



Murder at Dead Crag

Bruce Beckham

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A blood-curdling howl haunts moonlit Skiddaw Forest – its source the precipitous cliffs known as Dead Crag. Locals evoke the legend of the Black Dog, harbinger of misfortune, devil's familiar – an ancient myth revived in living memory by the unexplained death of Piet Crow, controversial founder in 1959 of Dead Crag Zoo.

If the curse blighted Old Man Crow, could it now be visited upon his descendants? Elderly granddaughter Antonia is found dead beneath the crags. Her twin Vivienne survives a life-threatening ordeal. Murder? Attempted murder? Or innocent coincidence? Skelgill is torn – until a long-serving zoo hand falls victim to a rifle bullet.

Unearthly baying hound there may be, it takes a finger to pull a trigger – and human predators circle the ailing zoo and its valuable land. A property tycoon with bulldozers at the ready. A titled aristocrat who covets ancestral hunting grounds. Volatile animal rights activists that protest malpractice.

Dark clouds gather above the isolated Northern Fells – some great storm is brewing – but to divine its nature defies all logical investigation. Skelgill is drawn inexorably to Dead Crag – where presentiment prickles at his skin. But will his legendary intuition read the signs before the curse makes its final destructive strike?

Murder at Dead Crag Details

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From Reader Review Murder at Dead Crag for online ebook

John Lee says

It is a bit difficult to get my thoughts down on paper because they are a bit mixed.

The book was a recommendation from my wife who has read the full series and thoroughly enjoyed them. Perhaps that was part of the problem because although this was not the first book of the series, it was my first. The Kindle notes to the book say that it is a stand alone novel but in some ways I wished that I had a grounding in the series before I came to this one.

My wife likes the writing style and the Cumbrian accent used throughout (There is an amusing glossary of terms at the beginning). For my part , I was a little unsure about the narrative manner and maybe because I spent almost 10 years living a few miles south of the Lakes, I found the accent at first humorous but soon, tiring.

As for the story, I had major difficulties with Inspector Skelgill who, I just couldn't get fixed in my mind. In some cases I had him as a mature DI almost at retirement and then at others he would appear much younger and far more energetic. Very little is said of his off duty life except for his activities with the mountain rescue but I didn't feel that I knew anything about whether he was married or single or divorced or widowed. There seemed to be hints through the book that he had feelings for DS Jones but whether that was a paternal type of interest in her safety and of her male companions, or something more - I don't know.

One thing in the story struck me as odd. Towards the end when the force is expecting a big confrontation, with manpower drafted in from other forces (and even from traffic) to cover all potential trouble spots, Skelgill appears to be following his own ideas off in the hills on his own and out of communications with the rest of the force and presumably unavailable to his own officers and men. Surely not.

I have to admit that I had problems finishing the book and if I hadn't ditched my previous start then this might have had that fate. I felt that it dragged. I did finish it, however, and was pleased I persevered.

I suppose the "proof of the pudding" as they say, will be if I return to the series. We will see.

Sally Lindsay-briggs says

This was a Goodreads Giveaway Kindle gift. If you are familiar with Cumberland, English slang, you like wordy sentences and a very slow moving plot; you would love this story. I felt the characters were very unrealistic, and frankly it was a really boring story with not enough oomph to interest me. Sorry but it was not my cup of tea.

Sue Middleton says

The best yet

A really good stand alone, fast moving story with unexpected twists and turns. The involvement of age old feuds, modern day activists and secret government departments make for a really good mix and makes it hard to put down the book. But the best bit for me is at the end when Skelgill tells Smart to "..... Off", protecting both of his sergeants without taking physical action. Brilliant.

P. says

Rounded up. The plot of Craggs is a bit slight of hand, the end 'twist' came out of left field, and because it is so out of sync with the style of this series wasn't believable. It also fatigues me to have Skelgill appear to have such difficulty communicating and at times even reading. How did he ever get to be a DI? Don't they have to pass written exams? Is he supposed to be an idiot savant? Solving crimes by unconscious thought? That said, when he's not behaving as if he can't tie his own shoes, Skelgill is a good enough character, even if he's often a drag on his own series.

