



Believing the Lie

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Inspector Thomas Lynley is mystified when he's sent undercover to investigate the death of Ian Cresswell at the request of the man's uncle, the wealthy and influential Bernard Fairclough. The death has been ruled an accidental drowning, and nothing on the surface indicates otherwise. But when Lynley enlists the help of his friends Simon and Deborah St. James, the trio's digging soon reveals that the Fairclough clan is awash in secrets, lies, and motives.

Deborah's investigation of the prime suspect-Bernard's prodigal son Nicholas, a recovering drug addict-leads her to Nicholas's wife, a woman with whom she feels a kinship, a woman as fiercely protective as she is beautiful. Lynley and Simon delve for information from the rest of the family, including the victim's bitter ex-wife and the man he left her for, and Bernard himself. As the investigation escalates, the Fairclough family's veneer cracks, with deception and self-delusion threatening to destroy everyone from the Fairclough patriarch to Tim, the troubled son Ian left behind.

Believing the Lie Details

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From Reader Review Believing the Lie for online ebook

The Cyber Hermit says

MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS

The rating really hovers between 2.5 stars to 3 for me but I'll give it three since the author managed not to intersperse her chapters with some faux-sociological meanderings about the State of London's Poor and Disenfranchised or a tacky, paper-thin veiling of a redo of the Jamie Bulger case.

Well, I **finally** read EG's book. Does it say anything that I used to read them straightaway when they first came out and now I'm all, eh, I'll get to it?

While **marginally** better than the crapfests she's been previously putting out, I still just...seriously, Elizabeth, seriously?

One thing I really liked about her earlier books is she would get into the mindset of the characters. You would get internal dialogue and reasoning; therefore, when they said or did something, there was information behind it that made the actions of the characters believable. Here? Not so much. While she's finally dropped the overt sociological treatises that were unfortunately becoming her stock in trade with "What Came Before He Shot Her" and subsequent books, she's also dropped much of the internal musings that helped define both her primary and secondary characters.

Lynley/Ardrey: Besides Ardrey continuing to be an extremely unlikeable individual (frankly, if I was Havers, I'd be putting in a harassment complaint if my supervisor was **that** concentrated on my looks to the point I had to get dental work done to please her!), this "relationship" was never really one I could even begin to believe even as a post-my-wife-is-dead-I-am-at-a-personal-and-emotional-loss kind of hookup. Ardrey was little better than a cardboard character in her last few appearances and her sudden, gentle "if you love something (or sorta like it), let it go free" appearance at the end had me rolling my eyes so hard I could see the back of my head. This is where George's lack of internal dialogue really points out that her characters just do what she writes because she writes it. Ardrey, who has spent the entire novel essentially being a jealous shrew, alternately angry and manipulative, that Lynley will not divulge where he has been sent on a case is suddenly all forgiving and softly talking about how they can't be together and she realizes that? Since, um, when? Might as well put a neon sign over her head saying "Watch Lynley move on!"

Lynley doesn't come off so well in this, either. Again, lack of internal dialogue. The only time he really thinks about Ardrey is when he realizes they didn't talk one night and he didn't even realize it. Beyond that, there is nothing about his "relationship" with her other than the thought that it's not good for a "guv" and a subordinate to be sleeping together. No. Really? Then, when he goes to her house for the last time, he somehow suddenly knows this is the last booty call and he's good with that and it's off to the roller derby? Not to mention his near comatose equanimity with (a) the revealed reason he was in Cumbria and (b) Deborah's part in hounding someone to their death.

Simon/Deborah: Please...ENOUGH of trying to shoehorn Deborah into investigations. You'd think after her shenanigans in Guernsey that Tommy and Simon would finally get a clue. But, no! She even gets to go undercover this time. Plus, she still continues to act like a spoiled brat and then wonders why she gets treated as "a child" (according to her). Oh, I don't know. Maybe because you continually act like one? Her continued, loud insistence on having no child but one of her and Simon's egg and sperm is, at this point,

grating, especially with the book's anvil-flinging about blood families and how parents and children screw each other over. Why has no one suggested therapy for Deborah on this issue to at least give her an outside perspective on why she clings so hard to this and at least what the other sides of the issues are?

