



## Killing the Beasts

*Chris Simms*

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## **Killing the Beasts** Chris Simms

Manchester, 2002. The Commonwealth Games are coming to town and the city is alive with possibilities. Caught up in the commercial feeding frenzy is Tom Benwell, account manager at an advertising firm. The pressure is getting to Tom – too many deals to make and lies to tell, and the passion for his job is waning. Meanwhile his friend, DI Jon Spicer, is on the fast track, showing a commitment to the job that borders on obsession, or so his girlfriend Alice tells him.

Then, in the aftermath of the Games, a series of brutal killings shatters the city's new found spirit. Jon Spicer gets the case. Each victim has been murdered in the same bizarre and grotesque manner, yet the lack of motive leaves the police utterly baffled.

With the race on to catch the killer, both men find themselves caught up in a nightmare where the most innocent action can cost the highest price. In this nail-biting crime thriller, Chris Simms draws us into the shadows that lurk behind the city's shiny new exterior, then plunges us into the mind of a madman.

## **Killing the Beasts Details**

Date : Published July 21st 2014 by Richmond ePublishing (first published 2005)

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Author : Chris Simms

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## **From Reader Review Killing the Beasts for online ebook**

### **Michael Nethery says**

This is the first book of the DI Spicer series. I want to read more!  
A superbly crafted roller coaster of twists and turn at break neck speed. Just amazing.  
Others have said it, and I will add to the pile who have, this is a must read.  
Now excuse me I am going to get book 2

Thank you Mr. Simms, this was excellent

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### **Karena Marie says**

WOW!! Brilliant!

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### **Lacey says**

Good detective thriller. I really liked reading the internal thoughts of someone descending into schizophrenia. Truely terrifying stuff. The end wasn't a complete surprise and there were enough other side stories that I wasn't completely certain who the murderer was until the very end. Definitely reading the next one.

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### **Donna Maroulis says**

Didn't guess the killer until the last bit of the book -- I like that .

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### **Sandra says**

Having read and enjoyed 'Cut adrift' I expected more of this. In mitigation this was written five years earlier and Chris Simms has in that time learnt much and polished his craft. No doubt the extraneous detail was cut, and certainly the plot did not have so much hanging on it nor play out so ... unsatisfactorily.

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### **Lukasz Pruski says**

I find it quite boring to read a book that ends up being close to what I expected it to be (that's why I generally don't like book series) so when an author manages to surprise me, I tend to value it a lot. Chris Simms totally astounded me with his novel "Killing the Beasts". My rating is very high mainly because of the surprise factor, actually, because of three surprise factors.

First of all, the structure of the book is delightfully unusual. There are two threads: one is quite a standard police procedural (DI Jon Spicer searches for a serial killer who has a weird and distinctive modus operandi in murders of women). The other thread does not have much of a crime component; it is about tribulations of Jon's friend, Tom, who is in the building wrap business and struggles to cope with much increased demand for his services before the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, UK. In fact, the "non-criminal" thread tends to dominate a large portion of the novel. Of course, an experienced reader knows that the threads will somehow merge at the end. And they do, but in an utterly unexpected (at least to me) way.

The novel undergoes quite a drastic metamorphosis toward its end. It is no longer what it seemed to be in the earlier parts. And I found the sudden switch of premise even more delightful. Sort of like an operatic aria capping a mundane techno music performance.

The third surprise cannot be divulged without spoiling the "mystery". I can only say that it involves quite a common every day item, and that it, in a sense, illustrates the foreshadowing aspect of the "Chekhov's gun principle". The item appears quite early in the novel, then its appearances proliferate in a mystifying way, and finally it plays an absolutely essential role in the denouement.

If not for the various surprises, "Killing the Beasts" would be a mediocre novel. I had quite a hard time focusing on the boring non-criminal thread involving Tom and his wife. The various surprises made the early pain worth bearing.

Four stars.

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### **Shell Shearer Swinscoe says**

fantastic gripping story...so did not see that fabulous ending coming!!!

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### **Mikeh5972 says**

I found the plot engaging and it certainly kept me guessing until the various threads of the story were brought together. I will certainly look out for more Chris Simms novels.

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### **Melody says**

nice read... follow along as character slips the cheese off his cracker!

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### **Sally the Salamander says**

I think a big thing that influenced how much I enjoyed this book was the fact that I didn't realize the two plot threads were occurring at different periods of time until honestly over 2/3 of the way through the book. After that, things made a little more sense.

However, even with that cleared up, I had some gripes with the book.

- I didn't particularly like any of the characters. None of them really stuck out to me as good people. Some would say that this is realistic. I would argue that there are plenty of decent people in the world. It's hard for me to like a book if I can't root for or support anyone. I felt kind of ambivalent about the two main characters, Tom and Jon. At times I could genuinely sympathize with them and at times they were d-bags. Again, some would say that's realism. I would say that's big chunks of the book when I didn't give a rip what happened to them. You can have flawed characters without them being unlikable.

ex. a character we're supposed to like drinking when she knows she's pregnant

- Things took a long time to get going. This wasn't a huge issue since things picked up before it got unbearable, but I would have liked things to move along a little faster.

- Tom's decline just seemed a little off to me. He just went from 0 to 60 extremely fast in my opinion. I think the circumstances were right, but I also think that things like that take some time to develop and don't just pop up all of a sudden. Also the whole Masters thing felt like a huge stretch to me. Idk maybe it's because I was never super sucked into the book.

- THE FORMATTING. I was reading a Kindle version, so maybe there was some formatting error or something. But good gravy. Instead of characters talking like this:

"What's for breakfast?" Sarah asked Tom.

"Just toast," he replied.

"Ugh."

