



## Grasshopper

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“They have sent me here because of what happened on the pylon.”

When Clodagh Brown writes these words at the age of nineteen, she believes that she is leaving behind the traumatic events of her youth. But Clodagh soon learns that you can never entirely escape your past.

In the aftermath of the incident on the pylon--one of the great electrified structures that dot the English countryside like so many gargantuan grasshoppers--Clodagh goes off to university, moves into a basement flat arranged by her unsympathetic family, and finds freedom trekking across London's rooftops with a gang of neighborhood misfits. As she begins a thrilling relationship with a fellow climber, however, both Clodagh and the reader are haunted by the memory of the pylon and of the terrible thing that happened there--and by the eerie sense that another tragedy is just a footfall away.

## Grasshopper Details

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Author : Barbara Vine , Ruth Rendell

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## From Reader Review Grasshopper for online ebook

### Nancy says

I thought I loved Barbara Vine (Ruth Rendell writing as), based on my total love of the book No Night is Too Long. Unfortunately, this book is nowhere near as good. It has some great situations -- teenage girl blamed for the death of her boyfriend after he climbs a pylon and is electrocuted, motley group of young people climb roofs and discover the hiding place of an abducted child -- but it's pretty draggy throughout, until the ending, which it earned from me its third star. I still think Rendell is an amazing writer, and you can see hints of that in this book, but I think it's too sluggish to appeal to most people.

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### Philip says

Anyone seeing my praise and high ratings for other Vine novels will no doubt be surprised at this book's two-star rating - quite simply, it's my least favorite Vine, period. I was not enamored of it when I first read it upon publication (which involved putting it down and picking it up again several times over the course of at least a couple of months), and I remain so to this day - although I did finally get through GRASSHOPPER, it's the only Vine novel that has defeated me on attempts to re-read it, and I've tried twice (getting halfway through on one attempt).

Why attempt to re-read a book I didn't like the first time? Because with Vine I've found that sometimes a book that didn't quite get me the first time is much more satisfying the second time around - this was the case with KING SOLOMON'S CARPET, for instance.

But, alas, there is nothing in GRASSHOPPER for me to like - not plot, not characters, not situations, other than the fact that it's by Ruth Rendell writing as Barbara Vine - otherwise it wouldn't even get its two-star status.

But, considering that this is (for me) the only out-and-out disappointment in an output that comprises some 58 novels (with a 59th on the way), that's saying a lot for the quality of Ruth Rendell's work.

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### Rebecca McNutt says

*Grasshopper* is a thrilling crime story, but what really makes it stand out is its peculiar yet engaging "Pylon", a small yet enigmatic setting explored by a girl and her friends.

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### Catherine says

I've never read anything by Ruth Rendell before in either of her incarnations. but I know she's one of those popular murder mystery writers so I assumed she could keep a story bubbling along. When I started this book I thought the main character's dilemma was interesting, the crowd she became caught up in was also interesting. But somewhere about halfway through this book the whole thing hit a plateau and hit it bad. It

was something to do with the family that was in hiding over the foster child. It was implausible and bogged down the whole story when it was meant to be the catalyst for the disaster. I will now confess it got so boring with the main characters buying groceries and on and on with hints about someone's demise I was wishing someone would hurry up and die.

In the end I skipped the last 7 or 8 chapters and just confirmed my hunches about the looming disaster by reading the denouement chapter. I'm ready to move on! Bit sad really when one can skip the climax of the story and not even miss it.

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### **Victoria says**

Opening with a secret and a compelling (and unexplained) claustrophobia... sounds like a great start, but unfortunately for me, it never really progressed from there.

My main problem with this book was I really disliked the heroine, whom I presume we were supposed to empathise and sympathise with. After she is blamed by her parents for the death of her friend in a 'climbing a pylon' accident - pylons being the grasshoppers of the title - Clodagh goes to London, where she gets her kicks climbing on rooftops and hanging around with the odd folk that Vine enjoys creating. Their exploits include attempted murder, robbery, agoraphobia, suicide and child abduction...

However, Clodagh herself never seems to get any personality of her own, her only interesting element is relating what is going on around her.

Well-written, but essentially dull and soon to be forgotten.

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### **R.L. says**

The author outdid herself with this one. I know as Ruth Rendell she writes serious suspense with a twist of murder mystery. As Barbara Vine she writes what are often complex character studies wrapped up in story. Sometimes it doesn't work as well as this one. This one is outstanding. The girl in Grasshopper loves heights but not being underground. So her first flat is a basement one, while she is in college in London. The people she gets involved with, soon after moving to London, love to climb along the roofs of Terrace homes and attached buildings in London. It reminded me of my "wildling" days pushing over dead trees in the woods with my pals. The story delves deeply into the reasons a young man was killed near her when she was a teenager, and what happens when something similar happens later. The ending is great, though I suspected lots earlier what it would be. Recommended.

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### **Samer Bou Karroum says**

I didn't plan to read this book, but once I opened it and read the first 2 to 3 pages, I knew I was trapped.

