



## Dying Breath

*Helen Phifer*

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## **Dying Breath** Helen Phifer

Take a breath. Pray it's not your last.

Just a few months after a terrifying case that nearly took her life, **Detective Lucy Harwin** is back with her squad in the coastal town of Brooklyn Bay – and this time, she's faced with a case more horrifying than anything she's encountered.

Along with her partner, Detective Mattie Jackson, Lucy is investigating what appears to be a vicious but isolated murder; a woman found bludgeoned to death on a lonely patch of wasteland.

But when a second victim is discovered strangled in an alleyway, then a young family shot in their own home, Lucy and the team must face the unthinkable reality - a killer is walking the streets of their town.

While Lucy and the team try to find the link between these seemingly unconnected murders, they uncover a disturbing truth – these murders are replicating those carried out by infamous serial killers.

Lucy must get to the killer before he strikes again. But he's got his sights on her, and is getting ever closer... Can she save herself, before she becomes the final piece in his twisted game?

**A dark, gripping and sinister crime novel that will hook fans of Patricia Gibney, Joy Ellis and Angela Marsons from the very first page.**

## **Readers are raving about *Dying Breath*:**

**'Loved this book so much.** I read it in one sitting, it's such a page turner. It's a fast paced thriller with plenty of twists in the plot, that keeps you guessing to the end...**I would give it 10 stars if I could.'**  
Goodreads reviewer

**'I found myself sitting for hours glued to the screen of my Kindle...**Helen Phifer has written another great book that has kept her in my top authors list.'  
*Nigel Adams Bookworm*

**'AMAZING book...**really pulls you in with every page...**this is a MUST READ.'** Goodreads reviewer

**'Kept me hooked all the way through;** full of twists...An explosive storyline and really likeable characters provide a great read and **I can't recommend this book highly enough.'** Goodreads reviewer

**'Captivating and thrilling; this one was hard to put down.** It was extremely well written, it was dark, suspenseful and **the twists just kept coming.'** *Bonnie's Book Talk*

**'What a book! I absolutely LOVED this breathtakingly fast-paced, tense and astounding story. One of the best crime novels I have read.'** Renita D'Silva

**'Its twists, turns and very likeable protagonist kept me enthralled from start to finish and I read it in one sitting.'** Goodreads reviewer

## Read what everyone is saying about Helen Phifer:

'I really enjoyed this book, the writing is engaging, honest and believable...**I devoured it** over 2 evenings and **I stayed up until WAY past my bedtime** on the first night because **I didn't want to put it down!**'  
*Urban Sapphire*

'**What a book! I really enjoyed reading this one...**What better place to set a chiller thriller than an old asylum full of atmosphere and old ghosts?' *Mrs Bloggs Books*

'There are many different and unusual twists and turns throughout the story that

## Dying Breath Details

Date : Published November 23rd 2017 by Bookouture

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Author : Helen Phifer

Format : Kindle Edition 268 pages

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## **From Reader Review Dying Breath for online ebook**

### **Book Addict Shaun says**

Having enjoyed Helen Phifer's Dark House, which introduces us to Detective Lucy Harwin, I couldn't wait to continue with the series and read Dying Breath. I did get a sense of déjà vu because the opening was fantastic, the middle gripped me but the ending I once again saw coming from a mile away.

Brooklyn Bay as I said in my review of Dark House is well-imagined and it's not a place that I would want to live. When two seemingly unconnected murders occur, it's up to Lucy and her team to try and work out what the connection is and apprehend the killer. When a family is then massacred as well, things become a whole lot more complicated for the team. With so many crime series it can be hard to come up with a story that hasn't been done in some way or another before, I enjoyed the story here and felt it had originality but I felt it could have perhaps been explored further.

I love gruesome and brutal crime fiction and Helen does not shy away from being very descriptive when it comes to the murder scenes within this book. It's gripping stuff and intriguing as well as we follow the killer and really get inside his head. The upbringing of this person was more than a little creepy and whilst I was left with so many questions about this character's upbringing, I was hooked on the story as I read. As with Dark House I found myself reading it at every available opportunity.

