



The Hanging Wood

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Twenty years ago, a teenage boy, Callum Hinds, went missing in England's Lake District. His uncle was suspected of having done the boy harm and interviewed by the police. When he committed suicide close to his cottage in the Hanging Wood, everyone assumed it was a sign of guilt. But the body of the boy was never found.

Now his sister, Orla Payne, who never believed in their uncle's guilt, has returned to the Lakes, and takes up a job in an atmospheric residential library, close to her father's farm, the upmarket caravan park where her step-father works, and the Hanging Wood. She wants to find the truth about Callum's disappearance, and--at the prompting of Daniel Kind--and, in a drunken call, tries to interest DCI Hannah Scarlett, head of Cumbria's Cold Case Review Team, in the case. Hannah is reluctant, leading Orla to demand whether she cares about justice. Hannah does care, and when Orla dies in strange and shocking circumstances, she determines to find the truth about what happened to Callum--and to Orla. Hannah's investigation brings her back into contact with Daniel, while she tries to resolve her troubled relationship with bookseller Marc Amos. But their personal lives have to be put on hold when another death occurs, and Hannah finds herself racing against time to prevent a shocking murder as the past casts long shadows on the sunlit landscape of the Lakes.

The Hanging Wood Details

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Author : Martin Edwards

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From Reader Review The Hanging Wood for online ebook

Cynthia says

Sisters, brothers and Murder

A young boy went missing many years ago. His troubled sister never stops looking for her vanished brother even though others find her obsession distressing and even a sign of mental illness. She meets a young man who might have the key to unlock her past but is he helping or hurting her? She breaks into her estranged, bitter father's farm, falls into his grain silo and dies. The interplay between upper and lesser classes plays out. Seemingly the only thing they have in common is wanting the investigation of boy's murder to stop. Local cold case detective Hannah Scarlet is too tenacious to accommodate them. She senses there's a connection between the sister and brother's murders. This is the first book I've read from Edwards and though this is a series it still stood up alone. Watch for his Trollopean sense of fun with his people and place names.

This review was based on an egalley provided by the publisher.

3.5/5

Mary Gilligan-Nolan says

Another series I really love. A cold case team, led by Hannah Scarlett and an ex-Oxford Historian called Daniel Kind lead this series. Daniel is researching his new book and has taken himself to St. Herbert's Residential Library, on the grounds of the Mockbeggar Estate, where he meets Orla Payne who works in the library and hears her tragic tale of her brother, Callum, who at the age of 14 years, disappeared without a trace one Summer's afternoon, some 20 years earlier. Daniel urges Orla to contact Hannah Scarlett, as she feels her uncle was unjustly accused of her brother's death and hints that there is more to discover in the disappearance of her brother. On the day of a phone call pleading with the cold case team to treat her seriously, Orla falls to her death into a Silo tower on her father's farm, an apparent suicide. Hannah takes a closer look into the circumstances of Callum's disappearance and Orla's death and soon realises with some help from Daniel, there is indeed some secrets from the past that are suddenly coming to the surface. My only niggle is with Hannah and Daniel's relationship, or lack of same. They have been dancing around here now for far too long and I am getting impatient with their lack of progress. Apart from that, it's a great story with a good ending and the hope of yet another book in the future.

Veronica says

I thoroughly enjoyed this mystery. The characters are all well developed and the plot unfolds well to reveal clues along the way. The mystery itself is interesting but a bit gruesome at the end. Well written.

Avid Series Reader says

The Hanging Wood by Martin Edwards is the 5th book of the Lake District mystery series set in contemporary England. DCI Hannah Scarlett is in charge of Cold Case Review Team in the Cumbria Constabulary. It was a bit of a demotion (or sidelining) due to office politics, but she enjoyed finally achieving justice for victims whose cases had gone unsolved far too long. Hannah has split up with bookstore owner Marc, enjoys her solitude most days, but almost succumbs to his pleas to resume their relationship. She's strongly attracted to retired academic Daniel Kind, son of Hannah's former mentor in the police force.

