

## CRIME IN FICTION CASE IN POINT

Crime fiction is fiction that involves crimes, their detection, criminals and their motives. To date, it is one of the most popular genres of fiction and is read world-wide. In the UK alone, 21 million crime fiction books are purchased every year, and every year, new TV-series about crime intrigue their audiences *True Detective* (2014- ) and *Sherlock* (2010- ) being some of the latest viewer favourites.

Women are by far the most frequent the readers of crime fiction. A Guardian article from 2014 estimates that about 80% of the readers of the genre are women. In the article "Women's appetite for explicit crime fiction is no mystery", June 30th 2014, writer Melanie McGrath claims that this is due to the fact that women know that they need to fear men, and when they solve the fictional crimes which they read about, it lessens their anxieties in the real world. She claims that from a young age girls are told not to associate with unknown men and to adjust their behaviour to the fact that the world is a more dangerous place for women than for men. Although this may be contested, it is certain that women are attracted to crime fiction, also in its gory and ruthless variations.

In a sense, reading crime fiction does not seem enticing. The genre follows a series of conventions that the readers know. Why read crime fiction when it habitually follows a set structure and has a stereotypical set of characters? Some scholars and writers have suggested that this might be the exact reason. As crime author P.D. James has said, "in an age when we are forever seeing images of death on a large scale, deaths that we can do nothing about, it is comforting to know that our society still makes a concentrated effort to bring murderers to justice." In traditional crime fiction, criminals are punished, and even though the system (the police and the legal system) has its faults, everything works out well in the end. Crime fiction is a genre that makes sense of the world or in which the world makes sense. Likewise, crime fiction tells us that an individual can make a difference. He or she can turn things around and make the world

*detection* (sb) opklaring  
*purchase* (vb) købe  
*intrigue* (vb) vække interesse  
*frequent* (adj) hyppig  
*explicit* (adj) detaljeret  
*anxiety* (sb) angst  
*associate* (vb) at have noget at gøre med  
*adjust* (vb) tilpasse  
*contested* (vb) anfægte  
*gory* (adj) bloddryppende  
*ruthless* (adj) brutal  
*enticing* (adj) tillokkende  
*convention* (sb) konvention, regel  
*habitually* (adv) vanemæssigt  
*scale* (sb) udstrækning, skala  
*comforting* (adj) trøstende  
*reassurance* (sb) beroligelse

a somewhat better place. All in all, crime fiction might give the reader a sense of reassurance and order.

**societal** (adj) samfunds-  
mæssige  
**penalize** (vb) straffe  
**deviate** (sb) afviger

Additionally, crime fiction offers a place to discuss societal problems. Many crime fiction novels and short stories deal with specific themes like trafficking, drugs or violence against women. The genre highlights what we consider criminal, and what we penalize as a society. The criminal is a social deviate whose behaviour is insupportable. How do we deal with people who cannot or will not follow the guidelines set by the majority? How do we detect them, and how should they be punished? And why did they become criminals in the first place?

**insupportable** (adj)  
uudholdelig  
**guideline** (sb)  
retningslinje  
**majority** (sb) flertal  
**detect** (vb) opspore  
**existential** (adj)  
eksistential: som  
vedrører el. er  
afgørende for  
menneskets eksistens  
**malicious** (adj) ond-  
skabsfuld  
**peer group** (sb)  
kammerater  
**surroundings** (sb,pl)  
omgivelser  
**envy** (sb) misundelse  
**violate** (vb) overtræde  
**consume** (vb) forbruge  
**jumper** (sb) sweater  
**skyrocket** (vb) stige  
voldsomt  
**The Killing** (sb.)  
Forbrydelsen, drama-  
serie vist på DR 2007-  
2012  
**mundane** (adj) trivial

Generally speaking, crime fiction often directly or indirectly discusses these issues and existential questions about good and evil i.e. are some people born with a malicious streak? Are criminals criminal because of their peer groups, their childhood trauma, their ghetto surroundings, their envy of others or simply because they choose to violate the rules that we have set up to control people's behaviour? Crime fiction is a genre that is deeply involved in society and reflects the societies in which it is produced and consumed. Some might claim that it also influences the societies in which it is read and viewed. After reading 21 million gory crime fiction novels a year, how do British people view crime? Are they more or less scared when they go out at night? Are their beliefs in the justice system strengthened or weakened?

Crime fiction does seem to matter greatly to its readers and viewers. After the death of Sherlock Holmes, fans, for example, chose to wear black armbands to show their grief even though Holmes was an entirely fictional character. Also the sale of Faroe-made jumpers skyrocketed after Sarah Lund wore them episode after episode in *The Killing* (2007) which aired on BBC Four in its original Danish version and which probably shaped many Brits' knowledge about and understanding of Denmark.

Finally, the genre is simple, good (uncomplicated) entertainment which might offer us a chance to escape our mundane lives. In *Talking about Detective Fiction* (2009) crime

writer P.D. James states, "we want to know what happens next. That is universal [...]  
Part of the attraction of the story is this satisfaction in solving the mystery. Some follow  
the clues assiduously and at the end feel the same triumph that they do after a  
successful game of chess. Others find more interest in the characterization, the setting,  
5 the writing or the theme."

*assiduously* (adv)  
omhyggeligt  
*predictability* (sb)  
forudsigelighed  
*escapism* (sb) eskapisme:  
forsøg på at glemme de  
umiddelbare omgivelser  
eller dagligdagens  
problemer gennem  
en særlig handling,  
aktivitet eller tanke-  
virksomhed.

Reasons to read crime fiction:

- Predictability and meaningfulness
- A forum for discussions about societal and existential issues
- 10 • Escapism
- Entertainment

### Subgenres

It is difficult to define crime fiction as the idea of crime covers a great variety of sub-  
15 genres. Originally we have the classic whodunit where the reader is provided with  
clues which are to be used in order to solve the puzzle. The courtroom drama/legal  
drama is a genre in which the major characters are lawyers. The legal system  
provides the frame for the story whereas the police procedurals try to give an  
accurate picture of the police at work. Another sub-genre is hard-boiled fiction,  
20 which gives an unsentimental portrayal of crime, violence, and sex. This genre often  
has a private investigator as its main character. This investigator seems rather tough  
and "hard-boiled".

A modern version of the *whodunit* is the *howcatchem*, a so-called *inverted detective*  
25 *story* where the crime and the criminal are known from the beginning of the story.  
Thus the story deals with the process of solving a crime and not so much the crime  
itself, thereby giving the reader the upper hand in relation to the police by having  
access to all material.

30 However, a definition might be that crime fiction deals with crimes, their detection,  
criminals, and their motives. Most crime stories build on the same concept in that we

first witness a crime, often a murder, next the murder is investigated and in the end the murder case is hopefully solved.

The American writer Edgar Allan Poe is generally known as the inventor of the detective story. In 1841 he wrote *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, the protagonist of which is a detective called Dupin who turns out to be cleverer than the police. Poe introduced the so-called locked room mystery, which deals with a crime having taken place in a room into which nobody can enter or leave.

10 The British counterpart to Poe is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose famous detective is Sherlock Holmes, an intellectual and eccentric superman who uses logical deduction based on minute details which escape everyone else's notice.

15 British crime fiction tends to be seen as rather conservative whodunits, which very often take their readers in the wrong direction, finally revealing to them the least likely suspect as the real villain of the story. The original British crime story is often set in the countryside whereas the modern version not surprisingly often takes place in an urban environment. British crime stories tend to be low-keyed and eccentric.

20 The American tradition of crime fiction writing is very different from the British one as the main character very often is an embittered, macho loner and the setting is predominantly urban. The stories are packed with action, violence and shootings, and the narrative style tends to be dry and laconic.

25 Modern crime stories clearly hark back to the writings of Poe and Doyle by dealing with the matter of detection, however they also tend to explore new grounds such as forensic science and global issues. The main difference lies in a new emphasis on character rather than plot and the fact that the reader gets to know the thoughts of the victims and the detectives is a way of illustrating a more psychological approach.

