



## Flesh House

*Stuart MacBride*

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## **Flesh House** Stuart MacBride

Those who like their crime thrillers diamond hard (but shot through with macabre humour) need look no further than Stuart MacBride. As 'Flesh House', his latest, once again proves, he has few equals in this area, and is more than worthy of the ever-growing legion of admirers he is gleaning.

His tough protagonist, Logan McRae, is once again negotiating the mean streets of Aberdeen, with violence and threat forever at his elbow. Those who have read 'Cold Granite', 'Dying Light' and 'Broken Skin' will know what to expect here - and they'll be aware that they're not in for a comfortable ride.

The city is in a state of fear. Some 20 years ago, the Grampian police nailed a particularly vicious serial killer known as The Flesher, a monster who had claimed victims throughout the country. But one of those frequent legal appeals which so often release dangerous criminals into the community has freed him, and when a container with human body parts appears at Aberdeen harbour, it looks like the stage is once again set for carnage on a massive scale. DS Logan McRae (along with his less experienced colleague, Chief Constable Mark Faulds from Birmingham - who was on the original team tracking down The Flesher), finds himself in charge of one of the most ambitious manhunts city has ever seen. And then members of the original team tracking down their serial killer prey (whose real name is Ken Wiseman) begin to disappear - and more human meat is making grisly appearances.

All of this is delivered with the requisite grasp of tension and characterisation that we have come to expect from Stuart MacBride. There are those who will feel he has gone too far in *Flesh House* in confronting the less savoury aspects of human behaviour, but fans of uncompromising crime writing will be in their element.

- Barry Forshaw

## **Flesh House Details**

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Author : Stuart MacBride

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## From Reader Review Flesh House for online ebook

### Chelsea says

It's as if the powers at be knew I needed a reminder as to why I fell in love with this series and sent me this baby and holy shit, THIS WAS FUCKING AMAZING!

Twenty five years ago Aberdeen was rocked with some gruesome and grisly murders committed by a serial killer known as the Flesher. But the Flesher didn't just hack up bodies. Oh no, they cut them up into joints of meat and distributed them into the food chain of the Granite City. The killer was caught eventually however he protested his innocence and due to a technicality he was released. And then the killings start up again when human body parts are found in a meat container being shipped out to the oil rigs and Logan McRae is once again caught up in a shitstorm along with the always wisecracking DI Steel.

I needed this book. Needed it so much and I didn't know it. There's nothing I love more than losing myself in a good crime novel and against the backdrop of Aberdeen with some good old Scottish humour chucked in, what more could I possibly want?

The last McRae book was a little dry for me and left me worrying that I was getting sick of the characters but this restarted for them all! And this book is gory. It should probably come with a warning not to eat any type of meat while reading this because all you'll feel is stomach churning nausea. I did wonder to myself how the hell Stuart MacBride thinks up his plotlines because so many of them are the ultimate shade of fucked up AND I AM LIVING FOR THEM!

As the books go on I feel that the characters are becoming more and more developed and I love them all the more for it. Logan and his penchant for shitty hangovers, Steel and her inability not to flirt with any and all females who walk past her, Jackie with her collection of porcelain pigs, Insch with his sweetie addiction and Rennie with his tendency to overshare every aspect of his love life.

And then we have the plotline. Absolutely stomach churning and sickening but so very very good and honestly even I'm still not 100% sure of what the fuck happened at the end but DAMN IT I LOVED IT!

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### Phrynne says

Stuart MacBride teeters on the edge of being totally gross with this one! I have seen several reviews where the writers advise not to eat whilst reading this book. I totally agree!

Nevertheless it is an excellent book, so grim and dark and yet frequently laugh out loud funny. The police procedural aspects are very well done and I really enjoyed working out the killer's identity at the same time as the police did using the same clues. There was still a degree of surprise at the end but it was not totally out of left field as sometimes happens.

Best of all was the character development. Over four books all the main characters have grown on me in particular of course Logan McCrae. It is so nice to see him getting a bit tougher and standing up for himself (to a degree anyway).

I am now really looking forward to #5:)

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## Helen says

*Flesh House* by Stuart MacBride is the fourth book in the “Cold Granite” series that focuses on DS Logan McRae. As an avid fan of crime books and even more so of crime series, it’s hard to find a writer that manages to write a series that not only sticks to characters but also allows them to grow and develop without completely destroying them. The characters are all down-to-earth as well as completely realistic through highlighting their failures but also how they work well together as a team. The character dynamics is one of the main reasons I read this series as well as the cases being excellently thought out as well as creating twists that you never expect to happen. Move over Taggart and Rebus, the ‘Cold Granite’ series is the Scottish Crime everyone should be reading!

