



Thin Air

Ann Cleeves

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A group of old university friends leave the bright lights of London and travel to Unst, Shetland's most northerly island, to celebrate the marriage of one of their friends to a Shetlander. But late on the night of the wedding party, one of them, Eleanor, disappears - apparently into thin air. It's mid-summer, a time of light nights and unexpected mists. The following day, Eleanor's friend Polly receives an email. It reads like a suicide note, saying she'll never be found alive. And then Eleanor's body is discovered, lying in a small loch close to the cliff edge.

Detectives Jimmy Perez and Willow Reeves are dispatched to Unst to investigate. Before she went missing, Eleanor claimed to have seen the ghost of a local child who drowned in the 1920s. Her interest in the legend of the ghost had seemed unhealthy - obsessive, even - to her friends: an indication of a troubled mind. But Jimmy and Willow are convinced that there is more to Eleanor's death than there first appears.

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Thin Air Details

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Author : Ann Cleeves

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From Reader Review Thin Air for online ebook

LJ says

First Sentence: The music started.

The gathering of university friends for a wedding hamefarin' on Unst in the Shetlands Islands comes to an end with the discovery of one of the friend's body the next morning. Was it suicide, as indicated by an email received from the dead woman the next day? Was her death foretold by Perrie Lizzie, the ghost of a young girl who'd died there years before? Inspector Jimmy Perez and his team travel to the outermost island to find out.

Cleeves excels at creating a sense of place and painting visual pictures which employ all the senses. Even though few will be able to visit these rather remote islands, you have a true sense of being there, with the long days and weather contributing to the plot. To this, she adds just a touch of the supernatural still leaving you to question whether it truly is.

All of her characters are fully dimensional. You know their appearance, enough of their back story to give true sense of them, and even insights into their personalities and insecurities. The relationships are realistic, understandable and important. The interplay between the investigating team and that those associated to the victim are equally important and well balanced in the story. Yet it is Perez, his slowly maturing Sergeant Sandy Wilson, and Detective Willow Reeves brought in to oversee the case, who most hold our interest.

"Thin Air" is very well done, with a plot that takes us around and amongst the islands, leading us down one path to another, with very good twists along the way. Cleeves is a wonderful writer and one who should be on any mystery-reader's list.

THIN AIR (Pol Proc-Insp. Jimmy Perez-Shetlands, UK-Contemp) – VG+
Cleeves, Ann – 6th in series
Minotaur Books – May 2015

tinne says

I'm being generous by handing out three stars. Two and a half would be more accurate.

Yes, all the elements of an entertaining and inspiring Shetland novel were there, but for the Monica character. She was not at all credible, her re-introduction into the story was left unexplained and she just seemed to be a hoax. The plot did not need more diversions and smoke screens. On the contrary, the book would have gained from some critical editing.

But I do still love Perez and the islands and I will read the seventh book in the series, no matter what.

Rachel Hall says

Whether it be DCI Vera Stanhope in Northumberland or Inspector Jimmy Perez in Shetland, every novel of either series seems to seamlessly work as a standalone and much of that is testament to Ann Cleeves gift for characterisation and exposing the hidden motivations in a tight knit community. This sixth instalment is a brilliantly atmospheric encounter that makes use of the barren Shetland landscape and the history of folklore that is so entrenched in the upbringing of the islanders. In the wake of his partner's, Fran Hunter's murder, Inspector Jimmy Perez is slowly coming to terms with the changes to his life and the responsibility of caring for Fran's daughter, Cassie. With his colleagues still concerned about his mindset and his passion for the job the disappearance and subsequent murder of a woman visitor close in age to Fran heightens sensitivities in those around him. Although it seemed a fairly laboured and slow introduction to the events of the night which see a murder uncovered the next morning, Ann Cleeves takes time to present multidimensional characters and furnish the story with an impressive level of depth. Within sixty-pages of *Thin Air* the reader quickly finds themselves fixated by the characters and with a fervent desire to know which of the events in the life of a young woman has motivated a murder.

