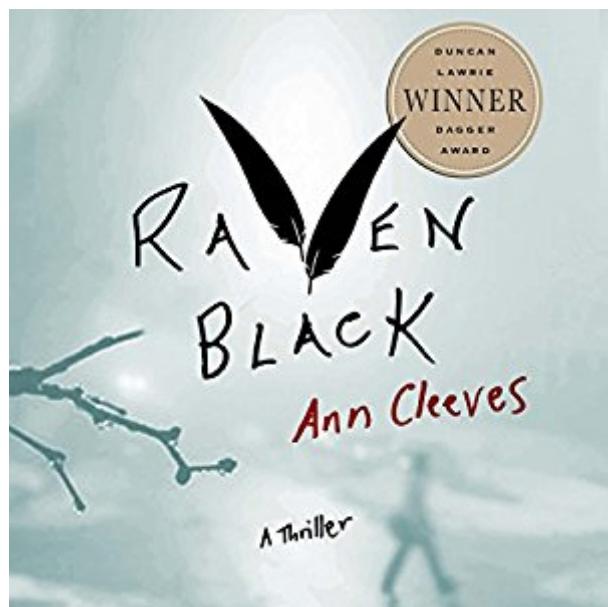


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Raven Black: Book One Of The Shetland Island Quartet



Synopsis

Long a celebrated crime writer in Britain, Ann Cleeves' fame went international when she won the coveted Duncan Lawrie Dagger for this amazing suspense novel, *Raven Black*. Like Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse or Peter Robinson's Inspector Banks, Cleeves' new detective, Inspector Jimmy Perez, is a very private and perceptive man whose bailiwick is a remote hamlet in the Shetland Islands. It is a cold January morning, and Shetland lies beneath a deep layer of snow. Trudging home, Fran Hunter's eye is drawn to a splash of color on the frozen ground, ravens circling above. It is the strangled body of her teenage neighbor, Catherine Ross. The locals on the quiet island stubbornly focus their gaze on one man - loner and simpleton Magnus Tait. But when detective Jimmy Perez and his colleagues from the mainland insist on opening out the investigation, a veil of suspicion and fear is thrown over the entire community. For the first time in years, Catherine's neighbors nervously lock their doors while a killer lives on in their midst. Ann Cleeves is sure to dazzle US mystery listeners with this unforgettable series debut. This series is the basis for the hit BBC show *Shetland*, starring Douglas Henshall, which attracted over 12 million viewers in its first two nights on the air.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Have you ever read a new-to-you author and wondered what on earth took you so long to discover them? *RAVEN BLACK* is Ann Cleeves 19th novel and I'm wondering why I wasn't aware of her before now. She has two series and a number of stand-alones to her name. *RAVEN BLACK* is the

first of a planned quartet of books set on the Island of Shetland, one of a large group of small islands to the North of Scotland of which only fifteen are inhabited. It's a small place, easily cut off from the rest of the world if the weather is bad. Everyone knows everyone else and people feel comfortable going out and leaving their house unlocked. This sense of security is shattered when sixteen-year-old Catherine Ross is found one cold January morning lying in the snow, strangled to death with her own scarf. The obvious suspect is old Magnus Tait who everyone knows isn't "the full shilling". Magnus lives alone in the cottage of his late mother and was the prime suspect a number of years earlier when a young girl named Catriona disappeared. Detective Jimmy Perez is the first investigator on the scene. He grew up on the neighbouring Fair Isle and is familiar with the locals and the way of life. Determined to get a head start before the Senior officer and his team arrive from Aberdeen on the mainland Jimmy begins to question the locals. Luckily for Jimmy his senior officer, the driven energizer-bunny Inspector Taylor, is wise enough to recognize that Jimmy's local knowledge is an asset and allows him to have his head. Together they try to unravel the inter-connecting relationships and secrets to discover who killed Catherine. RAVEN BLACK works well on a number of levels. First off it's a first-class whodunit. All the clues are there if you can figure it out (I didn't).

I had temporarily forgotten about Ann Cleeves and that was ungrateful of me because for several years she provided me with hours of rich entertainment. Moreover I once had the pleasure of observing her serving on a panel of writers at a mystery writers' convention (London, 1990). I do not remember the other three panellists, but the total and very entertaining illusion that I was watching an extraordinarily bright, witty sixth former, barely subduing her amusement at the whole business, lives on. She began by writing stories based around 'twitchers' - UK-speak for birdwatchers - which were as informed by insider experience as they were well plotted and well furnished with interesting characters. 'Twitchers' visit many interesting haunts around the British Isles so it was a well-conceived basis for a series infused with a strong sense of place. Then she launched a new series centred in Northumbria with a regular police inspector to solve her mysteries. These I found even more successful. Now she turns up nineteen novels later with Raven Black, set in the Shetland Islands. Ann Cleeves' sense of place is as strong as ever and I suspect that any readers who have longed to retire from it all among the hills and wild beaches of Shetland will find this book a bracing douche of reality. However, to each their own. Some years earlier a young girl vanished and a local, slightly retarded, loner was suspected, even more by the community than the police. Now Catherine, a sixteen year old schoolgirl, who with her only friend, Sally, had recently called at

the earlier suspect's cottage, is found dead with ravens pecking her viciously. Inspector Perez arrives from Lerwick. He is not in charge of the case, but is the local man and the man in the field.

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