



Death's Jest-Book

Reginald Hill

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Latest in ever-popular and consistently acclaimed Dalziel Pascoe series: 'Reginald Hill stands head and shoulders above any other writer of homebred crime fiction' Tom Hiney, Observer

Ex-convict and aspiring academic, Franny Roote, has started writing enigmatic letters to DCI Peter Pascoe who immediately smells a rat. DS Edgar Wield, intervening in a suspected kidnapping, takes a vulnerable rentboy under his wing, one who is hiding an earth-shattering secret. And young DC Bowler is looking forward to a weekend away with his girlfriend – but her dreams are filled with a horror too terrifying to share.

Detective Chief Superintendent Andy Dalziel, lording it over his team, is famed for his omniscience. But even he is unable to foresee the disaster towards which they are all tumbling...

Death's Jest-Book Details

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Author : Reginald Hill

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From Reader Review Death's Jest-Book for online ebook

April Munday says

It's not often that you read a murder mystery that has you in tears at the end, but this is one of them. By the time I got to the last of its 669 pages, I wasn't surprised that Hill needed them all to tell the story.

A great deal and nothing much happens in those pages. Unusually, no murder investigation takes place. Mysteries from previous books are resolved, possibly. The big crime itself is more or less incidental to everything else that happens, and the way in which it's going to happen and its perpetrators are obvious to the reader, although not to the police. It does, however, provide a fitting climax.

The novel is about love, both requited and unrequited. There is new love, which sweeps the participants off their feet, one of them finding redemption, the other great loss and despair. Parental love, or lack thereof, is explored in many ways. There is the father who has spoiled his son, in all senses of the word, and loses him. Other parents abandon their children. Two of the characters are young men who had been left to shift for themselves at an early age, which doesn't turn out well for either of them. Then there is the parental love that will give and risk everything to save the child. It's about the things people will do to save the ones they love, to revenge them, or even just to get their attention.

It's also about fathers and sons, and surrogate fathers and sons. There are relationships that destroy and relationships that heal and there's more than a hint that leopards can change their spots.

Most of all, of course, it's about death. The book encompasses all kinds of death - accidental, suicide, murder and manslaughter. Many people die in the course of the few weeks covered by the novel. Hill is quite perverse about the ways in which these deaths are presented. There are two deaths which, if you read about them in a newspaper, would probably bring a tear to your eye, but which are almost incidental in the novel. There are another two deaths which would hardly touch you, again if you read them in a newspaper, but are a blow to the reader.

There are many loose ends in the book, but these are not to its detriment. Two of the deaths might be murder, or they might be accidental. An ancient manuscript might or might not have destroyed. A man might or might not have been trying to terrorise a young woman. The reader cannot know with certainty.

Antonis says

Ήνα πολὺ καλὸ ἀστυνομικὸ, με πλοκὴ που τιμῇ την ετυμολογία της λέξης. Ξεκινᾷ εκπληκτικῶς, κατορθώνει να δώσει γκλήμα και λογοτεχνία, ἔχει χαρακτῆρες με τρομερὸ βῆθος και ἡνὰ ιδιαιτέρω χιομορ, ἐν? μ᾽χρι το τέλος δεν εἶσαι σ᾽γυρος για το τι ἔχει συμβεῖ. Απὸ τη μῆση και μετ᾽ ἀπογεῖνεται και δεν μποροῦσα να το ἀφ᾽σω. Φαντῶζομαι ὅτι ἡ ἀπ᾽λαυση για ἡσους ἔχουν διαβῶσει κι ἄλλα βιβλία του Hill με τους ἡδιους ῥωες θα εἶναι διπλὸ -τουλ᾽χιστον.

Viktoria says

it seems that reginald hill starts three different stories but at the end all of them resolve wonderfully in one. and what a thrilling end it is! as always: wonderful characters! dalziel, pascoe, wield and all the others are great developed. it just wants to make you read more about them.

Tony says

DEATH'S JEST BOOK. (2003). Reginald Hill. ***.

This novel can be viewed as a sequel to an earlier novel by Hill in which his main character first appeared, or it can be read as a stand-alone: either way works. The problem is that either way you approach it you are still faced with a book of inordinate length. By the time you get about half-way through (about 300 pages), you are sure that the second part will be titled The New Testament. There is no way that any suspense can be maintained over this long a tract. I even found that characters that I had met early on came back as complete strangers towards the end. We do meet – again – the character named the Wordsmith. I remember in the original novel having trouble convincing myself that a person would murder because of split infinitives or other instances of improper grammar. I thought that at the end of the first novel that he was over and done with. Turns out that I was wrong. He's back. I still remain a staunch Reginald Hill fan, and believe that he was one of the finest writers in the genre that ruled in the UK. I was saddened when he passed in 2012, knowing that the world could no longer look forward to a new work by him. I'll be forced to go back and re-read his works – maybe, even, this time in order.

Eileen says

I've been re-reading a few books that I either remember fondly or don't remember much at all. This is a difficult read because of multiple complex story lines, but in the end I think I'm going to revise my rating. Hill is amazing at character development and the subtlety of evil in ordinary people.