Lowrie Malcolmson returns to his family home in Unst, the most northerly island of the Shetland's, for his hameferin' and the tradition of taking his bride, Caroline, home. Their female friends from university have accompanied them for the celebration along with their menfolk, librarian Polly Gilmour and her recently acquired boyfriend, Marcus Wentworth and Eleanor and Ian Longstaff, themselves married for three-years. After spending thirteen hours on an overnight boat from Aberdeen to Lerwick the visitors are greeted by Shetland in midsummer and the discovery that it never really gets dark in June this far north. With the two couples staying at Sletts holiday cottage the evening of the hameferin' celebration ends with Eleanor telling his friends of her earlier sighting on a child in oddly old-fashioned clothing, dancing and then suddenly disappearing into thin air. Polly believes her friend, having experienced something similar herself that evening, but husband Ian's scepticism irks his wife. When Eleanor, age thirty-six, is reported missing the next morning it becomes apparent that she has had a rather traumatic time of late and two miscarriages and a spell in a private psychiatric hospital at the insistence of husband, Ian, has left a tension amongst the group. In the wake of their university days some distance has come between the three women but Polly remains convinced her friend would not have committed suicide, citing her passion for her career in TV production and a recent uptick in her mood. When Eleanor's body is discovered in a shallow loch, seemingly murdered but left in an angelic pose, a cloud of suspicion descends in the closed community of Unst. As Perez travels down to London to learn more about the deceased, her family and her work he discovers her fascination with Shetland legend, Peerie Lizzie, the ghost of a young girl that is said to have drowned and haunts the land, most recently proposing plans to explore the origin of the myth in a forthcoming documentary, but given the supposed link between conceiving and a sighting of Peerie Lizzie was this simply wishful thinking on Eleanor's part?

Responsibility for untangling the case falls to Inspector Jimmy Perez and his rather green assistant, Detective Sandy Wilson. With Chief Inspector Willow Reeves based at Inverness in overall charge, and effectively Jimmy's boss, her appearance in Unst and the frisson of chemistry that exists between the duo brings a real charm to proceedings. Although about three-quarters of the way through the novel the investigation seemed to stall, a rousing finish sees Perez regaining some of his former decisiveness and leadership skills and Sandy showing his potential. With the team finding some real tenacity this a spirited novel that sees Eleanor's life stripped back and explored in brutal depth. The insightful observations of Polly as she starts to discover different sides to the friends she has cherished is well conveyed. As different aspects of the character of murdered Eleanor are reassessed, Ann Cleeves shows that appearances can so often be deceptive. When a second murder occurs and the locals conclude that the Londoners have brought trouble to the islands it seems that the answers to this mystery are surely to be found in the remote community of Unst. The awkward interaction between Perez, his team and the southerners exposes just how different the lives of the city dwellers and the native locals really are.

Given that the synopsis made mention to Eleanor disappearing "apparently into thin air" and her claim about having seen a ghost child I was fully prepared for disappointment, assuming that the denouement would be marred by recourse to imagined sightings and a rather flaky and unsatisfying explanation, but Cleeves manages to pull a plausible motive out of the bag and did not disappoint! For an exploration of isolation on island communities under stress very few can hold a candle to Ann Cleeves and in Inspector Jimmy Perez she has fashioned a compelling protagonist who frustrates and delights in equal measure. Thin Air is steeped in the shadowy territory of ghosts and folklore and this delicately handled mystery is rich in otherworldly tension and unspoken emotions and is another very solid endeavour.

Susan Johnson says

The sixth book in the Shetland Island series starts with a hamefarin on the island of Unst, the northern most island in Shetland. A local boy returns home with his new wife and her English friends. A hamefarin is a homecoming that brings almost everybody on the island to the party.

Unfortunately after the party, one of the English girls is found murdered. Who could have murdered the outsider is the question of the novel. The local myth of Perrie Lizzie, a young girl found drowned many years ago plays a part in the mystery. Has the young girl appeared as a ghost and a participant in the murder?

Jimmy Perez and his side kick, Sandy, are called to investigate. Accompanying them is Perez's boss from Inverness, Willow Reeve. Jimmy is slowly making a recovery from the death of his fiancée, Fran.

Although this is an above average mystery, it is not my favorite of the Shetland series. The book doesn't provide the same punch as her earlier ones. Still the sense of place in the book is superb. I love the description of the endless days where the sun seems to never set. I love the description of the dimming when it almost becomes night. I am fascinated by the life on the Islands and Cleeves provides a realistic portrayal.