Then...then there is the fact that Deborah essentially hounds a character to her death exactly *because* she is so caught up in her own infertility issues. What is the outcome of this? Deborah feels bad for about 5.5 seconds and then Tommy tells her it's okay and Simon does his "my love" thing and suddenly it's all okay for Deborah to have done this thing that essentially caused someone else's death. Wow. Wonderful. I guess that's her carte blanche to continue acting like a child - no one will ever make her face the consequences of her actions.

Havers: What the heck has happened to Havers? One of the stated reasons Lynley likes her (and one of the reasons I did too) is that she never really gives a fig about appearances. Now, suddenly, she's bowing to Ardrey's demands for a makeover? (Again, Havers needs to be filing a harassment claim about that). And when did she suddenly get stupid? Not knowing how to run a Google search engine? Totally missing that line about not knowing the names of Hadiyyah's other family? And then, at the end, there is no absolution for her. No Tommy smiling "fondly" at her and telling her that it's not her fault but rather the fault of the "secrets and lies" people keep. No Simon blithely assuring "my love" that it's all okay. No. She gets to feel like the scum of the earth, absolutely wrecked, and then hop in the shower to start hacking at her hair, an act I'm sure George meant as deeply symbolic but I just found trite and overdone by the end of 600 plus pages.

The rest of the book: George attempts to cram in a lot and ends up doing very little with it. She's got homosexuality, transgender, homophobia, child pornography, murder-as-suicide, et cetera. However, all of it is so very much glossed over that it reads more like a laundry list of plot points she wanted to write in versus any character underpinnings. The child pornography plot with Disneyfied happy ending is tied for first place on the Top Ten Ludicrous Plots right next to the revealed reason Lynley was called to investigate Cresswell's death in the first place.

I really want to *like * Elizabeth George's novels again but she's making it very difficult...

Charity says

George is an infuriating writer. When she's good, she's very good, but she has a tendency to go overboard in her plots, descriptions, extraneous characters, etc. So where did this one fall? Well, for 1/2 to 3/4s of the book, I was hooked, enjoying the world, getting to know the characters, waiting for the mystery. Then the last 1/4 made me want to hurl the book into the wall.

Why you ask? Well, here's why (spoilers ahead).

First, there was no actual mystery. The ostensible crime was an accident and a convenient excuse to use Lynley to smoke out other, lesser crimes among a family (O, how George loves her some dysfunctional families).

Secondly, this book had a few too many extra plots and characters, which in the end, had little effect on the book and took away valuable time from the main thrust of the story and were irritating to boot. Among the

plots and characters that could easily have gone: Zed the hapless reporter and his travails, Kaveh, Ian's lover, Ian's children Tim & Gracie. Especially Tim. George includes a bizarre, disgusting side plot for confused, hurting, messed up Tim, who not only physically attacks his aunt, damages his sister's prized possession, and convinces a pedophiliac photographer and film maker to use him in a pornographic film SO THAT HE WILL THEN KILL HIM AFTERWARD. W.T.F.!?! I still don't quite understand the relevance of George having this poor boy suffer like this. It added nothing to the story except gratuitous 'sex' that this could easily have done without.

Lastly Lynley involves Simon St James and his wife Deborah, god help us. I will admit, I loath Deborah. She's one of the most annoying characters ever, she's all emotional flailing and sticking her nose where it doesn't belong and once again, she makes a hash of things. She is instrumental in throwing an unstable main character into a panic and fleeing her life, thereby causing her to be killed. Her relentless 'investigations' into this woman's life resulted in her death. Both Lynley and St. James told her to drop the investigation, that there wasn't anything to investigate. Instead of leaving the hell enough alone, she has to be a stubborn, know-it-all bitch and a woman dies and her family is ripped to shred. She feels some guilt, but both Lynley and Simon rush to disabuse her of that notion, saying if this woman hadn't lived with secrets, she wouldn't have feared Deborah and her questions. BULLSHIT. But Deborah is never held accountable for her bumbling stupidity and I hope George kills her off.

