



Death Wore White

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At 8.15 p.m. Harvey Ellis was dead - viciously stabbed at the wheel of his truck.

And his killer has achieved the impossible: striking without being seen, and without leaving a single footprint in the snow . . .

For DI Peter Shaw and DS George Valentine it's only the start of an infuriating investigation. The crime scene is melting, the murderer has vanished, the witnesses are dropping like flies. And the body count is on the rise . . .

Death Wore White Details

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Author : Jim Kelly

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From Reader Review Death Wore White for online ebook

Carolyn says

Rather contrived and stuffed with plot twists just for the sake of it. Not especially well-written, with rather bizarre metaphors, and the characters were rather one-dimensional. Perhaps the creation of detectives of the complexity and depth of Wallander, Rebus and above all, Erlendur has spoiled my appreciation of anything less. I found Shaw decidedly shallow and poorly drawn.

Marilyn F says

Might have given a 3.5 or 3.75 if I could ... I did think it was a good mystery, even if it lost me there once or twice, lol, and the characters were fairly interesting. And set in the cold so probably a good one for when you're laying hot on the beach.

Arwen56 says

Comincio a pensare che se non ci fossi io ad abbassare la media delle stellette, su Goodreads tutti i libri sarebbero da 10 e lode. :-D

Persino questo “giallo” che propone paragoni di questo tenore:

La neve cadeva a Burnham Market come tante vecchie banconote candide da cinque sterline

Avrei anche potuto capire il contrario, ossia che una manciata di banconote lanciata da un balcone ricordasse la neve. Ma che la neve faccia venire in mente le banconote, mi pare un'idea che sarebbe potuta venire solo a Paperon de' Paperoni.

E non demorde il signor Kelly, perché più avanti aggiunge anche:

Il contenuto cominciò a espandersi, come un film al rallentatore di un'orchidea che si apre. Rosso, oro e porpora. Foglie che si srotolavano. Shaw ne prese una e la tenne sospesa contro la luce. Una banconota da cinquanta sterline. Capovolve il barattolo e, facendo leva, tirò fuori varie mazzette che cominciarono a distendersi sul letto sporco come tanti fiori esotici.

Prima la neve e poi i fiori esotici ... sì, decisamente deve avere una parentela stretta con Paperon de' Paperoni.

E non è che si riscatti neppure quando si distrae un attimo dal pensiero dei soldi:

... giaceva nella vasca, le membra contorte in un intrico agonizzante.

Ma se il soggetto in questione è morto stecchito da un pezzo, come fa a essere “agonizzante”? Giusto per bontà d'animo sorvolo sul fatto che:

L'acqua del mare era stagnante come il mercurio.

Vabbè, soprassediamo sullo stile, che non è il massimo neanche per un romanzo poliziesco, e passiamo alla trama. Per buona parte del narrato, il ritmo è di una lentezza esasperante. In compenso, però, acquisiamo una notevole e utilissima conoscenza sui diversi tipi di tosse che affliggono il compagno di squadra dell'ispettore Shaw, George Valentine. Tosse secca, tosse catarrosa, tosse che scuote le spalle, per non parlare dei diversi e inquietanti sibili che escono dai suoi polmoni di inveterato fumatore.

Poi, improvvisamente, l'autore si riscuote. Probabilmente la moglie deve avergli tirato una gomitata della madonna in un fianco per non farlo abbioccare, perché comincia a snocciolare via nomi, situazioni, fatti, cause e concause, assassinî recenti e passati, motivazioni possibili o probabili, alibi e contro alibi. E il lettore, che a quel punto era ormai anche lui ridotto in stato di semi catalessi, senza ricordarsi più una mazza di chi fosse questo o di chi fosse quello e di dove si trovassero e a che ora, prende tutto per buono e si dichiara d'accordo su qualunque cosa, purché la si faccia finita una buona volta, perdio!

Ma il signor Kelly non la fa finita. E no. Il signor Kelly, ormai completamente sveglio e pimpante, ci schiaffa lì un ultimo fatterello cruento, per cui, se si vuol sapere come andrà a finire, bisognerà acquistare il prossimo romanzo e magari anche quelli successivi.

Per quel che mi riguarda, mi tengo la curiosità. Anzi, farò di più. Decido io, d'ufficio, che il responsabile verrà trovato, processato, giudicato colpevole, messo in galera, la chiave della cella gettata in mare e così *et voilà*:

Carol says

At 5.15 p.m. Harvey Ellis was trapped - stranded in a line of eight cars by a blizzard on a Norfolk coast road. At 8.15 p.m. Harvey Ellis was dead - viciously stabbed at the wheel of his truck. And his killer has achieved the impossible: striking without being seen, and without leaving a single footprint in the snow . . . For DI Peter Shaw and DS George Valentine it's only the start of an infuriating investigation. The crime scene is melting, the murderer has vanished, the witnesses are dropping like flies. And the body count is on the rise.