30 This is for example seen in Christine Poulson's "Don't You Hate Having Two Heads?".

## CASE #1 SETTING – A CONTRAST TO THE HORRORS

5 The setting of a crime fiction story is of great importance because crime fiction needs something to disrupt or throw into disorder. The physical setting, the climate, the culture, the legal system and society in which the story takes place helps the reader to understand what follows, and why the characters act the way they do. Time and again, crime fiction makes use of the following strategies and settings:

*disrupt* (vb) skabe kaos i  
*aspire* (vb) stræbe efter  
*thorough* (adj) grundig  
*sealed* (adj) forseglet  
*remote* (adj)  
afsidesliggende

### REALISM

Crime fiction commonly aspires to create a sense of realism. Ways to create realism:

- To refer to places and institutions in the real world like London street names or The White House.
- To describe details about a place in order to make it feel real.
- To make sure places and the people in them work in logical ways. Often crime writers go to great length to find out how a place smells, feels and looks. A realistic depiction of a police station must be based on thorough knowledge of how policemen and -women look, behave and think.
- To make places change. A realistic description requires objects and places to change in course of the story.

### LOCKED ROOM MYSTERIES

Some crime fiction stories go to the extreme of letting their stories unfold in locked rooms. This could literally be in sealed chambers or in some cases, like in classic Agatha Christie stories, in places where people are unable to leave because of the weather.

### IDYLLIC PLACES

Often crime fiction stories take place in idyllic small towns in remote areas. This might seem odd since the crime rate there must be low.

However, the idyllic sceneries create an ideal contrast to the murders that the authors wish to "commit" there.

*flux* (sb) stadig forandring  
*ills* (sb) onde  
*class division* (sb)  
          klasseskel  
*expose* (vb) blotlægge  
*enhance* (vb) forstærke

#### THE BIG CITY

Big cities like London, Los Angeles and New York often feature as settings in crime fiction because of their contrasts and states of flux. Furthermore, they are familiar to many people because of inexpensive air travel. They are environments created by humans where civilisation shows its advantages and disadvantages in one place. In that sense, they offer countless opportunities for writers who can go from luxurious mansions to dark back alleys within the same location. This for instance allows crime writers to write about contrasts between affluence and despair in a realistic fashion and hereby discuss societal ills. The cultural diversity of big cities also allows writers to deal with current societal issues like migration and transnational crime. Moreover, the cityscape, the urban version of landscape, influences its inhabitants in ways the writers can illustrate. Loneliness is an issue for many city dwellers while others thrive in the fast pace of the big cities and move between cultures and languages without difficulties, which offers opportunities to thematise multicultural societies.

#### SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPES

Settings can function as symbols of societal ills. The TV-series *The Wire* (2002-2008) for instance portrays the state of the US with corrupt politicians, class division, a hopeless, public education system and a disillusioned police force. The main characters in stories with symbolic landscapes will expose these truths for us.

The setting is used:

1. To enhance conflict: Imagine a crime ridden neighbourhood, and how its rundown buildings and poverty underline and heighten a tense atmosphere and push a criminal

5 into acting to maintain a power structure.

2. To illustrate a character's character: Makes the character believable and coherent. If the character lives in a rough environment, this might lead to violent behaviour or desperate actions.

3. To advance the plot: Imagine that our feuding main characters are locked up in a  
10 house together because of bad weather.

4. To create an atmosphere or mood: In crime fiction, the settings are often either used to create a contrast to murders or to create discomfort.

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## CASE #2 CHARACTERS

Can you smell something rotten? If not, you are perhaps not a nosy parker like most of crime fiction's main characters. Despite their diversity, the protagonists of crime fiction, who are often synonymous with the narrators of the stories, will often share a curious  
5 itch which will entangle them in drama wherever they go. Moreover, they often have problematic lives behind them – troubled childhoods, difficult relationships and abuse are common characteristics. This makes them human and typically lets us empathize with them.

- 10 A typical main character in crime fiction is the loner or unique individual who can outsmart other people.

*nosy parker* (sb)  
overdreven nysgerrig  
person [eller snushane]  
*itch* (sb) kløe, behov  
*entangler* (vb) vikle ind



Joanne Arnett 2012: *Two Years and a Fine of \$2000. Hand-woven mugshot.*

## THE LONER

- is a unique individual i.e. is extremely intelligent
  - has a troubled life/life experience behind him/her
  - has a 6th sense or is highly intuitive
  - has a strong sense of justice and a drive to serve a higher purpose
- i.e. a greater good

*loner* (sb) enspænder  
*higher purpose* tjene et  
højere formål  
*solitary* (adj) person som  
er alene fx ikke gift eller  
lign.  
*the average Joe, plain Jane  
or man in the street* Hr.  
og Fru Jensen (fig.)  
*hardboiled* (adj) hårdkogt  
*meet requirement* (sb)  
leve op til krav  
*shady* (adj) lyssky  
*rid* (vb) befri  
*vicious* (adj) ond  
*perchance* (adv) muligvis  
*cope with* (vb) magte  
*differentiate* (vb) gøre  
forskellig

## EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

There are of course many exceptions to this rule. Not all main characters are troubled by trauma from the past. Research a character like Miss Marple who does not call for pity, but is still a solitary figure and someone who is smarter than the average Joe, plain Jane or man in the street.

## HARDBOILED LONERS I

In hardboiled American stories, which are part of a particular crime genre, represented by writers such as Raymond Chandler, the protagonist can typically meet the following requirements:

- works alone.
- between 35 and 45 years or so
- a loner and a tough guy
- shoots criminals and takes a beating if it helps him solve the case
- ambition to save America from bad elements all by himself
- eats primarily fried eggs, black coffee and cigarettes• hangs out at shady all-night bars
- always "carries" a gun
- a heterosexual
- poor
- a heavy drinker

## THE KILLER AS THE PROTAGONIST

Writers from Edgar Allan Poe, considered to be the father of crime fiction, to Jeff Lindsay, Dexter's father, have thought it interesting to use the criminal as their main character. These criminals fit many of the characteristics of the loners, and some even believe to be serving a greater good like ridding society of other criminals. The appeal of these characters is perhaps the opportunity to investigate what evil is, and how a vicious mind works. They are highly intelligent characters perchance because this makes them easier to cope with. We give them mental superpowers to differentiate them from ourselves and people, we know. In so doing, they cannot be like us but remain fascinating.

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### CASE #3 PLOT

Like fairy tales, the majority of crime stories follow a schematic structure. The home-out-home model of crime fiction looks something like this.

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Traditional detective fiction

1 <sup>ST</sup> STAGE	2 <sup>ND</sup> STAGE	3 <sup>RD</sup> STAGE
A murder	An investigation	An outcome (often the criminal's arrest or death)

*majority* (sb) flertal  
*detective fiction* (sb)  
klassiske krimier  
med en detektiv som  
hovedperson  
*twist* (sb) forvikling  
*roughly speaking* groft  
sagt  
*plot* (sb) handling  
*commandment* (sb) bud  
*device* (sb) greb  
*coincidence* (sb)  
tilfældighed  
*culprit* (sb) gerningsmand

- Many stories are "whodunnits" where the reader is kept in suspense because she (most readers of crime fiction are middle-aged women) wants to know "who did it", who committed the crime. Characteristically, these stories have complicated plots with many twists and turns. Roughly speaking, the plot of a crime fiction story can be pushed forward or pulled backwards by a number of devices which the author can use to either slow things down, perhaps to create a sense of mystery, or speed things up. Some crime writers have even specified the rules of good crime fiction story telling. Mystery writer Ronald Knox for instance wrote down 10 commandments of detective fiction which you can find online. Most of the rules stress that you must have a sense of logic in your story and must not rely on accidents or coincidences. Also, the rules underline that the detective should not be the culprit. Oddly enough, Knox also feels a need to claim that you cannot include a "Chinaman" in a good crime story.

#### PUSH EFFECT

If a writer of crime fiction wishes to speed things up, he or she can give one of the characters great intuition or even a sixth sense with which the character can quickly discover things that are necessary for the story to move on. Another push effect could be that he/she meets a well-researched reporter or scientist, e.g. a forensic expert,

who has answers for the main character that he/she could not have obtained at all or as quickly the expert.

#### PULL EFFECT

If the author wishes to keep the readers or viewers in suspense a little while longer, he or she can introduce an element which slows down events. Frequently, an annoying boss holds back our protagonist in his or her efforts to solve a case. When something is used to divert the readers' attention away from the truth in crime fiction, it is called a red herring.

#### THE "REVEAL"

Crime writer Mark Billingham has explained the "reveal" as the writer leading his audience "along the garden path". The audience believe they are in the know, but are suddenly surprised by something they did not expect. Something is revealed to them.

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## CASE #4 DETECTION

How do the nosy parkers of crime fiction solve the riddles they are faced with? One of the classic ways to solve a crime is deduction. In *The Sign of the Four* (1890), the most famous detective of all, Sherlock Holmes, describes his method by saying that "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth". Deduction to Holmes is to observe and conclude something from these observations. To see Sherlock Holmes use this method, search for "Sherlock Holmes deduction" on Youtube.