Yeah, the last fourth made me want to burn the damn book.

There were a few bright glimmers. As always, Havers brings the funny and the ending of the book would seem to indicate that the next installment will be Barbara heavy. Also, the gross and unpleasant affair between Lynley and Superintendent Ardry is over - hooray! Also, she didn't figure much into the book. Hopefully she'll get demoted, transferred or killed off and we can all move on. Despite my quibbles, George is still a very good writer, her prose was nice and tight this time out, and she does often create compelling character portraits that keep you interested and turning the pages. If only she could find the right mix of character study, description, action and plot and then we'd all be happy.

Evi G says

I was appalled at the idea that even though no crime was committed, Lynley and particularly the loathsome Deborah, felt they had the right to snoop into the personal business of just about everyone, particularly Alatea. What they learned was really none of their damn business. Deborah is a stereotype of a self-absorbed, emotionally-governed female who lacks both reason and accountability . I cannot stand such women in real life and I hated her in the book. Come to think of it, many of George's female characters are incredibly flawed and none of them have the noble qualities of the male heroes.

The ironic part of the book is that although the book sneers at tabloid journalism, the whole book is an exercise in sensationalism, Lynley and his crew behave no better than the journalists of "the Source". Only a serious criminal investigation would justify such meddling, and there was no crime.

I used to be something of a fan of this series although I sometimes felt it veered into melodrama. I wish she had not killed off Helen. It has not led to good things.

Niki says

I dragged myself through this book, all the while "believing the lie" that it would eventually be worth reading. I have enjoyed other books by Elizabeth George. However, while reading this one I continually thought that there was no point to any of the plot. How often does a top level police investigator waste his valuable time on some random aristocrat's special request, and on top of that, drag in some friends, AND they all have to pay their own way to carry out this wild goose chase. No crime was committed, but while slowly and painfully churning their way to that conclusion, the detective trio did plenty of stirring the pot, which inadvertently led to the death of one of the characters (Lynley tried to let his friend Deborah off the hook, but I hold her completely responsible). So while I slogged through the whole thing, I found it a complete waste and am totally disappointed. Any other plot resolutions bordered on the maudlin and sappy. I only read this book because I was desperate for something to read and some of the subplots were somewhat interesting. Another thing I dislike is the fatuous (to use a Brit term) language of the book. I don't even think Brits talk like that anymore. In any event, it is pretentious and tedious. The only character remotely interesting is, as always, Barbara Havers.

Alice says

This bloated book was a disappointment to me. I used to love George's Lynley series, but this one is far too long and has pointless characters, subplots and repetitive descriptions that should have been edited out. I hate it when a writer gets so successful that apparently she either can't edit her own work or no one else dares do it for her. Likewise, I dislike it when any book, but particularly an expensive book from a "name" publisher, has careless errors of the type a decent copy editor would have caught - "pour" for "pore", "whom" incorrectly used instead of "who", and other examples. (I've copyedited many books in my time, so these jump out at me. But they shouldn't happen.) The story itself is a weak one with no true mystery, and the actions of several characters stretch credulity and don't ring true, including those of Havers, one of the best characters in the series. Maybe George should have quit writing this series while it was still good instead of having it degenerate into this hot mess.

Marijn Woudstra says

I am afraid the books by Elizabeth George on inspector Lynley and friends are becoming more uninteresting with each book that appears. It might be that I am getting older and am seeing the flaws in the stories much clearer than before. But when I was reading this book I realized that I was reading it for sentimental reasons only. I have been reading her other 16 books on Lynley as they appeared over a course of more than 20 years and still think that Playing for the ashes is a great novel, but I do realize that the stories and the character development is very thin and really, really: (view spoiler)

No, not good, definitely not good.