Lucy is a fantastic character. I enjoyed the developments here with her daughter and I liked the fact that despite the events of Dark House leaving her a little on edge, she seemed more in control of her life and career in this book (I just wish she would choose a man and settle on him, it seems half of Brooklyn Bay is after her). The sign of a good series for me is when I enjoy the scenes of normality (e.g. Lucy just pottering around the house) as much as the main story arc because it's a sign that I am invested in a character and want to read about them, and I can definitely say that about Lucy. I also love Mattie as well and there's some great scenes between the two characters throughout.

Helen's writing really draws you in and keeps you hooked. Each chapter ends and just makes you want to read on. And on, and on. This was a book that left me annoyed when I had to stop reading it. I love Helen's storytelling and, I noticed this in Dark House as well, she constantly mentions what food her characters are going to eat (or in the case of a wonderful sounding Italian, abandon) and it just makes me salivate. As somebody who hasn't had a takeaway for 18 days (not that I'm counting) it's agonising to read about pizzas and Chinese and Coke and whatever else these characters eat in between work. This isn't a negative however it just makes me feel jealous that I (for now!) can't eat the stuff.

Unfortunately despite such a strong plot that had me gripped, as with Dark House I did work out who the killer was going to be. I wasn't 100% sure initially and did at one point suspect somebody else but it turns out the one I eventually settled on was correct. It's a shame because apart from making the ending a little lacklustre, the rest of the book was faultless but this being the second time that I've worked the story out before the reveal is a real shame. Other than that I can't recommend these books more highly and I can't wait for the next one.

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### **Pat says**

After giving the first book 4.5 stars there was nowhere else to go with this, it had to be five stars.

Detective Lucy Harwin is back, only a few months after the events of book 1 which nearly killed her. Three seemingly unrelated murder scenes in Brooklyn Bay have the police scratching their heads. The modus operandi is different in all three cases, the victimology is different. There seem to be no links. But - it eventually becomes apparent that the killer is replicating famous murders from history. Now they only have to work out which famous murder is going to be copied next, and how to prevent that.

This book is heavy on the creep factor. We get a few glimpses into the killer's head and it's not pretty. The pace is relentless and the tension just keeps ratcheting up. Cat and mouse, cat and mouse. Lucy Harwin is a great detective and a pretty nice person. But this killer is a nasty piece of work with very dark fantasies. And Lucy is to be his latest prize. Can she save herself and bag this monster? I really hope there are to be more Lucy Harwin books because this series is a winner.

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## **Denise says**

Police procedural and thriller

Detective Inspector Lucy Harwin runs a tight team out of Brooklyn Bay and, in this second book in the series, she's dealing with a very complicated string of murders that may or may not be connected. As the investigation proceeds, Lucy also deals with her personal issues at home and some changes at the station. Meanwhile, a killer is out looking for his next victim.

This fast-paced story is told from the point of view of the criminal as well as from Lucy. Though there are indications of his identity throughout, along with his backstory, it isn't until the climax that he is revealed. Most readers of this genre will anticipate the confrontation between the two and the ultimate conclusion.

I liked the characters, however stereotypical to police and crime novels featuring female protagonists. Lucy is as spunky and as appealing as any in her role, and her male subordinates and bosses both respect her and have her back. She suffers romantic attention as well -- but I hope none of those develop into full blown relationships!

The most interesting piece of this book was the backstory of the man behind the murders. His childhood and association to the infamous Carnival Queen Killer -- but I'll say no more to avoid any spoilers. I did enjoy this and wish I had read the first book in the series prior to this one as there are references to previous cases. I like to see how a character changes and grows as new stories are published.

Thank you to NetGalley and Bookouture for the ARC to read and review. Can't wait for a third one featuring Lucy Harwin.

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## **Sue says**

DYING BREATH is book # 2 in the Detective Lucy Harwin series, a riveting serial killer fiction by Helen Phifer. Having loved her debut detective novel, THE LOST CHILDREN, a police procedural series set in the coastal town of Brooklyn Bay featuring DI Lucy Harwin, I couldn't wait to read book 2. I found myself

totally absorbed in the believable characters and the story. Another winner for Bookouture and this talented writer!

“He watched and waited, playing his favorite guessing game. Who was going to die tonight?” He waited outside a working-class pub...for his victim...she came out of the pub, smelling like a distillery, and accepted his ride as it was pouring rain. Big mistake!