It was like this:

'What's for breakfast?' Sarah asked Tom. 'Just toast,' he replied. 'Ugh.'

It was incredibly annoying. Several times I got confused about who was saying what. And what happened to putting double quotation marks around speech?

Ultimately I just think that this book wasn't my thing. However, I think I would have liked it more if it's formatting wasn't so bleeding awful and if the plot had moved along a little more.

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### **Shannon says**

I found this book while looking for new authors. So often when looking for something new you find something not so good. That was not the case with this book. The plot was very original, which I won't give away as that would definitely ruin this book. There were many twists and turns I didn't see coming that kept me reading late into the night to see what would happen next. The characters are real and believable. You find yourself attached to the characters and hoping they find their way.

This is the first book in a series and I will definitely be reading the next one.

A great read that I would recommend to others.

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## **Khushboo Wadhwa says**

Great read. Well written. Very captivating. Two different timelines makes it even more interesting.

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## **Godzilla says**

My second Chris Simms book, read out of order, as is my terrible habit.

This one is set around the time of the Commonwealth Games in Manchester, in 2002, a time and place I am very familiar with. He evokes the atmosphere and locations really well.

The timeline of the book is different: it jumps between time periods, which helps to paint a more vivid picture of the characters and the events which overtake them.

The story rolls along at a good pace, the characters are involving and the timeline jumps tie up the plot nicely. One or two elements felt a little forced, but that didn't detract from the book overall.

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## **Stephen Clynes says**

Follow DI Jon Spicer in this crime thriller set around Manchester. People are very busy in Manchester with the opening of the XVII Commonwealth Games in 2002, when a body is discovered.

Okay, this story is set in 2002 but do not let that put you off. People remain the same, the world over and what we have here is a gritty urban drama. This story is not dated, although you should ignore all the smoking in enclosed public spaces, which is now thankfully illegal.

This is a lovely balanced story, it is not purely a police procedural tale. Character development is great with a lovely diverse range of people. The plot is very good and the pace at which this story unfolds is spot on. It was a pleasure to read and DI Jon Spicer is a very likeable chap who does enjoy a pint in a pub giving you a wish to join him for a night out.

Crime thrillers are a crowded market but Chris Simms offers more in his books. You get the regular crime and its detection but also lots of local colour and a social life among the characters. Chris details how Manchester was re-generated in the run up to the Commonwealth Games and how the ugly parts of the city were covered up. He gives the reader the impression they were living there at the time. This novel has a very British feel to it and I like how it is set in the real Manchester rather than a fictitious city. There is also lots of social commentary spread throughout this story and I particularly liked the focus on consumerism and all forms of litter.

Chris has done a lot of research for his novel and this is explained at the end of the book in a section entitled "The ideas behind the story". I got an awful lot from reading this book, pleasure, a method of killing I had not come across before, the importance of the number 7 through history and a shiver whenever I walk past a branch of B&Q. Killing the Beasts is a great book that I am very happy to vote the top score of 5 stars. This book stands the test of time just like a beer Jon was offered in the novel called Summer Lightning, which is not brewed in Manchester but in Downton near Salisbury, an old favourite of mine and a winner of many

real ale awards over the years.

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## **Paul Curd says**

Detective Inspector Jon Spicer is working on Operation Fisherman, investigating a gang of car thieves, when he responds to a call for help from a Community Support Officer. A woman has been murdered and, because there is a prologue, we already know pretty much how, but we don't know why. And, despite the prologue, we don't know whodunit. As the first detective on the scene, Spicer (or 'Jon', as Simms prefers to call his leading man) is made Senior Investigating Officer – it seems a straightforward enough case. So far, so bog standard you might think.

But when Jon gets home at the end of the day, things begin to take a turn for the slightly different. Jon is not an embittered alcoholic loner but a happily almost-married man. Instead of lighting up a cigarette, he chews a stick of gum. Instead of unscrewing the whisky bottle, Jon goes out for an after-work run with his pet boxer. He is career minded, but slightly concerned about being tied down by marriage and by the looming prospect of parenthood. It's Ian Rankin crossed with Nick Hornby.

Over supper, Jon's partner Alice tells him some gossip about his friend Tom Benwell, whom he used to play rugby with (it was Tom who gave up; Jon still plays). Alice has heard that Tom's wife has walked out on him after he lost his job. By all accounts, Tom has become a complete wreck.

The novel then follows Jon's investigation of the murders (for the first is rapidly followed by several more killings of young single women) in parallel to a series of extremely well-handled flashbacks showing why Tom lost his job and his wife, and cataloguing Tom's slow but terrible descent into psychotic mental illness.

Killing the Beasts is the first of the Jon Spicer series of novels. It is set in Manchester at the time of the 2002 Commonwealth Games, and this is significant. Simms has created a great sense of place, but he has also shown how the glitz of the Games impacted on the city of Manchester and, especially, on Tom Benwell. Simms uses the metaphor of fireworks – the sudden shooting up to great heights, the spectacular display, the fall of the burnt-out case.

I have to say I found the female characters too thinly drawn in an otherwise excellent novel. The men are complex, fully-rounded characters. All the women, on the other hand, are little more than victims or potential victims. The only almost-exception is Nikki the Crime Scene Manager who, despite making only brief appearances, seems less of a simple cipher than the rest of her sex. The flirty relationship between her and Jon is expertly handled and deftly introduces another narrative question – will they or won't they take the flirting one step further?

I really enjoyed this book. I loved the main (male) characters. I loved the way Manchester was almost a character in its own right. I loved the depth to the story, and admired the skilful way Simm described the onset and development of Tom's illness. I enjoyed the way the author laid his false trails and red herrings. This is a book that works as an intricately plotted whodunit (the clues are all there) but also as a psychological mystery. And there's a breathless climax, too.

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