La Tonya Jordan says

Eleanor Longstaff was found murdered on Unst in Shetland which is the furthest north a person can go in the United Kingdom. She was in Unst to celebrate the hamefarin (wedding reception) of Caroline Lawson and Lowrie Malcomson, friends from college. Upon her death, people start to talk about the ghost of Perrie Lizzie, a ten year old girl, who drowned in 1930 on the island. Polly Gilmour, a college and long-time friend of Eleanor's, starts to actually see the little girl.

The investigation starts to take the investigators Jimmy Perez, Sandy Wilson, and Willow Reeves into ghost stories, abandoned crofts, and family histories better left forgotten. This is a fast pace read that will leave you confuse until the end. Another plus about this book you, the reader, get a sense of what the island looks and feels like with the descriptions of cliffs, voes, planticurbs, and wildlife.

Quotes:

'He raped a young girl to give his wife a baby?' Even after all these years Sandy was shocked.

Sometimes he thought it was the life of an islander that had attracted her, rather than him as a man, but

maybe after all these years that didn't matter.

And that was when something had broken inside Polly. Because Cilla was old and snooty, and always treated Polly as if Eleanor was doing her the hugest favour in the world by befriending her. How could Marcus have anything in common with a woman like that?

Margitte says

I'm going to throw the blurb in here. It's much more descriptive than I can make it. And please, humor me, and fall in love with the beautiful cover too, like I did.

A group of old university friends leave the bright lights of London and travel to Unst, Shetland's most northerly island, to celebrate the marriage of one of their friends to a Shetlander. But late on the night of the wedding party, one of them, Eleanor, disappears - apparently into thin air. It's mid-summer, a time of light nights and unexpected mists. The following day, Eleanor's friend Polly receives an email. It reads like a suicide note, saying she'll never be found alive. And then Eleanor's body is discovered, lying in a small loch close to the cliff edge.

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I am obviously in the mood for light, relaxing reads, and this one, a murder mystery with a touch of suspense and a pinch of ghostliness was a great experience.

It is one of those whodunits for the sleuthing detectives in us :-))

Of course the ending was a surprise. At least this time around. Common sense could have pinched me on the nose and I would have gotten the culprit, but I was just not in the mood for it. Okay that's my excuse.

So if you're in the mood for a highly atmospheric, picturesque detective drama in the British Shetland Isles, try this one.

I was just not emotionally invested enough to swoon. But overall quite worth the read. I will read this author again.

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

The Shetland series has long been one of my favorites mysteries, and this book did not disappoint. Characterization: brilliant. Setting: lovely. Mystery: kept me compelled. Red herrings like wut.

I really could do without Detective Willow, though. She's rather annoying.

Suzy says

Thin Air is the 6th entry into this favorite series. The series has in common many elements of other favorites. The place holds as much fascination as the mysteries, the cast of characters are fully realized and develop over the course of the series and the main protagonist is thoughtful and mostly careful in going about solving the crimes. I've said in other reviews that I really like Cleeves' writing feeling that it reflects the culture and pace of The Shetlands. This is not grit lit!

With that said, I thought this book didn't live up to the quality of the other five books, hence the 3 stars. While I liked the story, I thought the book dragged in parts and could have been 50-60 fewer pages. Many story elements felt familiar and the dilemmas of Jimmy Perez and his sidekick Sandy were all too common and sometimes feeling a little old. The ending felt rushed and one of the peripheral characters (Monica) didn't have a purpose to me. I liked it well enough to keep going to the end and will definitely read book 7 which looks to be coming out later this year.

I'm excited to be getting the DVDs for the tv show this week from the library. I love the Vera Stanhope tv show, Cleeves' other mystery series so I have high hopes for this one.

Richard Derus says

Rating: 4* of five

The Publisher Says: A group of old university friends leave the bright lights of London and travel to Unst, Shetland's most northerly island, to celebrate the marriage of one of their friends to a Shetlander. But late on the night of the wedding party, one of them, Eleanor, disappears - apparently into thin air. It's mid-summer, a time of light nights and unexpected mists. The following day, Eleanor's friend Polly receives an email. It reads like a suicide note, saying she'll never be found alive. And then Eleanor's body is discovered, lying in a small loch close to the cliff edge.