After a few months and a petrifying case that nearly took her life, Detective Lucy Harwin is back with her squad in the coastal town of Brooklyn Bay – and is faced with a case like no other!

Along with her partner, Detective Mattie Jackson, Lucy is investigating what appears to be a vicious but isolated murder; a woman found beaten to death on the playing fields.

But when a second victim is discovered strangled in an alleyway, then a young family shot in their own home, Lucy and the team must face the unthinkable reality - a killer is walking the streets of their town.

Was there a link between these unconnected murders? Lucy and her team soon discover that these murders are replicating those carried out by infamous serial killers.

Lucy must catch the serial-killer before he strikes again. This is a game of cat and mouse with a serial killer on the loose!

This is a well written creepy disturbing gripping thriller that will send chills down your spine. The pace doesn't let up and continues to increase until the end. Don't miss out on this amazing read. Highly recommend! I cannot wait for more from this talented author.

Many thanks to Bookouture via NetGalley for my copy.

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### **Mandy White says**

I could not put this book down! I had read the first book in this series and was excited to get into this one, the second Lucy Harwin book. A great story with gruesome murders that twists and turns right until the end. Highly recommend this series. Thanks to Netgalley and Bookouture for a copy of this book to read and review

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### **Elaine Tomasso says**

I would like to thank Netgalley and Bookouture for an advance copy of *Dying Breath*, the second police procedural to feature DI Lucy Harwin of Brooklyn Bay police.

Lucy is called out to a dead body who has been beaten with a hammer and posed. Her alarm bells are ringing and confirmed when a second strangled body is found a few days later. If that is not enough she has an unearthed skeleton and a new colleague she doesn't like to contend with.

I thoroughly enjoyed *Dying Breath* as its twists, turns and very likeable protagonist kept me enthralled from

start to finish and I read it in one sitting. The plotting and writing are excellent and had me barking up the wrong tree for the whole novel as intended. The novel is told from several points of view but chiefly Lucy and the unnamed killer. I'm not a big fan of this approach as it often makes for a disjointed read but Ms Phifer manages it seamlessly and it flows really well with each chapter adding to the reader's knowledge but still managing to keep the killer's identity and *raison d'être* well hidden.

Lucy is an excellent protagonist, dedicated, smart and tough and yet extremely compassionate when necessary. I love the scene where she sorts out her boyfriend which seems to sum up her personality. She is not without her sorrows, being in the middle of a divorce, but she just girds her loins and gets on with it. What a role model.

Dying Breath is a good read which I have no hesitation in recommending.

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### **Nicola Parkinson says**

What can I say other than W.O.W!!

This book blew my mind!

Helen is another new to me author and I can safely say this will not be the last book of hers that I read. I've jumped straight in with book 2, I am missing so personal details that happened in book 1 but I don't feel this has taken anything away from book 2 in this series. The pace of this book kicks off right away and it has bodies galore! And if, like me you need a body count by chapter 5 then this book definitely ticks those boxes.

I enjoyed how the book went from the present day crime scene to back when the killer was first discovering his killer ways. I liked seeing how he evolved into a killer and what triggered this. Helen certainly kept me on my toes and I didn't guess who the killer was until the back end of the book..... which is how it should be!

Lucy is certainly a very busy in her day job. I enjoyed the partnership between her and Mattie, they did make me chuckle a few times. There were a few times where I wanted Lucy to be more sure of herself, I'm hoping that will come to her further into the series we go.

If you love your thriller books that are action packed, twisty and turny plots and bodies dropping left, right and centre then this is one for you!

Highly recommended and very worthy of 4.5 golden apples

\*\*Thank you to Netgalley, Bookouture and Helen Phifer for my advanced copy\*\*

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### **Sandy \*The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice\* says**

EXCERPT: Right there and then he'd known that he was different to most kids, probably most people. They were all scared of death and dead people, whereas he was fascinated with them and couldn't get enough. He

needed to see a real dead person - he wanted to see if they looked as beautiful as his girls had. He wanted to touch one, stroke their skin, run his fingers through their hair. He wouldn't think twice about kissing one; he wanted to know what it would feel like to put his lips on theirs. He thought about Carrie. He would have kissed her.