Lynn says

Because I read a lot, people often ask me who my favourite writer is. How could you pick? There are so many. However, if I answer off the top of my head with my top five favourites, Elizabeth George is always in the mix. George writes complicated, intelligent, and thought provoking novels. Each book expands on the lives of her main characters. Some fade into the background, others come to the forefront, but always there are changes which impact the direction of her books.

Believing the Lie is not a typical murder mystery book. An accidental drowning death is questioned by the man's family. Inspector Thomas Lynley is sent to Cumbria to unofficially investigate the death and the coroner's findings. He is joined by friends Simon and Deborah St. James. Soon each of them are following different aspects of the case, driven by their own demons. George begins to skillfully weave a story about lies. Some are lies of omission, some are desperate attempts at self-preservation, some slip off the tongue too easily. The Fairclough family begins to crack under the pressure and deceptions boil to the surface. With a less skilled writer, the various story lines could have imploded. George manages to tie them all up, without pandering to happily ever after.

Ellinor says

I was a bit disappointed by this book. I've read all of Elizabeth George's books and loved all of them - until Helen dies. From this point on the books just weren't the same anymore. The mysteries seem very constructed and the characters sometimes act in very strange ways.

"Believing the lie" starts very interesting with Lynley being sent to the Lake District to investigate incognito the accident of Ian Creswell, the nephew of Bernard Fairclough who's a rich business owner. He asks Deborah and Simon to join him.

But that was about the good part of the story. From here on things get weird pretty soon. The characters' motives often aren't comprehensible and it is hard to imagine a journalist as naive as Zed. The most illogical part is Tim's story. It is obvious that he hasn't had an easy life but his plans seem very farfetched.

The reason I gave 3 stars is Barbara. As so often she saves the story.

I would recommend this book only to readers who already know the previous books. To understand the main characters' behaviour you need to know a lot about their background and this book just doesn't give these details.

Cara says

Ugh.

This is a phenomenally disappointing book. Technically, George is a great writer; but she used to marry that technical skill with interesting and believable plots and characters. Now, her strong writing style just emphasizes the many and glaring plot holes, inconsistencies, imbecilities, and out-of-character actions that make up the story.

In order to fully explain my disgust, I have to reveal spoilers because so much of the offensive content is concentrated in the last quarter of the book. For those who don't want to read any spoilers, be prepared for George to ask you to excuse Deborah's unjustified, unreasonable, and invasive behavior--and the horrific

consequences--because Simon and Lynley do so (and the idea that Lynley would respond as he does in this book contradicts what we learned about him in the very first novel of this series, *A Great Deliverance*). Be prepared for Lynley to continue to be selfish when it comes to his interactions with Havers, and for Havers to continue to put Lynley's interests before her own. I could accept that pattern in the initial aftermath of Helen's death, when Lynley is understandably immersed in grief, but 8 months out, I expect him to remember that Havers and he are partners, and she's not his devoted servant (though that dynamic is increasingly played out between them). Be prepared for George to write a family so dysfunctional that almost everyone in it is prepared to sacrifice the happiness/well-being of another member in order to protect his/her own interests.

*****spoilers ahead*****

I share many reviewers' objections to the way that George portrays the sexual minorities in the book, the bizarre child pornography leading to suicide-as-murder story (and the unbelievable "happy" ending to that plot), Lynley's out-of-character and icky relationship with Isabelle Ardery (who becomes, somehow, even more unlikeable), and Deborah's horrific conduct and the offensive absolution that she receives from Tommy and Simon. I'd like to focus on two other issues: one concerning the unbelievably contrived reason for Lynley's investigation, and the other concerning Lynley's conduct towards Havers and his absolution of Deborah (and the implications for his character).

The major problem with the book's plot isn't that there is, in fact, no murder at the heart of it. It's that the wealthy mother of a recovering meth addict--who apparently is worried about his potential for relapse--would manipulate her unfaithful husband into getting Scotland Yard to covertly investigate an accidental death by implicating the known-to-be-innocent son in order to expose said unfaithful husband's lies. I think George expects us to be sympathetic to this 67 year-old mother who is betrayed by her husband and one of her daughters. But this same mother already knows about her husband's infidelity and its result before the book even starts. She just wants to expose and--using her words--humiliate him in front of his family.

