



Hanging Hill

Mo Hayder

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What if you found yourself divorced and penniless? With no skills and a teenage daughter to support? What if the only way to survive was to do things you never thought possible, to go places you never knew existed ...

These are questions Sally has never really thought about before. Married to a successful business man, she's always been a bit of a dreamer. Until now.

Her sister Zoe is her polar opposite. A detective inspector working out of Bath Central, she loves her job, and oozes self-confidence. No one would guess that she hides a crippling secret that dates back twenty years, and which – if exposed – may destroy her.

Then Sally's daughter gets into difficulties, and Sally finds she needs cash – lots of it – fast. With no one to help her, she is forced into a criminal world of extreme pornography and illegal drugs; a world in which teenage girls can go missing.

Two sisters intent on survival. Until one does something so terrifying that there's no way back ...

Hanging Hill Details

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From Reader Review Hanging Hill for online ebook

Trish says

I had never read anything by Mo Hayder before, though I had seen the name. I had always thought the author was a man. Hayder is a mystery writer who earns one-word endorsements from other mystery writers: “Stunning,” “Haunting,” “Disturbing,” “Terrifying.” All of these could apply to *Hanging Hill*. What struck me, however, was the size and complexity of the vision—she doesn’t implicate just one policeman, nor find just one psychopath—there are several. Evil swirls all around us, every day. And each of us has the capacity for the most heinous crimes.

This is not exactly reassuring, which is why her novels have earned description as “the most terrifying crime thrillers you will ever read.” If this latest novel represents her skills, I have to admit I found it terrifying that so many ordinary-seeming people (including government officials and law enforcement) were implicated by the end. There seems no end to the deceit and criminality.

Willing as I am to suspend disbelief when it comes to novels, however, there were many places I could point to that did not add up. But I am not going to do that here, since I believe Hayder’s books speak for themselves. People want to be scared when they open her big books. I can imagine someone buying a new book of hers along with a bottle of plonk and a bag of chips and sinking down alone on the couch for a weekend of blissful terror.

Usually I can summarize the main theme of a book in one line, but it is especially difficult with this book. Suffice it to say a beautiful young woman turns up strangled along a canal tow-path and this story seeks to find that killer but finds many others as well. We go ‘round and ‘round with suspects, and it turns out each of them is hiding something. I’d love to see what Stephen King says of Mo Hayder.

Carol says

Better than average mystery/thriller with a twist in the end. The story is told from the point of view of two sisters, estranged for many years, seemingly from jealousy or maybe parental favoritism...it wasn’t clearly revealed. The novel is an enjoyable thriller but it does require the willing suspension of disbelief. I’m not sure that all of the narrative threads tied together neatly but the ending was a shocking revelation.

Sharon Bolton says

I’m a big fan of Mo Hayder, particularly her Jack Caffery/Flee Marley series, but this stand-alone didn’t quite hit the spot for me.

Hanging Hill is the story of two sisters, estranged for many years but drawn together by the brutal murder of a teenage girl. DI Zoe Benedict is part of the investigation team. Sally Benedict is a struggling single mum whose daughter, Millie, was not only a friend of the victim but is also involved in some pretty unsavoury activities herself.

One of Hayder's great strengths is her ability to create distinct, memorable and believable characters quickly. Both sisters and their surrounding cast are well drawn and immediately interesting, if not necessarily all that likeable. Another, is her willingness to handle the darkest of material without flinching and there are two scenes in this book which really do require a strong stomach. Lots of crime writers would shy away from dealing with such subject matter so graphically. Hayder doesn't and it is to her credit. We need writers like Hayder for our tradition of crime writing to remain as rich and varied as it has become.

She is also exceptionally good at tension and the final 25% of this book was almost unbearably gripping.

Having said all that, I still don't think *Hanging Hill* is Hayder's best. The story at times seemed disjointed, there were some very odd moments (giant Chinese MI6 operative in the car park!) and the surprise ending really didn't work for me.

It's good, and well worth a read, but not quite up the standard of her superb, Edgar winning last novel: *GONE*.

Bill Khaemba says

"I'm a post-menopausal woman who's lived in a man's world for twenty years. A more cynical, cruel creature it's hard to find."