**THE BLURB:** Take a breath. Pray it's not your last.

Just a few months after a terrifying case that nearly took her life, Detective Lucy Harwin is back with her squad in the coastal town of Brooklyn Bay – and this time, she's faced with a case more horrifying than anything she's encountered.

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Lucy must get to the killer before he strikes again. But he's got his sights on her, and is getting ever closer... Can she save herself, before she becomes the final piece in his twisted game?

**MY THOUGHTS:** There are some absolutely chilling moments in *Dying Breath* by Helen Phifer. "He turned to take one last look at the man who had changed from a monster into his hero, and he grinned at him." is one of them. It may not seem like much on its own, but when read in context you will feel chills up your spine.

Dark and twisty, *Dying Breath* had me wondering just who this child had grown up to become, because we never knew his name. . .but we knew what he had become and his life ambition. There are several people he could be, all of whom have some type of fixation on Lucy.

*Dying Breath* is deliciously suspenseful. Highly recommended ????

Thank you to Bookouture via Netgalley for providing a digital copy of *Dying Breath* by Helen Phifer for review. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions. Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page or the 'about' page on [sandysbookaday.wordpress.com](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com) for an explanation of my rating system. This review and others are also published on my blog [sandysbookaday.wordpress.com](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/) [https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/...](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/)

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## Schizanthus says

I write this knowing full well I'm surrounded by 5 star reviews so please file this in your ? **Danger, Will Robinson! Unpopular Opinions Ahead!** ? category.

I'm so conflicted about *Dying Breath*. By the time I'd finished the first chapter I'd searched Amazon for the first book in the series. By chapter five I no longer wanted to read it and wondered if I'd even make it through this book. By halfway through I wanted to read the first one again. Then partway through the second



half I no longer wanted to and could have DNF'ed it (and would have if I hadn't committed to reviewing it). Now? I honestly don't know.

Before I go any further, a word of warning. If you plan on reading this series I highly recommend reading them in order. During the course of this book I learned the name of book 1's killer and what happened to them, so any suspense I would have had if I decide to read *The Lost Children* has gone bye byes.

What mostly ruined any potential for suspense for me in *Dying Breath* was that the blurb gave away **way** too much. Before reading the first sentence of this book I knew how the first two victims were going to die and I knew that this was a copycat killer using infamous serial killers as their inspiration. While reading I kept waiting for the cops to work this out and it takes until after 70% for this to happen. Had I not known that the killer was copying famous murder scenes I imagine I would have wondered along with the police and there would have been some satisfaction upon uncovering the truth instead of me muttering, "Finally!" under my breath.

I enjoyed reading about the killer's upbringing and pivotal moments in their life that influenced their development down the dark, twisty murder path. The sections from their perspective were my favourite scenes and I wanted more of those.

Part of my problem is that I always compare books in this genre to Tess Gerritsen's *Rizzoli & Isles* series. I love the banter between the characters. I love the intricacies of the murders and subsequent investigations. I love the baddies with their own backstories and foibles. I love that the 'minor' characters are so well thought out that you feel like you know them as well and can figure out who's speaking without an "X said".

Knowing that this is what I'm looking for, here are some of my observations about this book:

\* The banter between characters - there wasn't the ease in conversations that comes with people who have worked together and seen each other at their best and worst. I didn't feel like I was being included in inside jokes or that there really were any.

\* I actually found some of the conversations too polite ("I prefer to believe it's because you're so good at your job.") and others cringeworthy ("Aren't we lucky that we're all so bloody good at working this stuff out and catching the bad guys and girls.")

\* No one seemed to have a specific 'voice'. I couldn't tell who was who from the way they spoke and sometimes I didn't even know who was speaking after I was told their name because there wasn't a personality, quirk or feature I could attach to some of the characters to be able to tell them apart for a long time.

\* The characters didn't have the confidence in their abilities that I would have liked to have seen. "Catherine smiled at Lucy, making her feel a whole lot better. If the doctor thought she was on to something, there was a good chance she really was. She didn't often agree with anyone." And another. "Is that okay?"

\* Some of the wording was awkward. "It's not for me to say for definite."

\* The main character's controlling is he or isn't he boyfriend. "She wasn't sure whether she was flattered by his persistence or annoyed that he hadn't taken any notice of her telling him she wasn't interested." Please, girl, grow some self esteem!

