



The Glass Room: A Vera Stanhope Mystery

Ann Cleeves

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DI Vera Stanhope is not one to make friends easily, but her hippy neighbors keep her well supplied in homebrew and conversation, and somehow bonds have formed. When one of them goes missing, Vera tracks the young woman down to the Writer's House, a country retreat where aspiring authors work on their stories.

Things get complicated when a body is discovered, and Vera's neighbor is found with a knife in her hand. Calling in the team, Vera knows that she should hand the case over. She's too close to the main suspect. But the investigation is too tempting, and she's never been one to follow the rules. Somewhere there is a killer who has taken murder off the page and is making it real....

The Glass Room: A Vera Stanhope Mystery Details

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From Reader Review The Glass Room: A Vera Stanhope Mystery for online ebook

E says

2.5* Liked the setting at the writers' conference and the usual cast of characters, but I do get tired of Cleeves' continued habit of leaving ravelly bits of plot hanging loose at the end like threads off the hem of Vera's skirt.

Carol says

The Glass Room by Ann Cleeves

Vera Stanhope series Book #5

4★'s

From The Book:

DI Vera Stanhope is not one to make friends easily, but her hippy neighbors keep her well-supplied in home-brew and conversation so she has more tolerance for them than most. When one of them goes missing she feels duty-bound to find out what happened. But her path leads her to more than just a missing friend.

My Thoughts:

I first met Vera Stanhope in the television series, 'Vera', played by Brenda Blethyn. I love this series and the Vera character that Ann Cleeves and the television producers created. It's difficult to put Brenda Blethyn's persona with the Vera character of the book. While Brenda isn't fashion model trim...she's not fat, overbearing, and sometimes bull headed as the book Vera is. Frankly if I hadn't seen the TV series I probably would have really disliked what the series began from. I just keep this Brenda "Vera" in mind when reading the books. The cases and the mysteries are the same high quality begging to be solved as only Vera Stanhope...TV or book...and her team can.

I don't believe that this book showed as much investigation as the others. A lot of time was spent interviewing suspects and seemed to be going over and over the same material. But it seems that no case is too much for our Vera. Vera does not waste time with petty issues. She looks for the clues, builds her case, and goes in for the capture. The ending seemed a little off to me after Ann Cleeves spent much of the book with character development. We didn't really learn the "HOW" that lead Vera and her team to the killer or even "HOW" they came to be where they were. It was Vera and I do love the character so I gave it a 4 instead of a 3.5.

Connie Howell says

I really thought I had picked the killer this time but sadly I hadn't. I love reading the DI Vera Stanhope books. If Vera and DI Jack Frost ever got together they would make a great team. They are both cranky, badly dressed love a cuppa and food and are incredibly good at detective work but I digress. There are several murders to wet the appetite in this book which starts at a writers retreat. The murders are staged to look like scenes from books. Her ever present sergeant, Joe Ashworth and the rest of her team, Holly and

Charlie help in the hunt to track down who the murderer is. It is one of the residents at the writers retreat but which one?

Judy Lesley says

I'll bet Ann Cleeves had fun writing this story - a murder mystery that takes place during a retreat for budding authors taught by professionals either in or associated with the publishing industry. This story was especially interesting because much of it is shown from the viewpoint of one of the tutors, automatically a suspect simply from being on hand when the victim was discovered. DI Vera Stanhope, Joe, Holly and Charlie all work together to collect the small bits and pieces that eventually grow together to form the picture of the suspect. Even Vera's hippie neighbors have a large part to play in this story so it was interesting to find out more about Joanna and Jack.

If you've watched the television series *Vera*, you may think you know all about these characters. I can tell you the television cast does not portray the characters as they are presented in the books. I am pleased to say I can enjoy both versions of the characterizations. The solution for this mystery was a doozy and I had no idea of who the murderer was. Looking back I can see that all the clues are there, but hidden, very well hidden. Available in e-book form as of late April 2018. Enjoy!