**riddle** (sb) gåde  
**deduction** (sb) logisk  
tænkemåde, hvor man  
ud fra generelle regler  
slutter sig til, hvad der  
gælder i enkelttilfælde  
**eliminate** (vb) fjerne  
**improbable** (adj)  
usandsynlig  
**allure** (sb) tiltrækning  
**emphasis** (sb) tryk, vægt,  
betoning  
**play on** (vb) spille på  
(fig.)

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In detective stories and whodunnits, the allure of the story is to figure out what has happened. Nevertheless, some crime fiction writers choose to place less emphasis on what has happened and more on the psychology of the characters. The allure of these stories is to figure out who the characters are. For instance the TV-series *Dexter* (2006-2013), which is based on a book series, plays on our interest in finding out who the mass murderer Dexter is, and how he keeps from being identified. This is a play on the traditional stories of crime fiction in which the criminal has to be caught and brought to justice.

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## THE THIEF OF AMSTERDAM

Criminal commissioner van Damin from the Amsterdam break-in squad nodded at Inspector De Ruijter encouragingly: „So, what was up in the gallery?" The inspector pulled the notebook from his pocket, flipped it open and started to report: „The forensics department has confirmed that the break in must have happened between midnight and 1.00am. In addition, we have tracked down a woman who saw torch lights moving around in the gallery rooms at the said time. She lives directly opposite!"

Commissioner van Damin wrinkled his forehead: „Why didn't she inform the police? That would have been the sensible thing to do." Van Damin agreed: „In theory, yes Mr Commissioner, but the woman has only been living there for around four weeks and thought that she had seen a routine check by the night watchman. At least, this is what she told us. Well, we have also found out that the thief came over the roof and left the gallery through a cellar window. He broke all of the internal doors in the gallery with a car jack. He took two paintings by Büffet and a collection of valuable coins. According to director De Cron, the value is around 200.000 Gilder." Van Damin threw his pen on the table annoyed and his voice was threatening: „I'll bet my car against a rotten gold tooth that our good old friend Boris Lutrinck is behind this. Roof, cellar window, jacked doors; that all points towards him. Has the media already been informed?"

Inspector De Ruijter shook his head: „The gallery director asked me, not to involve the press at this point. In other words: nobody knows about the whole thing except us!" „Ok good, De Ruijter, why don't you bring Boris Lutrinck here!" Almost three hours later they had him. Inspector De Ruijter pushed the heavily protesting Lutrinck into Commissioner van Damins' room. He announced himself with a joyful wink: „Here, Chief, you've got a visitor. He was sitting peacefully and innocently in Cafe Strooten and was minding his own business."

„Yeah right, Mr Commissioner, that's it! - Peaceful and innocent indeed. What have you got against me? This. . ." he made a contemptuous hand movement . . . „this policeman always makes out as if he has a massive secret..." The commissioner grinned and presented the stool with a friendly gesture.

„Take a seat, Boris..."

„I don't want to!"

„You can't listen very well standing up!"

„I don't want to listen. I want to go!"

„Sit down!!" This invitation was not at all friendly.

„See, why can't you sit down first time?!" Commissioner van Damin smiled once again.

„Maybe we'll find out that you are completely innocent, dear Boris. What will we do then? We'll apologise and let you go!"

„I should hope so!" sniffled the bald-headed man confidently and squinted at the commissioner with half open eyes. „What's wrong then? Maybe I can give you a tip..."

The commissioner held his head in sympathy. Then he wandered over to Inspector De Ruijter: „Did you hear that, De Ruijter? Boris wants to know what's up. . . he even wants to give us a tip..."

De Ruijter nodded and joined in, in the same tone: „Then Boris Lutrinck must know more than we think. Chief, it seems to be our lucky day!" Boris Lutrinck lifted up both arms and defended himself: „I did not say that I knew anything ... you're throwing words into my mouth... I don't know anything . . . nothing at all. When your strange break in happened, I was playing cards with friends. We were in and then we went back to mine and played from 23.00 until just after 1.00am. It couldn't have been me."

The commissioner nodded: „And I was so sure that we had the right one."

Lutrinck shook his head and said: „You're only human." The commissioner then said: „For this reason, I am going to offer you a nice warm cell." Lutrinck shot out of his seat: „You want to arrest me?" he stammered. Van Damin nodded, almost with a little pity. „There are always enough stupid criminals."

## "DON'T YOU HATE HAVING TWO HEADS?"

By Christine Poulsen

5 He came to the Guggenheim Museum every time he visited Venice and it struck  
him as strange that he didn't remember seeing this sculpture before. It lay at his  
feet, more like a gigantic insect than the body of a woman. He was fascinated, yet  
he could scarcely bear to look. There was an arched backbone from which the ribs  
opened Out like petals to the sun. Little breasts like grapes clustered above them.  
At one end of the spine, pipe-cleaner legs were splayed like those of a limbo-  
10 dancer. From the other end sprouted the neck, a long arc of vertebrae ending in  
a tiny head with a notch for mouth. He looked at the title: *Woman with her Throat  
Cut* by Alberto Giacometti. He looked again at the sculpture. A little way down  
the neck was a second notch. This bloodless bronze was somehow more terrible  
than the goriest painting could have been.

15 It was as he turned away that he saw the girl for the second time. He had first seen  
her going into the museum just ahead of him. He had admired the swing of her  
shoulder length hair as she leaned forward to buy her ticket. When she  
straightened up, he realised that she was half a head taller than he was, He had  
20 always been attracted to tall women, particularly to those as elegant as this. She  
was wearing a fitted jacket in tan suede and high-waisted brown trousers that  
flattered a slender figure. And now there she was on the other side of the room  
gazing at a painting by Max Ernst.

He slipped off his wedding ring and pushed it deep into his trouser  
25 pocket. She was frowning a little, totally intent on the picture, and seemed not to  
notice as he drifted over in her direction. He glanced at the title: *The Robing of  
the Bride*. The painting was dominated by a monstrous figure with an owl's head.  
Its round eyes gazed out at the spectator with an expression at once enigmatic,  
melancholy, and predatory. Further down, the rich orange feathers fell into the  
30 folds of a floor-length cloak from which emerged the small breasts and the gently  
swelling stomach of a naked female body.

**Guggenheim Mu'seum**  
kunstmuseum med  
amerikansk og europæ-  
isk kunst fra første del  
af det 20. århundrede  
**scarcely** knap nok  
**arched** buet  
**backbone** rygrad  
**petal** kronblad  
**cluster** samle sig i klynge  
**spine** rygrad  
**splay** forvride  
**limbo** dans fra Trinidad  
hvor danseren går  
under en stadig lavere-  
liggende stang  
**sprout** vokse  
**vertebrae** ryghvirvler  
**notch** rille  
**Al'berto Giaco'metti**  
1901-1966; schweizisk  
billedkunstner  
**gory** bloddryppende  
**fitted** figursyet  
**tan** gulbrun  
**suede** ruskind  
**flatter** "fremhæve"  
**slender** slank  
**Max Ernst** 1891-1976;  
tysk autodidakt sur-  
realist  
**in'tent on** stærkt opta-  
get af  
**drift** slentre  
**robe** iklæde  
**monstrous** uhyre stor  
**enig'matic** gådefuld  
**predatory** rovgrisk  
**cloak** kåbe

"Don't you hate having two heads?" the girl murmured,  
 Obviously she hadn't realised that he was standing behind her. He cleared his  
 5 throat. The girl looked round. Her eyes widened. She was a brown-eyed blonde,  
 an unusual combination. He felt a little thrill of excitement and apprehension, "Has  
 she got two heads?" he asked.  
 "Yes, look, right there, See that little face peering out?" The girl had an American  
 accent, light, attractive.  
 10 He moved forward so that he was standing next to her. He looked to where she  
 was pointing. Just above the breasts, a tiny mask-like face was peering out through  
 the feathers.  
 "So there it is"  
 "'Don't you hate having two heads?' is the title of another surrealist painting' she  
 15 said, "It's by a British artist, Roland Penrose. It's kind of a joke."  
 He smiled at her. "I see that".  
 She was older than he had thought. She must be about thirty, not really a girl at  
 all. He was glad that she wasn't too young.  
 She pulled a notebook out of her bag. She gave him a brief smile and turned  
 20 towards the seats in the centre of the gallery.  
 The encounter was over. At least for now.  
 He made his way through the central gallery past the Alexander Calder mobile,  
 and pushed open the door that led down to the terrace overlooking the Grand  
 Canal. The heat enveloped him. He hadn't expected the weather to be so good  
 25 in late September. It was a real Indian summer.  
 He gave it ten minutes, then he headed back into the museum. She wasn't in the  
 gallery where he had left her, nor in the garden. He felt a twinge of concern, but  
 surely she couldn't have left yet. He strolled around, hoping at any  
 moment to catch a glimpse of the bell of blonde hair, but he didn't come across  
 30 her. After a while he gave up any pretense of examining the Picassos and the  
 Jackson Pollocks and went through the rooms methodically, one by one. At last