\* Apparently in Brooklyn Bay the ambulance service are seriously underfunded. “One of the paramedics looked up at Mattie. ‘We need to get him to the hospital now but we both need to work on him - is there someone to drive the ambulance.’” Ooh! Pick me!

There was a sentence in Chapter 21 that gave away who the murderer was. There were red herrings but I’d already fixated on this person. The murderer takes pride in everything being absolutely perfect, well planned and executed. However, there’s one murder in particular that they don’t copy exactly because they don’t want to have to deal with the clean up of blood. Don’t just **not** stab the person. If you want to be a copycat you either stab the person and deal with the blood or choose another murder to copy that doesn’t involve so much blood.

For most of the murders it’s vital that the victim matches the original one as closely as possible. Then there’s a murder where it doesn’t matter to the killer if the victim is male or female. With the personality of the killer and their meticulous planning, these things are simply incongruent. So, did we catch the murderer because of our brilliant logic, deductive reasoning and pure brilliance? Nope, we found them by accident.

My favourite character was Toby’s nan. She may have only been in a few pages but that woman has attitude, grit and I loved her. You don’t need to feature in a book to be memorable to me. I just want people to have distinct personalities.

Just a few burning unresolved questions ...

\* What happens to Mal? Did what Lucy tell him make things better or worse for him?

\* What eventually happens to the murderer? The end of the book just cut off before that character was resolved enough for me.

After all of this it may sound like I hated this book. I didn’t. It’s just it had so much potential and with some further editing it could have been a superstar, so I’m mostly disappointed by what could have been. I still enjoyed reading it. There were times I could forget about my question marks and simply enjoy the ride but not as often or as long as I would’ve liked. I’m still thinking about whether I’ll read the first book or not. I’m interested in reading the next instalment because despite what I’ve said above I do believe there is a gem to be found here. It just needs to be polished.

*Please note that the quotes above are from the advanced copy and as such may be altered prior to publication.*

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley (thank you so much to NetGalley and Bookouture for the opportunity) in exchange for honest feedback.

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## **Monica Mac says**

We are back with Lucy Harwin and her team, who have a new case to crack. Unfortunately, it turns out to be more than one murder and they are very short on leads. The author throws out a heap of red herrings and I am pleased to report that I didn't figure out who the murderer was until quite a long way into the book, which is how it should be :)

Having read the first book in this series, I was wondering if this book was going to reach its dizzy heights, because that book was one of the most thrilling and clever books I have read this year. Thankfully, this is a very good book as well, complex but with lots of light and shade. I enjoyed learning about Lucy and her colleagues and their various temperaments, which influenced how they solved their cases. It will be interesting to see how all the characters develop in future books.

Looking forward to the next book in the series! 4.5 stars from me.

I voluntarily reviewed an Advance Reader Copy of this book. Thank you to NetGalley and Bookouture.

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### **Carolyn says**

This is a gripping, fast paced psychological thriller involving a pretty cold and creepy psychopath. Detective Lucy Harwin has just returned to work after nearly being killed on her last case, when a strange series of killings starts to happen on her patch. They don't seem to have much in common with different types of people targeted and different modes of death but something makes her think they might be linked, so the race is on to find out who the killer is and what links his victims. The author releases snippets of information from the past and present day to help us work it out, but I didn't guess the killer until near the end of the book. I liked Lucy Harwin's character; unlike many of the current fictional female detectives she doesn't seem to have had a tortured past and self destructive habits. Her partner Mattie is lovely and supportive and I like the way their relationship is heading. 4.5★

*With thanks to Netgalley and the publisher Bookouture for a copy of the book to read and review*

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### **Renita D'Silva says**

What a book! I absolutely LOVED this breathtakingly fast-paced, tense and astounding story. One of the best crime novels I have read. This author gets better with every book. Her writing is self assured and beautiful, the pace never flags and the story races towards the spectacular denouement. I thoroughly enjoyed this spectacular story and cannot wait for more from this amazing author.

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### **Dash fan says**

5? Gripping Psychological Thriller, that will leave your Spine Tingling!

Dying Breath is the second book in Detective Lucy Harwin's Crime Thriller  
This book can be read as a standalone.

