



Dying to Sin: A Cooper & Fry Mystery

Stephen Booth

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You never know what you might uncover ...

This chilling procedural is perfect for fans of Ian Rankin and Peter James.

While digging the foundation for the conversion of an old farmyard into upscale stables, builders unearth a human hand preserved in clay. Suddenly suspicious, the police explore further and find not one body, but two.

To crack a case that's even colder than the ground, detectives Cooper and Fry must look into the past of the eerily named Pity Wood Farm. But there is no obvious reason why the previous owners, two elderly brothers, would have corpses buried on their land. With little to go on but a collection of old bones, Cooper and Fry search desperately for a clue as to who—or what—brings death to Pity Wood Farm.

Dying to Sin: A Cooper & Fry Mystery Details

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From Reader Review Dying to Sin: A Cooper & Fry Mystery for online ebook

Clare O'Beara says

A half derelict farm has been sold in the rain-sodden Peak District. When the builders turn up a body the local police take charge, and soon discover other odd situations like chemical use, pagan superstition, migrant workers not on the books and some even more sinister criminals.

As the farm was inhabited by two elderly brothers I at first thought it was an earlier book I'd read, but the tale quickly went off into new territory for the police, who have to cope with modern crime even in the close-mouthed mountain district.

Diane Fry even makes a flying visit to Dublin while her colleague Ben Cooper realises that as a local copper he is going to be stuck doing local coppering for ever. If he can't get promotion soon, younger cops will be promoted over his head. With Ben's liking for hiking alone though, it's hard to imagine him as Chief Inspector.

I enjoyed the read and look forward to the next book. This is an unbiased review.

Yves Lefevre says

Great plot (with a small discrepancy towards the end).

Convincing main characters. Some of the secondary characters are not very convincing though.

Jeremy says

.Well, this kept me entertained in the car for a week. I think I must have switched off a few times though because I was lost in the story from time to time. That didn't matter too much as the plot didn't seem to move from where it was on CD 2 and the story spent it's time wandering around the topics of Polish workers, the troubled British farming community turning to making skunk (??), myths and superstitions and the like. There was a trip to Ireland in the story - I couldn't work out why that happened (maybe that was where I switched off?). What was all that about skulls being kept in farm houses to ward off spirits? There was a comment towards the end which resonated with me - about people living in towns and cities being so insular these days that no-one ever witnesses anything whereas in the country everyone knows everyone else's business (apparently it used to be the other way around).

I'm sure I would have made more of the book if I was reading it rather than listening to it but as an audio book I have heard much better.

Shireen says

Unlike previous books in the Cooper and Fry series, this book has a lot of Law & Order type preachiness in it aka informing reader of the state of a situation, in this case farming in the UK. Or maybe I just noticed it more this time. I know it's hard to pass on necessary information to readers, or to inform them of a real-world injustice, in a natural way, usually through dialogue; I would've liked it to have been better done, to truly sound like natural venting from one of the characters. But the plot was still intriguing, and character growth still kept me engaged.

Helen says

This is the first of Stephen Booth's that I've read and I'm not sure where exactly this book goes, other than in mysteries, because you learn something of the geology, the history, the sociology and the industry of the Peak area of England. It is set in a small semi-rural town where people know most of their neighbours and know mostly what they're up to. There's a retired policeman in the area, a man who doesn't believe in all this modern policing and feels that the only proper way is to be part of the community, get to really know everyone and "have a quiet word" when someone appears to be starting to go astray. You have to overlook some things in a place like that and as a result two brothers saw their farm turn into a mess. Along the way we learn about screaming skulls, illegal immigrants and the dangerous uses to which places can be put. Parts of the book are a little confusing to follow, partly because this is the 8th in the series, partly because he is writing for an English audience, and partly because you have to be alert to notice when you've changed the point of view. Diane and Ben are nothing like each other so you have to be sure which of them is speaking or listening. Enjoyed learning about the decline of agriculture in the Peak, and enjoyed the plot. The mud seems to be just like some we experienced near Birch Hills in Saskatchewan, thick, sticky, clumping and adding pounds to whatever it clung onto.