Orla Payne returns to the family farm after many years. She is considered a bit crazy for obsessing about her brother Callum, who disappeared long ago. She works at St. Herbert's Residential Library, an elegant old mansion, where Daniel Kind is writing a biography. Recent employee Aslan, who emigrated from India, has been Orla's latest obsession; she insists he is her brother returned home. Orla pesters the police with phone calls, but she's hardly intelligible due to drunkenness and/or mental confusion. When Orla's body is found in a grain silo on her father's farm, all assume it was suicide. Hannah feels bad that she could not help Orla when the younger woman called, clearly distraught, but Orla did not make sense, and abruptly ended the call.

When another death occurs, both Daniel and Hannah realize Orla Payne's past warrants investigation. Suspicious events tie the Payne and Madsen families: a supposed suicide twenty years ago of Orla's uncle, shortly after her brother Callum disappeared; a crippling injury in an automobile accident of the heir to Mockbeggar Hall; the intermarriage between Payne and Madsen families to secure wealth, Orla's violent father Mike...all events that turn out to be not quite what the families claim. It's challenging to keep track of characters, relationships and motives while Hannah and Daniel solve several mysteries.

Karla Huebner says

This was a book whose premise seemed promising but that did not really impress me remarkably. A young woman whose older brother disappeared when they were growing up tries to interest the police in re-opening the investigation, but she's drunk and incoherent and wanders off to jump or fall or be pushed into her father's grain silo, which certainly gets the attention of the police. The book has its sensitive, atmospheric, and funny moments, but seemed uneven and forced, with mundane details and encounters that bored me rather than charming me. Perhaps this was due to the author losing his mother while writing the book, as other readers praise his overall oeuvre. We can't all write our best all of the time. In any case, this book seemed to veer about somewhat as far as mystery sub-genres go, never quite settling comfortably in one or succeeding in being more than one. I've read police procedurals that I quite enjoyed, but the police procedural side of this book tended to get on my nerves; the cold-case detective was all right as a character, but the other police, her ex-boyfriend, and above all her best friend, irritated me. In sum, I had the feeling that the author wasn't in top form here.

Helen says

I'll have to find the earlier books in this series. This was a very unpleasant set of deaths set in a farming community in the Lake District.

A young teen disappeared twenty years before, his uncle committed suicide, and the conclusion was that the

uncle had interfered with the boy and then killed him. That is the phrase they would have used at the time and it blurs what may have happened. The boy's younger sister eventually left the district but has now returned and tries to make the police believe that her brother is possibly still alive and that there has been no justice. She is unstable herself and commits suicide by diving into a silo full of grain. There is something very appealing about a pile of grain, more so even than a sand pile, but just as dangerous. So she committed suicide. Or did she? And what about the brother? And what about Aslan Sheik? They connect Aslan to the Narnia stories but don't mention that the word literally means "lion" in Turkish. An Armenian lady told me that when she saw her grandchildren and I watching the early film version. Anyway...

The idea of a residential library is so absolutely riveting that I could scarcely get past it. I would like to visit the real place. In spite of being assured that there is a real one, I found the concept a little iffy. The whole story, however, worked pretty well and parts of it were truly horrific.

Will look for others.

Linda says

Three and a half stars...my first Lake District mystery book and much, much darker than expected. Numerous (and gruesome) murders past and present are involved but the recurring characters are well drawn enough that I will probably try another book from this series.

Sue says

To be short and sweet, I've enjoyed the series to date and I found this to be a strong entry. I'll definitely read the next book of Lake District mysteries. Good primary characters and action that grows out of the setting.

Ant Koplowitz says

This felt a bit hum-drum to me. The plot was ok, but some of the characters just seemed too one dimensional, not engaging, and made me not really care about them. Martin Edwards is a good writer, but I think that the Lake District setting is too small, too parochial, and this limits plot and character development. I got fed-up with chippy Hannah Scarlett and wet Daniel Kind. Time for me to move on, even if they won't.

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Cathy Cole says

Greg Wharf's evolution is one of the many reasons why I enjoy this Lake District series so much. Edwards' characterizations are layered and as you're drawn into the stories, you come to realize how much you care for these people. Daniel Kind and Hannah Scarlett are made for each other, but they're taking their sweet time in getting together, partly due in fact to Hannah's difficulty in ending her old relationship with bookseller Marc Amos. And Wharf? In so many other series, he would remain forever a "Jack the Lad," but in Edwards' hands-- although he still remains a wolf-- he's a wolf with surprising depth to his character. Methinks he's

going to play a larger part in books to come, and I'm looking forward to the developments.

