



## Lessons in Murder

*Claire McNab*

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On a hot summer day in Sydney Australia, teacher Bill Pagett is murdered. Detective Inspector Carol Ashton uncovers tangled relationships among six teachers, threats by letter and phone, and another corpse. Plus she is attracted to prime suspect Sybil Quade.

## Lessons in Murder Details

Date : Published February 1st 2004 by Bella Books (first published 1988)

ISBN : 9781931513654

Author : Claire McNab

Format : Paperback 222 pages

Genre : Mystery, Gltb, Lesbian, Lgbt, Fiction, Lesbian Fiction, Crime, Queer

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## From Reader Review Lessons in Murder for online ebook

### **Freyja Vanadis says**

A cross between a romance and a murder mystery. Again, the stilted formal British way of speaking is amusing and/or annoying, but otherwise it's a decent story.

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### **Awallens says**

On a hot summer day at Bellwhether High School in Sydney, Australia, teacher Bill Pagett lies murdered, the hole in his head accomplished with neat efficiency by a Black & Decker drill.

Detective Inspector Carol Ashton investigates, bringing with her a formidable reputation for competence. She soon uncovers tangled relationships and motives for murder among the six teaching staff, along with a maze of malicious anonymous letters and threatening phone calls. And then there is yet another corpse.

Carol's investigation is further complicated by the flashfire attraction between herself and prime suspect Sybil Quade. Carol fights her desire, knowing its potential to compromise her investigation. Nor does Sybil welcome an "unnatural" obsession with the alluring woman who is inexorably gathering the evidence to convict her of multiple murder.

The mystery in this book was lackluster at first and the romance was just so-so. the author does a good job of setting up the next book though and I will continue the series for at least a few more to see if it gets better.

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### **Tony Hisgett says**

This is a book I have had for quite a while but haven't read it because I haven't been able to find any of the others in the series (and I think there might be 15 or 16 others). You might think this is a strange reason, but what if I really like the first book then can't find the rest, the frustration could be overwhelming. Having noticed in an update from Bella books that they have the some Carol Ashton books, I thought it was time to give it a go.

Well I'm frustrated, because I liked this book and I wish somebody (probably Bella Books) would republish all Claire Ashton's back catalogue as e-books.

At the start of the book the central character seems a bit too perfect but I soon found myself really liking her. I'm not sure what it is, but Carol has something about her that makes her out of the ordinary. The actual mystery started slowly but soon got going and worked well for the first half of the book. Later on it bogged down a little and didn't flow as well, but picked up again near the end.

I must admit I found the on/off relationship between Carol and Sybil a bit annoying, both saying exactly the right words to infuriate each other, seemingly every time they met. While at the same time having a different conversation in their heads, this became a bit tedious after happening several times.

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## Megan says

Some time ago, I posted an article giving my opinion about why you should read the first book in a series first. One of those reasons is that the first book should be the best, despite the possibility that it might be a little raw. In another article I complained that the small sample of a book that Amazon allows you to read for free is often not enough to tell if the whole is worth paying for. Well, *Lessons in Murder* brings these ideas home in a big way.

I read the sample of this book twice, and neither time did I think it worth paying the too-high price of \$9.99 for the remainder. Instead, I read books 4 and 5 of the same series, which I already had in my library. After reading these, and enjoying them to some extent, I decided to find a used copy of book 1 and see how the series started. So I did, and surprisingly, I was surprised. *Lessons in Murder*, despite getting off to a slow and somewhat clumsy start, was by far the best of the three and very worth reading.

Because this novel does exactly what the first book in a lesbian mystery series *should* do: it has an interesting puzzle to solve, it's peopled with likeable (and unlikeable) characters, and it chronicles the beginnings of a love story between the detective and someone else. In this case, Inspector Carol Ashton investigates a murder at a posh high school just outside Sydney. The prime suspect is Sybil Quade, a woman that Carol feels an immediate attraction to. And even though the other woman is married, she feels a similar attraction for Carol.

Carol, too, was once married, and even has a 9-year-old son who lives with his father, making this book the second I have read where the sleuth and her love interest start out straight (the first was Iza Moreau's *The News in Small Towns*. And the growing attraction between the two—coupled with Carol's strong belief that dating a murder suspect is unprofessional and Sybil's initial conviction that women loving women is unnatural—make this a juicy story in a lot of ways.

The murder plot is well done—and well played by Carol and her team, including her assistant, Detective Mark Bourke, a handsome, likeable man and a good police officer. The interviews are professional and rewarding in a slow but inexorable way. And there are lots of baddies, too, from the religious fanatic to an ex-Premier whose political career was marred by suspicions of corruption.