Vera says

Confesso que ao pegar neste livro ia com as expectativas bastante elevadas só que ninguém me avisou e eu não fiz uma pesquisa decente antes de iniciar a leitura por isso não fazia ideia que seria o oitavo de uma série pelo que fiquei sem perceber se terei perdido algo por ter começado pelo livro "errado".

O desenvolvimento é bastante mais lento do que estava à espera, sem cenas de violência gratuita e uma grande informação de procedimentos policiais, é de facto bastante interessante conseguirmos perceber a meticulosidade do seu trabalho. Houve uma cena em especial onde a patologista faz descrição detalhada dos dois corpos que para uns pode ser fascinante (principalmente para quem gosta de series como o CSI) mas para outros pode ser informação a mais. Nota-se que há uma pesquisa extensa sobre estes procedimentos o que valoriza bastante a obra. A interação entre Ben e Diane também é feita a conta gotas, nota-se uma certa tensão entre eles mas não consegui perceber se o mesmo advém de alguma situação anterior ou se eles são assim desde sempre. Fiquei com a nítida ideia que perdi algo da história deles o que só pode ser colmatado com a leitura dos livros anteriores.

É interessante como vamos conhecendo a zona rural de Peak District, pormenores de agricultura que são-nos dados por Ben ou pelo seu irmão, as pessoas que caracterizam a zona, como o dono do pub Dog Inn e outros habitantes locais e como eles vão contribuindo para a trama. Também a superstição está patente e a crença popular torna o livro ainda mais envolvente e peculiar.

A história apesar de bastante boa não conseguiu prender-me com a mesma intensidade de outros policiais mas julgo que isso se deve em muito ao facto de os últimos lidos me terem marcado profundamente pela sua componente psicológica, bem como violência física extrema. Tem todos os ingredientes para os amantes do género e julgo que os seguidores desta série não se irão desiludir. Booth sabe sem dúvida o que faz e nós leitores vemos bem que o seu trabalho é exaustivo principalmente a nível de pesquisa.

Fiquei satisfeita e penso ler mais deste autor mas terei de ver a ordem correcta dos seus livros para não voltar a ser apanhada desprevenida.

Julie says

Dying to Sin by Stephen Booth is a May 2014 Witness Impulse publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

An old Farmhouse with the odd name of Pity Farms is the scene of a very puzzling crime. Workers digging on the foundation discovered a preserved hand . This sets off a string of other gruesome discoveries on this out of the way farm where evidently someone has been getting away with murder for a long time. With the owners of the farm either dead or suffering from dementia, Cooper and Fry have their hands full. First of all the task of identifying the dead bodies and then trying to figure out who they need to interview especially since the these corpses have been buried awhile and the farm had hired many immigrants over the years who came and went frequently. To add more pressure it is the holiday season and Diane and Ben both seem to have a case of the Bah Humbugs.

Diane is feeling out of her element more than ever before while working this case. Her inability to fit into this small community has come to the attention of her superiors who have suggested to her she could be happier somewhere else. While she knows that and ask herself why she is wasting her time here when she could easily find a job working for the MET, having someone else point this out for her was painful.

This eighth installment in the Cooper and Fry series is a particularly difficult one. The owners of the farm are selling it and the sole survivor in the family is in a facility suffering from Alzheimer's. By all accounts two brothers lived together on the farm for years although they did not get along at all. One brother was a religious man and the other was very superstitious. Odd ducks for sure. But, there have been some rather disturbing occurrences on the farm in the past and the detective working the case back then seemed to have found his own way of handling things.

This book is a procedural which takes the reader through the entire investigation from start to finish showcasing good old fashioned police work. The office politics are bubbling over in background and we glimpse the personal lives of Cooper and Fry at times as well. I loved the forensic elements the author included. These details were very interesting, for example we are told how the pathologist might judge the age of a corpse. The odd goings on at that farm also showcases a terrible problem that seems to plague small community's worse than the big cities. This case reminds us that bucolic scenery can be a deadly illusion and crimes are more easily committed and hidden in this type of environment. But the same sins inflict the country folk as do the city folk, a lesson that will most likely have long term repercussions.