Crime fiction is one of those genres that just feels *right*, when I get into the story and try to piece everything together. It especially difficult to come across one that takes the classic tropes and weaves it smartly but Mo Hayder has proven once again that she can own it. I came across her through a ~~7th book~~ in the **Jack Caffery** crime series, not knowing it was the ~~7th book~~, I read it as a *standalone* and I was utterly speechless. It was gruesome, thrilling and one heck of a ride and this one held its own.

The story follows **two sisters** who had a fall out at a young age and have not reconciled but a gruesome murder will bring them together in the most interesting and complex way. We go into the ugly world of child pornography, modelling, self-harm, corruption and so much more. I don't want to give away everything because of the mystery aspect of the book.

I loved it, I actually didn't expect to like it this much... It had a good length so I got to know the two narratives well enough to actually care about what happens to them. The author managed to balance plot and characterization as well as discussing heavy topics and themes. We got a glimpse on how ugly the **modelling business** is and the unbelievable *expectations placed on women to uphold a certain "look"*. She also managed to shine a light on sibling relationships and the lengths one could go to protect the ones they love & to top it all the mystery was very engaging and the ~~last 10 pages~~...

I feel like **Mo Hayder's** books should be read by everyone because they are so fun and gruesome... Would **HIGHLY** recommend it.

Happy Reading & thanks for reading :)

Mary Gilligan-Nolan says

Went into the library this week, and there was "Hanging Hill", I could not believe it. I thought I'd be waiting months to get this in paperback. So, I was looking forward to reading it, being a big fan of Mo Hayder. Now, I'm not quite sure where to start. I have mixed feelings about it. I was hooked on the story, but in part, it did not live up to my expectations. The editing was dodgy, an "eight-milligram camera chip"? come on, please, what the heck was that about, and there was reference to "a chip" again, further on. The premise of the story is, without giving too much away, a teenage girl is found murdered and raped, two sisters, one Zoe a police detective and one Sally, the mother of a teenage girl, who was friends of the victim, have been estranged since they were young and the murder leads them back together. The blurb of the front cover is misleading, Sally's boyfriend Steve, is a mystery man with a mystery job we get no real explanation of what it is. Reasons people did what they did (trying not to give too much away), were flimsy and unrealistic. Sally's daughter was a spoilt little thing, who didn't seem to care about the consequences of her actions had on her mother, as long as she got her own way. But, Sally just let it slide. I felt the whole thing rambled and drifted in ways that didn't even matter most of the time and some of the plot and characters were pointless. I love Mo Hayder, all of her previous books were great, but this one, just didn't quite come up to standard. It fell short and although I liked it, I have to say it's her weakest link so far.

Dannii Elle says

No! No! No! That cliffhanger ending might have just ruined my life! And a little internet research tells me that a sequel isn't even on the cards!

Hanging Hill is the story of two sisters, opposites in everything and estranged until dark events bring them back together once again.

This is a classic Hayder novel, where I read this lightheaded from holding my breath in anticipation for the next fright I am sure to receive. And this never lets up throughout the whole novel! I have said it before but I'll say it again; Hayder amalgamates horror and crime genres so perfectly together and manages to bring both a chilling creep factor and a fair amount of gore to her writing that I struggle to find a demographic she isn't suited for. Except for those that prefer a happy ever after, that is...

Steve says

This is the first book I've read by Hayder, and I'm already looking for her others. She writes like an upscale Denise Mina, with dark secrets and horrible twists and turns, but the story takes place in Bath, England instead of seamy Glasgow. Her style is evocative and lyrical, too, without calling attention to itself. It reminds me of a slightly lighter version of Dennis Lehane's earlier novels.

I'm guessing this book is a standalone because the main characters all have backstory that would have come out in earlier books. Here, it leaps out of the dark to bite their collective throats. Police detective Zoe Benedict investigates the killing of a lovely sixteen-year-old girl, a crime that has clearly sexual overtones. She's always marched to her own drum, and here she flies in the face of a glamorous psychological profiler-- who ends up sleeping with her partner. She also comes face to face with her own past, which includes stripping to earn money as a teen and a tendency toward self-mutilation, a habit she still hasn't kicked.

