

## LoveReading Reader reviews of The Detective's Secret by Lesley Thomson

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

### Jan Kirkcaldy

*This must rank as one of the oddest detective stories I've ever read though that is definitely not a bad thing. Jack and Stella are a very different crime fighting duo – he, a part time cleaner and train driver and she, quite an obsessive cleaner running her own business. There doesn't even seem to be much of a bond between them. They blunder along with their investigations being almost secondary to their everyday lives and their results seemingly achieved more by luck than judgement. Yet the overall story and plot is great and what kept me reading enthusiastically throughout. From the death of a man falling in front of a train, a fascinating though somewhat confusing scenario evolved which brought characters and happenings from schooldays into the equation. It does become complicated but that keeps even the most accomplished armchair detective on their toes. Who first encountered who and when? Did childhood games have a lasting impact on some lives? So many questions to be answered before a satisfactory conclusion can be reached. **Jack and Stella are eccentric yet compelling and the well-constructed plot is brilliant. All in all a most enjoyable read.***



## **Nikki Whitmore**

### ***Not your typical crime novel.***

*This is the second book by Lesley Thomson to feature Stella Darnell, 'The Detective's Daughter' being the first. I didn't realise that there was a previous novel before I started and I don't know much about it but I'm guessing it would have provided a bit of background information and probably an introduction to some of the characters in 'The Detective's Secret'. That being said, I don't feel I missed out on anything having not read it. In my opinion, this novel is perfectly readable as a standalone.*

*Overall, I enjoyed it. I liked the characters, Stella especially. I thought they were odd but in a good way! They were realistic for their quirks rather than in spite of them. I also liked the way the book was written. It gave it a different feel to a lot of other detective stories. Specific doesn't seem like a good way of describing prose but that's exactly what it is. Thomson has a very specific way of describing both people and actions and I definitely mean that as a compliment!*

*You do need to concentrate, especially towards the end where the revelations come thick and fast. I had to turn back more than once to re-read a paragraph and pick up a line or a clue that I'd missed. Like I said, it's very specific.*

*I wouldn't say the book grabbed my attention but it kept my attention which I think is probably more important. After all, there's nothing worse than getting pulled in by a novel that starts well and then runs out of steam before the end.*

## **Jane Brown**

### ***Crime author up there with the best and a must for the Robert Goddard fans.***

*I was interested in this author and found there had been a previous novel featuring Stella Darnell – 'The Detective's Daughter'. This book is number three in the series. I read this first and this gave me a background- not essential reader if you want to read 'The Detective's Secret' first.*

*I found the characters quirky and the story was compelling and up there with Robert Goddard fans. There are lots of twists and turns and the clues are there.*

*The story was fast paced and a great read. Readers you will not be disappointed.*

*A great author and I will be reading her other books- I am a fan.*

## **Phyllippa Smithson**

***Oh how I struggled to get into this book but then it started to grow in on me and then I was hooked.***

*Slow, slow, very slow start. Not having read what seems to be a previous 2 books with the same characters, Jack and Stella, I found the opening chapters very disjointed and whilst the author tried to get new readers up to speed with the lead players, it was a little clumsy in delivery.*

*Jack is an underground train driver who is arriving at a station as an alleged suicide jumps to his death. In the meantime, his friend, Stella, who runs a cleaning agency and is the daughter of a former police officer, believes she is on a blind date, set up by her friend Jackie, when in fact what transpires is that she meets the brother of the dead man. Frost, the brother believes his brother was murdered.*

*As we get to know Jack and Stella, we are taken back in time, to the mid-80s and follow the life of Simon, a boy disliked by his peers for being different – he is intelligent, has two missing fingers and does not know how to fight back. He also becomes obsessed with Justin, a boy he decides to be-friend, only Justin is not interested. He then meets a new friend who believes himself to be ‘the Captain.’*

*As the couple track not just one potential case, the suicide, which occurs in the now (2013), we learn of the discovery of a body found locked in a tower (Oct 1987).*

*With a very definite and alternative approach to a detective mystery, Thomson might appear to write in a very disjointed manner but she gets there and it makes for ultimately a very worthy read*

## **Maureen Gourlay**

***Stella runs a Cleaning Agency and with her friend Jack, also runs a Detective Agency. An old case and a new one find them involved more than ever expected. An enjoyably intriguing and unusual read.***

*Stella is the daughter of detective and her friend Jack drives trains on the Underground. They also have a side-line in "Detecting". When asked to look at a suicide case that Jack has witnessed they find it is more complicated than a straightforward suicide. There are intriguing childhood episodes decades earlier that you know must be connected with the present, but with constant twists and turns you are never quite sure how.*

*This is an unusual story with "odd" characters, but it is also oddly riveting, and an enjoyable and well written 'read'.*