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My Review: Series mysteries are a pleasure to me. I have a (well-concealed) orderly side, one that needs to see Right done even if it's not strictly speaking legal. The Right that's done here is a bit twisty, no doubt about that, but it satisfied me. Eleanor, the murder victim, is the sort of character that just needs killing. I've known Eleanors in my life and feel that way about each of them, though I hasten to say loudly and publicly that I don't condone murder as a means to make things Right.

Really. Honest.

But Jimmy Perez is a cop, a good cop, and even though it seemed to me that he secretly felt that Right was done in Eleanor's death, he set out to solve the crime that was committed in the course of setting things straight. Willow, the new Chief Inspector we met in the previous book, is a great character. She's just awkward enough to make Jimmy feel off-balance yet protective. He's still reeling from his love's death; he's still growing accustomed to being a single dad; he's got Sandy the PC Plod character making him crazy yet advancing in his own detecting capabilities under Jimmy's tutelage. Jimmy's a man with a lot on his plate. Eleanor wouldn't be someone he'd care much for in life and I suspect he'd simply do the minimum were it not for the cast of Shetland originals wrapped deep in the case's toils.

The series brings a delightful place on Earth's surface to light. (Pun optional.) As we follow Jimmy, Willow, and Sandy around in their investigations, the Shetlands feel like so much more than the land that holds the characters up as they walk around. The islands are palpable to me, as though looking out the window while I'm reading about Unst will show me Unst instead of Long Beach. That's a great feeling to have when reading a book about a place I've never been.

The BBC has a series based on the characters in the novels. It's had three seasons to date and a fourth will be produced. It's recently become available on Netflix so I suppose I'll binge it one day soon. I was completely enthralled by Ann Cleeves' other series, Vera Stanhope, in its ITV incarnation, and Brenda Blethyn is my idea of Vera. The seventh season is due next year, 2017, and I will be there for it with bells on. I've been more cautious in approaching the adaptation of this series because Jimmy is portrayed by actor Douglas Henshall, very much not the man I see in my mental movie of the series. A bit like Peter Capaldi as the Doctor...just about exactly wrong from my viewpoint.

Still and all, it pays to remain open. While Cleeves' first four Shetland novels were made into the first two seasons of *Shetland*, the third season has branched out on its own. That should make the cognitive disconnect of Henshall as Jimmy Perez a good deal easier for me to absorb. The books are a pleasure, there is a seventh full novel (after several novellas) appearing next year; the TV series bids fair to be worthy of attention; it's a good investment of your eyeblinks and dollars to pick up this habit. Start anywhere, the series aspect is a boon to your pleasure but not crucial to it.

Diane S ? says

A series I have read from the beginning, drawn at first to the unusual setting of the Shetland Islands. Kept reading because I loved the characters, the intriguing culture of a place I will probably never see, and the right combination of characters lives and plots. This outing finds Perez back on the job after a horrific circumstance in his personal life and a group of college friends, attending a Shetland custom after the marriage of two friends, one who was raised on the island. A folklore, possibly come to life, a song sung by school children and a few murders kept me reading. Do you believe in ghosts?

Another one I didn't guess who done it?

Cindy says

This is such an enjoyable series, love the characters, really love the setting. Makes me want to live on a Shetland Island but I probably would not like the reality. Just let me live there in these books.

Donna says

This is the 6th book in the Shetland Island series by Ann Cleeves. I read the first one in this series and gave it 4 stars. This one was only 3 stars for me.

There wasn't as much of a sense of place in this book. I loved that part in book one. Maybe the author didn't want to sound repetitive....I don't know, but I felt this could have happened anywhere. There wasn't anything that stood out as unique.

I felt the story was well thought out, but it moved a little slow. I did page math a couple of times. But I liked the intricate nature of the hunt. So 3 stars.

Sandy says

90% great, 10%.....wha? This is book #6 of the Shetland series featuring Detective Jimmy Perez. He's back on the job, still mourning the death of his girlfriend while caring for her daughter Cassie. After a young British woman goes missing following a wedding on Unst, he & colleague Sandy travel to the island. DI Willow Reeves soon joins them & they set up shop at Springfield House, a B&B converted from a manor with a haunting past.