Zoe's sister Sally is recently divorced and works with a cleaning service to make ends meet. She finds herself working for a sleazy man whom the police believe is one of the biggest porn distributors in the area. And he has business associates who are even worse. Sally, still reeling over the divorce, has to guide her daughter Millie through the minefields of unrequited teen love, too. And she's being bullied and threatened by David Goldrab, the porn king.

Even worse, it appears that Millie and her school friends knew the dead girl, and one of them may have been involved in her death.

Hayder weaves these various threads into a really ugly noose. Sally, Zoe, and most of the other characters find themselves doing things no sane (or decent?) person would do, and mostly because it's the best of several appalling alternatives. Every time I thought I knew where the plot was going, Hayder gave me another horrible surprise. And it all works. The ending makes sense, both logically and emotionally. I liked and understood many of her characters, but I'm glad that I'm not one of them. This book is a really fine read on all levels.

If this is typical of Hayder's work, I'll be burning through the rest of her works as quickly as I can get my hands on them.

Diane S ? says

Usually love Hayder, her darkness of her psychological novels are usually top notch. In this one while the darkness was still there, in the subject matter especially, the novel was just not as tight as hers usually are. She tended to ramble a bit and some of the characters were just annoying.

Barry says

Hanging Hill was a little different than other Mo Hayder books that I have read, although I enjoyed it as much or more than her other works. It was a bit more realistic than her previous books which often required the reader to suspend reality or, at least logic, for a bit. The unreality of her earlier books did not make them any less wonderful to read but I felt that the greater reality which marked this one made it all the better.

As has the been the case with all of her work, Hanging Hill was enormously engaging and suspenseful. Each day I looked forward to getting into bed and beginning to read it. The main characters were very three dimensional and realistic in that Hayder developed unique personalities for each as well as a set of interests, experiences, virtues and flaws that made each relatively easy to get to "know." Occasionally, I had to think a little about whether a character was a good bad guy or a bad good guy and that made the trip all the more enjoyable.

I suspect that Zoe, one of the two sisters who were the main characters, was, to some degree, based on Hayder, herself. I would love the chance to ask here someday but I would guess that I would receive quite an equivocal response.

The plot had twists and turns, a red herring or two and it kept me guessing right to the last page and maybe a little beyond. There were gruesome crimes, both good and bad detective work, a handful of quite reasonable suspects a couple of genuine shocks.

I can enthusiastically recommend Hanging Hill to anyone who enjoys a good whodunit! The American reader might find a few British or, perhaps, English colloquialisms and meanings a little distracting but not even remotely enough to detract from the enjoyment of the reading the book.

Barbara Elsborg says

I've read everything she's written and while I didn't enjoy this one quite as much as some of the others, it was still a great read. I think what I like so much about Ms Hayder's books is her ability to draw you straight into the story. Her prose reads as though its all taking place in front of you - sometimes you wish it wasn't! Her characters are always interesting and well rounded though I'd have liked a little more about the male partners of the sisters.

The blood and gore bits were - er - very bloody and gory but I don't have an issue with that - more perhaps with the fact that they did it in the first place. There did seem to be some loose ends but I read this so fast I wonder if I just missed the points - eg the writing on the body?

The ending - I wasn't entirely suprised - it would have been too simple to let that be it - but I'm not sure I liked the actual end! When you read it, you'll see what I mean.

But she's a master story teller - the tension and suspense is brilliant. Two nights to read it and I HAD to stay awake until I'd finished. I'd like to read more about Zoe and Ben. I wonder if the author has plans for more.

Kelly Roll says

As always the opinion listed here is simply that of a reader. Other readers may have a vastly different experience reading the book. If you've not yet read the book Goodreads give a nice synopsis of the basic plot.

I will be discussing plot points so read no further if you haven't already read the book.

