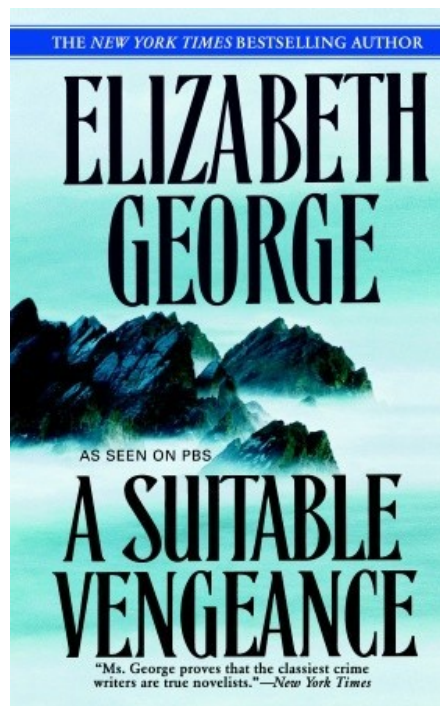




A Suitable Vengeance

Elizabeth George

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A Suitable Vengeance

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A Suitable Vengeance Elizabeth George

'Award-winning author Elizabeth George gives us an early glimpse into the lives of Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley, forensic scientist Simon Allcourt-St. James, and Lady Helen Clyde in a superlative mystery that is also a fascinating inquiry into the crimes of the heart. Lynley, the eighth earl of Asherton, has brought to Howenstow, his family home, the young woman he has asked to be his bride. But the savage murder of a local journalist is the catalyst for a lethal series of events that shatters the calm of a picturesque Cornwall village and embroils Lynley and St. James in a case far outside their jurisdiction—and a little too close to home. When a second death follows closely on the heels of the first, Lynley finds he can't help taking the investigation personally—because the evidence points to a killer within his own family.

A Suitable Vengeance Details

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Author : Elizabeth George

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From Reader Review A Suitable Vengeance for online ebook

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

I do like Elizabeth George's style, and her way with a mystery, but this novel epitomizes everything in her Lynley series I find the most irritating. This particular book is set before the first in the series, *A Great Deliverance*. Which means it's Lynley without Havers. Havers only has a very brief appearance here, more a cameo, late in the book, two appearances less than a page each and a couple of mentions.

That leaves us with Thomas Lynley, Lord Asherton, up to his family manor Howenstow in Cornwall for an "engagement weekend" to introduce his fiancée Deborah Cotter to his family; Lady Helen and Simon St James accompany him. The subplots involving Deborah, Simon and Helen in the other books have been my least favorite feature. Too often coincidences stretching credibility had been used to involve them in the mystery and their emotional entanglements too much a soap opera. At least in this story, since they are central to the mystery, it seems far less a distraction. And George is at the top of her game here plot-wise. I do like her way with red herrings and feints--she certainly kept me guessing to the end with more than one twist or turn.

But yes, I miss Havers and her working class sensibilities scraping against Lynley's upper class crust. At times here, such as when George has people ignoring a near-rape as an unpleasantness to be smoothed over, or when Lynley bumbles in securing a crime scene, I couldn't help but wonder what Havers would have made of that. Havers and Lynley compliment each other, both in professional and in a literary sense, and I do think her being missing bumps this installment down a notch.

Megargee says

Although *Suitable Vengeance* is the fourth Inspector Thomas Lynley novel published, it concerns events that occurred before *A Great Deliverance*, the first of the series published. In reviewing that book, I noted that there was more than enough material in the various characters' back stories to support a prequel, and here it is.

Suitable Vengeance focuses on the complex relationships among Lynley, Eighth Earl of Ashmore, his long time friend, the crippled forensic scientist Simon St. James, and Deborah Cotter, the 20 year old daughter of St. James' long time butler who was raised "downstairs" in the St. James household. Lady Helen Clyde, St. James' present associate and former mistress, plays a lesser role, and Sgt. Barbara Havers, who will later become Lynley's working class partner in *Great Deliverance*, has only a walk on part. Readers who especially relish Havers and the class conflicts between her and Thomas will be disappointed.