From the very first few pages and the way Helen built up the creepy atmosphere i knew something very bad was going to happen..... and wow I was not wrong!!!

The very sinister and creepy person stalking his victim outside a pub made my skin crawl.... 'His tongue kept snaking from his mouth and licking his lips. The excitement and anticipation were almost too much to bear' ....put me on edge!

What happens next..... let's just say the stalker gets his prey!!  
It's pretty gruesome but I loved being thrown straight into the action.  
The scene and atmosphere set and boom in for the kill.

From then on the story never loses pace. It's action packed, plenty of twists and turns. I loved all the snippets of past and present delving into the mind of a psychotic killer. The thrill of the cat and mouse chase will Lucy catch her killer or is she in too deep and in danger???

So the most important question..... did I guess the killer.... nope!!.... I really didn't.  
Helen had this way of feeding you information so you think your on the right track then another red herring!  
Ohhh but I love that.  
The anticipation and suspense of the unknown just makes me want to read more!!

Lucy is still by far one of my favourite female detectives so far! She was strong, determined, bad ass, and she is very relatable and real!

Dying Breath has it all, it's creepy, leaves you with goosebumps, a fantastically Fast Paced Dark Psychological Thriller, that delves into the Serial killer, it's gruesome and very clever with all the twists and turns. A great Crime Thriller!

Dying Breath is by far one of my favourite Psychological Thrillers this year!

If your looking for a Dark, full of Suspense, and at times a lil twisted read then this is Definety one for you!!

Enjoy!!

I received this book from the Publisher in which I voluntarily reviewed.

My Review is also on my blog website:  
<https://dashfan81.blogspot.com/2017/1...>

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## **Adrian Dooley says**

Well well well. I loved the first one in this series and if anything this one is better. A cracking read.

We are back with Detective Lucy Harwin and her team in the town of Brooklyn Bay. When a woman's body is found exposed on wasteland after being bludgened to death Lucy and her team are sent to investigate what seems a random and isolated attack. Soon another woman's body is found and then a family are found murdered in their home. None of the murders seem related with nothing whatsoever in common.

Lucy is convinced there is a connection somewhere and they soon realise they have a serial killer on their hands. One who is recreating famous serial killers murders of the past. As Lucy gets closer to finding who the killer is, she puts her life in more danger as the killer leaves clues for her to real her in.

Well I just loved this book. I've had a couple of so so reads recently and wasn't particularly in the mood of starting another book when I opened this one. However, literally from the first page I was drawn in. The

story is really good for a start, but more importantly it's very well told. I mean this book just grabs you from the first page and doesn't let you go until the last word. I don't know if the author is a very disciplined writer or has a very good editor, or a combination of both, but this book is the fillet steak of books. There is zero fat on this. There's just enough characterization without slowing the pace. There isn't loads of red herrings for the sake of it. It's under 300 pages long and all the better for it. It's the perfect length to tell this story and I'm glad the author was able to settle on such lean final draft.

Lucy is a really strong central character and her sidekick Detective Mattie Jackson is a great character also. Our "baddie" is also a fantastically twisted character whom I loved. Delving into his childhood and his misdemeanors. His visits as a child to prison to visit a serial killer. I just loved it all and lapped it up.

A very easy five star review. This series is up there now with the best in the genre and there are some really strong female detective series out there at the moment.

Do yourself a favour and check out this series. It's brilliant and I can nearly guarantee you won't be disappointed.

Many thanks to NetGalley, Bookouture and Helen Phifer for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Ankita Singh says**

First of all, thanks to NetGalley and Bookouture for giving me a chance to read and review this awesome book!

Dying Breath was chilling, exciting and so very awesome.

I love psychological thrillers and especially the ones with serial killers. I love trying to figure out a killer's pattern, and who he/she might be.

Dying Breath was everything the blurb promised and more! It was exciting, it was full of suspense and just plain awesome.

Lucy Harwin was a strong and real character. I loved her for her dedication to her job, and because she wasn't a super-human ;)

Dying Breath kept me on my toes, gave me goosebumps and made me look twice at everyone I saw for a whole day (seriously, you could turn into a serial killer's next target by just being in the same shopping center with him!)

Basically, I loved it.

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