



One Last Breath

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Around the ancient cave system in Derbyshire are thronging tourists, a medieval castle, and the thriving town of Castleton. With its underground tunnels and caverns, it's the perfect place for a man to hide—or vanish. Detectives Ben Cooper and Diane Fry are looking for such a man, one who is on a murderous rampage.

An escaped convict is on the loose, and, after thirteen years in prison, he may be seeking revenge on the son of the cop who put him away in the first place ... Cooper's father.

One Last Breath Details

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From Reader Review One Last Breath for online ebook

Kelly says

Stephen Booth is one of the best British police procedural writers in the biz today, ranking with Val McDermid or Peter Robinson. That said, I think he's starting to lose his grip on his characters.

Booth's style is to flip back and forth between points of view fairly quickly. When done well, it helps keep the plot moving, and there's a bit of frisson each time the reader returns to a favorite character's voice.

This time around, while the actual mystery is solid --a case involving a murderer recently released from prison, whose acquaintances start being knocked off (not as cut-and-dried as it seems)-- the characterization is not as spot-on as it usually is.

I found myself dreading some characters as they came back up, especially detective Diane Fry, who has become less and less likable as the series progresses. A scene with her newly-found sister in a restaurant goes nowhere and reveals almost nothing. It seems as interminable as an awkward dinner date.

We know Diane has secrets, but if they don't come out soon, I fear her workaholic nature and lack of emotion aren't suited for main character status anymore. She's too much of a shell.

Booth always makes sure we learn something we didn't know before, whether it's the history of Morris dancing or well decoration. This time it's information about caves and caving, and though we know the climax is going to involve a cave in some way, the groundwork laid for setting up the showdown makes the pay-off worthwhile.

Ben Cooper is still a solid character in a solid series, but if the next novel doesn't get the main characters moving in some way, Booth would be better off writing one-offs rather than sequential novels.

Kelly says

This book was just OK. Definitely not the best in the series. I had trouble keeping track of the plot because several of the characters were very similar to each other. I also thought the book could have been about 25 percent shorter. I found myself skimming over parts that just didn't seem relevant. Hoping this one was a blip and the next in the series will be back up to standard.

Adam Nickson says

This is the fifth book in Stephen Booth's ongoing series featuring Ben Cooper and Diana Fry.

Mansell Quinn has been released from prison after fourteen years for murder. Why has he returned to his old stomping grounds, is there revenge on his mind.

Mansell's ex-wife is found murdered in her new home, so this is the basis for the new investigation.

The mystery is an excellent one with lots of twists and turns. And can be read without reading the rest of the series.

The series ongoing nature is the relationships between Cooper and Fry and the supporting characters.

I enjoyed it, and will carry on reading the series to see how it develops.

Erin says

I read a review of this book that made it sound really great. I just found it dull, and I really didn't care who had committed the crime. Not recommened.

Sally906 says

Opening Sentence: "... And then she was gone..."

This is the 5th book featuring Ben Cooper and Diane Fry who are both detectives in the Peak district of England. Mansell Quinn has just been released from prison after serving time for murdering his lover. Within hours his ex-wife is brutally murdered and Cooper and Fry are on the case. They soon learn there is more to the story than meets the eye, and start to look into the original evidence. There were a lot of characters to keep track of, something I am increasingly having problems with, which is probably me rather than the author, and they all had something to hide. There are a few sub-plots going on and the connections don't start to come together until the end.

The settings are very atmospheric and add to the tone of the story – underground caves and a ruined castle seem to match the hidden (underground?) secrets and ruined lives. While the plot was very believable and the resolution, though a little confusing for a while, was definitely different, the book as a whole did drag a little for me in the middle and I felt that it could have been quite a few pages shorter.

I am a huge fan of the series and have loved all the books so far. This one, however, was not for me. I have a few more to go so hope that he gets back to the brilliant way he grabbed me in THE BLACK DOG and kept me enthralled through the subsequent DANCING WITH THE VIRGINS, BLOOD ON THE TONGUE and BLIND TO THE BONES.

Anita says

I don't read murder/mystery books frequently. This one had a good plot and several sub-plots. I was not familiar with the characters, which were from a series of similar stories by this author, I understand.

The setting of 'One Last Breath' is the Peak District; the caves and bleak countryside of that area giving an atmospheric background to the secrets and deaths of the characters. The story began well. I did, however, become a little confused by the numerous characters and sub-plots in the middle of the story. It was a little too complex and meandering to follow in parts. There were also a few glaring errors, such as on Page 100 where the author maintains that Mansell Quinn's daughter would not remember her father since he had been jailed for the past 14 years. She was 13 at the time of his incarceration! There was an interesting twist at the end of the story. Altogether, I enjoyed this book and would read another in the series by this author. I would have given it 4 stars but for the errors and the confusion of the numerous characters in the middle.

