



The Sound of Broken Glass

Deborah Crombie

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In the past . . .

On a blisteringly hot August afternoon in Crystal Palace, once home to the tragically destroyed Great Exhibition, a solitary thirteen-year-old boy meets his next door neighbor, a recently widowed young teacher hoping to make a new start in the tight-knit South London community. Drawn together by loneliness, the unlikely pair form a deep connection that ends in a shattering act of betrayal.

In the present . . .

On a cold January morning in London, Detective Inspector Gemma James is back on the job now that her husband, Detective Superintendent Duncan Kincaid, is at home to care for their three-year-old foster daughter. Assigned to lead a Murder Investigation Team in South London, she's assisted by her trusted colleague, newly promoted Detective Sergeant Melody Talbot. Their first case, a crime scene at a seedy hotel in Crystal Palace. The victim, a well-respected barrister, found naked, trussed, and apparently strangled. Is it an unsavory accident or murder? In either case, he was not alone, and Gemma's team must find his companion - a search that leads them into unexpected corners and forces them to contemplate unsettling truths about the weaknesses and passions that lead to murder. Ultimately, they will begin to question everything they think they know about their world and those they trust most.

The Sound of Broken Glass Details

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From Reader Review The Sound of Broken Glass for online ebook

Pat C. says

I just read "No Mark Upon Her" and "The Sound of Broken Glass" consecutively and enjoyed both books and yet I can't say I LOVED either of them.

I like the author's ability to portray original and engaging characters. Except for her "villains" the people who populate her books are realistic yet likable and I find myself hoping for a positive outcome for them which is pretty much how I feel about the "characters" in my own life.

I also appreciate that she doesn't let you get attached to some character who turns out to be a conniving slimeball and she doesn't kill off characters that I'm rooting for and/or attached to. For example, I was quite worried about Kieran and a little worried about Freddie in "No mark upon her" and I thought she elegantly resolved the realistic suspense engendered by their personal flaws and life disappointments. (Hope that wasn't too spoilerish)

What prevents me from giving either book 4 or 5 stars is that at times I find her dialogue contrived and unnatural. It might be the effect of a native Texan writing dialogue for British Londoners. I mean she doesn't do it all the time but... do people really say "ever so much" these days? Or I found myself grimacing at a character saying he would need "a lorry load" of something or other and wondering if that's really an English expression or if Crombie just adapted American hyperbole used when describing "a lot" of something as a "truckload". I don't hear "lorry" used much in contemporary English novels or tv shows so I've gotten the impression that it's a bit archaic. Sort of like I think the expression "and bob's your uncle" belongs in the twentieth century. These sort of awkward phrases pop up enough in her books that I find they detract from the overall impact of what are otherwise well written contemporary mystery novels.

Hallie says

Deborah Crombie's books are wonderful rich in atmosphere and character, and The Sound of Broken Glass is no exception. This one is Detective Gemma James's story, braiding the strands of a story from the past about a lonely teenage boy and his lovely neighbor together with a present-day story of the investigation into the murder of a lawyer, found in a seedy hotel in London's Crystal Palace neighborhood. Great sense of place, and of course anyone who follows Gemma and Duncan will want to see how their foster daughter Charlotte is doing. Satisfying on many dimensions.

Jill Hutchinson says

Another in the series of Kincaid/James books and it lives up to those that went before. The action centers around DI Gemma James in this edition as Kincaid is on parental leave looking after their newly fostered, soon to be adopted, little girl. Of course, Kincaid gets involved peripherally in his wife's case.....he just can't help himself.

In this story a respected barrister is found trussed and strangled in a cheesy hotel, soon to be followed by the death of a second barrister and the MO is the same. No clues except for some pieces of colored bits of fuzz on each body.....in other words, not much. The story expands to include an up and coming guitarist, his agent who is a friend of James and Kincaid, a mystery woman, and various music industry related characters. This is a complex story but the author slowly pulls the clues together into a very satisfactory conclusion. Deborah Crombie is one of the best of the modern British mystery writers and I would recommend any of her books

to the mystery fan.