I had some very real problems with this book. Let's start with two of our main characters, Sally and Zoe. They're both are pretty flawed and irritated the heck out of me. The first, Sally is incredibly annoying in her naiveté and handdogness. She has no common sense and evidently is so unworldly that at times I just wanted to shake her. I never feel sorry for her so I felt little sympathy for her actions. Early on in the book she discovers that her daughter has gone to a drug dealer/loan shark. Her boyfriend offers her the loan of the money in order to pay this man back. She refuses as a point of pride. Evidently she has no idea that loan sharks continue to tack on interest and that it would have been far better for her to have taken the money and repaid it to the person not threatening to harm her daughter, but no ...she decides to work extra shifts alone for the creepy man her boyfriend, an industrial espionage specialist, has warned her about. She decides that earning the extra 480 pounds a week is worth the humiliation this man puts her though. Just as an aside here, even if her boss weren't a total creep it would take her 8 months to repay the loan shark, and as we all know from other fictional accounts loan sharks are just so, so patient.

Our second protagonist, Zoe, is about as irritating as her sister. She goes into an actual snit and walks out of a police briefing when her colleagues don't immediately applaud what she considers a brilliant insight. I'm fairly certain that this would be tolerated nowhere. She also displays an incredible lack of professionalism in exhibiting quite a bit of jealousy toward a female profiler. There is also a scene late in the book in which her niece and a teenage boy are believed to be held by the man who allegedly murdered another teenage girl. She refuses to phone the police because the alleged murderer can identify her as a former pole dancer and she doesn't want her colleagues to know this. I was flabbergasted – this woman is actually willing to risk the potential death of two young people just so she won't suffer some humiliation. This point stretched the last of my credibility and I'm not quite sure why I stuck with the book.

In addition to the problems I had with the two main characters I also had difficulty with some of the plot points. The drug dealer/loan shark character is introduced quite early on as a menacing character and then is dropped only to be reintroduced later in the book as more of a buffoonish character. Sally is almost killed by her boss but then accidentally kills him defending herself. She refuses to call the police for fear that they wouldn't believe her. This was another head scratcher for me. The man has not ten minutes before shot a crossbow at someone else. This action is caught on the man's own cameras. He isn't a nice man at the best of times and it is absurd that the police wouldn't at least consider that Sally had acted in self-defense. Instead Sally decides the best course of action is to dispose of the body with the help of her boyfriend. They hack the body up in a particularly grizzly matter and disperse the pieces throughout the city. While Sally professes some angst over this act she seems to get over it fairly quickly. By the end of the book she seems positively okay with it, she seemed almost sociopathic in her acceptance of events. Other improbable plot points also occur that I won't go into, but for me, this was not one Hayder's better works.

Big Book Little Book says

Karen: www.bigbooklittlebook.blogspot.com

Oh how I love Mo Hayder. She's one of those authors where if I see that she's released a new book, I'll instantly purchase / borrow the book without even bothering to read the synopsis as I just know I'll enjoy it!

For those of you who have not yet found Mo's literary charms but like crime thrillers then a word of warning. Mo's stories are pretty dark and disturbing and she is one of the few writers that actually made me so scared when reading her earlier works, 'The Birdman' and, 'The Treatment' I actually debated whether to skip a few pages as I was struggling to cope with the intensity of the action and the grim realisation that Mo has absolutely no qualms about favoured characters or vulnerable innocents suffering unspeakable horrors.

It was then, a few chapters into reading 'Hanging Hill', that I got that sense of foreboding that I was once again being invited into a very dark world. This time it involves adolescent young girls who are usually forced into the sex industry and get involved with some very nasty characters indeed who operate both in the UK and abroad.

The story focuses on two estranged sisters in their 30's. Zoë, is the beautiful police officer with Amazonian attributes. She's a fighter but emotionally stunted and self abusive when she needs to regain control. Sally is the stereotypical well to do housewife who has become overly reliant on her husband, that is, until he leaves her and starts a new family. She then has to learn the hard way that her carefree ways don't necessarily serve her well when she has a teenage daughter to look after and ever increasing bills and repairs to pay.

Separately, these women become involved in the tangled web that occurs after a local schoolgirl is brutally

and sadistically murdered. They each have to make dangerous decisions and work together to try and keep themselves and those that they love, safe from harm.

