



## Eye Contact

*Fergus McNeill*

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# Eye Contact

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## Eye Contact Fergus McNeill

If you look him in the eye, you're dead. From the outside, Robert Naysmith is a successful businessman, handsome and charming. But for years he's been playing a deadly game. He doesn't choose his victims. Each is selected at random - the first person to make eye contact after he begins 'the game' will not have long to live. Their fate is sealed. When the body of a young woman is found on Severn Beach, Detective Inspector Harland is assigned the case. It's only when he links it to an unsolved murder in Oxford that the police begin to guess at the awful scale of the crimes. But how do you find a killer who strikes without motive?

## Eye Contact Details

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Author : Fergus McNeill

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Genre : Mystery, Crime, European Literature, British Literature, Thriller

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# From Reader Review Eye Contact for online ebook

## Moira Harker says

Read as part of a book club really enjoyed this book. It is fast paced a real page turner.

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## Penny Little says

Liked the story and the ending.

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## Boekverslaafde says

Titel: Oogcontact

Originele titel: Eye Contact

Auteur: Fergus McNeill

Uitgever: De Fontein

Genre: Literaire thriller

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Waardering: 4/5

“Als je hem aankijkt ben jij de volgende

Robert Naysmith is een succesvol zakenman. En hij is een seriemoordenaar. Al jaren speelt hij een ijzingwekkend en dodelijk spel. Hij kiest zijn slachtoffers niet bewust, iedereen zou het kunnen zijn. Zijn spelregels: hij kijkt op zijn horloge, bepaalt een tijdstip en de eerste die hem vanaf dát moment recht aankijkt is zijn volgende slachtoffer. Inspecteur Graham Harland staat voor een raadsel want de reeks moorden vertoont ogenschijnlijk geen enkel onderling verband. Hoe moet hij een moordenaar ontmaskeren die zijn slachtoffers zo willekeurig kiest...”

Fergus McNeill

Fergus McNeill ontwerpt computergames en apps. In de wereld van gaming heeft hij furore gemaakt met onder andere de Discworld game. Oogcontact is zijn eerste thriller.

"Oogcontact maken kan fataal zijn

De klok tikt af, zijn spel begint...

Als je hem aankijkt ben jij de volgende"

Oogcontact bestaat uit drie delen, bevat 53 redelijk korte hoofdstukken en speelt zich af van mei tot en met september.

Het boek is geschreven in wisselend perspectief vanuit hoofdpersonages Robert Naysmith en Graham Harland.

De knappe verschijning Robert Naysmith is op het eerste gezicht een heel normale eind dertiger. Succesvol

zakenman en werkzaam als sales director bij Winterhill.

Niets is echt er minder waar!

Hij houdt er een geheim leven op na en blijkt in werkelijkheid een keiharde seriemoordenaar te zijn.

Naysmith heeft zijn eigen gruwelijke moordspel ontwikkeld. Vanaf het moment dat het spel begint draait alles om het spel en is hij er 24/7 mee bezig.

Het spel heeft hem op de been gehouden en bepaald al zolang zijn leven. Het geeft hem een doel en hij put er kracht en voldoening uit.

De macht over leven en dood: hij had de kracht die te gebruiken, de mogelijkheid die om te zetten in daden, de machtgrenzen te overschrijden en de meest fundamentele menselijke wet te overtreden. En dat allemaal zonder gepakt te worden. De enige regels die voor hem golden waren de regels die hij zichzelf oplegde om het spel uitdagender te maken

Het spel verloopt via een vast ritueel. De macht om te kunnen beslissen over leven en dood geeft hem een onoverwinnelijk en machtig gevoel.

Zijn slachtoffers kiest hij willekeurig, de onwetendheid wie het volgende slachtoffer zal zijn levert een grote spanning op.

"Hij kijkt op zijn horloge, bepaalt een tijdstip en de eerste die hem vanaf dat moment recht aankijkt is zijn volgende slachtoffer

Het kon iedereen zijn, dat was de echte uitdaging. Iedereen!"

Robert wordt geplaagd door dromen uit zijn verleden. Wat is er gebeurd in het verleden wat hem gemaakt heeft tot de krankzinnige psychopaat die hij nu is?