This is the first novel in this series so I forgave it for being rather slow and having a improbable plot boarding on down right kooky. The characters of Shaw and Valentine are really good and they make a good team. The crusty old vet under the supervision of the young Chief Inspector who has a talent for forensics and in dealing with suspects are actually what carried this novel off and earned it the 3.5 stars. Like all of Jim Kelly's novels that I have read... this one also is very repetitive. It's almost like he has forgotten that he's mentioned this piece of evidence or advise at least five times already. I loved the idea of the plot. It was almost like a closed-door mystery. There was seemingly no way it could have happened but yet it did kind of thing.

Eric_W says

I know that I am no judge of what constitutes good writing, but this book is filled with evocative images. For

example, as the inspectors regarded a beach following a snowstorm where a man had been found dead, "sometimes a seagull wheeled, ripping a tiny white tear in the monochrome canvas." Or, "Crews disembarked, pencil-gray outlines working in a bank of falling snowflakes, bristling with rakes and buckets and forks."

As Stephen points out, this is a form of "locked room" mystery. "There's a passenger in the murder victim's vehicle, but she's gone. There's an apple in the murder victim's vehicle, but it's not his. The corpse on the beach is involved in some form of illegal trade in wildlife, and that's gone too. It wasn't a simple inquiry to begin with." A fresh fallen snow, but no footprints. The man who last spoke to the victim suffers a heart attack. And what's with the used spark plugs found in the victim's car? And was there a connection between the people caught behind the victim's car in the blizzard? See Stephen's nice review for a more complete plot summary. Ripping good yarn.

Stephen says

This is a wonderful locked room mystery, except it's not in a locked room at all. When reviewing a mystery one has to be very careful to not give away too much, which is easy to do with a book like this.

The two detectives are a study in contrasts. Peter Shaw is young, by the book, and forensics orientated. George Valentine is older, a smoker with some serious lung issues, and was the partner of Peter Shaw's late father. The problem is, Peter Shaw's father and Valentine were of the school of find the man then fit the evidence. In their last case it blew up in their face, Shaw's father retired, and Valentine was knocked down a grade and sent to the Norfolk coast. Not a plum pick of a job. In their working relationship, Peter Shaw is Valentine's boss. Tensions? Yes, but it doesn't get in the way of the police work. All of this is important, so remember it for later.

The mystery, which I have lifted from the inside flap of the book. *On a frigid winter night, Harvey Ellis is trapped on a coastal road--stranded by a blizzard in a line of either cars. Within a few hours, he is dead, viciously stabbed at the wheel of his truck.* The problem is this, there is only one set of foot prints leading up to his truck, and the lady in the second car saw the man who made those tracks walk up, keep his hands in his pocket and walk back past her to his own car. Therein lies the locked door mystery. How could anyone have gotten up there, killed him, and gotten away without making so much as a single footprint?

Meanwhile Shaw and Valentine are down on the beach trying to catch sight of barrels of toxic waste that are floating up on the beach so they can alert the Coast Guard. While they are doing that a child sized raft floats to shore with a dead adult male in it. It is in the effort to try to find a good cell phone signal (the famous dead spot Verizon says does not exist) that DCI Shaw even notices the line of eight cars, which leads to the discover of above mentioned Harvey Ellis corpse.

I enjoyed this book. The only reason I gave it a four star and not a five was the lack of fully developed characters among the other police involved in the book. The suspects all had some development, and guilty party had enough development, but aside from the two detectives, one character was about as cardboard as the next.

Now I don't want to know every single character, no matter how small a part they have, to be fully developed as in, say, an Elizabeth George novel, but I do want something that makes one police-man seem different from the police-woman two seats over in the briefing room.

Now for the details I asked you to remember about that infamous last case which cost Valentine so much. Young Peter Shaw is interested in that last case, looks over the evidence again, and tries to reopen the case.

This causes some friction between him and Valentine, who has the case file and is ever so reluctant to release it to Peter...but he does. You see, the person who they had fitted up for the child murder that cost them their careers, has a very eerie reappearance at the end of the book as a lawyer defending a juvenile delinquent who inadvertently caused a disturbed man to commit suicide. In other words, I sure looks like that had the right man after all originally, but their lack of "doing it by the book" got the case thrown out of court.