Doug says

This book is labeled a mystery but for the first 475 pages there is no crime and then when a crime happens it is no mystery. There are some themes carried over from his previous book and what is interesting is how Mr. Hill uses those themes in this book to tell a story about each of the characters, their development and interaction with each other. So we have a mystery book with no mystery but yet you keep reading to find out what happens.

Mr. Hill has a sharp sense of humor and he can easily make you like or dislike a character regardless of their personality. He can have you cheering for the bad guy or make you wonder about the good guy.

Don says

Reginald Hill and his excellent creations Peter Pascoe, a literate Yorkshire police detective, and his boss "The Fat Man" Detective Superintendent Andy Dalziel, are two of the most engaging and entertaining policemen working these days. Throw in an ambience of non-London England in current time and you have

a true winner in the mystery genre.

dmayr says

I've quite forgotten how much I enjoy reading the Dalziel & Pascoe series, and this is certainly in top notch form. Something big is going on in Sheffield, and it's up to the cops to discover what it is. Franny Roote, a free man once again, now hobnobbing with academics and politicians and incidentally, leaving bodies in his wake, is haunting Pascoe through ghostly sightings and psychologically astute correspondence. Wield got himself an admirer in a rentboy who is also acting as his snout. Hat Bowler is still madly in love with Rye Pomona, while Dalziel is still worrying over the Wordman case. Of course, as the sequel to Dialogues of the Dead I knew beforehand this will not have a happy ending. Still enjoyed this one though. It's just sad there won't be any more of this series.

Susan says

This long mystery builds heavily on the events of a prior book, which I read years ago and didn't remember very well. Why such a long book? Each character has his/her own ongoing story, and there are a lot of characters to keep up with, some more interesting than others. If you haven't met Dalziel, Pascoe, Ellie, Wield, Novello, and the rest of the cast of characters, don't start here! If you have met them, I'd recommend reading the prior book first.

Colin Mitchell says

This is a continuation of the Wordman case which had appeared in the previous book and follows the lives of Rye Pomona the librarian and DC "Hat" Bowler add into the mix DCI Pascoe's fixation with Francis Roote who is now pursuing an academic career but is he quite who he seems? The theme is Beddoes Death's Jest Book and this is the running theme through the novel. Various interwoven threads make it a good read although a long book 669 pages in the paperback edition.

Chris Wright says

This is superb. Gripping, convincing characters, humour. It had me constantly thinking about the plot, characters and locations when I had to put it down to react to the real world. It made me feel that it had some deep meaning and that I would be enriched by finishing it. It also made me go and read the original by Thomas Beddoes.

I think this is what reviewers mean when they say a book is "immersive". Death's Jest-Book

Larraine says

I always marvel at the complexity of the Dalziel and Pascoe series by Reginald Hill. The books take you to places in the past and present that you don't expect at all. This is one of his better ones. It starts out during Christmas which was kind of fun, however that's only part of the story. This is a continuation of the people in Dialogues of the Dead that included a rookie police officer, Bowler, who inevitably acquires the nickname of "Hat." In that book, he rescued the beautiful Rye Pomona and nearly died in the process. Now he is recovering, he and Rye are madly in love. Unfortunately she is carrying around some secrets. In the meantime, Pascoe is being plagued by letters from Franny Roote who, having spent some time in prison thanks to Pascoe, is now out and has acquired an MA in literature and is beginning to make a name for himself. However, Pascoe is sure that he is up to no good. Then there is the famous Eldreth Hoard, a treasure that is being moved and has some bad guys eyeing it. There are competing story lines including references to the original Death's Jest-Book by Thomas Beddoes, a poet who was obsessed by death. This has so many complications and subplots that it's impossible to really go into too much depth without giving a lot away. Suffice it to say that things get wrapped up in the end but rather messily and with a twist as always.

Gavin says

A kind of sequel to Dialogues of the Dead, which it would be useful to have read before this. It works well as a stand alone in the series, but works better as a complement to the earlier novel referred.

Kirsten says

Wow! Just wow! Another great Dalziel & Pascoe mystery. Though, I feel this volume exceeds the mystery genre. Several parallel storylines wind through this story and eventually end up intertwining at the end of the story.

Engaging, thrilling, and just plain fun! Pascoe, Dalziel, Ellie, Wielder, and the new addition "Hat" Bowler are like a family who I love to visit again and again.

Herb Hastings says

This is the first book that I have read by this author. It is from the middle part of a series. I'm not sure if these need to be read in order. It took a little while to get going but someone familiar with the series may feel differently.

Essentially this is a well written novel that just happens to be about police officers, their relationships to colleagues, to families and to loved ones. The crime element seems to be secondary to character development. I can't remember the last time a crime novel sent me, more than once, to spend time with the dictionary. (I say that as a good thing)

If all the rest of the series is as well written then I highly recommend it. I would note, that if you are looking for a Raymond Chandler type page turner, you will be disappointed. If you are willing to spend some time enjoying a well written novel, you won't be.

