



Good Bait

John Harvey

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When a seventeen-year-old Moldovan boy is found dead on Hampstead Heath, the case falls to DCI Karen Shields and her overstretched Homicide & Serious Crime team. Karen knows she needs a result. What she doesn't know is that her new case is tied inextricably to a much larger web of gang warfare and organised crime which infiltrates almost every aspect of London society, from the back streets and high rises of Tottenham to the multi-million pound hideaways of the new international entrepreneurs.

Several hundred miles away in Cornwall, DI Trevor Cordon is stirred from his day-to-day duties by another tragic London fatality. Travelling to the capital, determined to establish the cause of death and trace the deceased's daughter - an old acquaintance from Penzance - Cordon becomes entangled in a lethally complex situation of his own. A situation much closer to Karen's case than either of them can imagine ...

Brilliantly plotted and filled with rich, subtle characters, John Harvey's latest novel reveals him once again as a masterful writer with his finger firmly on the pulse of twenty-first century crime.

Good Bait Details

Date : Published January 5th 2012 by William Heinemann (first published December 25th 2011)

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Author : John Harvey

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From Reader Review Good Bait for online ebook

Rhian Williams says

This was a little frustrating to read. It felt rushed. Like the author was given a word limit and had to fit everything he wanted into it. I wasn't able to get a clear visual image of the story or the characters and had to read quite a lot of it a few times. It occasionally jumped from present to past without a clear indication which made a few chapters confusing. I can't recall having a conclusion to some of the murders that took place and it seemed like too much was going on. The cross overs were confusing.

Shane Lusher says

This is good, solid, British police procedural. It is populated with enough characters to keep you guessing it does keep you riveted until the end.

Predictable it is not. It is, however a bit flat: the contrasting characters (old white guy vs. younger black woman) are a refreshing addition to a genre that sometimes needs a freshening up, but this relationship is not very well explored in the novel. It is clear what Harvey is trying to do here, however it is not a 100% success.

I feel that 3 stars may be a bit harsh. I enjoyed reading it, and read it until the end, and I HAVE read worse.

Perhaps that's the definition of three stars.

Rebecca :) says

There were a few parts of this book that were good, but the rest of it was just so boring. It wasn't boring enough to make me stop reading, but it was getting there. At points, the characters felt flat and sometimes the pacing of the plot wasn't the best. I was hoping for better :(

Mary says

Too many plots sub plots and characters. It made the book a bit difficult to get into, so was just an ok read for me.

Nick says

John Harvey is an accomplished novelist with several fine pieces to his credit. Good Bait: A Novel is Harvey's latest offering and despite rave reviews and a good opening I found it ultimately disappointing.

Having read several of Harvey's previous efforts I found *Good Bait* had the strengths I have come to expect. Characters are finely drawn, interesting, with both flaws and admirable qualities. These are people I wanted to get to know, admire or despise and ultimately care about. The plot is robust, convoluted and complex. Dialogue is artfully used to move the story along. Two story lines, two smart cops, bring the reader glimpses of relationships hidden to the main characters but ultimately critical to the story's final resolution.

The first case involves the murder of a 17-year-old Moldovan boy found in a frozen pond, assigned to DCI Karen Shields and her team. But more bodies pile up and there is every appearance that all the mess is related. Separately, Cornwall DI Trevor Cordon is troubled by the death of a woman he's known, is her death in the London Tube suicide, accident or murder? Well outside his realm of responsibility he takes time off and calls in favors to poke around until he become embroiled in a plot bigger than he could have expected.

This is a police procedural. It gives a solid view of methods, problems and even technologies used by the UK police. It does this quite well. It is accurate, authentic and believable. But it like many crime stories it is ultimately a character study and here it falls short. While there is a stark contrast between the thirty-ish Jamaican Shields and the fifty-ish Cordon these differences are never fully developed. There is only a hint of the racism and sexism Shields must have experienced. She is efficient, a sound investigator and manager but she is sterile and left this reader wanting to know more. Condon is aptly described as a lonely, divorced old cop waiting for his retirement but his emotions and motivations are at times vague. There are glimpses of the workings of his mind but they are all too brief.

I found the vast cast of characters, good guys and bad, a challenge to keep straight. The multitude of UK place and roads names, to this reader who is not familiar with the county, also became a distraction. I read the Kindle version of *Good Bait*. I found spelling and formatting errors throughout. This novel came from a major publishing house. Don't they have editors or readers anymore? These errors, in addition to the British spell, Harvey is after all a British author, were a distraction but unfortunately, I have come to expect this from Kindle books.