Niemand kent zijn geheim, zelfs zijn zevenentwintig jarige vriendin Kim niet. Kim is de eerste vrouw waar hij echt iets voor voelt, deze gevoelens zijn totaal nieuw voor hem. Hij kan ze niet onderdrukken, zover had hij het nooit willen laten komen.

Wie is toch deze gruwelijke seriemoordenaar en wat zijn zijn drijfveren?

Aan rechercheur Graham Harland en zijn team de taak om deze moordzaken op te lossen.

Maar hebben deze slachtoffers wel iets met elkaar te maken?

Naysmith kenmerkt zich door de souvenirs die hij bij zijn slachtoffers achter laat.

Ook inspecteur Harland worstelt met zijn gevoelens, hij draagt een zwaar verdriet met zich mee.

Alice, de vrouw met wie hij de rest van zijn leven had willen delen, is omgekomen bij een verkeersongeval.

Het valt hem heel zwaar om verder te gaan met zijn leven en staat op het punt van instorten. Om zo min mogelijk te voelen stort hij zich op zijn werk.

Lukt het Graham ondanks zijn privéproblematiek om deze intelligente seriemoordenaar te vinden voor hij nog meer slachtoffers maakt?

Mening

Recent las ik het boek Oogcontact van auteur Fergus McNeill. Vanwege een verhuizing deed ik voor mijn doen extreem lang over dit boek, dit lag niet aan het boek maar aan tijdgebrek. Bedankt Uitgeverij De Fontein voor het versturen van een recensie exemplaar.

Vanaf het moment dat ik over dit boek hoorde, de cover zag en de tekst op de achterkant van het boek las

wist ik, dat boek moet ik lezen!

De cover van Oogcontact is geweldig, past echt perfect bij het verhaal. Ik vind hem zelfs mooier dan de originele cover van Eye Contact en dat gebeurt niet vaak.

En de titel past helemaal bij het verhaal.

Oogcontact is het thrillerdebuut van Fergus McNeill een wat mij betreft geslaagd debuut.

Het is een originele thriller, anders dan anders, in Oogcontact kijk je als lezer door de ogen van een seriemoordenaar. Dit geeft een bijzonder effect. Knap om je als auteur op deze manier in te leven in de hoofdpersoon. Oogcontact bevat een goed kloppend verhaal.

Fergus McNeill heeft een fijne en gedetailleerde schrijfstijl, hij beschrijft de omgeving tot in de puntjes.

Niets of niemand is wat het lijkt, dat blijkt wel weer uit deze thriller!

Kritische noot: ik moet heel eerlijk bekennen dat ik het verhaal afgaande op de cover en de tekst op de achterkant van het boek spannender had verwacht. Maar laat ik daarbij vooral opmerken dat er maar weinig thrillers zijn die mij echt op het puntje van mijn stoel doen belanden van de spanning. De onverwachte wending maakt het verhaal weer een stukje spannender.

Dit neemt overigens niet weg dat ik van het boek genoten heb.

Grappig detail: toen ik net in dit boek begonnen was en boven op bed in een stille kamer aan het lezen was en helemaal opging in het verhaal begon er opeens iemand hier in huis tegen me te praten. Ik schrok me kapot.

Fergus McNeill heeft inmiddels een vervolg op Eye Contact geschreven Knife Edge, dit boek verschijnt eind van de maand. Hopelijk wordt dit boek ook in Nederland uitgebracht, want ik wil graag weten hoe het verhaal verder gaat.

Durf jij nog iemand recht in de ogen aan te kijken na het lezen van dit boek?

Oogcontact, een origineel thrillerdebuut, niets is wat het lijkt, oogcontact is dodelijk, aanrader!

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## Vicky says

**Originally reviewed at: <http://www.booksbiscuitsandtea.co.uk/...>**

*Eye Contact*, Fergus McNeill's debut novel has been on my wishlist ever since I first saw it on the publisher's website. What intrigued me about this story is the fact that there's no motive behind these murders. It's all just a game. And even before I started reading the book, I started wondering: how do you track down someone who has no reason to kill and whose victims have no connection to each other whatsoever? As a huge crime fan I've read many books from the same genre but never have I encountered one where the killer's only motive is the adrenalin rush, that strive for power and I was quite curious to see what would happen next and how the events would unfold. I had really high hopes for this one and I'm glad to say that McNeill didn't disappoint. McNeill's writing, unique plot and his ability to describe what's going on in both the killer's and his hunter's head are equally engaging from the very beginning and I found it very difficult to put this book down.