**thrill** gysen  
**apprehension** ængsteise  
**peer** stirre, spejde  
**Roland Penrose**  
 1900-1984; engelsk ma-  
 ler, historiker og digter  
**en'counter** møde  
**Alexander Calder**  
 1898-1976; amerikansk  
 billedhugger  
**mobile** uro  
**twinge** stik  
**Jackson 'Pollock**  
 1912-1956; amerikansk  
 billedkunstner

he had to admit defeat. She had gone and he had missed his change. Stupid, stupid, stupid! Why hadn't he made a move earlier? Was a bloody nuisance just when he had psyched himself up to it. He had had so little practice, that was the trouble. He would have to mark this down to experience and start all over again.

5

First he would have a coffee. The museum café was crowded. Glancing round for a table, he saw at one end of the long narrow room a shallow flight of stairs and a sign to the Museum shop. He felt a flicker of hope. As he turned the corner into the shop, he saw her standing at the counter handing money to the sales assistant and receiving a small plastic bag, the kind that contains postcards. He breathed a sigh of relief. He moved deeper into the shop and paused by a rack of silk scarves. He looked back. She had moved away from the counter and was browsing among the books. He edged round to the racks of postcards and picked out several more or less at random. Now she was leaning over a cabinet of jewelry made from Murano glass. As he watched, she straightened up and walked towards the exit. He hastened to pay for the cards and followed her out.

10

15

At first he thought she was heading for the café, but she turned off into the ladies loo.

20

He hovered near the entrance to the shop and pretended to look at some books in a glass case. After a while she emerged and he hurried after her. He was just in time to see her sit down at a table. He looked around and felt like cheering. All the other tables were full. It couldn't have worked out better if he had planned it. He walked over to her table.

25

"May I?" he said, gesturing towards the empty chair. She nodded and smiled. He ordered a cappuccino. When he caught her eye again, she stretched out a hand and said, "Jessica David."

30

There was a directness about her that threw him off balance: he almost gave his real name. Well, the Richard was real enough. But even as the word was on his lips

**shallow** lav

**flicker** svagt glimt

**rack** stativ

**Mu'rano glass** verdens-  
kendt venetiansk glas-  
kunst

**loo** wc

**hover** gå frem og tilbage

**cheer** juble

he felt a moment of paralyzing indecision. He hadn't prepared a false surname. And now she was looking into his eyes, waiting for him to go on.

"Richard Ford," he said firmly, remembering a moment too late that this was the name of a well-known American writer. Still, it was a common enough name.

5 "Are you here on holiday?" he asked.

"No, I'm a student, a postgrad."

Ten minutes later they were deep in conversation. She wasn't American at all, he learned, but Canadian. She came from Quebec. He didn't have to feign interest.

10 He had always wanted to go there.

They reached a natural pause in the conversation. The coffee had been drunk. For a moment neither of them spoke. She looked around. He knew she was preparing to leave.

"Is it too early for lunch?" he asked.

15 She hesitated and he thought he had lost her. Then she said, "Not at all too early. In fact I'm ravenous." They decided on ravioli stuffed with cheese and vegetables and an *insalata mista*. When Richard ordered a bottle of wine, Jessica did not demur.

20 As they drank the first glass, she told him about her research. She was looking at various surrealist artists from a feminist viewpoint.

"There were some women surrealists, weren't there?" Richard said, dredging his memory. "Leonora Carrington, wasn't she one? And who did that cup and saucer

25 lined with fur?"

"Meret Oppenheim. Oh sure, there are some marvellous women surrealists, but there's another side to it. I'm interested in the way women were silenced by surrealists."

30 The waiter arrived with their food. Richard poured out another glass of wine for them both.

**paralysing** lammende  
**inde'cision** ubeslutsom-  
 hed

**postgrad** kandidat på  
 overbygningsstudium  
**feign** foregive

**ravenous** hundesulten  
**ravi'oli** italiensk pastaret  
**insa'lata mista** italiensk  
 for blandet salat  
**de'mur** gøre indsigelse  
**dredge** grave frem  
**prime** det bedste

"What kind of thing have you got in mind?" he said.

"There's a prime example here in this very museum."

It was as if he could read her mind, He knew what was coming next.

"I'm thinking of that Giacometti sculpture," she said. "It's called *Woman with her*

5 *Throat Cut*. There couldn't be a more effective way of silencing someone.

As he cast around for something to say, his eye fell on the newspaper that Jessica had left on the empty chair between them. ASSASSINIO SUL CANAL GRANDE the headline read. Jessica followed his gaze.

10 "Have you heard about that? " she asked. "I don't read Italian," he said.

"It might not be in the English language papers yet. They only found the second body yesterday. TWO in less than a week. The police think it's the work of the same person, so of course the press are making the most of it. There's a big spread about serial killers."

15 "How does he? — I mean what happens - ?"

"Cheese-cutter, They're garrotted with that thin strip of wire that you use to cut cheese."

20 Richard felt queasy. His head was swimming. He poured himself a glass of mineral water. He told himself that he could walk away at any moment. He didn't actually have to do anything.

This was just an experiment.

Jessica began to talk about the fellowship she'd been awarded and the bad moment passed.

25

"So you've been here for a while?" he asked.

"Three months."

"Where are you staying?"

"I've got a room in a flat. Not far away actually. And you?"

30 "A hotel in San Polo." He didn't want to be more specific.

He looked down at the table and traced a pattern in a little puddle of spilled water.

**prime** det bedste

**cast around** lede efter

**assas'sinio** italiensk for  
mord

**spread** iøjnefaldende  
artikel

**cheese-cutter** osteskærer

**ga'rotte** egl. henrette ved  
langsom kvælning

**feel queasy** have kvalme

**fellowship** stipendium

**puddle** pyt

"There's always plenty to do during the day, but it can be difficult in the evenings, can't it?" she said.

He looked up. She was smiling at him.

He said, "I wonder ... Maybe we could ..."

5 "I'd like that?"

"This evening? "

"Why not?"

Now that this was settled, they began to talk of other things. Richard asked her if  
10 she'd like coffee. She said she would. He ordered it and then excused himself. In  
the gent's, he splashed cold water on his face and gazed at his reflection. He tried  
to see himself through Jessica's eyes. His hair and beard, both worn short, were  
greying and it suited him. Certainly he was more attractive now at forty than he  
15 had been at twenty. All the same he couldn't believe how easy it had been, almost  
too easy. He found himself feeling annoyed with her for being so ready to go off  
with a complete stranger. Didn't she realise how dangerous it was?  
He went back into the café.

Jessica was gazing out into the garden with her back to him. As he approached  
20 their table, her head began to turn. And out of the blue it hit him: a wave of sheer  
panic. Because the head that swiveled towards him as if in slow motion wasn't the  
head of a woman. It was the owl-head of the bride in the Max Ernst picture. The  
feathery hair was made of real feathers, the brown eyes were round and  
unblinking, the little nose was a beak with a cruel curve at the tip, He closed his  
25 eyes. When he opened them, Jessica was herself again. She was looking at him  
with concern.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

He reached for a chair and lowered himself into it.

30 "Just suffering a bit from the heat."

"Would you like a glass of water?"

**gent's** herretoilet  
**swivel** dreje  
**beak** næb

He nodded and she poured one out for him.

"I need to go and freshen up myself," she said.

5 As she walked away, it occurred to him that maybe it was the heat after all. That and the alcohol. The sky was completely overcast now and yet the heat was still building, He was sweating profusely. Or maybe these were the early symptoms of food poisoning. That cuttlefish he had eaten last night ...

10 But whatever had caused that momentary hallucination, he knew now that 'he couldn't go through with it.

The waiter appeared at his side and laid the bill on the table. He got to his feet, pulled out his wallet, and threw three twenty Euro notes on the table he snatched up his packet of postcards, and ran out of the restaurant.  
15 Ten minutes later, he was on a vaporetto chugging up the Grand Canal the Rialto Bridge.

