



Payment in Blood

Elizabeth George

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The career of playwright Joy Sinclair comes to an abrupt end on an isolated estate in the Scottish Highlands when someone drives an eighteen-inch dirk through her neck. Called upon to investigate the case in a country where they have virtually no authority, aristocratic Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley and his partner, Detective Sergeant Barbara Havers, grapple for both a motive and a murderer. Emotions run deep in this highly charged drama, for the list of suspects soon includes Britain's foremost actress, its most successful theatrical producer, and the woman Lynley loves. He and Havers must tread carefully through the complicated terrain of human relationships, while they work to solve a case rooted in the darkest corners of the past and the unexplored regions of the human heart.

Payment in Blood Details

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Author : Elizabeth George

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Mo says

Good Lord, could a story be any more confusing?

- Do all of the characters have to be having affairs with each other (either in this book, or as part of their back stories)?
- Do in-laws really have sex with each other as much as they do in this novel?
- Do most of these characters have to have 3 or 4 names? I wish the author could have decided whether or not to use their first name, surname, peerage title, or professional title... and then STUCK WITH THAT!

If you can keep all these characters straight than you are smarter than I am. I was exhausted after trying to muddle my way through this book. I broke my cardinal rule after 8 chapters, and skipped to the end just to see “who done it”.

I am not tempted to read any more of this series.

Melissa Joulwan says

This is the second (third?) time I've read this book, and I think it's my favorite Elizabeth George. I'm really surprised that this was her second novel—it so captures what I think of as her style of storytelling. It's brutal and bleak, while also being a really fun time. It's a mashup of a locked room and location-specific mystery novel, populated with George's core characters—Lynley, Havers, St. James and Deborah, Lady Helen—and a deliciously spooky setting in a soon-to-be country hotel. There's plenty of long-held secrets, emotional confrontations, and sweet, heart-breaking moments. I kinda wish I could forget it and read it again, which is the highest praise I can give a novel.

Bionic Jean says

This is one of a series of novels about Elizabeth George's creation Inspector Lynley and his sidekick Sergeant Havers. These two characters are a chalk-and-cheese coupling. The aristocrat Thomas Lynley is steeped in tradition but fighting his destiny, wanting more meaning to his life. The council-house bred Barbara Havers is an ambivalent character, saddled with an antipathy to all that Lynley stands for combined with a chip on her shoulder. Add to the mix a doomed romantic liaison and you have an engaging sub-plot.

In fact this back-story proved to be more interesting than the main storyline, possibly because the characters were familiar to me from TV dramatisations. For the first half of the novel at least I found myself viewing the others as rather tiresome minor characters, and the plot to be rather prosaic. However the second half was vastly superior. The plot thickened, the characters began to take on more differentiation, and the book eventually turned into an intriguing whodunnit.

I still found myself more interested in the back story though, and I'm not sure this is altogether a good thing in a mystery series.

Smitha says

My first audiobook of the year, and immensely enjoyed it.

I have read this book earlier, a decade or so ago, but jumbled up in the series, and last year decided to read this police procedural series in order, as the emotional lives of the police and their near and dear ones are given as much importance as the crime and its solution. This book deals with a closed room murder of a much hated playwright in a stately mansion turned hotel on a snowy winter night. The house is inhabited by the people involved in producing the play, among them, being lady Helen Clyde, DI Thomas Linley's close friend. Lynley and his assistant Barbara Hayworth are at loggerheads when it comes to suspecting whodunit. ..and more murders occur.

It was a taut, well-written murder mystery, which was solved impeccably towards the end, but with lots of emotional upheaval.

Megan says

3.5 stars.

A decent-enough murder mystery that had a couple of twists and turns and kept me guessing until the end. I did feel like the middle of the novel dragged out a little too much though. Plus while I liked the character Simon/St. James better in this one than I did when he was first introduced in A Great Deliverance, I still find that I don't really care about side characters like Deborah or Lady Helen. Maybe I'm being overly picky, but I'd probably prefer the novel to just focus on the working relationship between Lynley and Havers - especially seeing as there really wasn't much of a presence from Havers in this sequel. Hopefully that's something that is rectified in Well-Schooled in Murder.

Donna says

There were LOTS of characters in this one and it took me a LONG time for the plot to grab me.

I will still continue on with the series and am hopeful that the next one will be a better read for me.

Lewis Weinstein says

UPDATE 2/13/18 ... marvelous even on re-reading ... the murders were complicated and the tension maintained throughout ... but the essence of the story is the way those murders impact EG's continuing characters, and the relationships between those characters ... Barbara Havers (my favorite) plays a major role in this one.

I read this at least a decade ago, and am re-reading it now to take another look at the outstanding way EG, one of my favorite authors, frames a story. This comes as I am editing the first half of the sequel to A

FLOOD OF EVIL and organizing the scenes for the second half. Looking to learn from a master.

Richard Derus says

Rating: 3.875* of five

The Book Report: Inspector Thomas Lynley, aka the eighth Earl of Asherton, is a hard-working man, but even he likes a few days' rest after chasing from pillar to post in solving brutal crimes. His rest is denied him by a call from his boss, at home, on a Sunday: A murder has occurred, in Scotland, and *only* Lynley can be trusted to investigate because it involves a famous Peer of the Realm.