*Recommended.*

### **Carol Peace**

***A great mystery just waiting to be read.***

*Stella runs the Clean Slate cleaning company and a bit of detective work which is following on from her father who was a good police detective. Jack is a train driver and a friend of Stella, he saw a man go under the train and when someone asks Stella to look into the 'suicide' Jack is the obvious person to help her. When Jack is offered the water tower to rent he jumps at the chance not realising that a body had been found years ago. He craves the solitude and that he can see for miles from his high home. As they are delving into the past for answers Jack realises a mans body had been found in the water tower some years ago and the more they try and solve one crime another seems to get in the way. As they get nearer to the killer they have some soul searching of their own to do. I loved Stella and Jack and the numerous other characters past and present and I really hope to meet them again. A great read.*

### **Joan Sidwell**

*A man dies on the London underground, witnessed by Jack a train driver, who also works part time for Stella (the Detective of the title) in her cleaning company. The dead man's brother, William, believes that it was murder, not suicide, and asks Stella to take on the case to find out exactly what happened. What is the link with another man's death in a water tower in 1987 and the parallel story of children playing in the area at the same time?*

*Lesley Thomson knows London and its underground system extremely well, the labyrinth of streets and the rail system provide a sinister background for a bleak tale. This was one of the positive aspects of the book. The story is very intricately plotted and well researched but the whole host of characters is mostly slightly odd although, conversely, this in fact suits the story. As the book progresses and Jack and Stella investigate the murder, secrets and events from their own lives are brought to the fore and the past eventually catches up with them.*

*It took me a little while to get into this book and unfortunately, even at the end, I still didn't enjoy the style of writing. For me, the narrative doesn't always flow,*

it is quite disjointed and veers off into sub plots or long descriptions not always relevant to the story. **An interesting read but not one of my favourites.**

## **Ann Quintilla**

**An intriguing murder mystery that makes you keep turning the pages to discover what happens next.**

*This is an intriguing and, at times spooky, detective story.*

*Jack, Stella's friend, is a train driver on the London Underground, who one day witnesses a man fall under a train. Was it suicide or was it murder? Jack also receives leaflets about a flat for rent in an old Water Tower in Chiswick. He knows the place and its birds-eye view of West London and its silence and solitary location suits him. He decides to have it.*

*Jack finds a toy railway engine and then some carriages for it. Have they been left especially for him to find? Only one person knows about his obsession with trains but he is dead, isn't he?*

*Interspersed with the present are flashbacks to the past involving a small group of children and a death, in the water tower, of a man who has not been identified. Stella's detective father was investigating that case.*

*Although I enjoyed reading this book it did not help that Stella has a female friend, Jackie and her train driver friend is Jack. At the beginning I was confused as to who was who but after a few chapters worked it out and then it did not detract from the story.*

*I enjoyed this book and although I realised the flashbacks were a crucial element I did not work it out completely until the last chapters. One reason I enjoyed it is because I know Chiswick very well and could immediately picture the river and the streets. Although I was aware of a water tower at the Kew end of Chiswick it bore no resemblance to the one in this book. Lesley Thomson has great descriptive powers and I could almost feel the wind when she described the hurricane that hit London and also Jack's fear when he realised he was not alone in the tower.*

*This isn't solely a detective story – it is one that involves human relationships, secrets and disappointments. All the characters are well drawn and believable.*

*If you are fan of mystery stories this is well worth reading. I shall certainly read more of this author's books.*

## **Gavin Dimmock**

***An unidentified corpse from 1987 and a modern-day suspicious suicide lead detectives Stella and Jack into a dangerous mystery where ghosts from the past threaten to destroy their lives.***

*Stella Darnell runs a cleaning company; her friend, Jack, is a late night train driver who witnesses a man jump under his train. Together they work as detectives and are approached to investigate the suicide of a man's brother. The same suicide victim from Jack's train.*

*This is my first exposure to the work of Lesley Thomson and I quite enjoyed this story. It cracks along at a nifty pace, throwing surprises up along the way, and builds to a pulsating finale. The characters of Stella and Jack are unique, their mannerisms, foibles and fears are well expressed, making them an interesting and likeable pair. The supporting cast help to build a satisfying plot full of twists and turns that keep you eager to discover more.*

*Interweaved into their investigation of the suicide is a decades old mystery of an unidentified body found in a local water tower. A tower into which Jack has recently moved.*

*I liked this tale but, at times, found myself somewhat puzzled about the characters, their motives and relationships to each other; especially Jack's references to "True Hosts" and Stella's family. As this is the third book in the series, I found myself wishing I'd read the earlier stories to help make sense of things.*

*This is a story that, despite my confusion, I found rewarding. The two mysteries, past and present, combine cleverly with a suitably chilling cast of suspects revealing themselves. I'm not sure I'd bother reading the first two books but I am certainly interested in seeing how the series develops.*

<https://themoustachioedreader.wordpress.com>

## **Sharon**

***Yet another tense crime thriller from this new crime author. Couldn't wait to read this and I wasn't disappointed.***

*This is the third novel in the series about the owner of a cleaning company turned detective, Stella Darnell. I would recommend reading the other two books in the series first to understand the background although this could be read as a stand-alone novel. Her first novel, 'A Kind of Vanishing', also includes*