"Got your research done, darling?" Richard's wife asked.  
She tossed her handbag and her newspaper onto the bed. It was the following  
20 day and she had just arrived from Marco Polo airport. Richard had met her off the bus at the Piazza Romana and they had walked the short distance across a couple of canals to the hotel. On the way they had talked about the children, Marcus on holiday with friends for the first time and Emily at Pony Club camp. The success of Richard's last novel had made both the holiday and the Pony Club possible and  
25 had allowed Sarah to join him for a few days.

"Well, I did establish that it would be easy to pick someone up in the Guggenheim Museum."  
'I told you it would be. Art galleries and museums are well-known intellectual pick-  
30 up places."

Something in the silence that followed made her look round at him.

"You didn't actually pick someone up yourself?" She was laughing. "You did, didn't you?"

5 "I did have lunch with someone," he admitted.

"Attractive? "

"A lot of men would think so."

"But you didn't? "

"She couldn't hold a candle to you."

10

"Looks like arrived just in time," she said lightly. "If you've done everything you need for the new book, maybe we can get down to some serious sight-seeing."

15 He wasn't going to tell her that for a crazy half-hour he had contemplated taking it further. She might guess, but she wouldn't ask. She wasn't one of those tedious women who insist on having everything out in the open.

"I've found a very nice restaurant just off the Piazza San Margarita," Richard said.

"I thought we'd go there for lunch."

20 "I'll just do a bit of unpacking first and maybe have a shower."

As she pottered around, he stretched out on the bed and glanced through the paper. He had more or less recovered from the day before. As he had alighted from the vaporetto, the heavens had opened. He had been soaked to the skin by  
25 the time he got to the hotel and to cap it all he was violently sick. He only just got back to his room in time. He'd felt better by the evening and had slipped down to the hotel restaurant for a simple pasta. He had chosen a table at the rear of the restaurant. He couldn't rid himself of the fear that Jessica was cruising the hotels of San Polo looking for him. Thank goodness he had never before been seriously  
30 tempted to be unfaithful to Sarah. He didn't have the temperament for it. Better

**hold a candle** måle sig  
med  
**contemplate** overveje  
**tedious** kedelig  
**potter around** nusse  
**a'light** stige ud af  
**soaked** gennemblødt

stick to fictional adventures and leave the real ones to bolder and more unscrupulous men.

Sarah had put her clothes away and had laid out her toiletries on top of the chest of drawers. Richard's belongings were lying scattered around and she began to tidy them up. Richard found this domestic activity comforting. He went on turning over the pages of *The Guardian* which had travelled with Sarah from East Midlands airport that morning.

His eye was caught by a headline. "Death in Venice." *Venetian police are denying that they have a serial killer on their hands, he read, even though the killer seems to have used the same modus operandi on both victims. Apparently they were gated with a length of cheese wire. In both cases something was left behind by the body that leads the polite to suspect that the killer is a visitor to Venice.*

"Really, Richard!" He looked up to see Sarah holding a plastic bag in one hand and a postcard in the other.

"Sorry — just let me" His eyes went back to the newspaper.

Both men were around forty and of a similar type. Both were below average height. Both were married, but police do not discount a homosexual motive.

"My God! They weren't women, they were men!"

"Richard!"

And now he did focus on what Sarah had in her hand. It was a postcard of *Woman with her Throat Cut* by Alberto Giacometti.

"Why did you buy so many of the same thing?" she said with a moue of distaste.

"There must be a dozen of them. They're really gruesome."

For a moment he was baffled. How had they got into his room? In his haste to leave the restaurant he had picked up the wrong plastic bag. Jessica had his Magritte and Alexander Calder postcards. He had these.

"And that's not all. There's something else in here," Sarah said.

She turned the bag upside down above the bed.

**to cap it all** oven i købet  
**un'scrupulous** skrupel-  
løs  
**toiletries** toiletsager  
**chest of drawers** kom-  
mode  
**do'mestic** huslig  
**modus ope'randi** frem-  
gangsmåde

Richard knew what would be in there even before the gleaming, tightly-coiled length of cheese-wire landed on the counterpane.

(2006)

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## HOSTAGE

By Andrew Wachs

"I've got a gun! Aimed right at her head. See? Take a look for yourselves. You make one move to  
5 come in here, I'll blow her away!"

The man was on the top story of a three-family frame building in a middle class section of Brooklyn. Standing at the front window, looking down at us. He was visible from the waist up, the silver revolver clear in his hand. We could only see the old lady's head and chest, the small body framed by the handles of the wheelchair. I felt a crowd surging behind us, held back by the uniformed cops. A TV  
10 camera crew was setting up to my left.

"I guess this one's yours, Walker."

I nodded agreement at the big detective. I'd seen him around before, at scenes like this one. Never could remember his name. "How long's he been like that?" I asked.

-

"We got a call about six this morning, just around daybreak. Prowler. Radio car took it, found the kid in  
15 an alley, peeking in windows. They chased him, he made it to the back door of that house there. They start up the stairs after him, that's when he flashed the piece. He's been up there for hours."

"That's his house?"

"Yeah. How did you know?"  
20

"He was just running in panic, he wouldn't have gone all the way to the top floor. I'll bet the gun was in the house all the time, probably didn't have it with him when he was outside." "Yeah. He's even got a permit for it, all registered, nice and

"What else you got?"

"His name's Mark Weston. Age twenty-three. Got two priors, indecent exposure and attempted B&E. Got probation both times. Sees a psychiatrist. Lives off his mother's social security check — that's her  
25 up there in the wheelchair. "

"You think he'd blast his mother?"

The detective shrugged. "You're the expert," he said, just the trace of contempt in his voice.

I'd been a cop a long time. Ever since I came home from the killing floor in South-East Asia. It seemed  
30 like the natural thing to do. My first assignment was vice, but I got kicked back into uniform when

some dirtbag pimp complained I'd roughed him up during a bust. Then I worked narcotics. The first week on the job I killed a dealer in a gunfight. He was shot in the back. The Review Team cleared me — he'd shot first and I nailed him going for the window.

I got a commendation, but they put me back on the beat. That was okay for a while. The people in the community knew me, we got along. I caught two guys coming out of a bodega, stocking masks over their heads, one had a shotgun. I cut them both down. Turned out one was thirteen years old. How was I supposed to know?

They sent me to the department shrink. Nice guy. Gave me a lot of tests, asked a lot of questions. Never said much.

The shrink's office was in Manhattan. The locks were a joke. I went back there one night and pulled my file. It made interesting reading. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, fundamental lack of empathy, blunted affect, addicted risk-taker.

I'd been a sniper in Nam, so they tried me on the SWAT Team. When I did what they hired me to do, they pulled me off the job. Took away my gun.

Then they gave me a choice. I could take early retirement, go out on disability. Emotionally unsuited to law enforcement, that kind of thing. Or I could learn hostage negotiation work. Go to this special school they have. The boss said I'd be real good at it — I always stayed calm, and I could talk pretty sweet when I wanted to.

But I couldn't carry a gun. My job was to talk. The boss said if I proved myself, I could go back on a regular job someday. Okay.

I lit a cigarette, thinking it through. "You got a telephone link?" I asked.

"There's a number listed. We haven't tried it yet. Waiting on you. You can try it from the truck."

I walked over to the blue and white truck, introduced myself. Sat down at the console and dialed the number.

it rang a half-dozen times before he picked it up.

"Who is this?"

"My name is Walker, Mark. I want to talk to you. About this situation, see if we can't work something out, okay?"

"Are you a cop?"

"No," I said, my voice soft, starting the lies. "I'm a psychologist. The police figured you'd rather talk to me. Is that

"Make them go away!"

"Okay, Mark. Take it easy, son. There's nothing to get upset about. You didn't do anything."

5 "Make them go away, I said! I'll kill her, I swear I will."

"Sure, I understand. Give me a few minutes, okay? You'll do that, won't you Mark. I can't just snap my fingers, make them disappear. I have to talk to them. Like I'm talking to you, okay?"

"I'll call you back. In a few minutes, okay? Just relax, I'm going to fix everything."

I stepped out of the truck, feeling his eyes on me. The big

10 detective was rooted to the same spot.

"Can we move everyone back? Just out of the sight-line from his window?"

"Procedure... "

"Procedure is we don't let him walk away, we don't give him weapons, and we don't set him off, right? Just pull back, okay? What's the big deal? You can keep the perimeter tight. Anyway, it's a good idea

15 to clear the area.. .what if he starts firing out the window."