I loved the way McNeill dealt with narration. A third person narrator tells the story of both the murderer and

the police inspector in a way that the first part of each section tells the killer's side of the events and the second half deals with the investigation process. It's interesting how, even though it's not the killer himself who tells us his side of story, we get to know what goes on in his mind before he decides to strike again and chooses his next victim. While he's a totally ordinary guy with a normal job on the outside, his thoughts are that of a madman. The character I loved the most, however, was the policeman who's working on Naysmith's case – DI Graham Harland. Harland is still trying to come to terms with the loss of his wife and he's quite a lonely, sad and depressed figure. I loved how much he's changed by the end of the story and his relationship with his colleague Mendel and I hope it's not the last we see of the two of them.

When I first saw this book I thought it would be a lot bloodier and more cruel than it actually is which was definitely a pleasant surprise. McNeill doesn't really go into details about the victims and the forensics' work like many thrillers and mysteries do – it rather focuses on how the police are trying to find a motive behind all this and find a link between these murders. Don't get me wrong, it's terrifying all the same. I had nightmares of being followed for two days straight after reading it and I'm not likely to forget this story anytime soon. But if you're looking for the next Hercule Poirot, this one's not for you. There's no snooping around examining the scene of the crime, questioning suspects and witnesses and collecting evidence – that's the point: there are no witnesses and there is no evidence. Naysmith is an incredibly clever and thorough guy whose attacks are carefully planned beforehand. He makes sure that there will be no witnesses and he doesn't leave anything behind, not even a footprint. Which makes this book all the better: you just want to know how the police would find someone who's as guarded as he is or what would be his downfall.

McNeill keeps you in the dark until the very end and you've no idea what's about to happen. Even thirty or forty pages before the end you just don't know if it's ever going to end or if Rob Naysmith is going to get away with it. I loved this book from start to finish and I would definitely recommend it for anyone who likes suspense and mysteries. *Eye Contact* will keep you on the edge of your seat all along and keep you guessing till the very end. It's a heart-pounding debut novel you don't want to miss!

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### **Cliff says**

A new fictional detective arrives. A DI with his demons - in the case coming to terms with the death of his wife in a car accident some years before the start of this book. He doesn't really get on with the Superintendent in charge of his station. He also has problems with one of his sergeants who is always, it seems, seeking to get one over on our hero. Whether there is more to it than that may be revealed in future books, if the writer proposes to make a series. The story here concerns a serial killer who picks his victims at random in 'the game'. We follow him in detail through three such. The ending twists and turns in a rather unexpected way. Fergus McNeill is to be congratulated on making his way into a very crowded field. It will be interesting to see how he progresses

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### **Elise Edmonds says**

I bought this book because I live in one of the areas described and was interested to see what happened. The idea behind the man who kills victims at random based on eye contact had a lot of potential. the detective in charge of the case also has a heavy private life, dealing with the death of his wife.

Overall it was an enjoyable read, but I felt the pace of the middle was slow and the ending not wholly

satisfactory.

I'd consider reading another in the series to see how it progresses.

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### **MisterHobgoblin says**

Every now and then, I like to read a bit of trash. At their best, serial killer thrillers can be really good fun - pacy, exciting, suspenseful as well as offering a social commentary on our times. Eye Contact does not tick any of these boxes.

We know the killer. He's called Robert Naysmith, a travelling business rep whose performance targets are so lax that for every day spent chasing contracts, he can spend a fortnight chasing a murder victim, plotting their demise in forensic detail, and buying a new set of clothes for each hit. The victims are selected by being the first person to look him in the eye after an arbitrarily defined point of time, and he then gives them 24 hours before he comes looking. The victims, needless to say, oblige him by sticking to predictable routines, habitually wandering around outside in the wee small hours, invariably near water, and having some souvenir about their person that can be passed on to the next victim. Naysmith seems to have a stable homelife, access to unlimited cash for hotels and pretty much no backstory. Who knows why he kills?