Patty says

The Sounds Of Broken Glass

by

Deborah Crombie

My "in a nutshell" summary...

Gemma and Duncan are still sorting out their lives with their two sons and the addition of three year old Charlotte to their family. Duncan remains at home while Gemma remains the crime fighter. Duncan is happy but frustrated.

My thoughts after reading this book...

I have high hopes and strong opinions about this book because I love this series so much. I have read every one of them in the order they were written and in the order they were meant to be read. I just don't think it's possible to truly understand these marvelous unique and complex characters if you skip one single book or read them out of order...it's not possible so don't even try it...it's like trying to start Downton Abbey in the midst of season 2... just don't attempt it!

Gemma and Duncan have family issues yet again in this book. Duncan is on family leave and Gemma is smack in the middle of a serious case...a barrister is killed. The barrister has kinky sexual tastes and a mystery woman and a band member are in some way involved in his death.

As usual...there is a lot going on in this novel. Gemma and her crew work diligently to figure out who murdered whom and why. And the murders don't stop with just one. It's intriguing and the author does an excellent job of making the reader ...convincing the reader... that all clues point to one person...or do they?

What I loved about this book...

The suspense, the characters, the lovely English setting...I want to hop on a plane every time I read about a bag of crisps and a prawn and avocado sandwich.

What I did not love...

I sometimes...and for just a short minute...don't love that there are so many characters from past books.

Final thoughts...

I truly love this series, these characters and all of their multifaceted situations!

Linda says

Deborah Crombie is one of those writers who reliably comes through with an engrossing, fast moving mystery, especially if Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James are the detectives on the case. The Sound of Broken Glass is no exception. Newly married, Duncan and Gemma are working out child care arrangements for their blended family, and Duncan's being house husband for a while. Gemma lands the case of a London barrister who was murdered in a seedy hotel. A few days later, another death occurs, seemingly with the same MO. She expects a relatively straightforward crime, once she can pin down a motive, but both of these crimes have roots dug firmly into events that occurred more than fifteen years ago. With the assistance of her new partner, DS Melody Talbott, Gemma tries to untangle a very twisted knot indeed. And some of the entanglements are only just beginning.

Ms Crombie deftly manages the narration and interweaving of present and past by using a series of flashbacks, which recount the memories of one of the prime suspects in the current murders. There is no dearth of possible killers, all of whom have interesting back stories that lead to credible motives. The setting, a hot London summer in the down-at-the heel Crystal Palace neighborhood, lends a fitting ambience to the investigation. Written so smoothly and intelligently that the pages just fly by, Broken Glass is an outstanding police procedural, so much more than a mere whodunit.

Mary says

Sometimes when I'm reading a mystery novel, the coincidences start piling up and throw me right out of the world the author is trying to create. In this book, however, I could tell that all the separate threads of the story would eventually come together and all I wanted was to know how. The only thing that stopped me reading it in one night was I couldn't keep my eyes focused any longer.

The only thing I didn't like was the very last page. Because -- holy cliffhanger! -- it's going to be another year before we can find out what happens.

If you haven't read any of the Kincaid/James series before, this might not be the best one to start with. There are a lot of recurring characters and Crombie doesn't spend a lot of time recapping the past (as presented in the previous 14 books...).

Jane says

I have Christmas mysteries sitting unread on the shelf, and I might have picked one of them up when I was looking for a crime story to read last month, but I didn't. Because there's a series that I love, I knew that I was a few books behind, and the pull of another meeting with old friends was much stronger than the pull of seasonal trappings.

'The Sound of Broken Glass' is the fifteenth book in the series that spins round Metropolitan police officers Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James. When the series started, Duncan was a newly promoted Detective Superintendent at Scotland Yard and Gemma was his sergeant. They worked well together, they understand each other perfectly, and in time their professional relationship grew into a deep and abiding love.

They kept that to themselves for a while, but they both knew that they had to do the professional thing; and so they made things official, and their career paths separated.

