



Raven Black

Ann Cleeves

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Winner of Britain's coveted Duncan Lawrie Dagger Award, Ann Cleeves introduces a dazzling new suspense series to mystery readers.

Raven Black begins on New Year's Eve with a lonely outcast named Magnus Tait, who stays home waiting for visitors who never come. But the next morning the body of a murdered teenage girl is discovered nearby, and suspicion falls on Magnus. Inspector Jimmy Perez enters an investigative maze that leads deeper into the past of the Shetland Islands than anyone wants to go.

Raven Black Details

Date : Published June 24th 2008 by Minotaur Books (first published 2006)

ISBN :

Author : Ann Cleeves

Format : Kindle Edition 384 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Cultural, Scotland, Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Raven Black for online ebook

Liz says

I love crime/mystery fiction that is set in the UK, particularly in Scotland, and even better on a remote Scottish island! Which puts *Raven Black* right up my alley. My three star rating reflects exactly how I felt – I genuinely liked it.

The mystery is sound, there are plenty of suspects, and Cleeves is good at dropping clues without being obvious. I do feel the writing lacks some of the depth of other great crime writers such as Denise Mina or Louise Penny, but then again, sometimes there's a breaking in period with a new author before I start fully appreciating their style.

I'll absolutely continue with this series. In fact, I picked up the second book from my library today, and since it's snowing and my hubby is out of town, I do believe I'll be gobbling up this crime fiction candy!

Carol says

The Hook - The Author Ann Cleeves has been highly recommended to me by many crime reading friends. Of her four series The Vera Stanhope was of the most interest but the first in the series seems to be missing at our library. I read reviews regarding The Shetland Series featuring Jimmy Perez and decided to give this a try.

The Line - *"The devil makes works for idle hands."*

The Sinker - This is definitely not a fast paced mystery but a slow burn that interested me just enough to consider continuing with the series. I particularly liked the measured pacing and revealing of the character of both Perez and The Shetland Island locale. The metaphorical use of blacks and whites in plot structure gave the whole a brooding feel which added to my enjoyment. There is plenty of room for Perez to be fleshed out. I'm looking forward to learning more about The Shetland Islands, unfamiliar to me. A solid beginning to a continuing series.

Ann Cleeves won a Duncan Lawrie Dagger (now known as Crime Writers Association International Dagger) for best crime novel in 2006 for Raven Black.

Shetland, a series produced by the BBC follows the cases of Jimmy Perez. I'm going to look for these.

Phrynne says

I am a devoted follower of the TV series "Vera" which is based on another series by this author. So of course I was interested to read this book and I am very glad I did. The author writes well and I enjoyed her descriptions of the Shetland Isles, an area I have never visited but would like to! The book starts off a bit slowly but it speeds up as it goes along and is always interesting. A nice, unexpected little twist at the end finishes the book on a high and I was very happy to discover there are quite a few more books in the series for me to read.

Linda says

Raven Black.....How dark is thy plot!

While I enjoyed Raven Black by Ann Cleeves and finished it as a quick read, I was left with a disconnect in regard to her character development. We hardly had a grasp of one character before the author roundhoused us with another who, may or may not be, central to the plot. "Keep 'em guessing" is at the core of all mystery thrillers, but that person/persons have to matter or peak the interest of the reader. Only bits and pieces so as not to reveal the real killer at the end. In doing so, we never cared or became attached to any of them in particular. Fear of the potential revelation of the killer too soon impedes the author from presenting a rich opportunity to bring more weight to that character. POSSIBLE SPOILERS: Magnus was put on a shelf and left to decay. He had so much depth that should have been explored and weaved into the story far more than it was. Fran seemed to be solely a reactionary to bounce off situations in the plot. Inspector Perez moved as though he were under water most of the time. He doesn't quite lay way any intrigue for future books containing his character.

A map of the island with the locations of the particular homes at the front of the book would have been most helpful. At some points, the characters could see into the windows of the others' homes, and at other points, there appeared great distance. Did the reader feel the willingness to revisit Shetland Island in upcoming books by this author?

All in all, Raven Black was a good read. Ann Cleeves is an extremely capable writer and a successful one as well. You will certainly toss about the storyline in your mind for some time to come.

Carolyn says

I really enjoyed the dark brooding atmosphere of this novel set in the Shetland Islands. The novel centres around an old man, Magnus Tait who was implicated in the disappearance of a young girl some years ago. The girl was never found and the police had insufficient evidence to charge Magnus who has since been living a reclusive life, but now another girl has been murdered near his house.