Meredith W Nisbet says

Caverns are another world

As a teenager, I made it my business to read all the books about caves and spelunking in our small-town Texas public library. In addition, on vacation trips we usually managed to your at least one cave. Between trips and books, my father told me many interesting, often spooky tales of his childhood adventures in the local caves near his rural Missouri home. I chose to read "One Last Breath" in hopes of revisiting that childhood fascination with caves as well as general spookiness. I was not disappointed!

Nancy says

I found this book extremely difficult to read. I experienced a total disconnect with the characters, never sure of the reasons behind their actions. Perhaps if I had read a few other books in the same series, I might have understood the obscure references to previous interactions between the characters and their work together. However, the plot was gripping enough that I did not give up on the book.

Colin Mitchell says

Mansell Quinn is released after serving 17 years for the murder of his lover. On his release he returns to his home area and soon his ex wife is murdered and a hunt is on for Quinn. This reveals the complex relationships of the past and comes to a climax in the caverns of the Derbyshire limestone caves. A good read that weaves in the Quinn story and continues Ben Cooper and Diane Fry's complex relationship.

Monika says

Efter fem böcker i den här serien så börjar jag känna mig riktigt hemma i Peak District och karaktärerna känns lite som... jag önskar jag kunde säga vänner, men helt ärligt så gillar jag dem inte speciellt mycket. Däremot är jag väldigt glad för att besvikelsen över förra delen bara var en tillfällig svacka. Läs mer på bloggen

Jill Hutchinson says

This is the third book of this series that I have read but not in order of publication (which might help since there is history among the major characters). I love an intricate plot with lots of twist, turns, and surprises.....but this book borders on confusing. This author appears to enjoy having a multitude of characters doing a multitude of things which may or may not have anything to do with the plot and it tends to muddy the waters. That is not to say that it isn't enjoyable, just not as enjoyable as it could have been if about three characters were omitted.

A convicted murderer is released from prison after serving 14 years for killing his best friend's wife who also happened to be his lover. He disappears and his old friends and family are getting a bit anxious as they wonder if he has revenge on his mind since they testified against him at his trial. Another murder occurs, he is still missing, and now everyone is running scared. But all is not as it appears and the story line goes off in several different directions. It is a fairly good read but every once in a while, you feel that you have missed some point. Don't worry.....you haven't.

Susan says

not bad, read better

Samantha says

I absolutely loved this book. I'm already partial to British mystery series where the characters are recurring (Elizabeth George and PD James are two of my favorite authors), but despite my predisposition to like it, this was still a great book.

This is the fifth book in the series (but only the third one I've read, having missed the first two) and each one has been better than the last. The central character is Detective Constable Ben Cooper, the son of a Police Sergeant who was killed in the line of duty. He's honest, earnest, clever, and compassionate, yet is not infallible. He's the hometown boy who everyone knows and therefore he cannot escape the scrutiny of everyone around him. He's a very likeable character.

Ben's immediate supervisor, Detective Sergeant Diane Fry, is not as likeable. Granted, she's had a rough life and has had to scrape and claw her way to where she is now, but I have a hard time finding any redeeming qualities in her at all. She's ambitious and hard and gruff. She holds nearly everyone around her in contempt and apparently has something on Ben that she contemplates using against him. (What this is was discussed in the first two books, I gather.) She reluctantly likes Ben and sometimes admires his insights, but she's loath to admit it and overall, he irritates her.

The story in this book revolves around Mansell Quinn, a man who has been released from prison after spending nearly 14 years in prison for a crime he claims he didn't commit. He's hell-bent on revenge and the cops need to find him before he completes his task.

Cooper, in his usual style, obsesses himself with the details and the what-ifs, especially since there's a link between Quinn and Cooper's father. So he sets off on a tangent of his own which once again irritates Diane. Of course, in the end, it's Diane's hard-nosed way and Ben's eye for the subtleties that help solve the case.

Oh, and there's an intriguing subplot involving Diane's prodigal sister Angie, who's just reappeared in her life after 15 years. And guess who helped choreograph that reunion? You guessed it - Ben Cooper. Just something else to get on Diane's nerves.

I love Booth's books, especially Ben Cooper. What a great character.

Gary Van Cott says

I thought the appearance of Angie, Diane Fry's sister, might improve the relationship between her and Ben Cooper. No such luck. I have decided that Diane's problem is that she doesn't like herself. Until that is resolved it will be hard to change any relationships. While I think this is generally a good book, it is geographically confusing. It needs a map (or two or three).

Thejelman says

I am a big fan of Booth's and I love this series so maybe this was down to my mood, concentration levels or some other variable but I found this instalment rather hard work. The basic premise was sound (murderer released from prison and his old contacts start dying) and of course the backdrop (England's Peak District and particularly the popular, picturesque and historic tourist village of Castleton) is fabulously packed with possibilities for a crime novel. But I just found it dragged in a way that others in the series haven't. Maybe the plot was just too elaborate, maybe some of the description and history was overdone and maybe the Fry-Cooper relationship has become tedious (I am working my way through the series in order) but I was just a bit underwhelmed by this one.