That changed the character of the series. In the most recent books the story has followed one or other of the pair as they worked on a major case while the other played a supporting role; sometimes on the home front, occasionally with a sub-plot, and frequently with past experience of a suspect, a witness or a similar case that relates to the major case in hand. It works well.

This story begins as Gemma is returning to work after taking a period of parental leave to look after the little girl the couple has been fostering, since she was orphaned as the consequence of a crime in an earlier book. Duncan is taking his own period of parental leave and Gemma is settling in to a new job in a South London murder team.

It falls to Gemma to investigate the somewhat sordid death of a barrister, in a cheap hotel in Crystal Palace. The circumstances suggest a very obvious solution, but, as the police team carried out its investigations, it became clear that there was more to this case than met the eye. As is often the case in this series, the crime was the consequence of events that had happened many years earlier.

A schoolboy, the son of an alcoholic single mother, formed a friendship with the young teacher who had moved into the house next door. She encouraged him to work towards his dream of becoming a musician, until one day she disappeared without saying goodbye. He did become a musician, he was a witness – and maybe a suspect – in the Crystal Palace hotel murder, and Duncan knew him as witness in an earlier case and as the protégé of a friend.

The story in the present and the story in the past were both compelling. At first they seemed so disparate, I couldn't think how that would come together, but it gradually became clearer. The plot was very well constructed, and I really didn't know it would play out until the very last pages. I turned the pages very quickly, because characters I had come to care about – and not series characters, the characters caught up in the story of this crime – were in jeopardy.

The characters are so well drawn that I can easily believe that they were living their lives in South London, before and after the events in this book; and that city is evoked just as well.

My only issues were that a significant suspect was introduced rather late in the story, and that a certain aspect of the latter part of the story felt rather contrived. Taken as a whole though, this was a very good police procedural.

When I read the last book in this series I was concerned that the balance between the personal and the professional was a little off, but this time it was right. Gemma and Duncan built a family, with a child each from previous relationships and a child together, and they had a diverse circle of friends. This book moved on the stories of some of them, mentioned some of the others, and left some of them to get on with their lives. It worked beautifully, and I could happily read these books just to catch up with characters introduced in earlier books.

I did wonder if the family's domestic life ran a little too smoothly; but I decided that following a couple who got on well and made their relationship, their family lives and their professional lives work for them was a lovely change from the norm.

As the story wound down I thought that I could happily move on to the next book in the series very soon. An unexpected cliff-hanger on the very last page made that essential.

I've thrown the Christmas mysteries into a charity shop bag, and I have that book on hand ...

Luanne Ollivier says

I only 'discovered' Deborah Crombie last year when I read *No Mark Upon Her*. I have been eagerly awaiting the next entry in her Duncan Kincaid/ Gemma James series. *The Sound of Broken Glass* (#15) releases today.

Kincaid and James are husband and wife and both work for Scotland Yard. Duncan is staying at home right now with their three year old daughter and Gemma is heading up her first big murder case.

Who has been killed? A prominent lawyer - found in a rundown hotel in Crystal Palace, naked and tied up. Is it a sex game gone wrong? Or a sadistic killer? But then a second lawyer is found killed the same way - and there's evidence to link the two cases. As Gemma digs deeper, she finds unexpected connections to her life. In flashback chapters, we also slowly learn of a young man's past and his upbringing in the Crystal Palace neighbourhood. What connection does he have to the present day?

Crombie is a master of plotting. There was no dearth of suspects and I was kept guessing until the end. The investigation is solid police work and I enjoyed solving the crime along with Gemma and her team. But woven through this main storyline is a running secondary storyline - that of Duncan and Gemma's personal life. And it is this 'personal' touch that has cemented Crombie on my must read list. Although others may complain that domestic details of characters may detract from a good mystery, I find quite the opposite. I feel they gave the story much more depth and make the characters 'real' and all the more believable. This same attention to detail is given to the secondary players as well. The result is a well rounded cast, all with their own tale to tell. I've become invested in each of their lives and want to see where Crombie takes everyone from here.