Good Bait, while a good read, was ultimately a disappointment. It needs more characterization and a conclusion that ties the initial murder back into the plot. I give it a lukewarm one thumb up.

Y-alex says

John Harvey has written a great amount of books. In which genres he only didn't acted - westerns, PI novels, thrillers with heroes reminiscent of Mack Bolan (as an example, and as the most colorful and famous hero of the certain direction), police procedural novels and psychological thrillers. And *His Majesty the Suspense* is usually never left works created by Harvey. And all that these books have in common is a number of general features: the action develops tensely (internal tension (psychological) or external (environment, heroes' actions, etc.) and you never know, for sure, in what vein the novel will be written.

Recently, the author opted for a police procedural novels. John Harvey is the author of two very worthy series: the Charlie Resnick and Frank Elder sequences. And this novel is also directly related to the sub-genre of police procedural thrillers. That's that also bribes very much in the works of John Harvey, is the fact that he can create very absolutely different characters in either series that he'd written. Externally, internally. Cultural layers, habits. Behavior, manner of speech, thoughts. Ideas, interests, hobbies. Strengths and weaknesses. But there is one thing they have in common - the desire to know the truth and solve the case (if it's a detective story). And the most important difference that is so much, in fact, draws the reader to the

pages of a novel, and does not allow to break away from this certain book, in particular, and makes the constant mystery's reader to monitor further the writer's work, in general - is the possession of every hero/main character of his Voice.

There are the two main characters - Karen Shields and Trevor Cordon – in the novel "Good Bait". And both are working in police. But they are very different people, which once again illustrates the written above. Karen Shields is working in a big city, Trevor Cordon - a servant of the law in a small town. Karen Shields have a lot of case - she is investigating several crimes at one time. Her cases are shuffled during the novel with admirable skills and harmony. Many details of the investigation, a lot of versions, many meetings with different characters, some of which very well may be possible suspects, conversations and interviews - and this is a big fat plus of the novel. Trevor Cordon is trying to help the daughter of former drug addict, who'd sunk into his soul. And he comes to London, to the 'hunting grounds' of Karen Shields. Seemingly different and unrelated to each other story lines are skillfully and harmonically united by the author at the end of the book.

Besides the mentioned advantages, the novel is also characterized by: a unique and unforgettable style of narration; a little cold atmosphere of danger and hidden threat, which are piercing so many of a large cities; the social aspect of the daily lives of ordinary people; the problems of immigrants; a clear threat of criminal organizations from other countries, and a number of other more small details, which are transforming some novels in the books from which it is very difficult to break away.

The book has the spirit a bit like in the Peter Temple's novel "The Broken Shore" – the same complex and atmospheric narration of everyday police work and the daily choice between good and evil, which everybody must make on their own.

Recommended if you like detailed police procedural novels.

3.5/5.

Tony says

GOOD BAIT. (2012). John Harvey. **.

John Harvey has been around for a long time now, and has picked up quite a few prestigious awards over the course of his career. He has written, by more cursory count, about thirty books, spanning the range of series detective to short story collection. My personal favorites used to be his novels featuring Charlie Resnick as his protagonist. This is not a Resnick, but a stand-alone police procedural that starts off fine, but soon becomes mired in a cast of thousands and dialogs so deep into British slang that the average American reader soon becomes lost in trying to maintain some grip on the story line. The basic premise is the intersection of two apparently different investigations, arising from two very different parts of England. The first occurs in the London area, where the body of a young man is discovered in a partially frozen over pond, stabbed to death. This investigation is soon headed up by Karen Shields, an officer from the Homicide and Serious Crime Command unit. The victim is soon discovered to be a native of Moldova who had entered England under the pretense of gaining an education. The second investigation starts off in the west of England – Cornwall – and is a relatively simple missing persons inquiry to begin with. Detective Inspector Trevor Cordon, through an earlier relationship with a local woman and her daughter, learns, first off, that the daughter has disappeared when her mother – already on the road to drunk and disorderly shows up at his station to report on her missing daughter Rose (later to be named Latitia) - challenges him to do something about finding her. A couple of weeks later, after having no success using the normal routes of investigation, he learns that the mother was killed after a fall (push/jump) under an on-coming commuter train. Now he is in London where the accident (?) occurred, and the two cases can come together. As usual in his books, Mr. Harvey lets us know that he is an avid jazz fan – and a very well informed one at that. References to the

genre and its performers abound in the book. The title of the novel, even, is derived from a tune he hears played by Dizzy Gillespie and the All Stars, recorded earlier in New York City. Towards the latter half of the novel, I began to become really lost in trying to remember who was who, and found myself re-reading pages in an attempt to bring back a character to mind. This is likely a failing on my part, so I can't rag the author. I can say that it takes a lot away from any enjoyment the book might have brought in its reading.