The big detective gave me a steady gaze, not giving anything away. "It's your show, pal," he said.

In five minutes, the street was empty. I went back to the truck, made my call.

"Okay, Mark? Just like I promised. Nobody's going to hurt you".

20 "I'm sorry for what I did. Can't I ... ?"

"Mark, did something for you, right? Now it's time for you to do something for me. Like good faith, okay?"

"Wha.. .what do you want?"

"What I want is to talk to you, Mark. Face to face."

25 "I'm not coming out!"

"Of course not, Mark. I wouldn't want you to do that. I'll come in, okay? And we'll talk." "If this is a trick..

"It's no trick, Mark. Why would I trick you? I'm on your side. We're working together on this. Tell you what: I'll take off my shirt, so you can see I'm not carrying a gun, okay? I'll walk up the stairs, you can

30 watch every step. And you can keep your gun on me all the time. Fair enough?"

"I'll think about it."

"There isn't much time, Mark. The cops, you know how they are. I got them to listen to me because I told them we had a relationship. That we could get along, you and me. If they think we can't talk, you know what they'll do." "I'll kill her!"

"Why would they care, Mark? You know how the cops are.

5 Another old lady gets killed in New York, so what? Besides, if I come up there, you'd have no hostages, right? Even more insurance."

"How come... "

10 "Mark, I'm coming up now. I want you to watch me, okay. Watch what I do. You'll see I'm on your side, son."

I hung up the phone, stepped out of the truck. I saw him at the window, watching. I waved. Took off my jacket, laid it on the ground like a blanket. I dropped my shirt on top. Took off my undershirt and added it to the pile. I unlaced my shoes, took them off, peeled off my socks and put them inside.

Rolled up the cuff of my pants to mid calf. Turned one complete spin, my hands high in the air.

15 Then I started for the stairs. On the second flight, I heard a door open.

"It's me, Mark," I called out.

The door was open at the top of the stairs. I stepped inside. He was standing next to his mother, the gun leveled at my chest.

"Hello, Mark," I said, reaching out to shake hands.

20 He didn't go for it, the pistol trembling in his hands.

"Okay if I sit down?" I asked, not waiting for an answer.

He stood silent, watching me. The old lady's eyes were ugly and evil, measuring me. She didn't look afraid.

"Mark, do you smoke?"

25 "Why?"

"I didn't want to bring my cigarettes with me. Didn't want you to be suspicious. But I'd sure like one now."

"She doesn't let me smoke in the house," he said.

The old lady's expression didn't change, but her eyes flickered triumph. The pistol wasn't cocked.

30 "Okay, no big deal. Let's talk now, you and me."

"About what?"

"About how you're going to get out of this, okay?"

"The probation officer, she said if I messed up again, I was going to jail. I can't go to jail.

"You're not going to jail, Mark. Why should you go to jail?"

Your mother, she's not going to press charges against you, right?"

5 He looked down at her. She nodded agreement.

"See?" I told him. "What we have to do, now, is bargain with them. Make a deal, you know?"

"What kind of deal?"

"The only trouble you're in, near as I can see, is maybe running away from the cops this morning.

10 That's nothing, that's not even a crime. But you know how judges are.. .so we have to give them something, make you look good. Like a hero, okay?"

"A hero?"

"Sure! What we do is, we let your mother go. We let her go outside. You still have me as a hostage.

But first, I call the cops. And I make them promise, if you let her go, then they'll drop

15 the charges. Then, you and me, we walk out of here together. Okay?"

"What if ..."

"How does your mother get around, Mark? I mean, how does that wheelchair get outside?"

"She can walk. If she has some help. I used to... "

"Okay, here's how we'll do it. I'll help your mother downstairs, right to the door, okay? That

20 wheelchair, it folds up, right?" "Yes."

"Okay. I'll help her downstairs. You're right behind me, with the gun. Then you and me, we'll go back upstairs and talk.

After a while, we walk out. And that's it."

"You promise?"

25 "Just watch me," I said, reaching for the phone. I dialed the truck. "This is Walker," I told them. "Mark and I have had a 30 discussion about this situation and here's what we have to offer. He's going to let his mother come out, okay? In exchange, we want you to drop the charges against him. You do that, and he and I will come out together. But remember, the deal has to be no jail for Mark, you understand?"

30

Mark stood next to me, the pistol inches from my face. I held the receiver so he could hear the cop in the truck tell me they agreed to my terms, no problem. So long as he sent the old lady out first.

It took a long time to wrestle the old lady down the stairs, her gnarled hands on my arm. I wasn't surprised at the strength of her grip. I snapped the wheelchair open and she sat down. I gently pushed her out into the sunlight. Climbed back the stairs, Mark right behind me.

We both sat down. "You can smoke now," I told him. "She's gone."

His smile was tentative, but he produced a pack. Handed it to me. We lit up, smoked in silence.

Then he told me his story. They all have a story. He was a change-of-life baby. His father left soon after his birth, and the old lady raised him alone. Hard. He showed me the discolored skin on his right hand where she'd burned him when she caught him with dirty magazines. The whip marks on his back. From an electrical cord. He dropped out of school when he was a teenager. Never had a friend. Lonely, scared, sad. Scarred.

In another hour he was crying.

I got up, went to him. Put my arms around him. Took the gun gently from his hand. Patted his back, talking softly to him. Telling him he was going to a better place. Where nobody could never hurt him again.

I stepped away from him. Turned and brought up the pistol. His face froze. I put two rounds into his chest. Footsteps pounded on the stairs.

Self- defense.

Maybe now they'll give me my gun back.

## THE CROSSING PLACES

The first book in the Ruth Galloway Mystery series, 2009



- 5 ELLY GRIFFITHS (1963- ) is a British novelist, screenwriter and columnist whose main character archaeologist Ruth Galloway works at Southampton University and lives alone on a secluded stretch of coastland with her two cats. This unlikely detective gets involved in the case of Lucy Downey, a little girl who went missing a decade ago. Harry Nelson, a local Detective Chief Inspector,
- 10 involves Ruth in the case after having found a child's bones on a nearby beach in the hopes of solving the case of Lucy's disappearance.

### PROLOGUE

They wait for the tide and set out at first light.

- 15 It has rained all night and in the morning the ground is seething gently, the mist rising up to join the overhanging clouds. Nelson calls for Ruth in an unmarked police car.

- 20 He sits beside the driver and Ruth is in the back, like a passenger in a minicab. They drive in silence to the car park near where the bones were first found. As they drive along the Saltmarsh road, the only sounds are the sudden, staccato crackle of the police radio and the driver's heavy, cold-clogged breathing. Nelson says nothing. There is nothing to say.

- 25 They get out of the car and walk across the rain-sodden grass towards the marsh. The wind is whispering through the reeds, and here and there they see glimpses of still, sullen water reflecting the grey sky. At the edge of the marshland Ruth stops, looking for the first sunken post, the twisting shingle path that leads through the treacherous water and out to the mudflats. When
- 30

*tide* (sb) tidevand  
*seeth* (vb) koge  
*gently* (adv) blidt  
*mist* (sb) tåge  
*overhanging* (adj)  
lavthængende  
*unmarked* (adj) civil  
*saltmarsh* (sb) marsk/  
vadehav  
*staccato* (sb) hakkende  
lyd  
*crackle* (sb) knitren  
*cold-clogged* (adj)  
forkølet  
*rain-sodden* (adj)  
regnvåd  
*reed* (sb) tagrør  
*sullen* (adj) mørk  
*twisting* (adj) snoet  
*shingle* (sb) dækket med  
småsten  
*treacherous* (adj)  
forræderisk  
*mudflat* (sb)  
mudderbanke  
*half-submerged* (adj),  
halvt dækket  
*brackish* (adj) brak-  
*disperse* (vb) sprede sig

she finds it, half-submerged by brackish water, she sets out without looking back.

Silently, they cross the marshes. As they get nearer the sea, the mist disperses and the sun starts to filter through the clouds. At the henge circle, the tide is out and the sand glitters in the early morning light. Ruth kneels on the ground as she saw Erik doing all those years ago. Gently, she stirs the quivering mud with her trowel.

Suddenly everything is quiet; even the seabirds stop their mad skirling and calling up above. Or maybe they are still there and she just doesn't hear them. In the background she can hear Nelson breathing hard but Ruth herself feels strangely calm. Even when she sees it, the tiny arm still wearing the christening bracelet, even then she feels nothing. She had known what she was going to find.