Then there's the detective. DI Graham Harland. Grieving the loss of his wife, and with a pathological hatred of Sergeant Pope for no adequately explored reason, he finds the key that unlocks the case (yes, it really is a key - boom tish). A couple of quite unlikely discoveries and a couple more miraculous hunches on the way, and he is hot on the trail of Naysmith.

The novel as a whole has issues with pacing - way too much detail planning the bloody murders with field visits to the locations weighing heavily on the narrative. No hole in the hedge is too insignificant to mention. All, presumably, to persuade us that Naysmith is intelligent, meticulous and untraceable. So when he picks a highly traceable souvenir from one of his victims, it sets an alarm screaming - with half a book of predictable denouement to follow.

The story is inexplicable, albeit grindingly easy to predict. The characters are undeveloped, the relationships are cartoonish and the author has a tin-ear for dialogue. The ending is not an ending - just a set-up for the sequel. And the fact that we follow both killer and detective from opposite ends dispels any sense of suspense.

This really is shockingly bad, but so bad it almost becomes good.

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### **Rebecca Bradley says**

This is a very clever novel that manages to drag you in and hold you hostage as Robert Naysmith plays his 'game'. The game being that when he decides to start the clock, the first person who looks him in the eye will be the person he kills. But, that person has 24 hours to live first as Naysmith likes the hunt: to find the person again after 24 hours have passed, with the person being hunted completely unknowing.

Naysmith is a clever articulate man. He holds down a whole other life: a great job and a home with a beautiful partner whom McNeill manages to show you the intricacies of Naysmith's emotional checks and

balances as he maintains this relationship and how this itself plays out.

There's also Detective Inspector Harland who is struggling with his own loss while hunting Naysmith. And though there are chapters with Harland in them and the police in general making an attempt to capture this killer, this is not a police procedural by any means. In fact the police aspect takes a back seat most of the time.

The whole book is hypnotising. It's the only way I can describe it. I had to keep turning the pages because the language used and human frailty captured was just riveting. I'm definitely looking forward to reading the next novel by McNeill.

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### **Sandra says**

I ordered this from Amazon back in January and can only assume I must have read a review which piqued my interest. And interesting this was - I can't remember reading a story in which so much time is spent in the perpetrator's head. And I liked the flimsiness of the mistake which brought him to ... well ... I'm not going to spoil it. Harland, damaged as seems to be necessary in a DI, has enough of interest and it is to be hoped he'll grow along with the next books in the series.

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### **William says**

The character of the serial killer and his approach to the "game" that was his killing ritual, I thought, was well presented. The bickering in the police department was not as believable. Overall, the story was good, not overly compelling, but a reasonably entertaining read. I thought the ending could have been managed a little better. It came rather suddenly. 3.8/5.

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### **Geraldine says**

I gave it a fair shot, but 2/3 of the way through I thought 'why am I bothering'.

A book that deludes you into thinking that it's reasonably good, until you actually stop and think about it.

Two main protagonists, one the serial killer and one the DI, with a troubled personal life.

We have pages and pages of their inner dialogue, which reveals both of them to be dull men with an entirely narrative outlook on life. No insights, no analysis, no reflection. In fact the entire book (or two thirds of it that I read) is dense, dull prose that does little to set scene or describe character. The pace is so slow, and when there is action, it's barely described at all. Endless lines about routes driven, about...oh I really can't be bothered, it's so drab and dreary.

The serial killer is presumably a sociopath, although one has to infer this. His MO is bizarre and his motive is banal. You just sit there and think "Why?" But not 'why is this character, whom I feel I know inside inside out, is killing random strangers' but 'why did the author think there was anything compelling about this?'



The author has a narrow blinkered view of the world. Perfunctory descriptions of physical spaces. Absence of any feeling (emotional or physical) in the main protagonists. A world populated only by white, straight able bodied middle aged men - apart from one 'effeminate' receptionist (who uses that word nowadays!) - and women (also straight white able bodied younger than middle aged) who exists only as passive victims or objects to be gazed upon by straight white middle aged middle class able bodied men, without any agency, thought, feeling, autonomy or personality.