This novel takes place at Ashmore, Lynley's vast estate that makes *Downton Abbey* look like a share cropper's hovel. It introduces Lynley's cocaine addicted younger brother, Peter, and St. James' flighty younger sister, Sidney, and their current lovers, as well as Lynley's widowed mother the Dowager Countess from whom he is estranged. Plus a full array of village characters. Yes, once again George has given us enough characters to populate a soap opera. Keeping track of them is made more difficult by having a female character with a male name (Sidney), a male character with a female name (Brooke), and others with look-alike names (Mick and Mark). The occasion is a weekend engagement/house party announcing the betrothal of Thomas and Deborah, an event that will come as a surprise to those of us who recall Deborah marrying Simon at the beginning of *A Great Deliverance*.

With all these emotions and relationships being explored, it isn't until Page 100 that we actually discover the castrated body of the first victim, the village newspaper editor. In the ensuing pages the local mystery is skillfully interwoven and integrated with the overall romantic drama and plot lines concerning drug dealing

and addiction, apparent prostitution, possible blackmail, and medical malpractice as additional murders take place. There are many people seeking suitable vengeance.

While I feared that my prior reading of the earlier novels would detract from this, the foreknowledge they provide actually enhanced this story. I would still choose to read them in the order published rather than beginning with No. 4.

Lobstergirl says

Elizabeth George creates a strange universe where an assault and attempted rape (boyfriend on girlfriend) is viewed by a bevy of bystanders (all acquaintances or relatives of the pair) who bring it to a stop, but then some aristocratic code of silence (they are "all too self-servingly well-bred") prevents them from ever mentioning it, or bringing it to the attention of law enforcement - even though it happens on property owned by a Scotland Yard inspector - or attempting to file charges. In this universe, called Cornwall, a father shows a picture of his son to a Lady (that would be an aristocratic female) and asks, "Is this the kind of man you'd say no to if he asked you to spread your legs, missy?" Also people say things like, "You've never been close to feeling anything for anyone. Why on earth should you? After all, you've got science. You don't have to feel passion." Uh huh.

At first I was very confused about who was dating whom, until I realized this must be a prequel. Havers and Lynley aren't paired up yet; she makes a very brief appearance late in the book.

Jill Hutchinson says

If the reader could get past the guilt complexes of the main characters, there is probably a good mystery here.....but 3/4 of the narrative deals with the guilt of unrequited love, guilt over minor incidents from the past, guilt over adultery, guilt over physical infirmities and just plain guilt over anything you choose. It made me feel guilty reading about it.

This is a prequel to the DI Thomas Linley/Simon St. James series that attempts to explain the relationships of the main characters. There is such *angst* that I am surprised they all didn't just commit suicide and escape their self-imposed suffering. I was not engaged and struggled to complete this book....I was looking for a good Elizabeth George mystery, not a psychological study.

Jamie Collins says

This was a decent murder mystery, but mostly it's a soap opera starring Lynley and his friends and family, set on his family estate in Cornwall. This book is a prequel, covering events that occurred several years before the first book in this series, so you already know how all of the drama is going to be resolved.

Havers only appears briefly, in a couple of unflattering scenes.

I find that I like Lady Helen more and more, and that I rather dislike Deborah.

I can't say there was anything extraordinary about the book, but as soon as I finished it, I wanted to pick up the next one. It's a good thing my mom loaned me a whole stack of these.

Aleshanee says

Es ist wirklich schon ewig her, seit ich diese Reihe gelesen hab - ich glaube, ich bin damals bis zu Band 11 gekommen ... und ich war wirklich begeistert! Aber dann hat sich mein Interesse am Genre etwas verschoben und ich hab sie nicht mehr weitergelesen.

Umso schöner, jetzt wieder ganz frisch einzusteigen, denn ich hab beim Lesen gemerkt, dass mir zwar die Figuren alle einigermaßen bekannt sind, aber an die Handlung konnte ich mich nicht mehr erinnern!

Der Einstieg ist eigentlich sehr ungewöhnlich, denn der erwartete Mord passiert erst relativ spät. Die Autorin zeichnet erstmal ein sehr genaues Charakterbild aller Figuren und vor allem auch die Familienkonstellation vom Protagonisten Thomas Lynley und seinen Freunden. Das war aber keineswegs langweilig sondern eher faszinierend, denn jeder von ihnen hat sein Päckchen zu tragen und die Beziehungen untereinander sind mehr als verstrickt.