There's a third thread also wound about the story - that of The Crystal Palace itself. Although the name now denotes an area of South London, the history behind this plate-glass building originally erected to house the Great Exhibition of 1851 is truly fascinating. Every chapter starts out with a quote or a paragraph chronicling the history of the building. And again, Crombie is very clever with her choices. Read carefully, they mirror what is happening in the book.

The Sound of Broken Glass was a satisfying read on so many levels - one I would definitely recommend. Crombie ends the book with a cliff hanger - I will be again eagerly awaiting the next in this wonderful series. Fans of Louise Penny and Susan Hill would enjoy these characters.

Matt Schiariti says

When Andy Monohan was 13, he became fast friends with his new neighbor, and older woman named Nadine. She was attentive, beautiful and encouraging; everything his mother wasn't. The two would sit out on their respective porches, seeking solace from the sweltering August heat, Andy playing his guitar, Nadine enjoying the sounds of the fledgling musician, letting him know that he had talent and one day he could make something of himself if he would stick with it. She was the kindest person he'd ever known. She was

the complete opposite of Joe and Shaun, two upper class boys that did nothing but bully that very same summer. Something transpired months later, and Nadine was never heard from again. Andy had thought it was his fault and he would harbor guilt over the actions of three teenaged boys for years to come. Now, in the present, Andy is poised to break big as a professional musician. But sins of the past rarely stay in the past. A successful barrister is found murdered, gagged and strangled in a seedy motel room and all fingers point back to Andy and where he came from. Gemma James draws the case and along with Melody Talbot, they'll discover a history of betrayal and lies that will have them second guessing every single lead they encounter.

Even in its fifteen installment, the James/Kincaid novels show no signs of slowing down. The Sounds of Broken Glass is yet another well thought out, well told chapter in the lives of Duncan and Gemma. Each book has its own unique feel and subject matter, but at the risk of sounding cheesy or contrived, these books always feel like putting on a comfortable pair of broken in jeans or a favorite sweater. They're just...comfy. This time around, the focus is music, since one of the central characters, Andy, is an up and coming musician who's poised to break big. Being a guitarist for over 20 years myself, Crombie's research shines. From the type of equipment, to band dynamics, she hits the nail on the head every time. But, just because they're comfortable reads, that doesn't mean her writing has become formulaic or cookie-cutter.

Crombie is deft at handling multiple subplots at once. This novel, as with those previous, isn't all about the murder investigation. It's also about the lives of those involved. It's about the constantly changing family dynamics of Duncan and Gemma and how they balance a new addition to the family with the demands of their careers. I've seen a few reviewers complain about Duncan's part (or lack thereof) in the book. Duncan does play a part, but his role has changed. It's become a bit more domestic, giving focus more to Gemma and her work as well as Melody Talbot as they go through the investigation. Doug plays his part as well but this novel focuses mostly on Melody, and I'm fine with that. She's a great character and I enjoyed seeing her play a more central role. Still, no characters are 'forgotten' in this novel. This book mixes characters old and new, and it does it well.

The plot, as always, is razor sharp. It shifts from the present to the past and never misses a beat. Every character plays their role in an overall story that's mixed with red herrings, twists, and turns. But, as can be expected of a Deborah Crombie novel, everything makes sense and there is not a single plot hole. It's always impressive to see how she can take so many plot threads and tie them all together while injecting the personal developments for the characters into the book. I'd imagine plotting these things to be a major task but when you read them, she makes it seem easy.

This review isn't doing the novel or the series justice. It's tightly plotted, paced fantastically, and is filled with well fleshed out characters and fluid dialogue. This being the 15th book, I have no idea how much longer she plans on writing these books, but I count myself there for each and every one. If you haven't started the series yet, you really should. If you love reading well written mystery books with fantastic character development and a vast array of themes, look no further.

Jane says

When I got the email from Goodreads that I had won "The Sound of Broken Glass: A Novel" from its First Reads program, my first thought was, "why the heck did I sign up for this book?"