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## Allan Nail says

So, I was going to do this tomorrow. I finished the book a little before ten, and was just going to go to bed. Do this tomorrow. But I was restless, wanted to start another book, but couldn't bring myself to do so without writing my little review. And so, here I sit, in my jammies, writing about one sick bastard. I'm looking at you, Stuart MacBride.

There's got to be a point where description turns to pornography, right? A limit to the amount of glee a writer can take in describing the violence of which I don't doubt humanity is capable (I was in Gainesville during the Danny Rolling manhunt after all), yeah? And yet, MacBride gets more disturbing in not only the creative ways people can destroy one another, all the while increasing the level of likability of his main character. When I first started the Logan McRae series, I wasn't sure I would stick with it. Serviceable tartan noir, but nothing remarkable and Denise Mina and Ian Rankin had spoiled me. Still, I liked that McRae, for all his brilliant, intuitive leaps, never seemed to get promoted from detective sergeant to detective inspector (but come on, it's going to have to happen, or you're going to have to explain why, MacBride) and gave us insight into the workhorses of the Scottish police force. So I read the forth, and it was pretty damn good.

Look, this isn't the best of Scottish crime writing, but then I'm not sure MacBride is shooting for that. Honestly, I'm not sure what he's shooting for, he may just be enjoying himself, but his books are compelling on a few levels. First, the crimes are so horrific, yet believable in their unfolding and eventual solving. Largely, MacBride has avoided the trap that always seems to catch Michael Connelly, namely that he (Connelly) never really reveals anything until the BIG reveal, making the solution a little unbelievable and sometimes a bit too unsatisfying. Logan has intuitive leaps, but they come after bits of evidence that are also clues to the reader-- this time around, I kinda sorta figured out the mystery, and it enhanced my enjoyment rather than diminishing it. Second, the chaos. I've mentioned this before, but MacBride never ignores that cops have more than one thing to do at a time. As much as I love Rebus, it never seemed like his caseload was all that full. Occasionally there would be multiple crimes, but they always appeared to be connected at some level. Again, not a complaint so much as an observation about what MacBride does differently. Logan, as a DS, is attached to at least three superior officers at various points in the book, is absolutely brutalized with expectations of work to be done, and the cast of characters he interacts with in the course of it all are legion (well, perhaps not so big, but big enough) to provide a bit of dizziness.

In this book, MacBride does a risky thing: he beats up on his own a little, and rather than introducing heretofore unknown cops on which to beat, he does it with major, recurring characters. Connelly did this a third of the way through the Harry Bosch series, but it was with an absolute bastard and a one-dimensional

one at that. The character who suffers the most in this novel may not be that fleshed out (sorry, bad pun if you've read it), but he's kind of a big deal and decidedly not a "bad guy." Moral ambiguity. Mmmm.

Still, the book isn't perfect. Really, I give it four stars in relation to the other McRae novels. It's better, but uneven. DI Steele, a character I initially hated but have come to really enjoy and favor, seemingly disappears near the end of the book, which is odd as she was so central through most of it to that point. Though, thinking back on it now, she really could have been replaced with any other DI and only the humor would have been missing-- which is saying something, don't get me wrong. Yet, Auntie Roberta was like Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (as a student recently pointed out to me): not necessary at all and the plot would turn out the same way. And while I don't need my loose ends tied up, especially in crime fiction, the way this one ended was a bit jumpy.

All-in-all, a good read. I'll continue, if this is a flavor (sorry, can't help myself) of what's to come.

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### **comfort says**

Once again Mr MacBride delves into his seriously weird mind and brings up the story of a serial killer who is butchering people and adding their flesh to the food chain.

Lots of false turns in this story and the killer is not evident until the very end.

Logan is still a D.S. in Aberdeen but is offered the chance of becoming a D. I. in the Midlands, a new job which he decides is just what he needs, but things don't go to plan and he is once again stuck with D.I. Steele. D.I. Inch his other nemesis has been struck down both by health issues and the aftermath of a traumatic tragedy.

His love affair with Jackie is obviously over, he just has to tell her but things have not been right with them since she went a tad rogue trying to catch the killer in the last book.

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### **Mystereity Reviews says**

Good, but an ordeal to finish. After awhile it seemed like the gore was inserted to make the book longer, but it didn't necessarily make it better.