There are a multitude of things going on in this book, none of them pretty, but all of them are compelling. If you like mysteries. You will like *Death Wore White*.

Trish says

The name Jim Kelly sounds American to me, in a way that the Australian name Ned Kelly does not. But author Jim Kelly is British, and he has produced a mystery worthy of a series with *Death wore White*. The descriptions of the two lead investigators on a triple homicide are strong and fully-fleshed, containing those rogue contradictions in character that make the action realistic, and interesting. Other characters are quickly sketched but contain the essence of personality and form. The author uses words the way his youthful Detective Inspector Shaw uses his Forensic Art kit, constructing faces, lives, motives from the heap of choices that surround us.

Death wore White is complicated, and filled with the feints and weaves that a complex set of family relationships can throw at someone observing from the outside. But the coast of Britain in winter, protected by Her Majesty's Finest, is a fine place to observe the insecurities and failures of the most well-meaning, and the unexpected strengths and grace of the least among us. What I liked best, I think, was the ending. The straight up-and-down-by-the-book young DI does something that might seem out of character for him, but not for his partner DS Valentine, nor for his dead and discredited father. So we look forward to the next development in the series.

Jazz says

The blurb on the cover from the NY Times Book Review pulled me in: "Ever since the days of Agatha Christie, the great divide in the British detective story has been between plot and character...which is why the novels of Jim Kelly are something of a find." Add to that -- my favorite -- the impossible crime: Eight cars and their passengers are stranded by a downed tree during a blizzard on a Norfolk coast road. When police arrive, the driver of the lead car is found dead, a chisel in his left eye. How could the killer have committed the murder without being seen by the other stranded motorists, and without leaving a single footprint in the snow? Intriguing first book in the DI Peter Shaw and DS George Valentine series with plenty of plot twists. Characters are well-drawn inside an interesting setting. I got a little impatient toward the end with the secondary plot line, just wanting the main crime explained, so my only criticism is that I thought it could have been a little shorter than 400 pages. Otherwise, a solid four stars for me, and I will certainly follow this series.

Anisa Novaniarti says

The Novel *Death Wore White* (DI Peter Shaw & DS George Valentine - 1) by Jim Kelly. This is the first

series of 5 series. The genre of this novel is crime-detective. In *Death Wore White* we find Peter Shaw and George Valentine as the main characters. The two detectives are a study in contrasts. Peter Shaw is young, by the book, and forensics orientated. George Valentine is older, a smoker with some serious lung issues, Valentine had been the partner of Shaw's disgraced policeman father, stumble on a corpse on an inflatable raft on a Norfolk beach, the pair are stuck in a blizzard, their car one of many vehicles blocked by a fallen tree. During this mishap, someone kills Harvey Ellis, the driver nearest the obstruction, with a chisel blow to the eye and manages to escape without leaving traces in the snow. Other bodies surface after the police extricate themselves from the scene of Ellis's murder. While Shaw and his team try to untangle the lies told them by every witness they encounter, he also tries to redeem his late father's reputation by reopening the child murder case that brought his father down. *Death Wore White* is complicated, and filled with the feints and weaves that a complex set of family relationships can throw at someone observing from the outside. I did enjoy the writing style of *Death Wore White* and the main characters were interesting enough for me to want to read more about them. The book is really a great story, told well, with a couple of interesting central characters, set in a vividly drawn and ever so slightly quirky setting.

Avid Series Reader says

Death Wore White is the first book of the Detective Inspector Peter Shaw and Detective Sergeant George Valentine series by Jim Kelly, set in present-day Norfolk, England. It features an intricate plot with deep characterizations.

Shaw and Valentine are members of (fictitious) West Norfolk Constabulary, extremely awkward in their new partnership. Valentine had been partner to Shaw's deceased father, DCI Jack Shaw, up until their infamous last case, in which their handling of evidence was ruled 'slipshod'. Peter is not entirely sure what happened in that last case, and cannot trust Valentine implicitly, the theme running throughout the book. Although the two detectives grow to respect each other's abilities during the case, the past remains to haunt them (and guarantees more books to follow in the series).

In *Death Wore White*, motorists are diverted one winter evening by detour signs from the highway onto the Siberia Belt, where they are blocked by a tree across the roadway. Sarah, in the second car stopped on Siberia Belt, is frantic to pick up her daughter Jillie from school. The elderly man in the Corsa behind her suffers a heart attack. 8 cars total are stopped on Siberia Belt, among them a delivery from a takeout Chinese restaurant, a security van carrying money, a builder's van, and a teenager driving an expensive sports car.