## CHAPTER 1

Waking is like rising from the dead. The slow climb out of sleep, shapes appearing out of blackness, the alarm clock ringing like the last trump. Ruth flings out an arm and sends the alarm crashing to the floor, where it carries on ringing reproachfully. Groaning, she levers herself upright and pulls up the blind. Still dark. It's just not right, she tells herself, wincing as her feet touch the cold floorboards.

Neolithic man would have gone to sleep when the sun set and woken when it rose. What makes us think this is the right way round? Falling asleep on the sofa during Newsnight, then dragging herself upstairs to lie sleepless over a Rebus book, listen to the World Service on the radio, count Iron Age burial sites to make herself sleep and now this; waking in the darkness feeling like death. It just wasn't right somehow.

**disperse** (vb) sprede sig  
**henge circle** (sb) cirkel af sten

**Erik** professor hun mødte på universitetet

**stir** (vb) rode op i

**quiver** (vb) dirre

**trowel** (sb) graveske

**skirl** (vb) hvine

**christening bracelet** (sb) dåbsarmbånd

**the last trump** den sidste basun, der lyder, inden Jesus kommer tilbage til jorden

**fling** (vb) smide

**reproachfully** (adv) bebrejdende

**groan** (vb) stønne

**lever** (vb) bakse

**blind** (sb) persienne

**wince** (vb) krympe sig

**Neolithic man** (sb) mand fra yngre stenalder

**drag** (vb) slæbe

**Rebus book** krimiserie af forfatteren Ian Rankin

**World Service** (sb) BBC nyhedsprogram

**burial site** (sb) begravelsesplads

	In the shower, the water unglues her eyes and sends her hair streaming down her back. This is baptism, if you like.	<b>unglue</b> (vb) skylle klister væk <b>baptism</b> (sb) dåb
5	Ruth's parents are Born Again Christians and are fans of Full Immersion For Adults (capitals obligatory). Ruth can quite see the attraction, apart from the slight problem of not believing in God. Still, her parents are Praying For Her (capitals again), which should be a comfort but somehow isn't.	<b>Born Again Christians</b> (sb) kristen bevægelse, der tror på Jesu genfødsel <b>Full Immersion For Adults</b> voksendåb, hvor man har hele kroppen under vand <b>capital</b> (sb) stort bogstav <b>attraction</b> (sb) tiltrækningskraft <b>comfort</b> (sb) trøst
10	Ruth rubs herself vigorously with a towel and stares unseeingly into the steamy mirror. She knows what she will see and the knowledge is no more comforting than her parents' prayers. Shoulder-length brown hair, blue eyes, pale skin – and however she stands on the scales, which are at present banished to the broom cupboard she weighs twelve and a half stone. She sighs (I am not defined by my weight, fat is a state of mind) and squeezes toothpaste onto	<b>vigorously</b> (adv) energisk <b>unseeingly</b> (adv) uden at se noget <b>scale</b> (sb) vægt <b>banish</b> (vb) forvise <b>broom cupboard</b> (sb) kosteskab
15	her brush. She has a very beautiful smile, but she isn't smiling now and so this too is low on the list of comforts.	<b>twelve and a half stone</b> ca. 80 kg <b>state of mind</b> (sb) sindstilstand <b>comfort</b> (sb) glæde
	Clean, damp-footed, she pads back into the bedroom.	<b>pad</b> (vb) lunte
20	She has lectures today so will have to dress slightly more formally than usual. Black trousers, black shapeless top.	<b>sequin</b> (sb) paillet <b>bugle bead</b> (sb) glasperle <b>diamante</b> (sb) falske diamanter <b>dour</b> (adj) dystert <b>pine</b> (sb) fyrretræs-
25	She hardly looks as she selects the clothes. She likes colour and fabric; in fact she has quite a weakness for sequins, bugle beads and diamante. You wouldn't know this from her wardrobe though. A dour row of dark trousers and loose, dark jackets. The drawers in her pine dressing table are full of black jumpers, long cardigans and opaque tights. She used to wear jeans until she hit size sixteen and now favours cords, black, of course.	<b>dressing table</b> (sb) toiletbord <b>opaque</b> (adj) uigennemsigtig <b>size sixteen</b> str. 44 <b>cords</b> (sb) fløjlsbukser
30	Jeans are too young for her anyhow. She will be forty next year.	

Dressed, she negotiates the stairs. The tiny cottage has very steep stairs, more like a ladder than anything else. 'I'll never be able to manage those' her mother had said on her one and only visit. Who's asking you to, Ruth had replied silently. Her parents had stayed at the local B and B as Ruth has only one bedroom; going upstairs was strictly unnecessary (there is a downstairs loo but it is by the kitchen, which her mother considers unsanitary). The stairs lead directly into the sitting room: sanded wooden floor, comfortable faded sofa, large flat-screen TV, books covering every available surface. Archaeology books mostly but also murder mysteries, cookery books, travel guides, doctor-nurse romances. Ruth is nothing if not eclectic in her tastes. She has a particular fondness for children's books about ballet or horse-riding, neither of which she has ever tried.



Marsh landscape.

The kitchen barely has room for a fridge and a cooker but Ruth, despite the books, rarely cooks. Now she switches on the kettle and puts bread into the toaster, clicking on Radio 4 with a practised hand. Then she collects her lecture notes and sits at the table by the front window. Her favourite place. Beyond her front garden with its windblown grass and broken, blue fence there is nothingness. Just miles and miles of marshland, spotted with stunted gorse bushes and criss-crossed with small, treacherous streams. Sometimes, at

**negotiate** (vb) klare  
**cottage** (sb) hytte  
**B and B** (sb) bed and breakfast  
**strictly** (adv) helt  
**loo** (sb) toilet  
**unsanitary** (adj) uhygiejnisk  
**sanded** (adj) afhøvlede  
**faded** (adj) falmet  
**eclectic in her tastes** har en bred smag  
**fondness** (sb) forkærlighed  
**barely** (adv) knap nok  
**cooker** (sb) komfur  
**lecture** (sb) forelæsning  
**stunted** (adj) forkrøblet  
**gorse bush** (sb) tornblad, (kraftig, tornet busk  
**criss-crossed** (adj) gennemkrydset  
**treacherous** (adj) forræderisk  
**streams** (sb) bæk

this time of year, you see great flocks of wild geese wheeling across the sky, their feathers turning pink in the rays of the rising sun.

But today, on this grey winter morning, there is not a living creature as far as the eye can see. Everything is pale and washed out, grey-green merging to grey-white as the marsh meets the sky. Far off is the sea, a line of darker grey, seagulls riding in on the waves. It is utterly desolate and Ruth has absolutely no idea why she loves it so much.

She eats her toast and drinks her tea (she prefers coffee but is saving herself for a proper espresso at the university).

As she does so, she leafs through her lecture notes, originally typewritten but now scribbled over with a palimpsest of additional notes in different coloured pens. 'Gender and Prehistoric Technology', 'Excavating Artefacts', 'Life and Death in the Mesolithic', 'The Role of Animal Bone in Excavations'. Although it is only early November, the Christmas term will soon be over and this will be her last week of lectures. Briefly, she conjures up the faces of her students: earnest, hard-working, slightly dull. She only teaches postgraduates these days and rather misses the casual, hungover good humour of the undergraduates. Her students are so keen, waylaying her after lectures to talk about Lindow Man and Boxgrove Man and whether women really would have played a significant role in prehistoric society. Look around you, she wants to shout, we don't always play a significant role in this society. Why do you think a gang of grunting hunter-gatherers would have been any more enlightened than we?

Thought for the Day seeps into her unconscious, reminding her that it is time to leave. 'In some ways, God is like an iPod...' She puts her plate and cup in the sink and leaves down food for her cats, Sparky and Flint. As she does so, she answers the ever-present sardonic interviewer in her head. 'OK, I'm a

**wheel** (vb) kredse  
**merge** (vb) flyde sammen  
**utterly** (adv) aldeles  
**desolate** (adj) øde  
**leaf** (vb) bladre  
**typewritten** (adj) maskinskrevne  
**scribble** (adj) overgrifle  
**palimpsest** (sb) håndskrevet dokument  
**excavate** (vb) udgrave  
**artefact** (sb) artefakt (historisk genstand)  
**Mesolithic** (adj) mesolitisk samfund (den midterste del af stenalderen)  
**excavation** (sb) udgravning  
**term** (sb) semester  
**conjure** (vb) fremmane  
**earnest** (adj) alvorlig  
**postgraduate** (sb) studerende efter kandidateksamen på universitetet  
**casual** (adj) henkastet  
**undergraduate** (sb) studerende, der endnu ikke har fået en kandidatgrad  
**keen** (adj) ivrig  
**waylay** (vb) passe op  
**Lindow Man** (bevaret moselig. Gravet op i 1984.)  
**Boxgrove Man** (fossil af en mand gravet op i 1953)  
**prehistoric** (adj) forhistorisk (fra tiden før skriftlige kilder)  
**grunt** (vb) grynte  
**hunter-gatherer** (sb) jæger-samler  
**enlightened** (adj) oplyst  
**Thought for the Day** (radioudsendelse på BBC 4)  
**unconscious** (sb) ubevidste  
**sardonic** (adj) hånlig

single, overweight woman on my own and I have cats. What's the big deal? And, OK, sometimes I do speak to them but I don't imagine that they answer back and I don't pretend that I'm any more to them than a convenient food dispenser.' Right on cue, Flint, a large ginger Tom, squeezes himself through the cat flap and fixes her with an unblinking, golden stare.