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### **Nancy Ellis says**

If I could have given a -1 rating, I would have. I've read the first three books and enjoyed them. This one made me want to give up completely on the series. I'm embarrassed to admit I read the whole thing even though I hated it from the beginning. I realize that each person has a subject he/she just can't stand to deal with. I can usually handle anything done at a reasonable level, but this one is waaaaaaay over the top dealing with crimes involving cannibalism. There were literally pages where the writing made me feel ill. I suppose that's a sign of good writing, which is in a perverse way one of the reasons I kept reading! I hated the way all the characters were trashed, from peripherals to main characters, just slaughtered either physically or personality-wise. Disgusting. Even McRae was a useless dishrag. The murderers themselves were pathetic,

and there were so many it was hard to keep track of who was actually committing the crimes. It was almost as if MacBride was trying to see how much violence and gore he could cram into one book. I had intended to drop the series for good, but a reader friend has told me that there is hope in future books.....I think it's going to take me a long time to give it another try.

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## **Rebecca Martin says**

I've read the first four books in this series in order, because the first one showed promise. Obviously, I have continued to read them. There are certain things that have bothered me throughout the series though and I have to say something at this point.

1. I know that the Scottish legal system differs from that of England and, of course, they both differ from the American system. I know, in particular, that there are significant differences regarding search warrants. It is really starting to bug me in these books, though, that the hesitation that American search warrants induce in an investigation is absent in these books. Occasionally someone does get a warrant, which appears to take about five seconds to obtain. Occasionally, someone mentions, "we don't have a warrant," but it never matters. I don't know the law in Scotland, but I do notice that the delay and hesitation caused by the need for a duly-signed warrant introduces in many American novels an additional source of suspense and tension, plus a display of at least a tiny bit of recognition that police just can't break into every single residence on the slightest suspicion. No one ever seems to question the judgment of the lone officer who gets a bee in his bonnet. Until, of course, he has screwed up.
2. Related to #1: In each volume I've read so far, the police have battered down the door of at least one residence because someone has suddenly had the bright idea that the evil-doer lives there. Most often, there is no evil-doer there or they have broken down the door of an innocent party. Do they never just knock? Not in these books. Warrant or no warrant, out comes the battering ram and down goes the door. Again, I do not know the law in Scotland, but the reasoning in each of these cases has been SO flimsy and insubstantial, so warrantless, if you will, that I have known each time that, in fact, the criminal would not be within. Someone may be called on the carpet for the mistake, but battering down a door is NOT an investigative technique and is a weak spot in these novels. I am not making this up, folks.
3. I have wondered about the role of the Procurator Fiscal. I have read that this is sort of like an American D.A., someone whose job it is to oversee the legal scrupulousness of an investigation to make sure a sound case can be made when the evidence is in and the suspect arrested. Though a PF sometimes shows up in these novels, she seems to have no role. What gives? Is there no real legal oversight of investigations? Is anyone ever responsible for saying, "I'm sorry, you do not have enough evidence for me to give the go-ahead to break down that door?"
4. We often hear about these incredible backlogs of chemical testing that occur in police jurisdictions in the U.S. And we should know that not all chemical processes can be done in five minutes. There may be delays for good reasons (some process might take a week to unfold in the lab) and bad (low staff levels, politically-appointed incompetence), but in the book I just finished, "check out this DNA sample," and poof! later that same day, here's your answer. Really?

Whatever the reality of how police officers conduct themselves in the U.S., I think that it is conducive to more enjoyable fictional narratives to show the police forced to work within some restraints. In these books, the only restraints are so much drinking that everyone is hung over ALL the time or someone's cell phone doesn't work; otherwise, out they charge with cars full of officers and a battering ram.

I understand that all authors take liberties. This is "fiction," after all. While I have generally found the Logan

McRae plots pretty interesting and the characters and their relationships intriguing, the narrative drive has become slack and predictable in many ways. My attention is waning.

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### **MadProfessah says**

Wow! Definitely the goriest and most violent of the DS Logan McRae books to date.

The story is based around cannibalism and police misconduct.

Logan is still a great character although he does make some questionable decisions at the very end of the book.

It's the most experimental of MacBride's mysteries to date, with the inclusion of tabloid inserts describing some of the action in the book.

Plus there's the multiple hallucinations by one of the victims of the Flesher.

DI Insch and DI Steel are major components of the story this time as well.

Overall a story that could give one nightmares. It makes me very curious to see how Logan recovers from the incidents depicted in this entry in the series.

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### **Ili Anuar says**

It was such a frustrating read. It seems like Logan is the only sensible cop who actually knows how to do his job. Everybody else is either too busy whining or doing something annoying. At some point, I thought, are these people really cops? Are they even qualified to be cops? They let too many people die that in the end I didn't even know how many people were actually murdered throughout the book. Some parts are disturbing with very gruesome and violent scenes. And the ending left me frustrated even more. Definitely my least favorite of the series so far.

