

MASTERPIECE

Flesh and Blood

Imelda Staunton and Francesca Annis star in
an unconventional thriller about family turmoil
on MASTERPIECE
Sundays, October 4-25, 2020 on PBS

Lust, greed, wrath, envy, and pride are just some of the deadly sins that plague a seemingly happy family in a mystery-thriller starring Imelda Staunton (*Harry Potter*, *Vera Drake*) and Francesca Annis (*Reckless*, *Cranford*), who play close neighbors cast into a generational psychodrama, on *Flesh and Blood*, airing in four cliffhanging episodes on MASTERPIECE, Sundays, October 4-25, 2020 at 9/8c on PBS.

Also starring are Claudie Blakley (*Grantchester*, *Cranford*), Russell Tovey (*Years and Years*, *Little Dorrit*), and Lydia Leonard (*Gentleman Jack*, *Apple Tree Yard*) as the grown-up children of Annis's character, Vivien; Stephen Rea (*The Stranger*) as a suspicious new addition to the family; and David Bamber (*Victoria*) as the detective who tries to work out whether an unfortunate incident was an accident or, in fact, a heinous crime.

Staunton, who is set to star as Queen Elizabeth II in the next season of *The Crown*, gives a slyly comedic performance as Mary, the family's long-time next-door neighbor, whose life is devoted to gardening and trying to be helpful to Vivien.

Critics were charmed during *Flesh and Blood*'s U.K. broadcast, with *The Evening Standard* calling it "top-notch TV...a perfectly judged script... excellent performances from the entire cast." *The Radio Times* proclaimed it, "mischievous, suspenseful, and unexpectedly funny – very funny in fact." And *The Daily Mail* observed that the show's ingenious plot "turns the traditional crime drama upside-down."

Opening with emergency vehicles on the scene of a life-threatening mishap, the mystery for viewers is: Who has done what to whom?

As D.I. Doug Lineham (Bamber) elicits the details in flashbacks, it all started innocently enough. Widowed a year and a half earlier, glamorous former salon owner Vivien (Annis) invites her three children to their seaside childhood home for an important announcement: she has a new man in her life, Mark (Rae), a widowed retired surgeon.

Wrapped up in their own complicated relationships, the children have mixed reactions. Career woman Helen (Blakley) is the eldest, and she is slightly wary of Mark, perhaps because she sees romance as entirely transactional, which is how she treats her stay-at-home husband, handyman, cook, and occasional sex partner, George (Keir Charles, *Love Actually*). Naturally, she is curious what Mark wants from her mother.

Jake (Tovey) is downright hostile to Mark, possibly out of guilt over the breakup of his marriage to Leila (Lara Rossi, *Robin Hood*). Also, he's worried about his inheritance, which may be his only hope for financial security. Aside from his income as a personal trainer, Jake earns extra cash as a kept man for one of his clients, Stella (Sharon Small, *Inspector Lynley*).

Only Natalie (Leonard), the youngest, is genuinely excited for her mom, likely because a fulfilling partnership is Natalie's fondest wish. At the moment, she is in the fifth year of an aimless affair with her boss, Tony (Vincent Regan, *Poldark*), who promises to divorce his wife, Carla (Stephanie Langton, *Holby Blue*), so he can marry her. But he has yet to deliver.

Then there is the opinion of Mary (Staunton). Having no close family of her own, she has been a second mother to Helen, Jake, and Natalie. A born sleuth, she conveys her serious doubts about Mark in the most elliptical way imaginable.

As for Mark, he dotes on Vivien, treats her to awkward and expensive surprises, demonstrating his social skills—plus he really wants to marry her. The question on everyone's mind: Is he hiding something?

Flesh and Blood is a Silverprint Pictures production for ITV and MASTERPIECE. The series was created and written by Sarah Williams (*The Long Song*, *Case Sensitive*, *Poppy Shakespeare*). Silverprint Pictures' Creative Director Kate Bartlett (*Dark Heart*, *Shetland*, *Vera*) executive produces the series with Williams. The director is BAFTA nominee Louise Hooper (*Cheat*, *Vera*, *Cold Feet*). The producer is Letitia Knight (*Dark Heart*, *Vera*). Susanne Simpson is the Executive Producer for MASTERPIECE. Silverprint Pictures is part of ITV Studios. ITV Studios Global Entertainment distributes *Flesh and Blood* internationally.

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About MASTERPIECE

Winner of 83 Primetime Emmys® and 16 Peabody Awards, MASTERPIECE has been essential Sunday night viewing for millions of fans since 1971. Susanne Simpson is the executive producer and Rebecca Eaton is the executive-producer-at-large for the series. Funding for MASTERPIECE is provided by Viking and Raymond James with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust. Presented on PBS by WGBH Boston, MASTERPIECE is known for recent hits such as *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Victoria*, and beloved classics such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Poldark*.