R.J. Lynch says

As you expect, it's well plotted and convincing. When I read a book, one of the things I look for is: Do the characters stay with me afterwards? And Ann Cleeves does female characters well--Nina Backworth is so alive, so warm and so convincing that I could almost travel to the Northeast just to see her in her white silk pyjamas and give her a seeing to. She's not so good on the men--her male characters from Sergeant Joe Ashworth on are little more than cyphers and you feel that the men don't really matter to the writer, but that makes her choice of central character all the wiser. A good read; I recommend it.

Nancy Ellis says

Vera is looking forward to a relaxing night at home with some peace and quiet. Naturally, that's not in the cards. She finds her neighbor waiting for her who says his wife has disappeared. Vera doesn't have too much trouble locating the woman, but unfortunately she has just been found leaving the scene of a murder with a knife in her hands. Vera loves nothing more than a challenging murder investigation, and she is in her element, working her team and herself as hard as possible trying to understand what happened at this workshop retreat for would-be authors. As always, the character development is sensational! I love Vera, Joe, and all her crew, but the people involved in the murder are equally fascinating. There is so much depth of detail given about how the authors think and work....I'd love to know how much of it was based on Ann Cleeves' personal experience! I was pleasantly surprised to be proven correct in my choice of the murderer....that doesn't happen very often. Maybe I'm becoming more able to think like Vera.....hardly likely.....so I'll just keep on reading and loving these books!

Dahlma Llanos says

I didn't find this a very satisfying mystery. Never got really interested in the characters. Not particularly well-written. I find that, amazingly, I enjoy the Vera TV mysteries more than I do the actual novels. The Vera characters in the show is much more compelling than the one in the books.

Mark says

Having seen a few of the Vera episodes on the telly I was bound to find the books sooner rather than later. I have been a great friend of the English crime series, while they lack the American sense of drama and spectacle (Columbo excluded) they seem to have certain air of the detectives of yore in the style of Agatha Christie, Ngao Marsh and such.

Vera Stanhope gets a request from her hippy neighbor to look for his significant other, and she is quickly found albeit with a knife in her hands near a dead body stabbed to death.

And so starts a detective story which is situated at a retread where certain writers and wannabees try their best at starting a career in writing under the watchful and guiding eyes of professionals. So why did her neighbor want to kill the teacher or did she not? - And when a second victim is found it is certain that there are more to follow can Vera with her little group of detectives stop the killing?

A nice British whodunit that leaves you wondering to the end all set in a truly British setting. I am sure Columbo would have a blast of a time detecting.

Cathy Ryan says

4.5*

Returning home after work and looking forward to some down time, DI Vera Stanhope, not really the sociable type, is annoyed to find her neighbour, Jack, waiting for her. It seems his partner Joanna has gone missing and he needs Vera's help. If he'd expected sympathy and a shoulder to cry on he was way off the mark but Vera, mindful of the burgeoning friendship that was developing between them agreed, for a variety of reasons, to Jack's request.

'God, Vera thought, if any of the others considered doing this—going freelance, playing private eye—I'd give them such a bollocking.'

Vera soon finds out that Joanna is staying at the Writer's House, a retreat for writers of varying experience, where residential courses and seminars are held with the promise of a possible publishing deal. The Writer's House is owned and run by Miranda Barton, with the help of her son, Alex. Deciding to check the place out discretely before she spoke to Joanna, Vera's visit coincides with the discovery of a body. Professor Tony Ferdinand, lecturer, had been stabbed to death. Joanna was found holding a knife. By rights, Vera knows she should step down and let someone else handle the case but she's never been one to follow the rules.

'Your mother saw the murderer?'

'No! I did. As I've just said. And as I told your colleagues. On my way to the glass room, while Mother was

still screaming, I bumped into the woman here in the corridor. She had a knife in her hand.'