The Hanging Wood is a bit of a locked room mystery even though nothing of import actually takes place behind a closed door. It's the entire location that's locked down to outsiders. St. Herbert's Library, Mockbeggar Hall, the Hanging Wood, Lane End Farm, and the upscale caravan park all seem to form a little world, and when one of the characters states that not even poachers would go into the Hanging Wood, it was my clue that outsiders were not involved. The problem was in ferreting out which insider was responsible.

When Hannah and Greg begin investigating, they find an almost incestuous knot of people living there. Niamh Hinds divorces the farmer to marry someone working at the caravan park. Her son Callum stays with his father while Orla goes with her mother. The farmer's brother lives in the Hanging Wood. The daughter of the man who owned Mockbeggar Hall marries the owner of the caravan park. And so it goes. I actually deduced the identity of the killer before the reveal, but there was no way I could've understood the why of it all. This leads to one of my favorite scenes in the book in which Hannah is interrogating one person of interest in one place while Daniel is doing the very same thing at another location. On the surface, the scene is a comparison of interviewing styles, but it reveals so much more about the characters of Hannah and Daniel. Daniel's father was a police officer and Hannah's superior at one time. It's obvious that Daniel is familiar with police procedure. The scene also shows how very good these two are at what they do and that they belong together. A little romantic tension when those two aren't even in the same building. Good, isn't it?

That's just one scene. The Hanging Wood is an excellent entry in a superior series. Yes, you can walk right into the action in this book and not really miss anything, but I'd suggest that you start at the beginning so you can savor every little bit of the atmosphere of England's beautiful Lake District and the wonderful stories and characters that Martin Edwards has created.

Rog Harrison says

I enjoyed Martin Edwards' Harry Devlin series so when I saw this in the library I thought I'd give it a go. After a few pages I realised that I had read a previous book in this series but I could not recall what it was and I had to check Goodreads to see that I had read "The arsenic labyrinth" in 2009 and had given it three stars but had not written a review. "The hanging wood" has a decent plot and the person responsible for the crimes comes to a gruesome end. There were several twists and this should have been a book which I enjoyed but at the end I just did not feel that it was more than OK. I think my problem is that I did not like the main characters who are a police detective and a historian and somehow this got in the way of my enjoying an interesting story. Sadly I don't feel any desire to read the other books in this series now.

Patricia says

Over the top! I highly recommend the Lake District mystery series. This is book #5, and I completely enjoyed it and am looking forward to book #6 with anticipation.

Bruce Hatton says

Despite this being the fifth book in a series I'd not read before, I found it still worked perfectly on its own without needing to know the back-stories of the central characters.

The apparent suicide of troubled, alcoholic Orla Payne is somehow linked to the disappearance of her brother Callum some 20 years earlier, followed by the suicide of her Uncle Phillip.

The novel is set in the beautiful, rugged countryside of the Northern Fells around Keswick, Ambleside and Derwent Water. The delightful descriptions of the landscape contrasted sharply with the ugliness of many of the more villainous characters: a lethal mix of fading aristocracy and nouveau-riche.

I liked the way both central characters, Hannah Scarlett and Daniel Kind both managed to arrive at the same solution to the central mystery coming at it from totally different directions. Still too late, alas, to prevent a truly shocking ending.

Fiona says

Reasonably entertaining murder mystery. A few pinkish herrings along the way, a satisfying ending, and well written characters. The author is keen to promote the Lake District but it isn't comfortably part of the narrative and is quite embarrassingly clunky in places. If I was looking for a quick read, I might read others in this series but I don't feel compelled to hunt them down.

John says

The Hanging Wood (Lake District Mystery #5)

by Martin Edwards (Goodreads Author)

3.69 · Rating Details · 451 Ratings · 58 Reviews

Twenty years ago, a teenage boy, Callum Hinds, went missing in England's Lake District. His uncle was suspected of having done the boy harm and interviewed by the police. When he committed suicide close to his cottage in the Hanging Wood, everyone assumed it was a sign of guilt. But the body of the boy was never found.

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