



The House With No Rooms

Lesley Thomson

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The crimes of the past echo in the present in a chilling new case for the Detective's Daughter.

The summer of 1976 was the hottest in living memory. In the Botanical Gardens at Kew, a lost little girl, dizzied by the heat, thought she saw a woman lying dead on the ground. But when she opened her eyes, the woman had gone.

Forty years later, Stella Darnell, the detective's daughter, is investigating a chilling new case. What she uncovers will draw her into the obsessive world of botany, and towards an unsolved murder that has lain dormant for decades...

The House With No Rooms Details

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Scott says

This was a slow, steadily uncoiling mystery with a 1956 prologue, followed by a current narrative with two points of view, and a 1976 backstory, in alternative chapters. Despite seeing some elements before the characters did, I was surprised by revelations at the end. I would like to read more volumes in this series, however, because I liked the detectives' dual careers (cleaning and detection for one, Underground driver and cleaner and detective aide for the other). The protagonist, Stella, is a fascinating individual with a love of cleaning, a sharp mind and absolute belief in her own independence.

Liette says

As usual, Stella and Jack found the solution to one of Terry's old case.

Diane Rosvold says

This is the 3 book I have read by this author in her "Detective's Daughter". I am currently reading the 5th in the series "the dog walker". I would be interested to read other opinions because I find all these stories to be quite tedious and garbled. To this day I couldn't tell you what the main character "Stella" or her totally mental sidekick "Jack" actually look like. Is this completely odd, or is it my imagination?

Jennifer McGown says

I thought that this book is more intriguing than satisfying. I really liked the descriptions of Kew Garden and the Marianne North Gallery. I want to see it next time I am in London. The flashback chapters were good, as well as the interaction between Stella and her friends. I found Jack the Underground Train driver/ cleaner very strange. He never seemed to sleep. Also the idea of the cleaners solving crimes is different to say the least. It seemed they detected more with feelings than with evidence or procedure. Tina was much more interesting than Stella for all the book, but Stella is the main character- go figure.

Jonathan Farley says

It is strange for me to read the fourth book in a series without reading the first three, but I was pointed towards it due to its connection with the Marianne North Gallery at Kew Gardens. This is because I was the person responsible for managing the art conservation work during the recent HLF funded restoration project of the Gallery... I am one of the 'Kew Experts' referred to in chapter 19!

The book is a well constructed murder mystery, though at times the verbosity was quite high for the information imparted. I realise that it is necessary to bury the clues so that the reader only sees their

importance in retrospect, but even so, I did feel that some of the material was superfluous.

It is apparent that the author has been around the Herbarium at Kew and has visited the Marianne North Gallery. However, on several occasions I was brought up hard due to some anachronisms which could have been easily checked, had the author made enquiries.

For example in chapter 16, which is set in 1976:

"In the porch, Mr Watson showed Chrissie the lady she had thought was real when she came before. He said it was a marble bust of Marianne"

I didn't put the bust of Marianne into the porch until 2010. For the 100 years before this, the bust was situated at the back of the inner gallery. Likewise, the author goes into great detail about the encaustic floor tiling, describing the shape of each tile. Unfortunately, the tiled floor just wasn't there in the 1970s. The original tiling was ripped out in the 1920s and replaced with lino. By the 1970s the floor was covered by a bland cream coloured tessera. The tiling in the gallery today is an award-winning reconstruction also dating to 2010.

Now I am probably being a little geekish about pointing out these couple of errors and that they are fairly specialist points which wouldn't interfere with the average reader's appreciation of the novel. However these were not the only points that I noticed and some of the anachronisms were absolute howlers.

Nevertheless I enjoyed the novel immensely and will certainly be reading the others in this series.

Patti O'Hara says

Enjoyable reading although the verbosity was overdone and a little laborious. I felt more information than necessary dragged it out making me skip parts only to go back and re-read fearing I'd missed something. Lots of detail, sometimes confusing but clears up in the end.

Ria says

Once again Lesley Thomson offers us a 'who done it' tale full of details that sing to the soul. Thomson again manages to add layers to her familiar characters without bogging us down with unnecessary information, everything she tells us is for a reason. I enjoyed this particular tale because it is focused around Kew Gardens, an area of London I have very happy memories of. Thomson has obviously done her research, and this once again brings us a story that not only entertains and keeps us guessing, it also offers us a real sense of time and place.....I just know her next TDD book will be even better!

Jo says

This murder mystery cleverly weaves together events that occur in three time periods, ending in 2014. The

solving of a murder by a woman who is an amateur detective made me feel like I might be reading a novel about a grown-up Nancy Drew. There were also elements that reminded me of novels by P.D. James. The interesting notion of a "True Host" murderer, a term I have not heard of elsewhere, is introduced early in the story and strongly influences one of the characters.

Kylie H says

Another great story in this series. Jack & Stella drift apart, but a compelling series of mysteries starts to draw them back together.

Petra Beck says

Very atmospheric mystery, well written and interesting how it all comes together. Only I have one single gripe with the Detective's Daughter books, and this is there are just a bit too many coincidences each time. But never mind, I very much enjoyed this one.

Kim says

Another excellent instalment in the detective's daughter series, which continues to go from strength to strength. The sub characters are given more depth and I loved Lucie May and her 'corncrake' laugh - more please. Jackie and Jack's relationship just perfect. It felt very domestic and I would certainly like to be part of this family. The backdrop of Kew Gardens and the Marianne North gallery was an added bonus especially as I have visited and had already fallen in love with the location. A few good twists and turns, the occasional red herring and a nail biting finish makes this a very good read. Highly recommended.

Pam Mertens says

This is the fourth book in a series, and I have now read all of them. All kept my interest throughout, but this is the first where the characters really showed some depth. Perhaps that's because each novel builds on the one before it, and the primary characters - Stella, the detective's daughter, and Jack, who is coming to grips with seeing his mother murdered and the emotional toll it still takes 30-something years later - learn more about each other and themselves in each book. I recommend the novels, but they should be read in order.

Gabi Coatsworth says

Telling not showing

I found this book odd and couldn't figure out why until I realized that the narrative voice is that of someone possibly on the spectrum - logical, socially awkward, not particularly intuitive. There's nothing wrong with that but it means that it's mostly telling, not showing. At first, I thought perhaps the book was for teenagers

with its simple language and concepts. Then I decided it was supposed to reflect how the protagonists viewed the world. Either way, it didn't make for a very fluid read. I kept going because it takes place in a part of London I know well, but I will probably never read another.

Trudy Pomerantz says

I'm not quite sure why I like these books. I do like the characters and the writing flows; the conversations do not sound stilted or out of character. I do plan to keep on reading the series and go back to the one I missed.

Jeanne says

Excellent author!

This is my fourth book by Thomson. The characters are so interesting and well developed. Once I start one I can't seem to put it down. In each book of the series I learn more about each of the main characters. Great series for mystery fans. She's English so sometimes I need a dictionary!

Give it a try.