So, instead of hiring a private investigator to expose the man that she plans to condemn before, ultimately, taking him back, she waits for the accidental death of that husband's nephew (a death she knows is accidental), and then initiates a convoluted plan to get an unofficial official investigation, all the while using her supposed doubt's about her own child's innocence as an excuse. Any sympathy I would have otherwise have for this character dissolves into loathing over the callous disregard for her son (all the while claiming, of course, that she never meant to hurt him). "Really, son, I don't think you're a murderer--I just wanted Scotland Yard to think that so that someone could expose your father's double life."

Oh, and no one from Scotland Yard even suggests to her that this was an inappropriate use of limited police resources.

I could have gotten by that plot point, however, if George didn't continue to assassinate Lynley's character and the Lynley-Havers' relationship. One of the most infuriating things about this book--and the previous ones--is that Tommy pays more attention to the needs and concerns of virtual strangers (that idiotic potential love interest from Careless in Red, and now Isabelle Ardery) than he does to his long-term partner's, even though that partner has been unfailingly loyal and did, in fact, save his life. So, Lynley doesn't even notice that Barbara's teeth have been fixed, though he certainly noticed their poor condition when he first met her. He provides no support to her in connection with Ardery's "suggestions" that Barbara get a makeover--not even the support of saying that she looks good.

And then he asks Havers to do a lot of investigation when he knows that he has no authority to ask for her

help and that her help could get her in trouble with Ardery. Tommy knows that Barbara will help, even if it gets her in trouble, which, of course it does. But does he show her any of the same loyalty? No. He takes no steps to protect Barbara from Ardery until it's too little and too late. And when Barbara calls him at the end of the book, with a legitimate crisis of her own, he can't step away from his roller derby watching (and, really, are you kidding us, George?) long enough to find out what she needs or why she's calling.

Finally, there's Tommy's reaction to Deborah. Deborah spends most of the book focused on someone who is never identified as a suspect, all because Deborah found a fertility magazine in the person's home. Deborah's relentless pursuit continues past all reason and sense--including the certain conclusion of her forensics expert husband that no crime was committed and Tommy's own judgment that Altaea's fertility issues aren't a factor in the investigation--because Deborah is still obsessing over her own fertility problems. So, she continues a ridiculous charade as a Met sergeant and hounds a woman to death. And when she finally evinces some introspection that she's behaved abominably, Lynley rushes in to assure her that Altaea's death wasn't her fault but the result of the "secrets and lies" Altaea carried. He then smiles "fondly" at Deborah and drives her home. Well-justified, if way too late, crisis of conscience, possibly leading to a less selfish and histrionic outlook, successfully averted!

Contrast this with Lynley's reaction in *A Great Deliverance* when Havers runs away with her assumptions about the victim's eldest daughter and ends up alienating and traumatizing the daughter--who has vital information that will help Lynley solve the case. Lynley blames Havers and makes it clear that he doesn't trust her or her judgment. But for all that Havers messes up, her actions don't result in death, and the witness is able to eventually provide the necessary information. So is it just red-headed neurotics that Lynley used to sleep with who get to act on wild assumptions and hound people to death?

I used to wonder why Lynley ever wanted to marry Deborah and why he continues to trust her judgment. Given the recent character assassination, I'm beginning to feel that Lynley and Deborah should get together so that they can feed each other's egos, and Simon and Havers can start a private detective business based on mutual respect and friendship--what I once thought Havers and Lynley had.

Ugh.