'Very convenient.' Bugger, Vera thought. So it was back to working the boring stuff, the pathetic druggies and pub brawls, just when she thought there might be something more exciting to sustain her interest. Then she had another thought, which was even more disturbing. 'I suppose your murderer has a name?'

'It's one of the students. We've shut her in her bedroom. She's called Joanna Tobin.'"

I loved the setting for this book on an isolated and rugged stretch of the Northumbrian coast. The story itself mirrors a classic crime novel—a captive number of suspects in an old remote, rambling house, several with a motive for murder. The way in which people regard each other, often completely wrongly, is woven into the narrative with insight, as is the world of writers and publishers. A well plotted and paced story with believable characters has enough twists to send the reader (this one anyway) in every direction but the right one.

The TV characterisations are slightly different to the books. In the televised version Vera is still short-tempered but slightly less abrasive and not portrayed nearly as large. Her vulnerability and flaws are evident in both, I'm glad to say, which makes her a more rounded and engaging character despite the brusque manner. It makes a nice change to have someone quirky and not at all stereotypical as the main protagonist. Joe is much more adult in his dealings with the other members of the team, and the confrontational attitude between him and Holly is nonexistent. Ann Cleeves' well drawn representation of the characters is excellent and I do enjoy being able to picture the cast in their roles, and the areas the stories are set.

I chose to listen to and review *The Glass Room* based on an audio of the book courtesy of Brisa Robinson at Macmillan Audio

Elaine Tomasso says

The *Glass Room* harps back to an earlier age of crime writing where you have a limited number of suspects, in this case a group of wannabe writers and their tutors on a residential course, and the mystery lies in unraveling the motivation for the crime. Needless to say all the suspects have some kind of motivation. I thoroughly enjoyed this book as it is easy to read, in style if not substance. Ms Cleeves has plenty to say about people's perceptions of others, not just of Vera whose weight, age and dowdy appearance often lead people to underestimate her, so given the setting perhaps the tag line should be "never judge a book by its cover". *The Glass House* is simply a slightly old fashioned, good read and well worth your time

Andrew says

3.5 Stars. I feel this is my least favourite of all the many Ann Cleeves books I have read and usually I love her books. However this one felt a bit flat for me and more like an attempt to write an Agatha Christie and it has a feeling of a TVs script. I feel since it became a tv series the characters have changed and the very feel of the books. Vera definitely needs to sort out her team and get rid of Holly as I don't feel she adds to the books and her running confrontation with Joe grates with me. Hopefully Ann will be back on top form with the next book.

LJ says

First Sentence: Vera Stanhope climbed out of Hector's ancient Land Rover and felt the inevitable strain on her knees.

What is an Inspector to do when one's neighbor goes to a writer's retreat and another of the attendees turns up dead? In Vera's case, and with the approval of her Superintendent, she, and her team, investigate it. But is her neighbor truly as innocent as Vera thought?

Ann Cleeves has the most wonderful voice and creates such a strong sense of place—"It was October and the light was going. A smell of wood-smoke and ice. Most of the trees were already bare and the whooper swans had come back to lough."

Vera is definitely not a cozy Miss Marple—"Let folk into your life and they started making demands. She hated people making demands."—yet her internal monologue, which is delightful, tells so much more about her—"And why had she agreed to do as Jack asked...Because I'm soft as clarts. Because I enjoy happy endings and want to bring the couple together again, like I'm some great fat Cupid in wellies."

Cleeves explains perfectly why—"...everyone loved a murder... They loved the drama of it, the frisson of fear, the exhilaration of still being alive. People had been putting together stories of death and the motives for killing since the beginning of time, to thrill and to entertain." Such a perfect statement and small truth.

It's nice that we have Joe's internal thoughts as well. They reveal information about the character, his relationship with Vera—"You're my eyes and my ears, Joe. I'm a simple soul; I can't talk and observe at the same time."—and about Vera herself as she is perceived by others. In fact, the way in which we are introduced to the supporting characters is very well done. Rather than the author introduce them to us, many of them introduce themselves to another character.