Die Ermittlungen selber und die Zusammenhänge wirkten manchmal etwas konstruiert, aber die Autorin hat sich die überraschende Aufklärung bis ganz zum Schluss aufgehoben. Man konnte gut miträtseln, denn es waren viele Figuren involviert und auch das Motiv war nicht einfach herauszufinden.

Vom Stil her merkt man, dass es doch schon einige Jahre her ist, gerade was die Charaktere betrifft, erinnert das Verhalten und Denken doch eher an "früher" - was aber jetzt nicht negativ zu bewerten ist - es war für mich nur etwas ungewohnt. Ich weiß ja noch ungefähr, wie sich die Beziehungen untereinander entwickeln werden, deshalb war es für mich keine Überraschung am Ende, aber mit diesem ersten Band setzt Elizabeth George eine gute Grundlage für die folgenden Bände. Auf die bin ich jetzt schon sehr gespannt, denn soweit ich mich erinnere, stehen da die Ermittlungen mehr im Vordergrund und vor allem auch Lynleys zukünftige Partnerin beim Scotland Yard, die hier nur einen kurzen Auftritt hatte.

Ich war nicht ganz so begeistert wie vor 20 Jahren aber ich hab mich gleich wieder in der Geschichte wohl gefühlt und bin jetzt gespannt auf den nächsten Teil.

© Aleshanee
Weltenwanderer

Karen says

While this is listed as Lynley #4, it is a prequel to number one.

aPriL does feral sometimes says

The game is afoot! Wait, wrong movie. In fact, everything is awry in this 4th book in the Lynley/Havers mystery series. Why is Lord Asherton, Thomas Lynley, Eighth Earl and Detective Inspector of CID, not at center stage as the lead protagonist in this story? He's a bit offstage, instead of being the one who is in the game for most of the book. Instead, it appears to be mostly forensic scientist Simon Allcourt-St. James who is following up on clues. Where is Detective Sergeant Barbara Havers? She doesn't seem to be on the job or

be even known to the Lynleys.

Tumultuous Asherton family surprises are at the forefront. A decade after Thomas's father died, the entire Lynley family with various childhood friends, lovers and servants are all coming down to the Howenstow residence for a weekend to introduce Deborah Cotter to the family. Thomas Lynley is about to marry Deborah, photographer and daughter of Joseph Cotter, who is a lifelong servant to the St. James'. Deborah has returned to England from America after a three-year absence. Peter Lynley, Thomas's brother, is a SoHo drug addict, and Sidney St. James, Simon's sister, is involved with a scientist and drug addict, Justin Brooke.

These two sets of young people have brought plenty of drugs to enliven their visit to dull Cornwall; however, the drugs run out and their party degrades into angry scenes, simmering resentments, wild sex and financial disputes. Thomas hates his mother, Lady Asherton, because she had an affair with Dr. Roderick Trenarrow while the Seventh Earl of Asherton, Thomas's father, was dying of cancer. The Lady is still dating Dr. Trenarrow, inspiring Thomas to never-ending disgust with his mother. Deborah is pining for Simon, even while kissing Thomas, even though Simon is 11 years older and even though he is handicapped with a ruined leg - ruined by a car accident in a car driven by Thomas. Thomas can't stop feeling guilty about driving drunk and crashing the car which almost destroyed Simon's leg, but he is very happy now that Deborah has accepted his proposal. But before too long, he is disturbed by undercurrents between his best friend Simon and his fiancé Deborah. Simon is hiding his feelings with polite affection, but he finds being around Deborah difficult.

Only one person is calm and centered and not guilty of having plotted vengeance in some degree - Lady Helen Clyde. She flows in and out of the chapters soothing savage hearts, but even she can't divert the impending disasters.

Wow. I'm confused. Most of the conflicts above were mentioned in passing in the previous three books, but in 'A Suitable Vengeance', they either haven't happened yet or are happening now in this book's present.

Oh! It's a prequel! Oh.

Well!