Sadly, Diane's future seems a little unsettled and she appears to be ready for a change in her career and perhaps in her personal life too. I felt like I could identify with Diane on many levels. I don't want to say anything that would hurt anyone's feelings , but having lived in a small town for many years, I still to this very day never found a niche for myself. Sometimes that is simply the case for those who are not born and raised in an area. Newcomers just don't get all the little inside jokes or the lingo or jargon or mindset and are never fully accepted. If someone is lucky enough to finally breakthrough they will admit it took them a great many years to do so.

I hope that this case and Diane's quick thinking that helped solve the murders and unravel an ongoing crime

will give her some long overdue respect and she will be able to feel like she belongs, at least a little bit. Only time will tell.

Dark, atmospheric, moody, and suspenseful- I give this one 4 stars.

note: This book was published previously. This is a reissue by William Morrow's Witness Impulse imprint. This book is now available in digital format.

Kirsty Darbyshire says

This book didn't captivate me as much as earlier books in the series have done. Still like the atmospheric setting, still like the central characters, and the rest of the characters were mostly well drawn. The plot felt a bit ropey in places, especially near the end, and it seemed to go on that bit too long. It wasn't awful, and still better than plenty of mysteries out there. I guess I just think Booth can do better, which isn't really an insult is it?

Nikki says

I've been enjoying Stephen Booth's Cooper and Fry series from the beginning. Set in England's picturesque, but menacing, Peak District the series is both typical and untypical of the classic British police procedural. The main characters, Ben Cooper and Diane Fry, are officers who often work together -- what a US police force would call partners. The pairing of a man and a woman officer is not unusual -- viz. Deborah Crombie and Jill McGown. Unlike in the books of those two authors, there is as yet no romantic relationship between Cooper and Fry. We're always given the feeling that they could become friends, at least, but their own inner demons have so far prevented that. Fry also outranks Cooper - she is a sergeant and quite concerned with her career path, while Cooper seems to be stuck at Detective Constable. Cooper is a local boy, son of a heroically dead police sergeant, with a brother who is still farming; Fry is an urban transplant from the Black Country and frequently bemoans her inability to get a handle on Cooper and the other locals. However, when it comes to investigating, they are usually on the same wavelength.

It appears that *Dying to Sin*, published in 2007, is the most recent to be released in the US, although there are two more recent books available in the UK. I didn't dislike this book, but it did take me a while to get through, with the two police detectives both dealing with their own problems and insecurities and a lot of moaning about the plight of the British farmer. The book moves quite slowly for a good portion of its considerable length. Of course, the situation -- the discovery of an unidentified body, and then another, on a derelict farm that's being converted to a hobby farm for a rich city dweller -- engenders a certain amount of interest in the police department, but not much urgency, since the bodies have been there some time and Christmas is just around the corner. I have a fairly high tolerance for slow-moving stories but I can see that it wouldn't be to everyone's taste. The story does become more exciting in the last third of the book, and new developments in Cooper's and Fry's personal and professional lives add interest. I will still be looking for the subsequent volumes in the series, but I'll be hoping that Booth comes up with some resolution to his characters' depression in the next books. Recommended for Booth fans, but if you haven't read him before, don't start with this one.

Colin Mitchell says

A story that kept me engaged over four evenings, alright well into the night, with a well crafted plot that had an unexpected conclusion. This is a tale of the declining farming community of the Peak District of Derbyshire and its rural inhabitants finding it difficult to change. We have the now well trodden relationship between the local Ben Cooper and Sergeant Diane Fry from her Black Country roots that produce the inevitable clashes. In this book this is overshadowed by the arrival of a new Superintendent. Plenty of bodies, migrant foreign workers and street girls make for a good crime novel.

Quillracer says

This is another solid entry in the series.

But it had one major flaw: it went on one chapter too long. The final line of the penultimate chapter would have been the perfect ending to the story. The last chapter – gloomy and depressing – added nothing but word count to the story.