A very well written book, with a really attractive style. The writer doesn't keep you waiting for the next event, doesn't bore you with unnecessary details. Instead, there are always hints to the next events, which make you want to know more, and to continue reading. There are always small details that will trigger your

imagination ...

Its a story about Clodagh, written by her, in a form of Diary, told after 11 years of the events that happened.

The only thing I disliked is Silver. That character seems really unrealistic:

- 1) I doubt someone will accept half a dozen of people living in his house without paying rent, with all the problems they caused him.
- 2) Why would an event that he can't remember, that happened when he was 3 years old, affect him so much? Why would he spend that much on strangers?

Other than that, the whole story was one of the best I've read. It tackles many psychological problems, how would our childhood affect us and dictate the way we act later in life, how we can always have another chance ...

I'd definitely recommend it, and I'm excited to read more stories written by the same writer.

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### **Barbara says**

As is usually my custom, I will not write a synopsis of this book. It is easily found elsewhere. To classify this book as a mystery, is somewhat of a misnomer, but there are some elements which suit this label. Briefly, the title, *Grasshopper* refers to the pylons, the structures which support the electric wires in an area. Early in the narrative the main character, Clodagh, as a young teen and her friends found their excitement in climbing these frameworks. As she grew older, she moved to London, where she and a group of aimless individuals spent much time climbing the rooftops of the areas around them.

I have read several Rendell/Vine novels and have always felt admiration for her astute ability to pinpoint the large and small foibles of human behavior. Her writing is clear, beautifully descriptive and generally involves some suspense. This was a rather long, meandering book, which generally held my interest, but it lacked much of the tension and appeal that I have found in others. My rating of 3 stars denotes, of course, that I liked it.

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### **Laura says**

My first book by this author, and it's already on my favorite authors shelf. Really enjoyed it. Terrific characterization and I love her psychological insights. I fell in love with the protagonist right away and had to learn more about her. The story shifts from present to the past and there is so much foreshadowing that just tantalizes you all the way through. She even leaves a few questions in your mind that are never resolved. I really enjoyed it and I only dock a star because I felt the plot was a bit farfetched at times. Just a bit too neat here and there. But I've already checked out other books and audiobooks by this author, and I'm glad she has quite a long book list.

Re the audio performance by Jenny Sterlin: I really loved it, but I do like my audiobooks a bit on the slow side. She is a wonderful reader and does the different voices convincingly and IMO uses pauses effectively. Her reading made a really fine book that much better. I'm looking forward to *From Doon With Death*, which is Ruth Rendell's first installment in the Inspector Wexford series. Not sure why she used a pseudonym and I do find it interesting that both authors' names are probably equally well-known. I was sucked in from the

start with Doon, and I think the audio will be enjoyable for that one as well. Different reader, but he made a good first impression.

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### **Kirsty Darbyshire says**

This seemed a much lengthier read than the actual 400 and something page count would have me believe. It might be that picking it up and putting it down for about three months isn't the best way to read it but it did seem to drag. Altogether too much foreshadowing of the 'if only I'd known then what I know now' type which rather than heightening the suspense leads you to not be surprised by many of the events in the book.

I'm making it sound like I hated it which I didn't. It was a much more interesting, more unputdownable, book in the last hundred pages than it was in the lead up and I enjoyed seeing all the various threads intertwine and play out. Just too much set up for not enough pay off in the end though.

The main spinal theme of the books is scaling heights but the recurring theme of relationships, especially those between parents and children, is more absorbing on the whole. The thing about heights gets your attention but I felt it diverted me from the real matter of the story. Clodagh Brown is the narrator telling the story about eleven years after the events happen when she was 19, mainly when her and her friends lived in Maida Vale and took to gallivanting around the local rooftops. I think it's the looking back narration style that really annoyed me; since she's looking back she can hide things from the reader but it didn't feel artfully enough done. I don't mind being able to guess the ending but there seemed to be too little that I couldn't guess at here.

I love many of Barbara Vine's books but other are just 'eh?' for me. This was one of the second type.

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### **Pat Evans says**

I have all of Barbara Vine's previous novels on my bookshelf and reread them periodically. Normally I am pleasantly creeped out by Vine's work but not this one. Mi found it plodding. Too much run up and foreshadowing and not a strong enough resolution. Back to the drawing board Barbara/Ruth!

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### **Julie Tridle says**

Like other Barbara Vine novels I've read (I've never read any of her Ruth Rendell books) this one isn't paced like a crime novel. Crimes happen in the novel, often in the periphery of the main action of the story, but the book, itself, is about a core group of young people and their eventual evolution into adulthood. It's a frustrating book filled with frustrating characters who expect you to care about some frustratingly asinine things. I can't tell you how many times I wanted to reach through the page and throttle the people this book forced me to hang out with page after page after page. Young people bitching about situations they fought and lied to stay in. There's a lot of (clumsy) foreshadowing and build-up to incidents that really, truly don't

matter one iota. But, a small part of me liked the book anyway. In fact, that part of me liked the book BECAUSE these people were so damn frustrating. They're flawed characters. Flawed, young characters. Realistically drawn flawed, young characters-- who drove me absolutely nuts.