Susan says

Oh, let me count the ways I loathe this book. I generally love the series (count me as someone still missing Helen, but still, love the series). I like Lynley. I like the supporting characters. I like the attention to geography in each of the books. But the series seems to be spiraling out of control since Helen's death. And in this book, there's just so very much not to like. For starters, the mystery at the center of the book seems completely anticlimactic. Turns out there's not much of a mystery here, just a lot of exploring of lies in the lives of various characters. OK. Good to have a theme. But here, the lies are threaded through so many different overly dramatic stories that the plot would be better suited to a soap opera. And for all the research that went into the geography of the book, there was apparently very little research into some of the plot devices. Sexuality is consistently a problem here: all the gay characters end up miserable. There's a very creepy child pornography subplot that's completely unnecessary to the main plot, and is rooted in no understanding of teen sexuality that I've ever seen. There's a conflation of transgender identity/gay identity/cross-dressing. Simon, the rational scientist, appears to have read no literature on adoption. Deborah, increasingly whiny and self-absorbed, behaves abominably and is excused for this behavior by others. It's awful.

Sarah says

Elizabeth George is a writer whose fortunes, I think, have waxed and waned. I've been reading her for years, pretty much since she published her first book. Although many of her novels have a London setting I think that she has been particularly good at embracing other English settings such as Cornwall and Derbyshire. She has also created an interesting dynamic not only in the professional workings of DCI Thomas Lynley and DS Barbara Havers but also in the interweaving relationships between Lynley, his wife Helen and their friends Simon and Deborah St James. However, perhaps under pressure from her publisher or possibly to inject new characters into her books, Helen was brutally killed in *With No One as Witness*. Her next book was the slightly odd *What Came Before her Shot Her* not really a crime novel at all although it did accurately reflect the condition of London's sink estates. Since then, her books in my opinion have been a shadow of their former selves. They haven't been terrible, just mediocre and I personally think that she has some further great books in her.

So I succumbed to the temptation to read this, even though I have some enticing books to read waiting in my bookshelves. *Believing the Lie* starts promisingly by sending Lynley up to Cumbria to investigate the accidental death of a nephew of a prominent industrialist who wants convincing that there was nothing more sinister to the mishap. This was a good move because for me one of the most irritating features of the last book was the new relationship that Lynley has embarked on with his boss, Isabelle. Even more promisingly he takes with him Simon and Deborah St James, two characters that I particularly like and who have only had minor roles in more recent books. However, the subsequent investigation into the suspicious death of Ian Cresswell was disjointed and slightly surreal. There is an ongoing theme in George's books about the inability of Simon and Deborah to have children. This was once more woven into the main narrative but seemed removed from Lynley's own investigations. I can see that 'children' was the central theme of the book, focusing on the relationships between parents and their offspring and the deep-seated fractures that can tear families apart. But in my opinion there was just too much going on and there didn't seem to be much actual crime in the book.

The redeeming feature, for me, was Barbara Havers in London carrying out her own investigations. She is, as always an appealing character and her relationship with her neighbour Azhar, again focusing on the issue of children was at least very moving. This wasn't a terrible book. It kept me going over some severe turbulence as I was flying across the Alps yesterday. But I think Elizabeth George needs to strip back her writing and get back to basics.

Wyma says

Disappointing and especially so for an Elizabeth George mystery starring Lynley and Havers. I think it was Deborah who ruined it for me, although she can't be blamed for all the tedious parts that ought to have been edited out. The mystery and Lynley/Havers' parts in it are rather minor in the scheme of this novel. What matters most are the subplots and the lives of the characters who make up the mysteries, of which there are several.

My favorite subplot had to be Manette and Freddie, the couple who have divorced, still live together as friends even while Freddie has started dating. Manette in particular is more fully drawn, a mature woman who means well and mostly does well but also has her faults and messes up more than once. She truly cares about the children in the story.

Next would be the beautiful Altea and Nicholas (brother to Manette) and the scion who threw away his youth on drugs and is struggling to make amends by bringing derelict AA's to the family estate to rebuild an ancient fortification structure called a pele. They are unusual, he in his goodness and she in her mysterious background.