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### **Michelle Sibley says**

Gruesome is not the word for this book. At times i had to put it down it was so graphic and i havent ate meat the whole time i was reading it and im not sure ill ever be able too again so this book is for all those wanna be veggies out there - after reading this book your never eat meat again.

Was a good book though and i was hooked from the start. Was nice to read a book where the local police were not super heros like they normally are. They came across as everyday people and the story lines on the sides about their personal lives were really interesting.

Not sure i would read Stuart Macbride again ... not sure my stomach is strong enough!!

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## Siobhan says

The fourth Logan McRae novel, and Stuart MacBride is slowly working himself higher up my list of favourite authors.

Since picking up the first Logan McRae novel, Cold Granite, I knew I was onto something good with Stuart MacBride. I love crime thrillers, adore police procedurals, and he was offering me all that I wanted and then some. He offers great mystery. He keeps you guessing throughout. There are plot twists. There are great characters. The humour is dark. The story is grizzly. He has it all, and to make it all better I actually know the locations in the stories. The final point, knowing the locations, doesn't really influence my love of the stories (I would love them even if I was oblivious to Aberdeen) but it does make it that little bit easier to enjoy.

With Flesh House, Stuart MacBride gave us another great story. Book three, Broken Skin, was my favourite of the first three books. It had every single tiny thing that I could ask for. It really did, in my opinion, have it all. I fangirled so hard, to the point where it was no longer funny. Coming after such a thing, I was worried Flesh House would not be as good. At the same time, however, the synopsis had me believing it would be even better. It was a tough place to be, but I was excited any way.

Compared to many crime books I have read, this one sits quite high up there. Compared to the first three Logan McRae books, it is not the best. It is at Stuart MacBride's usual high standard, but it sits in the four star category rather than the five star category. A wonderful read, but not my favourite in the series. Wonderful, as I had hoped, but it was coming after a stronger read.

With Flesh House, I feel as though the story was a bit slower. This isn't to say the story was slow throughout, but it seemed to take longer before the action really started. A lot more time was spent focusing upon the past aspects of the case, of what happened twenty years ago, and rehashing details pertaining to that aspect of the story rather than moving things forwards.

Of course, they did move forward in the end. When things started moving it was great – there were so many aspects to the story, and it was all a lot of fun – but I felt as though I waited longer than usual for the action to truly start. As so much happened, towards the end, I felt as though the story had made up for the slow start, but it still wasn't quite there. I would have liked all the wonderful aspects of the story, and a little more speed at the start.

Don't get me wrong, it was a brilliant story. I did have a lot of fun with it, as I do with all of the Logan McRae novels. I've already listed all of the things Stuart MacBride has to offer, and all is apparent in this novel. Hell, the humour continues to increase with every novel and I was once again getting into trouble for laughing at the most inopportune of times. I simply had my hopes set a little bit higher after reading Broken Skin.

Overall, a wonderful read. It is a brilliant addition to the series. Unfortunately, despite hoping otherwise, it wasn't a new favourite.

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## **Roy says**

I'm really getting into these now. A serial killer from the past had just been released due to an appeal. Human bodies have just washed up in a shipping container. The past catches up to the group in Aberdeen in this episode. Gruesome fast paced and very funny. Im enjoying the characterisation as we now slowly learn more about each one. The growth of Logan is also really good, as he's now standing up for himself and not holding back. Some scenes were a little horrific but thats what youd expect from MacBride.

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## **Candace says**

Well, well, what can I say? I obviously really liked this book, but it's not a story for everyone...I have a long medical background and it's a well known fact that we can talk about the grossest things while having a meal. MacBride is great at dark humor and easily makes a story about murder with cannibalism amusing in parts, primarily due to DI Steel...think Vera but much, much ruder. I don't like stories with torture so, although these murders are creepy, death is quick. The rest of the story is quite entertaining...to me. If you find the idea that the meat you just brought home from the store could be human makes you queasy, this book is not for you! You medical ghouls, and others with a strong stomach, should be entertained. Remember, it's fiction, human meat could never get into your burger, or could it?

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## **Ian Mapp says**

I think on the fourth of the series I finally get Stuart Macbride.

He constantly paints the police as failures - not really know what they are doing and bungling raids and the investigations.

He also writes such over the top violence (and sometimes sex) that he must be out just to shock the people that read these crime series.

And I bet they love him for it. After they complain at how disgusting it all is.

Usually characters - bungling copper with home issues, over the top head who constantly explodes with rage.