Verdict: Probably not as dark and intense as some of Mo's earlier works but still a very intriguing (I shouldn't say enjoyable should I...?) read and I was very pleased with the final, 'plot twist finale' even if I will be forever wondering, 'What happened next?!'

Eva says

This ending made me so mad!!!!

This woman really knows how to write a good suspense thriller. I have read 250 pages in 1 sitting, because it's just so good! The characters are good, the build-up is good and that plottwist, my oh my....

Gatorman says

Before the last ten pages or so I was about to give this terrific police procedural mystery 4 stars. It is, as always with Hayder, very well-written with an emphasis on a troubled protagonist trying to deal with major emotional and personal issues while trying to solve a brutal murder of a young girl. The dueling stories of two very different sisters was engaging and weaved together nicely. As I approached the ending, I was thinking that the story, while quite good, was not on the same level as Hayder's other dark stories involving Jack Caffery, or even her two other stand-alones.

Then, the last ten pages or so changed that thinking. Without giving anything away, Hayder once again proved why she is so adept at showing the darker side of life and how evil can rear its ugly head just when you least expect it, with devastating consequences. A powerful ending, to say the least. Very highly recommended.

Siobhan says

I've been meaning to read this one for so long.

I'm a big fan of Mo Hayder's Jack Caffery series. He is one of my favourite police officers. The books sit up there in my favourite police procedurals. I'm crossing my fingers regarding what will come next. Due to this, I've spent a long time wanting to read one of Hayder's standalone novels. Of the three – The Devil of Nanking, Hanging Hill, and Pig Island – this one always stood out to me the most. I was going to pick it up no matter what, but one day there was a nice surprise for me at work.

To raise money for the charity, there was a book sale. Many books were sold, but many were left over. Thus, I went for a rummage through the boxes of left over books. There was much squealing, as it seemed every crime fan in Aberdeen had donated their books to the charity. There were so many big names to hunt through. My pile grew bigger and bigger. Paperbacks and hardbacks were added. Included in the pile was Hanging Hill. It was probably one of the biggest squeals. What caused more squealing, however, was when I was informed the books were even cheaper now that I was working my way through the unwanted pile after

everyone had gone home. In the end, I managed to get this wonderful read for less than two percent of the original price.

What. A. Bargain.

I didn't get down to reading it straight away, though. Despite all of my excitement, I tried to work my way through the other books on my shelf. Then there were releases that I was too excited to ignore. It was bumped down my to-read list, but in the end it worked its way back up. I couldn't ignore it any longer. I needed to know what happened. I needed to know if Mo Hayder's standalone novels were as good as her Jack Caffery novels.

Based upon *Hanging Hill*, I can safely say Mo Hayder excels in the standalone novels.

I'll be reading the other two books – *The Devil of Nanking* and *Pig Island* – of course, just to make sure, but I have no fear. The woman is on my list of favourite authors for a reason, and whether she is adding another book to her Jack Caffery series or whether she is writing a standalone, it seems as though she is capable of pulling you into the story.

As always, Mo Hayder writes a dark tale. *Hanging Hill* isn't as dark as some of her Jack Caffery novels, but the darkness is still there. This is no cosy mystery. This is a gritty tale of human nature. Whilst the crime is always there in the background, quite a lot of the story is dedicated to showing the darkness of the characters. It shows how humanity can be at its best and its worse at the same time. It shows how darkness and light can go together. It shows how there is so much more to a person than you know. So many connections, so many things unknown. It is a great read, all the while with the mystery underneath as more and more is being added to the criminal aspect of the story.

Honestly, I could say so much. Hayder really has created something wonderful here. The characters are complex. The mystery is intriguing. The story is dark. You're given everything you want. Well, maybe not. The ending is a cliffhanger. Not in the sense that you don't get all your answers: you know who is to blame for what – but certain events are left... well, open. It was a great way to end the story, yet I know some will be annoyed by the way it came about. The only thing that annoyed me was the fact that I sort of saw it coming. Not the specifics, but I knew something was going to happen regarding certain characters. There were too many red flags for me to ignore, but I was still pleased by the way it played out.

Overall, a great read. I certainly need to pick up those other two standalone novels so I can complete my Mo Hayder collection.