The book was written with one eye on TV serialisation in the 1980s. But it's not the 1980s and this book is clichéd and passé.

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### **Elaine Tomasso says**

I admit that I didn't read the blurb before buying this book. I saw DI Harland and plenty of stars so I assumed it would be a well written police procedural and in a way it is but it is much more than that. There are two main protagonists, Rob Naysmith, a somethingpathic serial killer, and DI Graham Harland, a detective struggling to come to terms with the death of his wife.

The novel starts with Rob Naysmith selecting a victim and ramping up to the kill. He is a seriously scary individual as his victim is the first person to make eye contact with him after he sets an arbitrary time. The fun for him is tracing the victim, setting up the crime scene and the power of death and he sets rules for himself so that it doesn't get too easy. Once he kills his victim the narrative switches to the police investigation which doesn't get very far because finding a needle in a haystack is probably easier than finding a forensically aware thrill killer but DI Harland and his team manage to link their murder to others across the country and the hunt is on.

I normally don't like novels where the murderer is obvious from the start as I prefer a big reveal at the end but Eye Contact had me riveted to my Kindle from the first to last page and I read it in two sittings. Rob Naysmith is a creepy but fascinating character. Outwardly "normal" with a successful career and a loving partner he likes a challenge but unfortunately for the rest of the population his chosen challenge of murder is a bit more dangerous than the extreme sports most people would pick as a challenge. I think Mr McNeill has done a tremendous job in his portrayal of Rob Naysmith, especially his casual callousness. I wasn't just so keen on Graham Harland. I got a bit fed up with all his grieving and think it would make a better novel if his actions implied much of it rather than having it spelt out at every turn. I liked the sense of frustration and helplessness that pervades the investigation, very unusual in fiction but realistic I imagine.

I think Eye Contact is an amazing read. It has an original take on the serial killer genre and is extremely well plotted and written with great characters and is well worth your time and money.

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### **Rachel Hall says**

On the basis of the seductively original premise which promises a deadly cat and mouse pursuit of a ruthless serial killer without a motive by a grief-stricken detective who obsessively follows his trail, I should have enjoyed Eye Contact immensely. Disappointingly, the woeful execution does the synopsis a disservice and I struggled to wade through the interminably mundane prose, the lacklustre pace and two lead characters who are extraordinary underdeveloped.

Robert Naysmith, a successful, confident and well groomed sales director in his late thirties is in Bristol on business when he is presented with the opportunity to continue a lethal game of life or death which has left a

trail of unsolved murders in his wake. His cover is his charismatic personality and to all intents and purposes ability to successfully function in his everyday life. Why he does so is never explored in any depth, but occasional lapses into dream sequences hint at an unhappy childhood, so I presume that is supposed to be the implied trigger. Unfortunately I am still none the wiser about the drivers behind his killing spree, however I presume they are thrill killings, defined as premeditated murder that is motivated by the sheer excitement of the act. Naysmith's introduction of a random factor in selecting his chosen targets is wonderfully original, with his quarry being the first unlucky soul that makes eye contact with him once the game is 'in play'. From that moment on the clock starts ticking with a twenty-four hour head start for the target and a chance to disappear keeping Naysmith on his toes. His first victim is a young female jogger and his preparation, stressing the importance of patience and details is endlessly observed by McNeill, as befitting a sociopathic serial killer. When the victim's body is discovered on the Severn Beach and the case is assigned to D.I. Graham Harland operating out of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, the excitement and promise of something to occupy his lonely hours sends a shiver down his spine. The victim is Vicky Sutherland and the cause of her death is asphyxiation with the killer's gloved hand introducing a clear sign of premeditation. A lack of forensics leaves an absence of leads and the exposure of the body to the motion of the tides is another headache muddying the findings. In her possession are three keys attached to a keyring, two of which are obviously for her front door but the third one, which holds a decent thumbprint, goes unidentified. When the thumbprint is analysed it is discovered to belong to a man that she has no connection with and who himself was discovered dead four months ago, in a similar waterside location. And so begins the start of a sinister pattern of murders connected only by their apparent randomness and the deliberate placement of a 'souvenir' taken from the previous victim and left on the following victim signalling the work of the perpetrator.