Uh-oh.

Yeah, uh-oh and in spades, as Lynley tromps ill-temperedly up to Scotland where Scotland Yard has no legal standing and no authority and no utility, except in the titled person of Lynley himself. He's quite clearly if subtly warned: Lord Stinhurst, eminence of the London theatrical world, isn't to be troubled about small things like guilt or innocence or such-like plebeian goings-on. He's to be softly and swiftly shuffled out of the line of fire. So what does Lynley do? He brings Sergeant Barbara Havers, well-known to have a classist chip on her shoulder, to assist him, and he allows her a *lot* of leeway to poke and snoop and generally cause discomfort to the comfortable uppercrusties. (I suspect Lynley, were he corporeal, would've worn a small, snarky smile throughout this investigation.)

As the investigation proceeds, awful truths come out, lives are ruined, others are altered, and some few are lost; but no one is spared from the terrible cleansing fires of truth. Even those one might wish could be. No bond, no tie, no feeling is safe when Elizabeth George goes to work.

My Review: Good stuff. Unless you don't like puzzles or suspense or characters so real you'd swear you have their cell numbers somewhere if you could just find 'em, don't hesitate to start this series!

MadProfessah says

This is just my second book by Elizabeth George and I am quite impressed. I was unaware of the BBC series about Inspector Lynley but I was aware of the high average rating (4.0) with more than 10,000 entries.

This is a very high-quality entry into the genre of British police procedural murder mysteries. The setup is classic: a locked room mystery of how is an unpleasant author and playwright murdered while attending a weekend dinner party at a remote location in Scotland. Inspector Lynley and his sidekick, DS Barbara Havers, along with forensic specialist Simon St. James are dragooned into taking the case by the upper echelons in Scotland Yard.

What George does particularly well is describe the internal emotional worlds of the major characters (Havers and Lynley) as well as the minor but important characters. Then she sets up a bewildering array of familial and romantic connections between the primary suspects. This includes the inclusion of Lady Helen Clyde, Lynsey's longtime unrequited love, in the party of suspects.

Towards the end of the book there is an intensely suspenseful chase as the number of suspects gets reduced to one (or maybe 2) and Lynley and Haver set a trap to capture the suspect that goes awry. Misdirection is

often an important feature of effective mystery novels and PAYMENT IN BLOOD is no exception to this rule.

Overall, the book is probably 4.5 stars but it deserves rounding up to 5 stars for its impressive execution and emotional impact.

Aleshanee says

Da diese Reihe schon ewig her ist, seit ich sie gelesen habe, kann ich mich wirklich an nichts mehr erinnern! Umso schöner weil ich das Gefühl habe, die Geschichten nochmal ganz neu zu erleben!

So konnte ich auch super miträtseln, denn in diesem Mordfall gibt es wirklich viele Verwicklungen und auch viele Charktere, die eine Rolle spielen. Das war anfangs etwas wirr bzw. unübersichtlich, aber im Laufe der Handlung konnte man dann doch jeden ganz gut einordnen. Vor allem, da die Autorin wirklich eine großartige Figurenzeichnerin ist, die jeden so prägnant und treffend beschreibt.

Inspector Thomas Lynley hat also einiges zu tun - und dieses Mal ist er auch noch abgelenkt durch seine bohrende Eifersucht. So kenne ich ihn eigentlich nicht, bzw. hatte ich ihn gar nicht mehr in Erinnerung, denn dass er sich so von seinen Gefühlen überrollen lässt und dabei die Ermittlungen beeinträchtigt, hätte ich gar nicht von ihm erwartet.

Aber zum Glück ist ja noch Havers bei ihm, die sich durch die vielen konventionellen Einschränkungen nicht von ihrem Spürsinn abbringen lässt. Natürlich geht sie dabei auch mal wieder zu weit und sie kann ihren Mund nicht halten; was zu Äußerungen führt die sie für den Moment unsympathisch erscheinen lassen. Ihre Vorurteile gegenüber der "Oberschicht" sind einfach nicht zu leugnen. Aber man merkt auch, dass sie sich durch die Zusammenarbeit mit Lynley mehr Gedanken macht.

Helen ist ja auch wieder mit von der Partie und hat einen sehr schwierigen Stand; aber ich mag sie total gerne, weil sie so eine offene und liebenswerte Art hat!

Es gibt wirklich immens viel Ermittlungsarbeit mit Befragungen und komplizierten Verbindungen zwischen den Figuren, aber gerade das hat mich total fasziniert. Natürlich auch der Schauplatz in dem verschneiten Hotel in Schottland, weitab vom nächsten Dorf, ist ja geradezu prädestiniert für einen englischen Krimi.

An den Schreibstil hab ich mich mittlerweile wieder gewöhnt, denn er wirkt schon etwas "veraltet", wenn man hauptsächlich neuere Bücher liest und gerade diese ganzen gesellschaftlichen Spielchen aus der Oberschicht fühlen sich für mich völlig antiquiert an - aber wie gesagt: Wenn man sich da mal reingelesen hat merkt man das gar nicht mehr so arg.