'Does God feature on our Recently Played list or do we sometimes have to press Shuffle?'

Ruth strokes Flint and goes back into the sitting room to put her papers into her rucksack. She winds a red scarf (her only concession to colour: even fat people can buy scarves) round her neck and puts on her anorak. Then she turns out the lights and leaves the cottage.

Ruth's cottage is one in a line of three on the edge of the Saltmarsh. One is occupied by the warden of the bird sanctuary, the other by weekenders who come down in summer, have lots of toxic barbecues and park their 4 x 4 in front of Ruth's view. The road is frequently flooded in spring and autumn and often impassable by midwinter.

'Why don't you live somewhere more convenient?' her colleagues ask. 'There are some lovely properties in King's Lynn, or even Blakeney if you want to be near to nature.' Ruth can't explain, even to herself, how a girl born and brought up in South London can feel such a pull to these inhospitable marshlands, these desolate mudflats, this lonely, unrelenting view. It was research that first brought her to the Saltmarsh but she doesn't know herself what it is that makes her stay, in the face of so much opposition. 'I'm used to it,' is all she says.

'Anyway the cats would hate to move.' And they laugh.

**food dispenser** (sb)  
foderautomat  
**on cue** på kommando  
**ginger** (adj) rødåret  
**flap** (sb) lem

**concession** (sb)  
indrømmelse  
**Saltmarsh** (sb) marsken

**bird sanctuary** (sb)  
fuglereservat  
**toxic** (adj) giftig  
**4 x 4** (sb) firhjulstrækker  
**flooded** (adj)  
oversvømmet  
**impassable** (adj) ufarbar  
**convenient** (adj) bekvem  
**property** (sb) ejendom  
**pull** (sb) sug  
**inhospitable** (adj)  
ugæstfri  
**desolate** (adj) øde  
**mudflat** (sb) mudder-  
banke  
**unrelenting** (adj)  
ubarmhertig  
**in the face of** til trods for  
**opposition** (sb)  
modstand  
**devoted to** (vb) gift med  
**child-substitute** (sb)  
erstatning for et barn

Good old Ruth, devoted to her cats, child-substitutes of course, shame she never got married, she's really very pretty when she smiles.

Today, though, the road is clear, with only the ever present wind blowing a thin line of salt onto her windscreen. She squirts water without noticing it, bumps slowly over the cattle grid and negotiates the twisting road that leads to the village. In summer the trees meet overhead, making this a mysterious green tunnel. But today the trees are mere skeletons, their bare arms stretching up to the sky. Ruth, driving slightly faster than is prudent, passes the four houses and boarded-up pub that constitute the village and takes the turning for King's Lynn. Her first lecture is at ten. She has plenty of time.

Ruth teaches at the University of North Norfolk (UNN is the unprepossessing acronym), a new university just outside King's Lynn. She teaches archaeology, which is a new discipline there, specialising in forensic archaeology, which is newer still. Phil, her head of department, frequently jokes that there is nothing new about archaeology and Ruth always smiles dutifully. It is only a matter of time, she thinks, before Phil gets himself a bumper sticker. 'Archaeologists dig it.' 'You're never too old for an archaeologist.' Her special interest is bones. Why didn't the skeleton go to the ball? Because he had no body to dance with. She has heard them all but she still laughs every time.

Last year her students bought her a life-size cut-out of Bones from Star Trek. He stands at the top of her stairs, terrifying the cats.

On the radio someone is discussing life after death. Why do we feel the need to create a heaven? Is this a sign that there is one or just wishful thinking on a massive scale?

Ruth's parents talk about heaven as if it is very familiar, a kind of cosmic shopping centre where they will know their way around and have free passes

**child-substitute** (sb)  
erstatning for et barn

**present** (adj)  
altidtilstedeværende

**squirt** (vb) her: sprøjte  
sprinklervæske på  
forruden

**cattle grid** (sb) kvægrist

**negotiate** (vb) klare

**overhead** (adj) ovenover

**prudent** (adj) forsvarlig

**boarded-up** (adj)  
tilskodet

**constitute** (vb) udgøre

**turning** (sb) sidevej

**unprepossessing** (adj),  
lidet tiltalende

**acronym** (ab) navn  
bestående af  
forkortelse af  
forbogstaver i en  
forkortelse, fx NATO

**forensic** (adj) kriminal-  
teknisk

**head of department** (sb)  
institutleder

**dutifully** (adv)  
pligtskyldig

**bumper sticker** (sb)  
klistermærke/streamer  
til bilens bagende

**Bones** (sb) fiktiv person

for the park-and-ride, and where Ruth will languish forever in the underground car park. Until she is Born Again, of course. Ruth prefers the Catholic heaven, remembered from student trips to Italy and Spain. Vast cloudy skies, incense and smoke, darkness and



**park-and-ride** (sb) sted, hvor man kan parkere bilen og tage videre med offentlig transport

**languish** (adj) sygne hen

**Born Again** (adj) genfødt via dåben

**vast** (adj) vidtstrakt

**incense** (sb) røgelse

**John Martin** engelsk, maler præget af romantikken, som primært malede bibelske motiver og natur

**the Vatican** (sb) Vatikanstaten i Rom, hvor Paven bor

**Norfolk** (sb) ("amt" i den østlige del af England)

**wryly** (adv) ironisk

**buttery** (adj) smøragtig

**crack** (sb) revne

**concrete** (sb) beton

5

mystery. Ruth likes the Vast: paintings by John Martin, the Vatican, the Norfolk sky. Just as well, she thinks wryly as she negotiates the turn into the university grounds.

10

The university consists of long, low buildings, linked by glass walkways. On grey mornings like this it looks inviting, the buttery light shining out across the myriad car parks, a row of dwarf lamps lighting the way to the Archaeology and Natural Sciences Building. Closer to, it looks less impressive. Though the building is only ten years old, cracks are appearing in the concrete facade, there is graffiti on the walls and a good third of the dwarf lamps don't work. Ruth hardly notices this, however, as she parks in her usual space and hauls out her heavy, rucksack heavy because it is half-full of bones.

15

	Climbing the dank-smelling staircase to her office, she thinks about her first lecture: First Principles in Excavation. Although they are postgraduates, many of her students will have little or no first-hand experience of digs.	<b>dank</b> (adj) fugtig, klam, kold <b>staircase</b> (sb) indvendig trappe <b>dig</b> (sb) udgravning <b>fee</b> (sb) skolepenge
5	Many are from overseas (the university needs the fees) and the frozen East Anglian earth will be quite a culture shock for them. This is why they won't do their first official dig until April.	<b>East Anglian</b> (adj) øst-engelsk <b>approach</b> (vb) nærme sig <b>greying</b> (adj) grånende <b>contained</b> (adj) behersket
10	As she scrabbles for her key card in the corridor, she is aware of two people approaching her. One is Phil, the Head of Department, the other she doesn't recognise. He is tall and dark, with greying hair cut very short and there is something hard about him, something contained and slightly dangerous that makes her think that he can't be a student and certainly not a lecturer. She stands aside to let them pass but, to her surprise, Phil stops in front of her and	<b>ill-concealed</b> (adj) dårligt skjult <b>edge</b> (sb) kant <b>paste</b> (vb) smøre på
15	speaks in a serious voice which nevertheless contains an ill-concealed edge of excitement.	
	'Ruth. There's someone who wants to meet you.'	
20	A student after all, then. Ruth starts to paste a welcoming smile on her face but it is frozen by Phil's next words.	
	'This is Detective Chief Inspector Harry Nelson. He wants to talk to you about a murder.'	
25		