Family drama abounds! Zowie! Have you been noticing all of the clues in the previous 3 books that the backstory for Lynley and his friends is drenched in pathos, trauma and broken relationships? All is revealed in 'A Suitable Vengeance'. However, I'm still very confused. This is a not a mystery, but a regular novel with chic-lit tendencies. Or is it?

Despite a slow, slightly disjointed beginning of a hundred pages or so, the author Elizabeth George eventually brings into play the sad and ugly death of a Cornwall local which will send the Ashertons spinning out of their more comfortable miseries into the depressed universe the reader has come to know and love from the previous books.

A local man, Michael 'Mick' Cambrey. is discovered dead on the floor of the Cornwall cottage he has been renting for himself and his wife Nancy and baby, obviously castrated. He is a reporter at a newspaper which is owned by Harry Cambrey, his father, but he has been keeping his latest investigations secret. Did he uncover a story too deadly to know? Or could the murder have been by an enraged husband, since it is widely known Mick has been in and out of many beds, despite his marriage? Or was it Nancy's father, John Penellin, or her ne'er-do-well brother, Mark? Mick had been disbursing paychecks when he was murdered and many of the local drug addicts were broke, including Peter Lynley. Could Peter or another addict have murdered Mick for the cash?

As if the Lynleys and the St. James' didn't have enough anxiety in their lives!

Hooray!

Jamie says

(3.5) While this blast-from-the-past book was a good way to deepen understanding about how the messy love triangle between Lynley, St. James, and Deborah occurred that is alluded to in the first book, it didn't include enough of Havers to keep the dynamic I love going strong. We need her to balance out the upper-crust story of Lynley et al.

Still, it was interesting to get background on Lynley and his brother Peter and his mother, and the mystery was decent, so I'm giving it a solid 3.5 stars.

It's also the perfect time to take a break from the series and read other novels that have been tempting me!

Kathy Davie says

Fourth (publication-wise) in the Inspector Lynley mystery series set in modern-day London, *A Suitable Vengeance* is so incredibly well titled as vengeance abounds throughout the story. Tommy's anger with his mother, Deb's anger with Simon, Peter's anger with Tommy, Justin and Mick's actions, Sidney's emotions, Mark's activities...it's endless.

The Chronology of the Series

A Suitable Vengeance is, chronologically, first in the series as it tells the tale of Deborah's return from school in America with her engagement to Tommy during her visit with Tommy's family in Cornwall. ALL of which takes place well before *A Great Disappearance* in which Barbara Havers is collecting Tommy for a case from Simon and Deborah's wedding.

The Story

So, that said, lordy, what a convoluted, swirling tide of clues is this. The primary story is of Simon's desperate and undeclared love for Deborah set against her and Tommy's involvement, which leads us to the family weekend at Tommy's estate in Cornwall, Howenstow---Tommy has proposed and Deborah is to meet the family.

And what a weekend to remember. The local Lothario is murdered with a particularly nasty cut with more murders following and all the suspects are connected to Howenstow. Tommy may be Scotland Yard but we're not on his patch. And this is where I get frustrated with George. Tommy is a Detective Inspector with Scotland Yard and he is screwing up all over the place not behaving like the policeman he is. He does nothing to secure the initial crime scene. He withholds evidence. He searches for evidence on his own. Why not hire on some divers to search the sea for the case instead of having a couple of the lads diving with masks and snorkels??

My Take

I guess I'm expecting the world especially with how masterfully George pulls all these red herrings into a simple cohesive solution. George is amazing in her attention to detail, the situations she creates, and the tension she builds (even though I have a pretty good idea of how things will end as I'm already three stories into the future when I read this story).

The Cover

The cover is rather painterly with a very suitable subject---the rocks off the Cornish coast which play such a role in opening the case.

Rosario (<http://rosario.blogspot.com/>) says

A Suitable Vengeance is next in the series in order of publication, but it actually takes place some years before the rest of the series. Lynley is back at the family estate to introduce his fiancé to his mother, and in the midst of much drama, a journalist gets killed.