As the series moves on and the impetus to investigate is handed to the appropriate investigating force in the region where the next body is discovered, the refusal of D.I. Graham Harland to pass on the baton and focus on other investigations seems obsessive. But how can he expect a killer who strikes at random to ever be caught when the usual 'tells' involving behavioural patterns and irrational hatred of a sector of society are so absent? With the 'souvenir' theory meaning that by the time the next body is discovered the police are already behind the curve and playing catch-up, and hence the frustrating investigation leads to tempers fraying. The portrayal of the investigating officers at Avon and Somerset Constabulary reads like a checklist of requirements for a stereotypical crime novel, from damaged and mourning D.I. Graham Harland struggling to find a reason to move on the wake of his wife's death a year ago and prone to the frequent bout of "red mist". His political superior, Superintendent Alasdair Blake, is keen on pep talks but seemingly blinkered to the difficulties that the unique investigation faces, with the sarcastic DS Pope who seems determined to wind Harland up through to DS James Mendel's unwavering support alongside. This forgettable cast brings little to the story and it seemed like a means of creating the tension as the pressure to deliver a result escalates.

I found the structure of this novel a little strange and I confess that it did nothing to enhance my enjoyment. The narrative switches back and forth from the viewpoint of the perpetrator to that of the lead detective but in contrast to the usual formula of alternate chapters which injects pace and tempt the reader into 'just one more chapter', McNeill strangely opts for recounting the snail's pace build up, scoping of locations and eventual killing by Naysmith before moving to D.I. Graham Harland. Located around the South-West of England, there is plenty of descriptive prose featuring walks through the countryside and along the course of the river but McNeill would do well to understand that the hint of intrigue is often superior to overly elaborate descriptions which make it hard to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Eye Contact is however, a coherent if rather run of the mill serial killer novel, but achingly devoid of suspense and with pages of inane waffle as the killer scopes his new targets and locations, it drags along all feeling fairly lacklustre. The initial premise with the head-start given to the chosen target and the forfeit undertaken for a selection that is he cannot pursue, in this case a child, added intrigue but I was never

convinced by Robert Naysmith, despite his controlling of lover, Kim. A failure to even offer a backstory leaves Eye Contact devoid of the usual insight into a sociopathic serial killers journey through the course of his life so far and I found it impossible to connect with the portrayal. In fact, Robert Naysmith wouldn't even need to make eye contact with me before I succumbed as the man could quickly bore me into submission! I would struggle to wholeheartedly recommend Eye Contact and for me it does not meet the criteria necessary for a thriller. The denouement goes right down to the wire and readers wishing to see how Eye Contact ends will need to be patient!

Eye Contact was a curious read, lacking the vibrancy and gusto which makes for a page-turning novel and with a wallowing lead detective, this is my first and last encounter with D.I. Graham Harland and Fergus McNeill. The lack of characterisation or exploration of the serial killers behaviour was my biggest struggle with this novel and the snail pace narration made this a book feel like a chore to persevere with. In the right hands I still think the premise has much to offer but a good editor to cut the unnecessary repetition is a must.

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### **Sarah says**

Pretty good. I didn't know there was more (which no library around me has) so I didn't see that ending coming. But really interesting.

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### **Jayne Charles says**

The back cover poses the question "how do you find a killer who strikes without motive", and indeed that was an interesting question. Most fictional killers seem to have some motive or pattern to their actions which makes the job of the police that much easier. It did get me thinking that this very much the meat in the sandwich of the police procedural, whereas in this case we were just waiting for the perpetrator to make a mistake.

It wasn't that it was badly written - in fact it was very well written. And I thought the depiction of the killer, with his adherence to rules he imposes on himself, was very effective and very clever. As a slightly aspergic rules-based person myself, I did kind of identify with that, which was chilling in itself as I don't intend to go around murdering people.

The problem for me was the lack of narrative drive from the police's point of view - they weren't going to dig up clues, they weren't going to find people with a grudge against the victims, they were just going to have to wait for the killer to slip up or strike again. And the end was curious - could it be this author is setting up a series of books not just about a single cop but a single killer too?

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