Although there are several suspects for the possible murder that occurs early in the story, there are no really evil people in this novel. The top three who could qualify are in order of greatest shame Niamh, Mignon and Kaveh. Their unethical and even immoral behavior results from their total disregard for the feelings of others, including those of their children, family, and lover. While clearly selfish and lacking empathy, they did not immediately strike me as sociopaths capable of the most heinous crime of murder.

Lynley and later Havers are brought into the plot in order to see if a murder has occurred. Lord Fairclough and his wife, parents of twins Manette and Mignon and Nicholas are the wealthy people who request that Lynley look into the matter. As they work on the case, the private lives of Lynley and Havers provide two more subplots. Lynley is having an affair with his boss, Isabelle Ardery, a not very likeable woman serving as acting Superintendent of Police at Scotland Yard. It isn't just that Havers doesn't like her, but we're not sure that Lynley does, though he comes whenever she calls. Havers's neighbor for whom she's had a crush, Azhar, has the mother of Hadiyyah living with him now, and there are mysteries surrounding this arrangement. Because we see Lynley and Havers in their "real lives," we tend to see them as almost real people.

The subplots and the working out of the crime are well written and suspenseful. Conclusions are logical and foreshadowed. There is a rich array of characters and more intricately worked out subplots than I could go into in this short description. It's just not quite up to what I expect from Elizabeth George. This Body of Death, the novel previous to this one, was excellent. Perhaps Believing the Lie suffers by comparison.

I would have forgiven the occasional tedium of this novel were it not for Deborah. I had been so pleased when St. James and Deborah made their way back into Lynley's stories since they were two of my favorite characters early on in the series. I do recall Deborah as being stubborn and unpredictable, but in this plot her actions seem more those of a truly troubled person and it seems to me that she does - accidentally - contribute to the circumstances surrounding a character's death. The author through Lynley leads us away from that conclusion, but I wasn't buying it.

Of course I recommend it as a piece of the Lynley/Havers saga and I can hardly wait to see what happens next to each of them.

Karen Brooks says

I would like to file a Missing Person's Report. Name: Inspector Thomas Lynley, 8th Earl of Asherton. Description: Approximately six feet tall, blond hair, dark brown eyes, oozes class, intellect and emotional intelligence and an uncanny ability to read people. Inspires loyalty, desire and trust in equal measure from friends, colleagues and strangers.

For the last three Elizabeth George novels, at least, this Inspector, whom we know and love – the dedicated friend and partner of Sargeant Barbara Havers has absented himself. No, that's not exactly right either – he's there, but it's as if someone else has possessed his body and mind and I want him back!

OK. Maybe I'm being unfair, but in the latest Lynley novel, *Believing the Lie*, George seems to have gone even further post-Helen's death in re-inventing the grieving widower to a point there's not much of the old boy left. In a sense, the fact he doesn't appear until chapter three of this book, well after the main narrative is set up (sans Tommy), functions as an analogy for the minor part he plays in this current mystery.

Months have now passed since Helen died and Lynley is embroiled in a steamy affair with his alcoholic and neurotic boss, Superintendent Ardery. Quite apart from the fact that I never understood the attraction he feels for his unreasonable and demanding superior, when Lynley is sent to Cumbria by Hillier as a personal favour in order to investigate the accidental death of a friend's nephew, he's told to keep it secret. And he does. Not knowing why or where her lover has gone, and with him refusing to breach confidence, Ardery's insecurities and unprofessional behaviour come to the fore making her more irritating and consequently Tommy's attraction and efforts to placate her less plausible.

Taking his friends, Simon and Deborah St James with him, Lynley stumbles into a family full of secrets, lies and betrayals that have little to do with the reason he was brought there in the first place. But when Deborah and a reporter from the London tabloid, *The Source*, join forces to uncover the mystery of the Fairclough family, you know tragedy is just around the corner. Even if it takes almost six-eighths of the book to arrive. As usual in George books, the writing is sublime. All the other characters are beautifully and, for the most part, believably drawn. Just as she did in *What Came Before He Shot Her*, George doesn't steer away from the brutal reality of many young people's lives and the choices they make and this story is no exception. Scenes are painted realistically – to the point you can smell the fresh air, hear the crunch of gravel underfoot, and smell the Pop Tart Havers is forever cramming down her throat.