I tried and tried, but really could not get into it. The first sections are almost entirely about supposed adults moping around like emo teenagers, and it was extremely annoying. These people clearly do not want to be happy (Simon St. James, I'm particularly looking at you). There's also an element of creepiness in Simon's obsession with Deborah. Deborah is the daughter of his manservant, Cotter, and she grew up in his house. Simon is 11 years older than her, and to be honest, it felt a bit as if he'd been grooming her as she grew up. Pretty disturbing.

That, plus the knowledge that the book is supposed to be set almost entirely in George's cringey, forelock-tugging interpretation of the world of English aristocracy, put me off. Plus, this takes place before Lynley met Havers, so I couldn't even look forward to her coming in and pricking these people's self-importance (reading the reviews on goodreads I see that she does show up at some point, but not for long).

I'm hoping this one is not necessary to continue reading the series (well, I'm pretty sure it isn't, since I enjoyed the later books just fine when I first read them).

MY GRADE: This was a DNF.

Meg Hannah says

It was a little disorienting to go back in time, with no mention of what's happened through book #3, but this book certainly establishes a lot of history.

All the ingrown relationships seem a bit contrived and overwrought, as does the cross-dressing part of the plot, but I care enough about the characters to keep reading and even feel satisfied to know more about their background.

The British "stiff upper lip" stereotype is certainly a big part of things, yet again. I swear these characters are the masters of it, and of the "elephant in the living room" syndrome. Can't someone (someone who's not a loony or a completely oafish crank) just say what they feel or acknowledge what everyone knows?

IslandRiverScribe says

Technically, this fourth entry in the Inspector Lynley series is a prequel, taking place about a year before the events of the first novel, "A Great Deliverance." Realistically though, this book is placed exactly where it needs to be in the series. After the bombshell that Deborah Cotter St. James laid on her husband, Simon, at the end of the previous book, Elizabeth George takes us back just far enough to get a real understanding of the original dynamics that led every character to that last point in time in that previous book.

Although written in third-person, the primary POV in this novel is that of Simon St. James. A brilliant move on Ms George's part, Simon is practically the only character, major or minor, who does not wish "a suitable vengeance" on someone. Quite frankly, he hates himself too much to hate anyone else.

As for the others, Scotland Yard Inspector Thomas Lynley, the eighth Earl of Asherton, has sought and achieved vengeance against his mother for fifteen years. At the age of 17, he caught her "in flagrante delicto" with his father's doctor in the room next door to the dying man. For well over a decade, as the Earl, he has controlled both the property and the purse strings of the extremely large estate in Cornwall. Punishing her with long silences, few visits and absolutely no physical touch, Lynley will not even allow a single portrait or photograph of his father to be displayed at the estate as long as his mother chooses to reside there. Oh, yes – vengeance is mine, sayeth Lynley!

Deborah Cotter has, in her mind and her heart, declared vengeance against Simon St. James. Even though Deborah is eleven years younger than Simon, they basically grew up together as her father was a highly placed employee in the wealthy St. James household. Deborah's mother died when she was seven and Simon was critically injured and severely disabled in a car accident with Lynley shortly after the mother's death. Despite their age difference, these circumstances bonded them together tightly. However, when Deborah was seventeen, Simon sent her to America to finish her college studies in photography, despite the fact that he loved her and she had professed her love for him. And for the last three years, Deborah has heard not one word from him, not a letter, not a phone call, nothing. But she has heard from Lynley, Simon's best friend. He has called her often and has visited her in America multiple times. He has courted her slowly and dearly. She is no longer a woman scorned. She has become Lynley's lover and she has accepted his proposal of marriage. Now, at age 21, she is returning to London and has made very specific plans as to how she will make Simon pay for the hurt he laid on her. Oh, yes – vengeance is mine, sayeth Deborah!

Peter Lynley is Thomas Lynley's younger brother. When their mother betrayed their father and then the father died, Thomas, in his hate and his grief, essentially abandoned his pre-teen little brother. With no one to guide him during these critical years of youth, Peter eventually descended through self-pity and depression into an addiction to cocaine. Thomas has the title, the estate, the money, the Bentley, the rank with Scotland Yard. And Peter hasn't enough for his next fix. Hearing that Lynley is bringing Deborah to Cornwall to celebrate his engagement, Peter heads there too, with plans and announcements of his own. Peter is determined that Thomas will pay for all those years of abandonment, and not all the payment will be in money. Oh, yes – vengeance is mine, sayeth Peter!