Vera's relationships with people, particularly Joe, are fascinating. She reads them well and knows just how to manipulate them, but never in a malicious way. With her team, she knows how to get the best out of them. The way in which she conjectures about other people's lives makes one realize that many may do the same.

There's nothing better than a good plot twist. One dealing with the forensics of the murder is even more clever. There is, however, one significant problem; the author/editor couldn't seem to decide on the manner by which the first victim died. This could rather throw one out of the flow of the story. Still, the plot twists are well spaced and very well done. As should be, one doesn't see them coming, but they are very effective when they do. There is very good drama and suspense. In the end, all the questions are answered.

"The Glass Room" has a wonderful theme and setting for readers and hopeful writers. Being inside Vera's head, combined with the several well-placed twists, makes this a very good read.

THE GLASS ROOM (Pol Proc-Insp. Vera Stanhope-England-Contemp) – VG+
Cleeves, Ann – 5th in series
Minotaur Books – April 2019

Tanja Berg says

Rating 4* out of 5. Vera Stanhope is looking for the disappeared wife of a friend - Joanna- at a writer's retreat and arrives just when a body is encountered. Unfortunately Joanna was seen walking away from the scene with a knife in her hand.

Vera is amazing. Fat, ugly, unapologetic and sharp. The murderer will have no chance of course, but Vera pushes boundaries here that will make her unpopular with her team.

I like this series a lot better than the one about Shetland by the same author.

Sharon Bolton says

“All writers are parasites”

Stepping into The Glass Room is a little like being transported back to the golden age of mystery stories: a windswept landscape, isolated country house, disparate people thrown together, crime scenes mimicking their fictional counterparts and a plot liberally strewn with blind alleys, red herrings and mis-directions. This book has all the elements of Agatha Christie at her best.

DI Vera Stanhope, at the request of a frantic neighbour who's mislaid his wife, heads out to the Writers' Retreat, where publishing-establishment figures and literary hopefuls are gathered to see what each can learn, and plagiarise, from the rest. Vera hopes to talk sense into the errant wife; she isn't expecting to find a corpse, (Professor Ferdinand, in the conservatory, with the kitchen knife). Nor her neighbour the prime suspect.

As the Writers' House draws us in, the book's cosy veneer sloughs away, because the players in the mystery (those who aren't police are writers) are anything but appealing. Writers, in Cleeves' world, are shallow, self-absorbed and egotistic, as willing to stab you in the back (literally), as they are to pen a harsh review. These writers are greedy for fame and recognition and worryingly, are all too credible. One has to hope Cleeves isn't writing from personal experience, but given her number of years in publishing, she might well be.

Cleeves plots skilfully, the clues are all there in this clever and convincing mystery, but most readers I suspect will miss them, so subtly and delicately are they laid. But where Cleeves excels is in characterisation, particularly with the lovable, exasperating Vera, about whom she writes with all the easy, slightly contemptuous familiarity of the long-standing best friend.

The book gathers pace to its perfect Christie-esq conclusion, when the suspects are brought together and one almost expects to see Poirot strut into the drawing room, kiss Vera on the cheek and ask her how she's getting on.

Cleeves (and Vera) fans might baulk at my giving The Glass Room four rather than five stars but this is nothing more than a reflection of personal taste. The claustrophobic, country-house mystery simply isn't my

favourite of the sub genres, but those who love it (and they rank in their millions) might well consider *The Glass House* to be one of the best crime novels of the year.

Mick Kelly says

Possibly not quite up to Ann Cleeves' usual very high standard, but good enough for me to finish in two days. The story revolves around a writer's workshop in an isolated part of Vera Stanhope's patch. A tutor is killed and each of the budding or published authors are under suspicion. No spoilers but it really is one of them. A chance (I think) for Ann Cleeves to have a bit of fun at the pretensions of literary authors and that is probably what pulls the quality down a tiny bit. Excellent characters and writing as usual.