This time they are out for a serial killer who has been skinning and filleting his victim and introducing the meat into the food chain. Told you.

This started 20 years ago, they caught a suspect, out of jail and the killings start again.

You can realistically ignore the story.

What was a joy this time was the humour and the playfulness of the writer. I think he realises that this is junk culture, he has tapped into a formula and is doing very well off it.

I will continue.

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## Neil says

This was book 4 in the Logan McRae series, and possibly not one for the squeamish. 20 years ago there was a spate of gruesome killings in Aberdeen. One man was arrested and imprisoned, now his appeals have been upheld and he has been released. The killings have started again, and Logan finds himself as part of the large task force engaged in capturing the Flesher. Had the right man been imprisoned originally, did he have an accomplice, or were they barking up the wrong tree the entire time.

Then some of the original investigating team go missing, and then turning up dead. This book has more twists and turns than you can shake a big stick at. A read that is guaranteed to keep you turning the pages, The only thing I didn't like were the pseudo press clippings used throughout the book.

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## Elizabeth Moffat says

This is the fourth book in the Logan McRae series, and has to be my favourite one so far. Twenty years ago, a serial killer known as The Flesher, terrorized Scotland by dismembering his victims and eating them. A man called Ken Wiseman was fingered for the murky deeds but escaped jail time on a technicality which has always infuriated Logan's boss, Inch who played a major part in his conviction and trial. Fast forward to the present day where butchered human remains are found in food about to be sent to an oil rig, even more in the supplier's freezers and considerably more in an abattoir – along with some grisly parts like hair and teeth which leave the police force in no doubt that the cannibalistic killer has returned and may be attempting to get some human bits and pieces into the food chain.

The obvious perp for the crime is Ken Wiseman and the fact that he has done a runner doesn't exactly look good for him, but as with MacBride's other work, the real story is considerably more complicated. And it is a work of pure genius. The plot kept me gripped throughout, to the extent where it got incredibly frustrating as I just wanted to know what was going on! Character wise, I felt Logan was pretty much put on the back burner in this novel, but don't think this was necessarily a bad thing as the plot was so convoluted in its structure that digging further into the mind of Logan McRae may have over-egged things slightly.

I also enjoyed exploring a different side of Inch – the notorious jelly baby muncher/Logan's superior, and the hilarious chain-smoking Steel. Also characteristic of these novels is MacBride's hard and gritty sense of humour which I always appreciate, especially when delivered in the textbook Scottish self-deprecating style. Is it wrong to say that I found the word "jobbie," strangely comforting as a Scot living in England?! I really don't want to say too much about the ending, but it's an absolute blinder and one I won't forget in a hurry. If you haven't read any Stuart MacBride before (do it!), this is a brilliant introduction to his work, and can be read as a stand alone or as part of the series. I'm hoping you all get a good laugh out of Steel's Kermit the Frog joke also, it might be a bit rude to repeat here...

Please see my full review at <http://www.bibliobeth.wordpress.com>

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## Rabbit {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says

Need to be reviewed.

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## Rachel the Book Harlot says

*'DI Steel yawned, stretched, then said, 'What's green and smells of pork?'*

*Logan didn't look up from the copy of yesterday's Evening Express he'd found on the back seat. 'No idea'.*

*She grinned at him. 'Kermit's willy!' Pause for laughter. Nothing. 'Miserable sods.'"*

Logan and crew are back in *Flesh House*, the fourth installment of the Logan McRae series. This one was a lot darker and gorier than previous books (seriously, don't eat while reading this), but it also contained a nice dose of humor, suspense, and moments that actually made me teary-eyed. The crime solving was also great, with the case keeping me guessing right until the end.

This installment was a little different than previous books in that Logan was entirely focused on solving solely one case. Another difference is that for the first time in this series Logan didn't miss some obvious clues, which he sometimes tends to do.

Stuart MacBride really knocks it out of the park with *Flesh House*. It is now my official favorite of the series so far. Can't recommend it enough.

**Final rating: 5 stars**

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## Ellen says

Flesh House by Stuart MacBride.

Alert: This book is not for the faint of heart.

DS Logan McRae is on the trail of a serial killer known as The Flesher. He's not the only Detective that's been on this manhunt. It's been going on for over 20 years. Then the complications begin and they begin with Detective Inspector Inch. Apparently it's come to Logan's attention protocol has not been followed and that's putting it mildly. Has the wrong man been in prison for all these years because of a major foul up?

This book is beyond a mystery and more of a thriller, in my opinion. It was over the top(my opinion) but the characters/the story were and continue to be worth the read.

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