My main problem with the book—and the one that caused me initially to stop reading after the sample, is that Carol Ashton is too perfect. Or rather, everyone—good guys, bad gals, and especially the author—are so dazzled by everything about her that they literally can't see straight. Tall and blonde and gorgeous, she is famous for bringing her cases to a satisfactory conclusion and sought after by the media because of her looks and her calm, unperturbed demeanor. Here are some descriptions showing how everything about her is extraordinary: "Carol's smooth, decisive driving," "the firm lines of her mouth," "Carol drove efficiently," she parked "with swift competence," she had "long, sensitive fingers," "that beautiful woman," And all of these come in a three-page sequence!

McNab also has a tendency to use phrases usually confined to cheap romances. I imagine that editor Katherine V. Forrest edited out most of these, but some remain. I also wish there had been a little more backstory, more give and take between Sybil and Carol about their pasts. As it is, it reads like it may have been shortened because of Naiad's penchant for not going more than a page or two over 200. On the other hand, this length is almost perfect for an enjoyable read on a day that you have absolutely nothing else to do

but lounge and drift off into another world.

Note: I read the fourth Naiad printing of this book.

Another Note: See my full reviews of over 200 other Lesbian Mystery novels at  
<http://www.goodreads.com/group/show/1...>

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### **jo says**

the plot is not something to write home about, and the unveiling of the mystery proceeds rather ploddingly and without focus, but the relation between carol and sybil is great, and greatly paced. as with **Death Down Under** i would have liked the book to wrap up a bit more slowly, but hey, i read this in one sitting, and enjoyed every second of it.

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### **Jen says**

So I have finally got around to start the Detective Inspector Carol Ashton Mystery series and I have to say that while the storyline was a little frustrating the story itself and the writing were very good. Bill, a teacher at Bellwhether High is found in the industrial arts room MURDERED!!! Positioned at a desk with the murder weapon pointing at his eye, upon further inspection the cause of death is found to be a Black and Decker to the base of the skull! Who would commit such a horrendous crime and in such a well respected school? Enter, Detective Inspector Carol Ashton, assigned to the case not only for her great reputation but also because Bill just happens to be the son of a prominent man in the community, one with possible connections to things higher than government influence. Carol starts working the case and is lead astray by pretty much every suspect in the school. First up is Sybil whose estranged husband was the best friend of the victim and some even say he was the reason for the separation. Other suspects pop up as the story continues: A student who found out that Bill was sleeping with students, the girl who was pregnant by Bill, a few teachers who knew about Bill's tendencies like Edwina the plump busybody, Lynne the jealous vixen, and Terry the stalker with a bad temper. As things unfold in the story, Carol and Sybil discover a mutual attraction to each other and against Carol's better judgement they end up sleeping together. Much to Carol's chagrin (knowing the pratfalls of getting involved with a straight woman) Sybil regrets what she has done claiming it to be unnatural, although it does not stop her from enjoying Carol again. Then the calls start, first it was Sybil, threatening to chop her head off and calling her a randy little bitch. Then come the reports of Edwina, Lynne and another teacher getting similar calls and then Carol finds out about the letters that the principal has been receiving and subsequently destroying, all except the last one. Of course no evidence can be obtained from the letters or the phone calls so again, everyone is a suspect. The case really turns when Sybil's husband is found dead thrown off a cliff, Sybil didn't even know he had come back and was surprised to realize that he was at Bill's house as Sybil and Bill were having an argument. As Carol investigates further she realizes two things: Sybil is not guilty and in danger and that she is overly attracted to her. As Carol narrows down the suspect list to just one person she realizes that imminent danger lies ahead and she must act quickly! Is the murderer the plain laced Edwina, one of the students that knew about the proclivities of Bill, Terry the overprotective stalker of Sybil, Sybil's estranged husband, or Lynne the temptress that wanted to be with Bill. Will Carol be able to save Sybil? Will their attraction bloom into something more? One thing is for sure Detective Inspector Carol Ashton always gets her man and her woman!

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### **Fleppy85 says**

I loved her series about the Australian private investigator in Los Angeles so I read this one as well. Somehow the main character didn't come over as good as the ones before.

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### **Jay Odon says**

The first book in a long line of great stories involving Detective Inspector Carol Ashton. This episode introduces Carol as she investigates the murder of a teacher and the prime suspect is a very attractive woman. As she investigates she not only gets close to catching the killer she also gets close with Sybil. Lines between business and personal are blurred and Carol might just be sleeping with the killer.

Strong characters that are very human and fallible. You fall in love with them because they are "normal" and you can see yourself in their shoes, well at least in the personal sense. Of course if you are a detective then you could identify with it on a business sense too.

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### **Little Fish says**

Gruesome murder of a teacher in Sydney, Australia brought Det. Carol Ashton in to hunt for his killer. She was known for her formidable reputation for competence. She soon uncovers all kinds of entanglements among the teaching staff, motives, malicious telephone calls, letters and another corpse. Complicated by a flashfire attraction to Sybil Quade one of the suspects.

REally HOT book!

Lesbians and questioning women will enjoy it.

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### **Murphy says**

I really liked this Carol Ashton mystery. It was one of the early ones and the mystery is first rate.

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