*some background.*

*I love the way Lesley Thomson builds the tension in her novels and throws in red herrings along the way. Both Stella and Jack, an employee of Stella's, are a bit OCD but this also makes them good detectives. All of Lesley Thomson's novels are page-turners and the reader is hooked, wanting to know what happens but then is left wanting another case to read.*

*She is an excellent crime/thriller writer, on a par with the best. Definitely to be recommended.*

### **Barbara Goldie**

***An engrossing with two quirky main characters, edge of the seat read.***

*This is the first book by Lesley Thomson I have read. It is the third in the series and I will be searching out the two previous novels. Having not read the first two was no problem as the story works well as a standalone story. It is a tale of loss and reconciliation and I enjoyed the two timespans and got used to it straight away. Jack a part time cleaner and train driver and Stella who runs a cleaning agency are a likeable duo and grew on me very quickly. There are quite quirky and from a slow start the tension grows quickly and it becomes edge of the seat stuff at a great pace. It is quite dark and chilly in places but has a clever plot that shows good storytelling. The backdrop of the London underground is quite sinister and chilling but very true to life and creates a great sense of time and place. The dialogue is an easy read and very realistic. I look forward to more from this eccentric pair.*

### **Edel Waugh**

*This is book three in this series featuring Stella Darnell and Jack Harmon. Stella has a knack for solving crimes when she is not running a cleaning service and it's not long before her help is needed in solving a crime that has strong links to the past, buried secrets and terrible mind games. The story flits between the 1980's and 2013, in the past we see the story from a child's perspective and it present say through our main characters who have links to that past.*

*There was a deep sense of how harm done in youth to young people can carry though to adulthood and can either make or break who they are going to end up being.*

***A strong emotional ride of a book that will stay with you long after you have finished it. I recommend this to any mystery lover.***

<http://www.edelwaugh.blogspot.com>

### **Clare Turner**

*This is the third book in Lesley Thomson's 'Stella Darnell' series – which should possibly be called the Terry Darnell series, as her deceased detective father is at least as important a character as any of the living ones.*

*Stella, who is dabbling in detection as well as running a cleaning agency, has been asked to investigate the death of a man who fell under a late-night Underground train. Her friend/side-kick/love interest Jack, actually witnessed the fall and becomes fully – and almost fatally – involved in the investigation, during the course of which they stir up the past. This includes the complications of a cold case nearly 20 years' old, and the widespread fall-out from what happened with an unhappy group of children from the same era. Much is also made of the "coincidence" of the 1987 hurricane and the Storm of St Jude of 2013 (a name with which I was unfamiliar despite having experienced the weather).*

*This was not my favourite book of the year – I felt little empathy with the characters, and found the story rather convoluted and long-winded. However in fairness, I think familiarity with the earlier books would have aided my appreciation of this one; also it is likely that if I had read it in longer sittings rather than short bursts I would have done it more justice. **It is atmospheric – the author certainly knows her London – and does manage to hold one's interest in the outcome.** And I must confess that at the end I was a little curious as to what might happen next; I might well go for Number 4!*

### **Gary Simkins**

***Cleverly interwoven with hidden clues, red herrings and twists and turns, this unusual crime novel certainly keeps you on your toes.***

*This was my first introduction to Stella and Jack who, alongside their everyday professions of cleaning company proprietor and train driver respectively, are initially unlikely amateur detectives. However, as my familiarity with their characters grew, I found their collaboration compelling and whilst the true nature of their relationship remained unclear, it intrigued throughout.*



*Set in London, this atmospheric story paints a vivid, if in places overly detailed, picture of not only the area but also of the daily lives and worries of people that have suffered some form of loss.*

*I found much of the early narrative confusing as it switched and swapped between the late '80s and 2013 when the majority of the story takes place. But, as the book continued, the two story lines began to blend with the introduction of new characters filling in more of the well constructed plot, and finally come together in an unexpected and quite thrilling conclusion.*

*Cleverly interwoven with hidden clues, red herrings and twists and turns, this unusual crime novel certainly keeps you on your toes and, at times, has a strange yet appealing supernatural, eerie atmosphere.*

*Though slow to start, I soon found myself engrossed. I thoroughly enjoyed the read, and look forward to the next exploits of the 'Clean Slate' Detective Agency.*

### **Reba Khatun**

***I found this book hard to get into at first but when it picked up I had to read till the end.***

*I found this book hard to get into but when it picked up I had to read till the end. Stella runs a cleaning company and with her friend Jack, an underground train driver they take on the case of a man who commits suicide by jumping under a train. However, the dead man's brother is adamant he was murdered. These two are not your typical detectives but they solve the case along with an unsolved murder from 1987 where a man was found dead in the tower Jack is currently renting.*