Leading the local police is Jimmy Perez, whose family (despite their name) are long time residents of Shetland. He is not sure all is as straight forward as it seems and he doggedly follows up clues as he tries to find out the secrets being kept from him.

The author Ann Cleeves is also the writer of the Vera series of books made into an excellent TV series and this first in her Shetland series suggests the plots and character will be just as interesting.

Lisa says

4.5 stars

Thanks Mike & Minty for the recommendations for this one - very enjoyable!

I loved the characters and the setting and the mystery was really well played out - looking forward to reading the rest in the series.

It is slow paced but in a luxurious, indulgent way that I imagine mirrors the pace of Ravenswick where it is set.

I can't say that it has a spectacular twist or that it deviates from traditional murder mystery BUT there is something about the writing that I really connected with and something that made the ordinary seem so extraordinary - it's really difficult to explain - all I can say is that it felt so real and the imagery and myth element only added to the general spookiness and sense of isolation that exists within a tight-knit community - the contradictions are everywhere!

Hannah says

Quite frankly, I'm surprised this was an award winning mystery novel (2006 winner of the *Duncan Lawrie Dagger Award*). Makes me wonder how abysmal the competition was that this came out on top....

Symplistic/trite writing, lackluster characters (and characterization) and no sense of descriptive place (though set in the Shetland Islands, it could have taken place anywhere, IMO). The mystery was the only thing that kept me reading on - and the reveal was....ok at best.

Not recommended for anyone who enjoys a solid whodunnit. I'd try S.J. Bolton, Val McDermid or even Erin Hart for that. I think this will be my first (and last) Cleeves, although I'm willing to be swayed by my GR friends if they find a better one of hers :D

Michael says

Teenagers from time to time feel like they don't fit into their world. This is very much the case for Sally who lives in the north of Scotland on the Island of Shetland with her teacher mother. Bullied wherever she goes, Sally's life is a nightmare until she meets Catherine. For once she has a friend and with a heightened, seemingly romantic interest in the son of a local big-shot life seems to be picking up. That illusion though is shattered when Catherine is found one cold morning strangled to death with her own scarf.

The obvious suspect is old loner Magnus Tait, who was the key suspect in the disappearance of another young girl named Catriona eight years earlier. Leading the investigation is detective Jimmy Perez who having grown up in the neighboring Fair Isle is quite familiar with the people and the environment. Jimmy is not convinced that Magnus has committed the murder and the investigation will try and unravel the many relationships and secrets of a community now in fear for its children. When another young girl called Cassie goes missing there is a desperation to find the killer but can they before another young girl loses her life?

There is just so much to like about this book. Firstly the old-fashioned whodunit theme is first-class and will leave you thinking intently on who is committing the crimes to the very end, while the descriptions of Shetland are both vividly imagined and gives a fascinating insight into remote living. Throw in characters that ooze character and realness and you have a story that will keep you engaged, guaranteed.

One last note, don't you hate it when you discover an awesome author only to discover they have been around for ages? How could I have missed this author for so long?

Pouting Always says

A thriller were a teenage girl ends up dead and everyone blames the mentally disabled man who was accused of killing another girl years ago. It was an interesting read, I didn't see the ending coming at all. The pacing was good too. The characters could have been better written but it's a mystery so I didn't care very much. Nothing spectacular but a good read when you just want to read for pleasure.

Richard Derus says

2017 UPDATE The Shetland TV show version of this book isn't terribly faithful as adaptations go, but it certainly managed to retain the awful, uneasy undertones. And it's beautiful to look at.

Rating: 4.5* of five

The Publisher Says: Raven Black begins on New Year's Eve with a lonely outcast named Magnus Tait, who stays home waiting for visitors who never come. But the next morning the body of a murdered teenage girl is discovered nearby, and suspicion falls on Magnus. Inspector Jimmy Perez enters an investigative maze that leads deeper into the past of the Shetland Islands than anyone wants to go.

My Review: There are two facts I must convey to you before reviewing the book. One: I am extremely uncomfortable, to the point of pain, around people with cognitive and/or communicative disorders or inabilities. Two: I was the object of my pedophile mother's sexual interest until I was fifteen.

Unsurprisingly, these aren't the sorts of themes I find enjoyable to find in my leisure reading. "Raven Black" has both! I was thinking seriously of abandoning the read, just quietly taking the book back to the library and forgetting it existed. Cleeves managed to make that an undesirable option, and in doing so, made it possible for me to hold a very unflattering mirror up to my character.

