann Cleeves

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From the author of Shetland and Vera

When fifteen-year-old Marilyn Howe turns up alone and frightened on Inspector Ramsay's doorstep he has little choice but to invite her in. Marilyn and her mother, Kathleen, are a familiar sight around Heppleburn, a strangely inseparable couple. But Kathleen has unaccountably failed to return home that evening, and Marilyn is fearful for her mother's safety.

Ramsay takes the young girl home, to the isolated coastal community known as the Headland. And in the Howes' dark and cluttered kitchen they find Kathleen safe and apparently well, though acting rather mysteriously.

Six months later, Ramsay has more or less forgotten the strange incident, busy as he is on the trail of a local child abductor. Until he receives news that Mrs Howe has disappeared once more. And for the second time he is drawn into the strange relationships of the families living on the lonely Headland.

Then a woman's body is washed up on the beach . . .

The Baby-Snatcher Details

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Author : Ann Cleeves

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From Reader Review The Baby-Snatcher for online ebook

Jack says

Well observed crime story focussing on the inhabitants of a remote community on the coast.

Lauraine Parkinson says

Sad to see the end of Inspector Ramsey as I have now read all the 6 books in the series in less than a month. Well worth the read and best to read the series in order.

Janice Melvin says

A really good one

Love Vera series. But this is the best of the Ramsay series so far, reminds me of Ruth Rendell (high praise) yet distinctive (more high praise). Definitely recommend.

Corinne Johnston says

Having read all six inspector Ramsay books in a short binge, it is easy to see the growth of Ann Cleeves. Also easy to see the genesis of her other quirky detectives Vera and Jimmy. Interesting too, to read books where so much would be solved with 21st century communications!

Pauline Morgan says

Another great book from Ann Cleeves

I love this series, each book gets better, I hope this isn't the last we hear from Inspector Ramsay. What a great Author.

Lisa Ram says

It held my attention almost all the way to the end, but it seemed to become muddled and ended abruptly. The reactions of the characters seemed unreal at the end.

lorraine a olson says

Lots of plots, but a fun read!

I sometimes found the threads of the plots difficult to follow, but I will say I enjoyed the hike! Not being familiar with the geography, and it seeming so alien from where I live, I was confused trying to understand the local scenery. I did improve my vocab, though. I now know what a "Deen" is!

Gladys Almond says

That's it then..

Great read I have finished the series! This was the best book a little slow to start. It was full of lots of red herrings and twists and turns. I enjoyed it very much!

Susan Anderson says

Another heart wrenching story

Another heart wrenching edge of your seat mystery starring Inspector Ramsey and his team who scramble to find a killer and a baby snatcher. Some harrowing scenes and great character development. I wonder what happens between Ramsey and Pru. Oh well I guess they live happily ever after?

Ann Tonks says

Another enjoyable Inspector Ramsay book from Ann Cleeves. Small community. Range of social and familial issues. Well crafted story.

Marcela says

Another fun British mystery writer! Not as dark as Ruth Rendell, not as literary as the great P.D. James, but clever and well written. A good summer snack.

Pat Obermeier says

after seeing a review of this in the NY Times, i picked up a copy. Enjoyed the read...as with British TV shows, this book is character driven...not action driven. Good intro to this author for me.

Marita says

Perhaps not quite as good as the more recent novels, but I liked Inspector Ramsay and I wouldn't be at all surprised if I found myself reading another book in the series. Whilst the ending was not entirely unpredictable, it was still somewhat creepy.

Newton Johnstone says

Exciting as usual

I'm sorry it's the last in the Ramsey series, I could read more of the inspector, his sergeant and WPC

Jane says

I'm trying not to take on too many crime series, and when I do I try to read in order, but I broke my rules for this book. The premise looked intriguing, and when I saw that it would fill a difficult year in my Century of Books, well I decided that was a sign ...

The story began one evening, when Inspector Ramsay was at home and off duty. The quiet evening that he had planned was disturbed when a teenage girl, alone and clearly frightened, banged on his door. He hesitated, aware of the risks of having a distressed girl in his house with nobody else present, but he realised that he couldn't turn her away.

She told him that her mother was missing, and that her mother was so reliable, so involved with her family, that she knew something had to be wrong. And he was inclined to believe her, because he had often seen them in the town, and he had never seen one without the other.

Ramsay drove the girl back to her home, to the Headland, a small, remote, coastal community. And he found the girl's mother, safe and well. He didn't quite believe her account of where she had been, or of what had happened, but he didn't think that there was really anything amiss.

Until six month's later. When the same woman was reported missing again. And her body was found on the beach

There was precious little physical evidence, and even less witness evidence.

There had been a children's party that day, for one of the children of the family at the Coastguard House. With all of the coming and going somebody should have noticed anything unusual. But nobody did. Save a man in the red car visiting one of the neighbours.

She only knew his first name, she told the police; he was just somebody she had met in a club who called round. Ramsay was inclined to believe her. She had a lot of male visitors, indeed she made her living from them. But it was a line of enquiry that had to be followed.

They had to look closely at the woman's family. Her husband, who worked in an office but was building up a lucrative side-line as a children's entertainer. He was at the Coastguard House, entertaining the party guests,

when his daughter reported his wife missing. Her sister, much younger than her, who she had brought up, She worked as a nanny at the Coastguard House. And her daughter. They all seemed strangely unaffected by the death.

They had to look at the couple at the coastguard house too. There seemed to be so many links between the two families. And they looked at a close friend who had been there that day. A new widower, a teacher at the daughter's school.

There was no real action, no real drama but, as the police made their enquiries, Ann Cleeves was able to create detailed character studies, to analyse relationships, and to slowly reveal secrets. And she did it so well that for a long time it didn't bother me that there wasn't much of a plot.

The police - Ramsay and two colleagues - their relationships, the way they worked together, were just as well drawn and just as believable. There may have been subtleties I missed by dropping into the middle of a series, but I really didn't notice. And because there was no one else I could really warm to, it seemed quite natural to follow them and to see things as they did.

The sense of place was just as good.

The crucial piece of evidence that the police needed came to them purely by chance. through another case. Small boys had been going missing, only to be found some distance away, seemingly unharmed. Suddenly the two cases seemed to be linked.

And that was where things went a little wrong. There was a little too much drama, a little too much going on. The ending was right psychologically, but it didn't grow out of the story and out of the character as naturally as it should have. And it felt a little rushed.

I'd still say that this was a good book, and I'd still pick up another of the series if I liked the premise. But I'd also say that this book, from 1997, probably isn't as strong as the books Ann Cleeves has written more recently.