I usually choose the books I enter for pretty carefully -- I don't just click and enter for whatever's available but select books that I really want to read. So it was with relief and excitement that I found out that this book was the latest from Deborah Crombie.

I've read all of Deborah Crombie's books, and even though I couldn't remember exactly what happened in the last one, I still got caught up in the plot of this one, as well as in the subplots involving secondary characters. I finished this book in a day, and I was so engrossed in it that last night I was flossing my teeth and because this is an advance reading copy and in paperback, put the book on the floor, knelt with my knee on it, and kept reading while I flossed. Yes, that's how good it was.

Unlike other mystery authors I've read lately, whose books initially filled me with excitement, only to disappoint me later as the writing quality diminished (hello, Janet Evanovich! Patricia Cornwell! Elizabeth George, I shall never forgive you for doing you-know-what to you-know-who!), Deborah Crombie gets better the longer her series goes. I really enjoyed this, and hope to continue enjoying her work for many more years to come (as long as she doesn't do you-know-what to one of the major characters).

Patrice Hoffman says

Won Through a Goodreads Giveaway

I have always heard good things about Deborah Crombie and her books. I was super excited after receiving news that I'd nabbed her latest. The only problem with nabbing it was the fact that it's the latest book in a well-established series. The series is known as her Kincaid/Gemma series and it is book number fifteen. I usually hate starting books any where except the beginning but I seriously wanted to start the book and not empty my bank account by buying fourteen books that came before *The Sound of Broken Glass: A Novel*.

This is the first book I've read by Crombie and I admit that I was expecting a lot more. A barrister is found in a compromising position in a seedy motel in Crystal Palace. Gemma is tasked with finding out whodunnit and why or if it was just a sex act gone wrong. Meanwhile, another story is playing out with Andy, an almost famous guitar player who may be connected to Gemma's case. Crombie jumps between the past and the present in order to help the reader understand Andy's connection to the case and the victims.

What I enjoyed most about this book is that it chronicles the actual Crystal Palace. The Crystal Palace was what I consider a modern marvel. It was constructed entirely of plate glass and iron. The Crystal Palace is used to make a connection to Andy and his life but the connection for me never came into crystal clear (no pun intended) fruition. Although I liked the information Crombie researched and provided for the Crystal Palace, it wasn't used in a way to move the story forward in connection with the present. It only made sense when details of Andy's past emerged.

I must be fair in reminding my self that this is book fifteen in a long series so many of the characters have been established long before I finally came across them. It is not Crombie's fault I didn't do my due diligence and actually read some of her other titles. I recommend doing this because I felt that the characters were pretty weak and could have possibly been more dimensional.

I imagine that fans of the Gemma/Kincaid series will not feel let down by this addition. There was mystery, there was an extremely interesting setting, and plausible actions. I devoured this book in a few hours and genuinely could not put it down once I began it. There isn't much action or gore or blood but it was still a worthwhile read. I look forward to reading book one from this series.

Mal Warwick says

A Mystery Writer Can Have a Bad Day, Can't She?

If you've ever contemplated writing a thriller, or even just a run-of-the-mill crime novel, you may have stopped in your tracks when you came to the point of coming up with a plot. It ain't easy (at least for those of us who aren't named James Patterson). Readers tend to demand stories that keep them puzzled right up to the end, surprise or shock them in the closing pages, and then leave them with a satisfied feeling that everything makes sense after all. All this requires that lots of loose ends need to be tied up tightly, shining a favorable light on the intrepid investigator who solves the case or the heroic action figure who forestalls disaster (usually something tantamount to destroying the planet we live on).

Sometimes coincidence plays a part in making all this work. And sometimes it plays much too big a part.

In her police procedurals set in England, Deborah Crombie has generally done an unusually good job of writing convincing and engaging mystery novels — despite the fact that she's a native Texan and lives in a Texas town. On most of my previous excursions into the lives of Crombie's protagonists, Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James, I've enjoyed myself immensely. However, *The Sound of Broken Glass* is a disappointment.