Detective Inspector Peter Shaw and his partner Detective Sergeant George Valentine are investigating a body in a raft on Ingol Beach, when they notice the stopped cars on Siberia Belt. The driver of the first truck has been murdered. A few days later, a body washes up on Styleman's Middle (beach). Shaw and Valentine believe the deaths are not coincidental, and carefully probe the connections between all the involved parties, while a forensic expert examines all the evidence.

The driver of each stopped vehicle has a backstory that Shaw & Valentine investigate in depth, as well as the nearby tenant farmer. I recommend *Death Wore White* to readers who enjoy police procedurals with a wealth of forensic evidence, a complicated plot, and a large cast of characters. Frequent references to UK-specific terms had me relying on Wikipedia to fully understand the context.

Jyv says

I found the style of writing ponderous. There was some unusual use of words for descriptions that seemed unnecessary (eg "pus-coloured" headlights). I didn't care about any of the characters nor was I really bothered about the outcome. I just wanted to finish it so I could start something hopefully more enjoyable.

Bettie? says

Bettie's Books

Michael says

Det. Inspector Peter Shaw and veteran officer, Det. Sgt. George Valentine are sent to the Norfolk, shore to look for containers of toxic waste that police in England suspect are being dumped in that location. While there, the officers discover a dead body in a raft, washing up against the shore. The weather is terrible and blizzard conditions prevail.

Not far away, someone has placed a sign on the main road that due to flooding, motorists should detour to the coastal road. A tree has been cut and is across that road and eight cars are trapped. In addition, someone has killed the driver of the first car in line, Harvey Ellis.

When Shaw and Valentine get to the scene, what perplexes them is that, although Ellis has been killed in a violent manner, there are no footprints in the snow.

D.I. Shaw followed his father, Jack, into the police department. He is currently the youngest detective inspector on the job. He's teamed with the no nonsense, veteran, George Valentine. What adds possible tension between the partners is that Valentine had been Peter's father's old partner. Twelve years prior, Jack Shaw and Valentine made a mistake with the evidence on a case. The judge was very critical of the manner in which the case was handled, and it ended Shaw's career. Now Peter surprises Valentine asking him to tell him about the case and letting him know that he wants to look into it.

This is a well done novel a variation of the locked door mystery. The author's literary style was a pleasure to read and Shaw and Valentine are a fine team, the crusty old vet, under the supervision of the young Chief Inspector, who has a talent for forensics and in dealing with suspects.

My dilemma was that I wanted to find out how the story came out but the book was so fine, I didn't want it to end.

Kathy says

Slow reading. Starred reviews for this author from Booklist, Publishers Weekly and Kirkus. Perhaps only Kirkus for this book. Police procedural - interesting enough main character, Peter Shaw, but very convoluted plot of murder on stranded coastal road with lots of characters, subplot of detective and new partner George Valentine, under a cloud involving detective Shaw's father. They unsuccessfully tried to get new info and open the old case; at end Peter will pursue on his own. Guess there's another book coming!

Karen says

There's nothing better than a well-executed version of one of the good old staples of crime fiction - a twist on the locked room scenario.

DEATH WORE WHITE is the first in a new series from CWA Dagger Winner Jim Kelly, an author well known for his ongoing Philip Dryden books. DI Peter Shaw and DS George Valentine are a good pairing - Valentine the older cop, ex-partner of Shaw's father, his career has seen higher points. Shaw, on the other hand, is a rising star, keen to prove himself and to clear his father's, and consequently Valentine's, reputations over the last case they both investigated. Despite what sounds like a pretty predictable scenario (and let's face it - most of everything's been done before), Shaw and Valentine rub along together as you'd expect the old buck and the young upstart to do for a while, eventually coming to a grudging if not quite respect, then at least understanding.

At the heart of DEATH WORE WHITE there's a very complicated plot which unravels for some aspects predictably, and in others unexpectedly. One of the best parts of this particular locked room scenario is that whilst it's obvious that's what the reader is being confronted with, and therefore there must be more to the initial discovery of the scene, the full story is revealed in a way that the reader can draw some conclusions, maybe completely solve the puzzle. The story is, however, incredibly complicated and some readers might find that it stretches credibility somewhat, having said that, personally I had no problem with the interconnectedness of the entire thing.

The book is really a great story, told well, with a couple of interesting central characters, set in a vividly drawn and ever so slightly quirky setting. Kelly knows how to write good, solid entertaining crime fiction - a bit of a puzzle solver, as gruesome as the killing may be, these books aren't particularly confrontational and characters and the settings are a big part of what he does. DEATH WORE WHITE should appeal to fans of the Dryden series, as well as to readers who are new to Jim Kelly's books.