The younger of my two grandsons is autistic. It is extremely hard for his mother to cope with the demands of two active, intelligent, communicative children plus an active, intelligent, uncommunicative one. I don't know how she does it. I would be incapable of doing one-third what she does, with (at long last) support and help from her (second) husband.

Magnus Tait, one of our POV characters, is cognitively impaired. It was *horrible* for me to read the sections of text told from his POV because I could not bear to be in this close contact with him. It made me think of the helpless inability I feel when confronted with my autistic grandson...that sense of having nothing of myself to offer, of withdrawal from avoidable contact...no one can tell me the boy isn't aware of it, and while Magnus isn't autistic, it was a close-enough situation, and to know from the inside what chill and distance feels like...well, how awful, how awful to know it, feel it, and be unable to *understand* it.

At least I understand. But funnily enough, that fails to make it better. It makes it worse.

Pedophilia is present in several characters, no spoilers so no names, and the object of desire's POV is used in the story as well. It's unbelievable to me that Cleeves can recreate the unmixed-but-unsettled feelings of a child who holds that kind of intoxicating, terrifying, inappropriate power over an adult. I hope not, for her sake, but I felt "takes one to know one" so many times in reading certain parts of the book.

The thriller aspects of the book were nicely done, though as an old hand I pegged the murderer and motive fairly early on...but, discomfitingly, I found that I wanted the truth not to be what I knew, but what my prejudices drooled over.

I recommend this book to the unsqueamish. It's strong stuff. Nothing that happens in it is gratuitous. The guilty, and I mean those morally guilty, are punished severely. There is a bleak pleasure in that.

Aditi says

No one knew he had this beautiful creature to visit him.

She was his treasure, the raven in his cage.

---Ann Cleeves, *Raven Black*

Ann Cleeves, the award-winning British crime author, penned her first book in the Shetland series called, *Raven Black*, which later went on to win the **The Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger** in the year 2006. *Raven Black* cannot be compared to atypical crime novel, instead, this book promises us with a mystery that will only pull us more into its darker side, and also it promises us with one of the finest detectives in the British Literature- DI Jimmy Perez.

Synopsis:

It is a cold January morning and Shetland lies buried beneath a deep layer of snow. Trudging home, Fran Hunter's eye is drawn to a vivid splash of colour on the white ground, ravens circling above. It is the strangled body of her teenage neighbour Catherine Ross. As Fran opens her mouth to scream, the ravens continue their deadly dance . . .

The locals on the quiet island stubbornly focus their gaze on one man - loner and simpleton Magnus Tait. But when police insist on opening out the investigation a veil of suspicion and fear is thrown over the entire community. For the first time in years, Catherine's neighbours nervously lock their doors, whilst a killer lives on in their midst.

Ann Cleeves' Shetland series has been turned into a major TV series of BBC One network called *Shetland*. And I've watched them all and loved them all, especially DI Jimmy Perez.

Honestly speaking, *Raven Black* is a far better book than Cleeves latest book, *Dead Water*. *Raven Black* is not only a crime novel, but it also explores the aspects of teenage friendships, past regrets and madness.

Raven Black has not many twists or turns and it is even easy to predict the killer's true identity. Then why it is a better book? Well Cleeves writing is extraordinarily exquisite and articulate. While reading the book, you feel like the whole story is simply unfolding right in front of your eyes and that you're standing on one of the cliffs of Shetland and watching the whole drama with your own eyes. The narration is crystal clear and free-flowing like a river- I will say easy to comprehend. The whole investigation taking place in Shetland is described intricately and vividly.

What can I say about Cleeves protagonist- DI Jimmy Perez? I'm more drawn to his loneliness. Cleeves portrayed Perez as a widower with a step-daughter, Cassie and as a brave, strong man whose determination will keep you hooked on to the story. In BBC One's Shetland series, Douglas Henshall plays the role of DI Jimmy Perez and he completely justifies his demeanour from flaunting the local Shetland accent to always maintaining that serious look on his face.

Cleeves created rest of the supporting characters skilfully by portraying their past to let us know them on a personal basis, hence leaving room for us to judge them on our opinions. Another striking character which

made me love this book was Magnus Tait- a daft man, more like stupid man who had no idea what to say at the right moments- a loner. Shetlanders boycotted him and that made his activities more suspicious. Magnus is the suspected killer but while I was reading about him, it made me more drawn to his sorry state, rather than hating him.