The missing woman was part of 2 couples who travelled from London to see one of their friends marry an island man. The women have known each other since uni so you'd think they had no secrets between them. You'd be wrong.

Running parallel to the murder mystery is a subplot involving the ghost of Peerie Lizzie, a young girl who died in 1930. Her family lived in Springfield House & according to local folklore, she can still be seen dancing on the beach nearby. As the book progresses, both story lines are developed until it becomes clear there are ties between the present & the past.

I loved the previous books. Jimmy is a compelling character who is just starting to emerge from a dark depression following the death of his beloved Fran. He's a smart, intuitive cop, the guy his colleagues depend on & they're relieved to see signs of the old Jimmy returning. The author continues to use the customs, people & geography of the Shetlands as a backdrop to great effect. Descriptions of the fog, desolate landscapes & island croft houses lend the story a feeling of claustrophobic isolation, perfect for a mystery. Characters are divided into locals & those from away and I appreciated the clash of cultures & dialogue. The only character I didn't enjoy was Willow. She's Jimmy's boss, a DI in charge of Serious Crimes but comes across as a lovesick, petulant child instead of a mature professional. The author repeatedly refers to her unkempt appearance, complete with a wardrobe of hand-me-downs from charity shops. I'm thinking someone in her position could afford basic clothing & a comb.

This is not about car chases & shootouts. It's a quiet, thinking person's mystery, more about the characters than acts of violence. The communities are close knit & memories are long among the multi-generational families. There are occasional disputes but they band together to keep secrets from strangers. As some of these are gradually uncovered, the murder investigation changes direction several times & I enjoyed trying to figure out whodunit....right up 'til the end. This is where the story fell apart with an ending that seemed

rushed & unbelievable. After being engrossed by the story, it felt like being jerked awake. When the killer was revealed in previous books, you could look back & see where you missed the dropped clues, admiring how the author cleverly concealed them. Here, I was left thinking "Huh...?", a bit disappointed that I never had a chance. Instead of being rooted in any of the story lines being followed, the killer's identity (& especially their motive) came out of the blue & I just couldn't buy it. It was like staring at a beautifully wrapped gift for days before Xmas & finally opening it to discover socks.

So...how to rate this. If I disregard Willow (irritating to me but that's not the author's fault), 90% of the book is a 4 star read. I'd give the last couple of chapters a 2.5. It was a case of a great book deserving a smarter end. Having said that I will read #7, hoping this is a blip in the series. The setting & main character are compelling enough that I want to see where his life goes next in this beautiful part of the world.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

This was a book I really looked forward to reading since I love the Shetland series. What I like with the Shetland series is a.) the characters b.) the setting and c.) the crimes. I like Detective Jimmy Perez, he is such a steady character. He is still recovering from the loss of Fran, but now he seems to be more himself again. Detective Willow Reeves was introduced in the last book and I liked her from the beginning. This hippie cop together working with the steady Jimmy Perez. It's just a terrific pairing.

I liked the story very much in this book, I like that it didn't feel rushed that slowly, the pieces came together in the end. A tragic end, so much misunderstanding. The myth of the drowned child was an interesting part of the story.

Now I'm just waiting for the next book to be released...whenever that will be!

Bonnie says

Ann Cleeves is back with her sixth book featuring Inspector Jimmy Perez in her Shetland's series which includes Raven Black, White Nights, Red Bones, Blue Lightning, and (running out of colors) Dead Water. The novel opens with a group of old university friends from London arriving in Unst, Shetland's most northerly island, in mid summer to celebrate the marriage of one of their friends. Late on the night of the wedding party, one of them, Eleanor, disappears - apparently into thin air. It's mid-summer, a time of light nights and unexpected mists. The following day, Eleanor's friend Polly receives an email. It reads like a suicide note, saying she'll never be found alive. And then Eleanor's body is discovered, lying in a small loch close to the cliff edge.

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The setting is ominous with dense fogs obscuring the horizon until it is difficult to see where reality begins and ends. The legend of the child who had drowned when she slipped away from the girl who was watching her infests the lives of the local residents and creates a sense of impending doom.

Can Jimmy and Willow, who is more attracted to Jimmy than ever, find the killer of Eleanor and expose the real culprit of the legend of the lost child?