This time, the culprit is coincidence.

In *Broken Glass*, Kincaid and James are married and raising three children (one of hers, one of his, and one adopted), and in ways that are clearly less than satisfying or convenient for them, their lives now revolve around the kids. Kincaid, a Detective Superintendent, is playing house-husband while James, promoted to Detective Inspector, chases murderers through the streets of London. James' sidekick, Detective Sergeant Melody Talbot, works closely with her on a case that seems to involve not just vicious murder but sexual perversion as well: a prominent barrister (a lawyer who argues cases in court) has been discovered in a cheap hotel, bound and gagged in bed in a way reminiscent of autoerotic play but strangled to death as well. As the investigation unfolds, much of the story revolves around Talbot, the upper-class daughter of one of London's press lords. As time goes on, Talbot becomes romantically involved with a key witness in the case — and the slow, painful unraveling of his memory of a tragic childhood incident comes to figure as a central element in the resolution of the mystery.

All this might have been a lot of fun for the reader — if only Crombie hadn't built her plot around an excess of coincidences. As it turns out, everybody involved in the case — police officer, victim, murderer, and witness alike — seems to have known just about everyone else at some time in the past. It's really too much. I hope for better again from Deborah Crombie.

Mary Ronan Drew says

Once again Deborah Crombie has written a terrific mystery, one even better than the last. I've been saying since I started reading her Gemma James/Duncan Kincaid stories 14 books ago, she can't possibly keep this up. Instead she's getting better.

The plot of *The Sound of Breaking Glass* is particularly clever. It begins with a band performing in a noisy

pub that they don't normally play. They are there because their manager, Tam, wants a producer to see the lead guitarist, Andy, perform. Because the other two know it's his big break and not theirs they play poorly but don't manage to make him look bad. He's angry, the other guys are angry, the manager is angry with the other guys, and to make it all worse, a guy comes up to Andy whom he knew when they were boys and Andy punches him in the nose. A guitar player. Fortunately he doesn't do much damage to his hand. . . .

To read the rest of this review go to my blog at:

http://maryslibrary.typepad.com/my_we...

Ivonne Rovira says

How hard it has been to wait an entire year for Deborah Crombie to produce yet another novel! How I've longed to know how Detective Inspector Gemma James has been getting along and how her husband, Duncan Kincaid, has been doing in his transition from CID detective superintendent to stay-at-home dad! How I've missed them!

In *The Sound of Broken Glass*, the 15th novel in the Kincaid-James series, Gemma and her sergeant, Melody Talbot, investigate the murder of Vincent Arnot, a well-respected barrister who was strangled and left tied up and naked in a fleabag hotel in the Crystal Palace. Was Arnot involved in unsavory sexual escapades that led to his accidental death far from Arnot's usually posh environs? Or was Arnot murdered and — to add insult to injury — set up to become tabloid fodder?

The very next night, a second barrister is murdered in much the same fashion, and evidence proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that the two murders are linked. But what was the connection between the two barristers, one old, married, and apparently staid; the other, a young bully intensely disliked at his chambers?

Crombie has crafted a very suspenseful read with plenty of twists and turns and a bit of romance for Melody. The climax will keep you riveted! But my favorite parts of the novel deal with Duncan and Gemma's domestic sphere and the new life they're creating for their foster daughter, the pretty but withdrawn Charlotte. You'll love the mystery, but it's the story of Charlotte that you'll find yourself dwelling on after you devour that last page.

Sarah says

Oh, she's done it again! Another brilliant mystery novel in the Kincaid/James series that I adore. Her main characters are so well developed, I feel I know them. I loved the plot of "The Sound of Broken Glass", and felt frustrated when I had to put the book down. "Too many coincidences", you say? I say "so what?!" The historical references to Crystal Palace are all very interesting, and we meet up again with characters from earlier books, lovable guitarist Andy Monahan and the rather odd DI Maura Bell. All in all thoroughly recommendable.