I'd like to hats off to the author for painting the backdrop of *Raven Black* so distinctly. Shetland is a small Scottish Island where the weather remains cold, dark, windy, chilly and rainy 365 days in a year. And Cleaves captured them all with such sharpness that you can almost feel the wind on your skin and the salty taste of the breeze on your tongue. The lush green and the ocean blue landscapes will invite you into the heart of Shetland. In one word, *Raven Black* is an intriguing story that will keep you guessing till the very end and will compel your wits to unravel this puzzling mystery.

Verdict: *A must read novel that will keep you engaged from its very first page, and if you want to explore a very English island, then you must definitely read this book.*

Courtesy: *Thanks to the author, Ann Cleaves, for providing me with a copy of her book, in return for an honest review.*

Brenda says

Magnus Tait, a lonely old man now that his elderly mother had died, sat by the window and waited for visitors who never came. But New Year's Eve brought two tipsy young women to his door – Catherine Ross and her friend Sally Henry. They'd been out celebrating and were heading home. But the dare to knock on Magnus' door was what put them inside his house...

When Fran Hunter discovered the body of a young woman in the snow on her way home from taking her daughter Cassie to school, she was in shock. The immediate thought of the townsfolk was that Magnus must have killed her as he was a suspect in the disappearance of a girl who'd gone missing eight years prior. Although he hadn't been arrested, the locals were a suspicious lot.

Inspector Jimmy Perez was on the case immediately – his investigation led him to suspect that things were not as they seemed. The secrets he unearthed took him back to the hidden past of the Shetland Islands. Would Jimmy find a satisfactory solution for this convoluted case?

Raven Black by Ann Cleaves is the first in the Shetland Island series and I quite enjoyed the mystery which was surrounded by the sense of a cold, bleak but atmospheric setting in the Shetland Islands. Plenty of twists kept the plot moving along nicely. I've enjoyed author Peter May's books set in the same area – always with the same bleak setting. Recommended.

Susan says

This is the first in Anne Cleaves Shetland series. Although I love crime novels, I had not read any of this author's books before, but I am pleased that I finally did get around to it, as this was an excellent book, with interesting characters and a good setting.

When sixteen year old Catherine Ross is found murdered by Fran Hunter, the crime brings back old

memories to the residents of the island. For eight years ago, another little girl went missing and her body was never found. At the time, Magnus Tait, an old man who lives alone, was rumoured to be guilty of the crime. Now, he is also linked to Catherine Ross and the whispers start again.

Inspector Perez is a local man, despite his Spanish name, and he is not convinced of Tait's guilt. What follows is an interesting cast of suspects – there is Fran Hunter's ex-husband, Catherine's widowed father, the wealthy Robert Ibister and others. As the story unfolded, I was happy to go along and not even try to guess the murderer, which did catch me completely by surprise. If you like well written crime books, with a good setting, then this is a good series to try.

Thomas Strömquist says

I did not enjoy this as much as I hoped. Quite good written police procedural which held far too many slow chapters around the middle. I did like Perez, he goes into the 'very human' category of policeman characters. It was an OK read, but unfortunately I did not care for the ending either and therefore it slipped another notch. Not too plausible and with the narrative voices throughout the story, it kind of didn't add up.

Rob says

A very immersive tale. Like all the other Hebridean based stories I have read of late this is another dark and, at times, oppressive story.

A small, almost, isolated community living on the edge of the world. Suspicious of the foreign imports coming to live on their Island. The trials and tribulations of the foreigners, people from mainland Scotland and England, trying to gain acceptance from the local community. It's a struggle for everybody to get along. I just loves the way Ann Cleeves takes hold of the string that tie families and communities together and starts to tug at the string and keeps tugging until everything starts to unravel. All the secrets, that everyone knows but nobody talks about, start to come to the surface. This makes Shetland a very unpleasant place to be.

To make matters worse there has been two murders. The murders take place eight years apart. Both victims are female. The first victim is a young girl and the second victim is a teenager on the cusp of adulthood. On the surface there is nothing to connect these murders but there are a couple of things that perplex the police. At the time of their deaths both the girls were living in the same house, albeit, at different times. Also both of their names start with the letter C.

Does this mean anything?

The ending was a big plus for me. I'll say no more.

As I said at the start, it didn't take long for me to become fully immersed in Raven Black. If you like to read books that exercise your brain then you'll enjoy this.

Highly recommened
