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The Blue Last: Richard Jury, Book 17



Synopsis

In *The Blue Last*, Richard Jury finally faces the last thing in the world he wants to deal with - the war that killed his mother, his father, his childhood. Mickey Haggerty, a DCI with the London City police, has asked for Jury's help. Two skeletons have been unearthed in the City during the excavation of London's last bomb site, where once a pub stood called *The Blue Last*. Mickey believes that a child who survived the bombing has been posing for over 50 years as a child who didn't. The grandchild of brewery magnet Oliver Tyndale supposedly survived that December 1940 bombing...but did she? Mickey also has a murder to solve. Simon Croft, prosperous City financial broker and son of the one-time owner of *The Blue Last*, is found shot to death in his Thames-side house. But the book he was writing about London during the German blitzkrieg has disappeared. Jury wants to get eyes and ears into Tyndale Lodge, and looks to his friend, Melrose Plant, to play the role. Reluctantly, Plant plays it, accompanied on his rounds of the Lodge gardens by nine-year-old Gemma Trim, orphan and ward of Oliver Tyndale; and Benny Keagan, a resourceful 12-year-old orphaned delivery boy. And Richard Jury may not make it out alive. A stolen book, stolen lives, or is any of this what it seems? Identity, memory, provenance - these are all called into question in *The Blue Last*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Blue Last" is almost good, flawed by impossibly intelligent children, a dog who talks to himself, and forays into the art world that seem to have little application. There are errors here--for example,

it is Henry V who speaks of "we few, . . . we band of brothers," not Henry IV. That small editorial error may be the objective correlative of what is wrong with this book. It seems hurried. Ms. Grimes seems to be growing weary of Jury and his friends. The book reveals her weariness. But is Ms. Grimes wrong to try to satisfy those of us who clamor for more of Jury when she is tired of him? The reader yearns for Jury because he had once been original, engaging, surrounded by delightful Dickensian characters who did not need to mean anything. The weariness in this Jury makes us scrutinize those characters who float by and comment on the silliness of the human condition, seeking for them to add meaning to the novel. This is not a bad book. There are aspects of Jury's character that are beautifully and subtly developed. The story develops well, with many clues to the mystery imbedded into the interactions of the characters. The settings evoke an atmosphere that draws the reader into it. Avid Jury fans will be engaged throughout the book and enraged by the ending.

Richard Jury's old cop buddy, Mickey, is dying. He calls on Jury's expertise to help him solve a decades old case of deception. When modern murder intervenes, Jury and his old friend Melrose Plant set out to unravel both the new and old mysteries. We see the usual suspects: Jury, Plant, Trueblood, the young child, the plucky boy, the old wealthy gentleman, the hard-hearted woman, the maybe-so/maybe-not imposter. What we don't see, alas, is real originality in plotting. As I read *The Blue Last*, I experienced déjà vu--I had read this Richard Jury novel before. Plant and Trueblood together are amusing, as usual. Ms. Grimes seems to have put too much emphasis on perspective and art style to render her theme. There seemed something lacking there. Considering the location of their excursion, the absence of a certain female character was disappointing. The sudden bit appearance of an old female character was surprising and felt out of place, as though she had been added just to "make the readers happy. You felt like you'd met all these characters before--even the plucky boy with the dog living on his own. Add to this, the destruction of much of the "history" of the characters as we know it (perhaps this was tying in with her theme of perspective again) and the disappointment builds. At the end, when the killer is revealed, there is no surprise. Although motive may not have been apparent, the suspect certainly had been from the beginning of the novel. Perhaps my real disappointment comes with the ending, which can only be called ambiguous. If you dislike cliffhanger endings, you'll loathe this one. I give the book 3 stars mostly because I've read Martha Grimes since her first (*Man with a Load of Mischief*). Save your money for the paperback, though.

I am a great fan of the Richard Jury series but this one was very disappointing. There were too many unanswered questions, characters thrown in that were never explained, main characters suddenly acting out of character and an ambiguous ending (which I won't go into in case you want to read this) that was annoying. One last complaint - if this book is taking place in the present day, then Richard Jury and the other children born during WWII would be in their 60's. Is Richard Jury - the heart throb detective - supposed to be 65? Is the middle-aged woman who is the baby in question 62. How old is her mother? Eighty? If you are a Richard Jury fan you will probably want to read this book but be prepared to be disappointed. Too much atmosphere - not enough plot.

Although the premise of the story had great potential, it took awhile for the story to get my full attention. I waded through all of the discrepancies and tangential story lines mentioned by the other readers and I forgave Ms. Grimes because of my deep love for her early Jury books. But by the time I was fully engaged and got to that implausible "solution" and ending, I was utterly frustrated and disappointed. Where did they come from? And where did everything else go? While reading the entire Jury series over the last few years, I have also been reading Elizabeth George's Lynley series. They are similar in many ways (handsome Scotland Yard detective, female American writer, engaging side characters, great sense of "mood," etc.). But over the years I have seen Elizabeth George's plots become more complex (admittedly, some are excessively so) and her writing is absolutely outstanding. On the other hand, the last couple of Grimes books seem rather lightweight and unsatisfying. The one about Melrose at the cliffside house is another example of recent disappointing Grimes efforts. I'd recommend the George books to Jury fans, in chronological order, as a supplement, but I'd also encourage Ms. Grimes to resurrect Jury and bring him and Melrose back in their former glory!! If she's going to end the series, she needs to provide better resolution than she did here.

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