David Jennings says

This fiction feels bang up to date, like reading the news, or how the news might read if more responsibly produced. Today's media focuses on triggering our startle reflex with scare stories of crime and immigration that skip the context and the causes. *Good Bait* paints on a broader canvas and tells the stories that other media don't reach. These stories are no less scary, but have considerably more substance.

This was the first of four books I read on holiday this year, and after this other novels felt like second best. I believe John Harvey was a geography teacher back in the 1970s, and he has a great eye for showing how different parts of London mesh together, and how London connects to western extremities of the UK, coastal towns and its motorway-bordered heart. There's also a very contemporary social geography running through the book, as waves of immigration and grey/black market commerce from different generations diffuse together.

(Note: I was given this book by the author after sharing a long train journey with him. I can't deny that this disposed me favourably towards the book, but I don't feel this has coloured my judgement too much.)

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Trish says

I have a lot of time for John Harvey. I can't figure out why he is not more widely read here in the U.S. He writes police procedurals, but with a deep intelligence and special flair. He does it all—the characterizations, the humanity, the procedure, the *mystery*--and then throws in a little music, a little talk about literature, food, wine...man, I just love this stuff. He is another of those authors whose books I save until I want a surefire weekend read-a-thon going on.

Harvey is certainly the equal of Ian Rankin or Kate Atkinson, so if you like those popular authors, prepare for something special with Harvey. It looks like several of his books are being reissued this year or shortly thereafter. Definitely check him out if you haven't already. He's been writing a long time, and like Rankin and Atkinson, he just gets better as he goes along. Best of all, he provides us his influences at the end of this book, giving us some insight into his creative process. In fact, he praises *Ladder of Angels* by Brian Thompson as one of the finest crime novels in recent decades. I have never heard of this author, and I'm willing to bet many other people haven't either. I'm pleased to get a recommendation from a master.

This stand-alone novel follows two separate investigations in different parts of England which end up circling the same house: the house of a drug and sex trafficker. We follow both threads which rarely overlap, one investigation led by a thirty-something black female homicide investigator based in London, and one led by an old copper close to retirement, shunted to a quiet out-of-the-way Cornwall precinct to finish off his duties. We like these folks. They don't have their perceptions skewed, just sharpened, by their line of work.

"Good Bait" is a jazz song, recorded many times by different artists. You might want to snag one (or several) of those recordings to prepare for settling down with this fine novel.

Lis says

A bit depressing, as much remains unresolved at the end.

Ron says

Didn't finish - not good not interesting

Steve says

A dual story line that overlap in only a minor way. One involves a black DCI in London, Karen Shields. The other an older (five years till retirement) Detective Inspector, Trevor Cordon, in Cornwall. The story action surrounding Shields is more intense (murders, drug gangs, plus some worthwhile reflections on black communities in England), while the Cordon story line focuses more on a missing woman. I felt that Harvey gave us a lot more insight into the psyche and personality of Cordon than he did of Shields in this particular novel. As a result, his character was pretty interesting, hers was more bland, even inconsequential, especially given her role as a DCI. I have long been a big fan of John Harvey, including his series' with Charlie Resnick, Frank Elder and the Helen Walker/Will Grayson books. This one was a different style. It involved two concurrent story lines, use of a lot of British slang, and was written almost with a scat kind of writing style. Although that does seem to match up nicely with the title of the book, Good Bait, which is a reference to the jazz classic. Overall, I enjoyed this story, especially the confluence of events in the Shields story and the character of Cordon.

Dorian says

I like John Harvey a lot and regret he's had a checkered US publishing career.

The new book feels like an experiment. Harvey admits as much in an afterword, in which he talks about wanting to do some of the things Peter Temple does in his work.

Well, it's no Peter Temple. But what is?

I salute Harvey for feeling his way into a slightly looser form. I like the sense of experimentation here; impressive for a writer who has been around a long time and could be said to know what he's doing. The book feels a bit messy, but in a good way. I appreciate, for example, that the two story lines only meet obliquely.

A weekend with this book wouldn't be misspent.

Leonore says

It was very mediocre. It kept putting me to sleep