Jillian says

I finished this on the train to Oxenholme in the Lakes District. Beckham helps to get me in the mood for my visit. I enjoy the local setting and the sense of belonging that the characters have. Skelgill could do with a good shake sometimes, but he does deliver.

I like the pace that Beckham sets. The plot, for me, moves well and holds my interest. I would, however, like to see some development in the team so that it isn't always Skelgill to the rescue.

Jean says

Every One a Winner.

Having read all but two of this series I can confidently say that if you enjoy a good murder mystery , this is a book for you.

Better , still , if you enjoy the great outdoors , from your armchair , you can take an exciting tramp with Inspector Skelgill , puzzle out Murder at Dead Craggs and never get cold or muddy.
Of course you might find yourself planning your next holiday in the Lake District.

Patricia Mccammon says

Won this in a Goodreads Giveaway. My first book in this series gives the appearance of being written in the style of English authors in the 1950's with the descriptions of both people and places. However, the current times are brought to mind by the use of cell phones and other modern devices.

LeAnne says

Book #10 in the Skelgill series. The story started out slowly, but I knew not to give up on Bruce Beckham's stories. They build to a story that causes you to read faster and faster. This series takes place in the Lake District of England...lots of mountains, cliffs, and lakes, of course. You will learn new terminology for this landscape. The clues are scattered throughout for the reader to follow. Who to trust?

Tess Olson says

I won this Kindle ebook from Goodreads Giveaways.

This is the third book I have read in the series. I really wanted to give this series a chance as I enjoy British mysteries. Alas, I am finding these slow and lacking in character development. Sigh. I hope others continue to enjoy them but I am moving on to other authors.

Betty says

I enjoyed being back in Beckham's wonderful setting around Cumbria and the Lakes District and I do love Inspector Dan Skelgill and his team. But sadly I didn't like the story line here as much as some of the ones in the past.

Things improved in the last chapter and I would have given that part four or five stars for everything coming together quite neatly. But I really have a difficult time reading Beckham's narrative in present tense. To me it's as awkward and dry as listening to the hard-of-hearing descriptions on a television show.

I have recently discovered that some of my English heritage goes back to the Cumberland area. I, apparently, am a descendant of the de Hotone family of Penrith, and so I will definitely keep reading Beckham's books as long as he keeps writing them. But, oh how I wish he had discovered the joys of past tense story telling.

Karen says

Skelgill is not a happy DI. A woman has been found dead of apparent natural causes at Dead Craggs but Skelgill has doubts. He doesn't quite know what to make of this woman's twin sister who is the remaining owner of an old zoo but he feels that she's in danger especially when one of the zoo employees ends up murdered. Then there are the outsiders. DS Jones is working undercover with a group of activists who may be more than they seem. And there's a possibility of a developer turning some beautiful land (including the land currently used for the zoo) into a resort and golf course which has the locals up in arms. There's also a beautiful woman that Skelgill keeps running into...she runs buses for day-trippers, but is she involved with the developer? Skelgill has to figure everything out before anyone else gets hurt.

A visit to the Lake District in the company of DI Skelgill is always a welcome break. This is a great addition to the series and I can't wait for the next novel!

Gary Van Cott says

I am starting to find this "series" a bit tedious. While the police characters remain the same from book to book there is absolutely no character development, in fact the books are advertised as "stand-alone" mysteries. Also, I believe there is an excessive amount of description of the local scene and not enough plot.

Marissa says

Goodreads Kindle Copy Win

A zoo is not supposed to be too dangerous. But when a woman's body is found there things seems suspicious. Did she loose her footing or was she pushed then it would be murder?

Things are not what it seems as things are unraveled and secrets come to life. DI Skelgill uses his expertise to uncover the mystery and the curse behind the zoo.

A fast paced read with surprises along the way.

Jane says

I couldn't get into this one yet I've enjoyed others in this series.

Argum says

I won a free copy of this book from Goodreads First Reads.

Inspector Skelgill seems to have come around about women since the first book (the last one I read), but this series is still a little slow moving for me. Much improved on the extraneous fishing and cricket, but still a bit plodding pace for my taste. Mystery more interesting and tighter prose