For a novel that roughly sits in the crime genre, however, the main crime here, for me, is the absence of Lynley. As with the other books she's written of late, the main character fades into the background and secondary characters dominate. Again, this might be all right for some, and the story is interesting, but this is a Lynley book and he simply doesn't step up and wrest the tale or arrest the reader in ways that he used to. In fact, there is something listless and annoying about Lynley that there never used to be. Sure, he's grieving for Helen, but that doesn't mean he suddenly has to become all wishy-washy and turn into something he's not. I can't explain it better than that except a Lynley mystery this book wasn't – and nor was it really a crime novel of the sort we've come to expect from George.

But, it was fascinating study of sexuality, familial ties and the psychology of a family unravelling. The climax was more anti than explosive as it's not difficult to solve the puzzle George has tried to construct well before it's revealed. That Lynley has a minor role to play in any of the action is at odds with his well-established character as well and is a bit of a let down for fans.

The book finishes with two endings (one of which will come as a relief to some) that set the scene for the next book – one that may yet relegate Lynley to the role of support character again. I sincerely hope not. I hope the Inspector is found, along with his mojo, because the series, as well-written and structured as it is, simply isn't the same with this watery substitute.

Bring back Inspector Lynley – please! Grieving, confused, angry, yes - but with more of his old self as well!

Alice says

I'm a big Elizabeth George fan and I'm always excited when she releases a new book. That being said, this was not one of my favorites, mostly because it deals with sexuality, especially homosexuality, in the most lurid, sensational way. Let us recap. 1) The "murder victim" is gay. He ruined his children's lives by coming out and leaving them for his boyfriend. 2) His boyfriend refuses to commit to him and ends up marrying a woman to make his parents happy. 3) His son, thinking he might be gay, gets involved in a child porn ring in order to commit suicide (?!). This subplot was ridiculously sordid and unrealistic. Having dealt with the Digital Crimes unit at my company and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, I know that claims of child porn and child sexual exploitation are dealt with VERY SERIOUSLY, and anyone who came into a police office WITH CHILD PORN ON THEIR LAPTOP and said a child could be filming a porn movie RIGHT NOW would NOT be blown off and ignored. 4) The sexy beautiful woman character turns out to be transgendered and thus tragically DIES because she didn't have the guts to tell her husband about it. So therefore, all the sexual minorities have horrible terrible lives that are caused, more or less, by their sexuality. That is seriously fucked up.

Also, the investigation in this book was laughable; I don't believe for a second Havers could have tracked down the sexy beautiful woman's family just by calling random numbers in Mexico.

Lyne says

Believing The Lie would have to be one of the silliest and most disappointing books I've ever read. As a great fan of Elizabeth George's previous novels, I almost feel affronted at being given this piece of utter rubbish. Nothing about this book is believable, and the worst thing about it is the utter contempt displayed by Ms George for the true nature and personalities of her beloved ongoing characters. No-one seems to know who they are anymore. Barbara Havers as an example, would never in a million years cow-tow to the spurious suggestions of her acting superior by changing her appearance so radically.

What has happened to the great partnership of respect, trust and friendship between Lynley and Havers? Why would Lynley, even in his utter despair and grief after the murder of his wife, get himself involved with the unattractive, self-important drunkard that is Isabelle Ardery?

The whole premise of this book is flawed, I don't think it was ever going to work. It's a book about nothing, but unlike that famous tv series about nothing, it's a failure.

Ms George has lost the plot, both figuratively and literally. She wants us to suspend our disbelief to epic proportions in asking us to go along with the

nonsensical behaviour and decisions made by almost every character in this book.

If Ms George doesn't get rid of Ardery and put Lynley back in his rightful position, that of solving murders with Havers and Nkata, then sadly, I doubt I will bother with any more of her books.