And let's not forget Sergeant Barbara Havers. She is not yet Thomas Lynley's partner. In fact, she does not even personally know him at this point. She just knows him by reputation – his title, his wealth, his position in the Yard, his purported sexual conquests. And for this, she despises him. When Peter Lynley falls afoul of the law in relation to a murder and her boss is assigned to the case, Barbara is ecstatic. She looks Thomas Lynley straight in the face and telegraphs her glee and her intentions. Oh, yes – vengeance is mine, sayeth Havers!

Unfortunately, the dance card of hate is still not yet filled. One other character feels that he has been humiliated at the hands of his peers. And the plans for vengeance he sets in motion even transcend death.

So where is the murder in all this soap opera? On or about page 115 of the mass-market paperback edition, we find the body of Mick Cambrey, with a fractured skull and sexually mutilated. He is a journalist, son of

the Cornwall paper's owner, the son-in-law of Lynley's estate manager and reputedly a notorious womanizer. Thus, the sexual mutilation comes across as yet another instance of "a suitable vengeance."

Mick is just the first of four people who will die within one week, that same week that Lynley has taken Deborah, Simon and Lady Helen Clyde to Cornwall for the engagement festivities. Lynley is out of his jurisdiction from a police standpoint, although he and Simon investigate anyway. However, almost everyone involved is either related to Lynley by blood, employment or emotion. He is really not at the top of his game and he knows it. Simon's ability to compartmentalize in the face of physical and emotional pain pulls the investigation together. But, basically, Lady Helen is the only principle character without a dog in this fight, so to speak. So she does what she does best, she mediates, she coordinates, and she uses both her high society skills and her acting ability to gain information for Lynley.

Elizabeth George's writing throughout this novel is rich, full and expressive. Her characters are, for the most part, high born and/or well educated and she writes a vocabulary to match. Her physical descriptions of people and locations are crisp and clear. Her characters are multi-dimensional and she does not paint them by description or dialogue with any particular society's morality brush. They are who they are, they think and say what they will, and they live with the consequences.

The entries in this series are usually classified as British police procedurals specializing in murder investigations. But this book, in particular, and the series is general, is not really about murder. It is about five intertwined characters: Lynley, Simon, Deborah, Lady Helen and Havers. Murder is only the catalyst that effects changes in these characters' lives and affects the dynamics between them. This series is about people's lives, not about people's deaths.

Even being about people's lives, these entries, particularly this one, are not capable of being classified as romantic suspense either. Even if there are intimate relationships involved and there are mysteries and murders, the emotional, as well as the investigative, content is dark and sometimes quite stressful to absorb. There are no overt or erotic sexual scenarios. While much is alluded to or implied, nothing is gratuitous or sensationalized. And, if you need an HEA at the end, don't look here. In this particular entry, Prince Charming does not get Cinderella, justice is not served, and every one of our characters reaches the last page grappling with some form of a personal living hell.

Phil says

When you're reading a whodunnit and the crime doesn't appear until after page 100, you should take the hint that maybe it isn't the right book for you.

I've read a few other Elizabeth George books and knew that Lynley was a bit of a simp and his friend St. James wasn't really much better, but this book exaggerated those annoying qualities to such a degree that portions were nearly unreadable. The mystery, once it got going, was adequate. Unfortunately the Harlequin-style writing buried the fun under multiple layers of "who gives a shit."

Kathy Davie says

Chronologically, *A Suitable Vengeance* is first in the Inspector Lynley detective mystery series set in modern-day London, and fourth publication-wise.

In 1992, *A Suitable Vengeance* was nominated for the Dilys Award.

Tommy's anger with his mother, Deb's anger with Simon, Peter's anger with Tommy, Justin and Mick's actions, Sidney's emotions, Mark's activities...it's endless.

My Take

A Suitable Vengeance is, chronologically, first in the series as it tells the tale of Deborah's return from school in America with her engagement to Tommy during her visit with Tommy's family in Cornwall. ALL of which takes place well before *A Great Deliverance*, 2, in which Barbara Havers is collecting Tommy for a case from Simon and Deborah's wedding.