Gegen Ende zieht die Spannung dann richtig an, und die Autorin schafft es wieder, viele Möglichkeiten offen zu lassen und mich als Leser von einem Aha-Erlebnis zum anderen zu führen. Die Aufklärung war schlüssig und hat keine Fragen offengelassen.

Fazit: 4.5 Sterne

© Aleshanee
Weltenwanderer

Elizabeth Theiss says

As always, Elizabeth George has kept me in the dark about the perpetrator of a series of murders and a brutal beating until the last possible moment, and that's a good thing. The strength of her police procedurals are wicked good plots that gallop along, throwing off suspects willy nilly. It took me about half the book to get the characters straight. The memorable Inspector Lynley, peer of the British realm, investigates the brutal murder of a playwright in a manor house where she was revealing the plot of her latest play for the prospective members of the cast and the play's director, the Lord of somewhere or other. Bless working class and hard working, clear thinking Sergeant Barbara Havers whose head was not turned by nobility and who was able to steer the investigation into fertile territory.

Eve Kay says

I like it! It cuts to the chase without too much nonsense, the introduction of all the characters is brisk, to the point.

Also, there was none of that annoying fascination with the scenery like there was in the first one where it read like the author had visited UK for the first time and was overly excited about it.

Payment in Blood went on to the investigation of the murder pretty quickly in comparison to other books of similar nature which was excellent. Usually there's a lot of that setting the scene and going through the complex relationships between the characters but this one pretty much went into the officers going through the events and going back and forth about what could have happened.

A lot of people have said they didn't like the fact that there were so many different characters and that they kept losing track who was who. Well, I liked all the drama and how they were all connected to each other in some way. It felt like there was a lot going on when there really wasn't and it added to the mystery. Sure, it could have been a distraction from the silly plot twists and such but I don't care, I still think it was one of the best parts of the book.

I didn't like the fact that Havers and Lynley kept having the same discussion again and again. I also didn't like couple of the plot twist that smelt like the author needed to cram certain things forcefully down our throats just coz she felt like it.

I did guess the killer very early on so I'm very proud of myself!

I didn't like Lynley at all so I'm gonna be a little sceptical about reading further on the series. I mean if you don't like the protagonist...

Ken Schloman says

This is an entertaining but complicated blend of British police procedural with a traditional British "cozy" mystery setting. Multiple suspects in a country mansion setting. What makes the novel intriguing are the relationships between the characters, particularly between Inspector Lynley and Sergeant Havers, and between Lynley and Lady Helen. This will keep the reader guessing till the end. This is not a quick read but one that should be enjoyed at a leisurely pace.

Melaszka says

I'm reading the Inspector Lynley novels out of order - having been deterred from reading them for years by

the rather mediocre TV series, I was hugely impressed when I eventually got round to reading some of the more recent books in the series. I'm now catching up with the earlier novels.

This one was certainly compelling enough - lots of intriguing subplots, twists and red herrings - but the faults of the series were amplified and I felt the book lacked the originality which lifts the later books above much of the genre.

My biggest peeve with George is that at times she peddles a Theme Park England - a fantasy England which US readers would like to believe exists, but actually doesn't. The whole aristocracy obsession in the series drives me nuts - it's neither true to life (in the UK, we don't tug our forelocks to anyone with a title any more. You wouldn't be able to influence a police investigation just by pointing out you were an earl. And I'm pretty sure that not many 20-something posh girls and guys have a live-in full-time servant in their London pied-a-terre, either, despite the fact that pretty much everybody in the series does) nor particularly attractive to anyone who believes in democracy and meritocracy. Thankfully, she's backpedalled from that a bit in the later novels in the series, but here she's in full feudal-worship mode. I feel she's trying to meet the dual needs of her American readership (allowing them to indulge their fantasies about being a lord at the same time as allowing them to, hypocritically, feel smug about the fact that they live in a society where such class distinctions have been abolished) rather than painting a genuine picture of British life.

I also felt that the book creaked under the cliches of the genre - the isolated country house mystery set-up, the melodramatic theatrical setting (and the picture of theatrical life also felt very unrealistic - British theatre just does not work as depicted in this novel)

Judging it purely as a mystery novel, the journey was very exciting, but the arrival at the final destination was a bit of a letdown: the "reveals" were predictable and/or quite dull, although the building of tension and juggling of alternative possibilities earlier in the novel had been deftly done.

Sarah says

I'm not a huge fan of Elizabeth George, but I always finish every book of hers that I pick up. This one was actually one of her bests. The reviews on the back keep comparing George to P. D. James and though I think such a comparison is ludicrous, this Lynley mystery does read like a watered down James novel. The setting and set-up were classic, and the pace moved right along and kept my interest. The problem with this book, as with all George's book in my opinion, is her tendency to descend into cheap, romance fiction. It seems whenever she tries to describe peoples emotions or love relationships we end up squarely in a melodrama. But this was less of a distraction than usual in this book and didn't overshadow the plot too much.