As for things I didn't like so much, the clumsy, heavily used foreshadowing. There was a lot of it, like she didn't trust the readers to keep reading on their own (and it seems from many of the other reviews, many readers didn't anyway.) I'm also not sure why Vine chose to begin the book showing how it ends. We get to see two of the main characters of the book grown up and doing well from the get-go, which, to me, took away a lot of the tension the book could have had.

There were some interesting aspects to the book. The kidnapping story-line kept my attention. And, as I've said before, I did sort of like seeing the main characters mature and grow as the book progressed. I liked the way Vine wrote humans instead of villains and victims. But, in the end, if I'm totally honest, I thought the book was a two-star "okay" and not much more.

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### **Theryn Fleming says**

*Grasshopper* was, I think, less dark than other Barbara Vines I've read, perhaps because it was clear from the outset that the ending would be a (mostly) happy one. The ending doesn't tie up all the loose ends, though, which is good. It definitely kept me turning the pages and, when I got to the last page, I experienced that little pang of sadness that you do when you've become attached to the characters in a book and you have to let them go. That kind of surprised me because none of the characters were particularly likable. But I suppose that was precisely it; their unpleasant qualities made them seem like real human beings and I got used to them being around.

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### **Hilary G says**

I have never really understood what criteria Ruth Rendell applies when deciding whether to publish a book as a Rendell or a Vine. I could understand if all the Wexford novels were one and everything else another, but this isn't so. I am particularly confused now I have listened to *Talking to Strange Men* (Rendell) and *Grasshopper* (Vine) as they are so remarkably similar. Both tell a long and complex tale about an unusual group of people (what a quirky universe Rendell inhabits) where even the most seemingly discrete facts or events turn out to be connected. There is at least as much coincidence in Rendell/Vine's writing as in Dickens, possibly more!

This novel was read by Emilia Fox, who has a pleasant voice that never becomes irritating, though I held my breath a bit when she attempted an Irish accent (it was passable, I think). It is an absorbing story, though I am not sure that people like this really exist, still this is fiction. The story has a very sixties feel, though I can't remember whether the time period was ever stated (probably it was). The story is told by one character which means we may not be hearing an entirely rounded version of events, but it works OK. There were things I did not think worked OK, though. Firstly, Clodagh kept presaging events in a sort of "little did we know..." way, which became tiresome and irritating. Secondly, and more importantly, this was presented as a sort of coming of age story, but I would say the characters were years too old for that. Clodagh tells us earnestly that they didn't know any better because they were SO YOUNG and didn't understand things because they were SO YOUNG and in the climactic scene, one of the firemen said "It's a couple of kids," yet

I believe these characters were 20ish. I could see why the author had to make them that old, but I thought it made a nonsense of some of the claims to callow youth. On the plus side, Ruth Rendell is a competent and intelligent writer and her characters and their motivations are always interesting. I like the way she takes so much trouble with all her characters, even more minor ones. Her books are not so much about what happened (you can tell from early on in this book that there are going to be some tragic events but aren't sure till the end what really happens) but why they happened, what character traits, history, circumstances, motivations, coincidences contributed to the events. I was surprised by Clodagh's statement near the end that we might not have suspected who her husband was as I think it was always obvious. I have, in fact, been mulling over whether it would have been a better or worse (or perhaps just different) novel if he had turned out to be someone else. This author is also not afraid to leave loose ends, the stories of Liv and Wim, and Johnny to some extent, are unfinished. I don't dislike this, it reminds me of a family tree, where research into one branch comes to a halt because records did not survive, or the father of an illegitimate child was not recorded. Another thing that I think Ruth Rendell and Barbara Vine have in common is that almost none of the characters are very likeable and I didn't feel any particular sympathy with any character in this story, except perhaps Jason. I suppose it is a compliment to Ruth Rendell aka Barbara Vine that she can generate so much interest in people you don't particularly like or empathise with.

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### **Kasey Jueds says**

I read this book when it first came out, and had forgotten how amazing it is: smart and moving and mysterious and strange in the best possible way. I suppose it is a mystery, but only in the quirky way that all Barbara Vine's books are mysteries--not traditional, but deeply compelling. This one involves claustrophobia, adoption, love, electricity, the architecture of London, roof-walking, kidnapping, betrayal... and the plot is so bizarre, in some ways, that describing it would make it sound completely unbelievable, and awful as well. But Barbara Vine's genius (well, one aspect of it) involves throwing all those things into the mix and making it seem true and real and genuinely moving. I particularly love the two main characters in this book, who are young and vulnerable and trying hard to figure things out. And I love the way that, even on the level of individual sentences, there's beauty here, and so much intelligence, so much tender attention to the world: pretty unusual qualities in a mystery--really, unusual in a book of any genre.

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