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The Story

It's Simon's desperate and undeclared love for Deborah set against her and Tommy's involvement, which leads us to the family weekend at Tommy's estate in Cornwall, Howenstow — Tommy has proposed and Deborah is to meet the family.

And what a weekend to remember. The local Lothario is murdered with a particularly nasty cut with more murders following, and all the suspects are connected to Howenstow. Tommy may be Scotland Yard, but we're not on his patch.

The Cover and Title

The cover is rather painterly with a very suitable subject — the rocks off the Cornish coast which play such a role in opening the case.

A Suitable Vengeance is so incredibly well titled as vengeance abounds throughout the story.

Denaë says

A Suitable Vengeance is the fourth book in Elizabeth George's Inspector Lynley series, but chronologically it occurs years before the first three. In it we see the main characters much younger and gain far more insight into the tangled relationships of Lynley, Deborah, and St. James. Given how much those relationships make me want to shake each one of the players hard, this was my least favorite so far. The mystery itself was interesting, but bizarre in a way that did not redeem the book. I did enjoy the revelations regarding Lynley's relationship with his family, but again, those did not do enough to redeem the book. Not weak enough to put me off the series, but not what I would call good.

Nolan says

The lovely and talented photographer, Deborah Cotter, has come back to England from her years studying in the U.S. Simon St. James, a forensic scientist, has been in love with her since she was 17. No less ardently in love with Deborah is Inspector Tommy Lynley, who is about to announce his engagement to her at his family home in Cornwall. Awkwardly enough, everyone has been invited to the estate for the announcement, including Simon St. James. It is a diffident and civil love triangle, but a love triangle just the same. Deborah clearly loves them both.

But before the weekend party can break up, the usually peaceful Cornwall countryside is riddled with murder, and everyone's a suspect from St. James's sister, Sidney, to Tommy Lynley's brother. A journalist has been savagely murdered—a journalist whose wife grew up on the Lynley estate—a journalist with plenty of secrets, any one of which could get him killed.

Sidney St. James's boyfriend also soon turns up dead, and Lynley and others must discover whether his death was accidental.

Almost as suspenseful to me as were the efforts to solve murders was Deborah Cotter's decision as to which man she would ultimately select. (Because I've flounced about through the series, I knew how it would turn out, but watching it unfold in this book was fascinating indeed.

Mary says

Good read. More of a relationship story, with murder and crime mixed in. I have read her books with The two detectives, Havers and McPherson but they only had small parts in this one. Thomas Lindly of CID, falls in love with a woman who grew up in his best friends household, it is when he takes her home to mom, for an engagement party weekend and his brother shows up, things start to happen.....

Toni Osborne says

The story is very complex, one that explains the background of several characters of this Inspector Lynley mystery series .After reading the 3 first books I had trouble with the sequences of events regarding the characters things seem to be out of synch. I was trying to remember what happened to them previously and I found it conflicted with the way they are presented now. The plot in my view is a bit flat, it starts out interesting enough but it drags on and on. The characters are self-absorbed, full of themselves compared to the previous books making it hard to relate to them. I agree with others who suggest it would have made a wonderful short story.

MadProfessah says

This was the 4th book by Elizabeth George I have read.

The murder mystery was interesting but it was somewhat overwhelmed by the romantic plots sourced in the

tensions between the main characters Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley (the 8th Earl of Asherton), his best friend Simon St.James (a forensic scientist) and the woman they both love (Deborah Cotter, a professional photographer).

In addition to the relationships between Deborah, Simon and Tommy there is also tension between Tommy and his brother Peter and between Tommy and his mother.

However, the mystery at the heart of the story is the death of Mick Cambrey, a local journalist who is living on the Lynley estate, in a small cottage. The event happens during an important weekend where Lynley and Deborah are announcing their engagement, in the presence of their family and friends. Before the end of the weekend two more people are dead, and figuring out why this has happened is quite an engaging tale.

Overall, I would say that this is not one of her best entries in the Lynley series; however it is as brilliantly plotted as the other three books I have read are. But the absence of Barbara Havers is apparent, because in her place is the emotional roller coaster provided by the multiple estranged relationships between the main characters.