Booth still spends too much time detailing the main characters' introspections. In the middle of a scene, the POV character will suddenly veer off into mental rambling about something only peripherally related to events. This kills the story's forward momentum until Booth returns to the plot. Although this book is over 100 pages shorter (at roughly 500 pages) than prior entries, these asides still need more paring down.

Booth continues to soften Fry's attitude toward Cooper, which is a welcome change from earlier books where she seemed to treat him as a slightly addled stepbrother – tolerated but not accepted because he will never quite be her equal. I'm beginning to wonder why he doesn't tell her off once and for all.

Maybe it does really rain a lot in the Peak District, but Booth often has his characters standing out in it, getting soaked. In the real world, they would know enough to dress in proper rain gear. Come on, Mr. Booth, fix that.

Despite these niggling irritations I keep reading these books because stripped of all the wasted words, Booth tells a great story about an engaging mystery.

Lela says

I keep reading these books even though I always feel like there is never an ending. Perhaps that's why! Mr Booth has found the formula that keeps some of us returning. At the end of the one before, I wasn't sure I could keep reading without something different happening with the relationship between Fry & Cooper. Well, apparently, I will continue as I've already started the next one. I continue to hope for some progress of any sort with that pair. Then, there is the weird angst of Ben's brother, Matt. Ben's flirtation with the "other." His clueless attitude & actions with and around Liz. All this and I haven't touched on the crimes and mysteries! As always the crimes, criminals -- what, how, who, when -- gets sorted by the end. Sometimes I have to reread portions to figure any of it out. At times I think I'll scream. And, yet, I keep attaching 4 stars. Sigh. I must enjoy being punished. BTW - start this series at the beginning or you probably won't like it.

Ann Reed says

Dying to sin by Stephen Booth

This book was more ghoulish than I'm comfortable reading but well written. The characters were real and vivid, especially those two Cooper and Fry who are always opposing each other's ideas. The country people they are investigating are dark and and silent adding to the mysteries surrounding them

Ann Reed

Monika says

Jag fortsätter att beta av den här serien och börjar fundera på om det möjligtvis kan vara för mycket att läsa en varje månad. Inte för att boken är dålig på något sätt, men jag märker att väldigt mycket är samma. Något som jag inte brukar haka upp mig på när det går längre tid mellan böcker i en serie. Läs mer på min blogg

Spuddie says

#8 DC Ben Cooper/DS Diane Fry mystery set in the Peak District of England. A body has been found at Pity Wood Farm, an old family farm recently sold off when the last remaining Sutton brother, Raymond, goes into a care home. Developers are digging and re-doing much of the farmstead when a college student unearths a hand while digging--which soon proves to be attached to a body, estimated to have been in the ground for about a year.

While the forensic and pathology departments try to determine cause of death, Cooper and Fry begin interviewing neighbors and old Mr. Sutton, whose mind isn't very sharp anymore. No one has been reported missing in the area, although the villagers and people living on the surrounding farms are decidedly reticent in dealings with the police, so they're stumped as to who the body might have been. They're surmising that it may have been one of the many seasonal workers, often foreign help provided by agencies when another body turns up wrapped in the same plastic, only estimated to have died about four years previously.

As Christmas approaches, the whole of the police force groans with the knowledge that celebrations with family and friends may be in short supply, and a new Det. Superintendent seems hell bent on making some major changes--one that may see Diane Fry transferring out. Cooper, meanwhile, struggles with the deepening relationship with SOCO Liz Petty.

Another enjoyable visit to Edendale and surrounding area. The relationship between Cooper and Fry still irks me and the dialogue still at times feels somewhat unnatural, but the stories themselves are wonderful. I picked up on many of the clues as to 'what was going on' fairly early on (and am surprised that the cops didn't!) but didn't figure out the whole package until just before the reveal. Fry bugs the heck out of me, and sometimes I want to smack Cooper upside the head, too, but something about the books keeps drawing me back to the series and they never disappoint. A.

