



Harm Done: An Inspector Wexford Mystery

By Ruth Rendell

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The search for the body commenced. Then the victim walked into town.

Behind the picture-postcard façade of Kingsmarkham lies a community rife with violence, betrayal, and a taste for vengeance. When sixteen-year-old Lizzie Cromwell reappears no one knows where she has been, including Lizzie herself. Inspector Wexford thinks she was with a boyfriend. But the disappearance of a three-year-old girl casts a more ominous light on events. And when the public's outrage turns toward a recently released pederast and another suspect turns up stabbed to death, Wexford must try to unravel the mystery before any more bodies appear, and before a mob of local vigilantes metes out a rough justice to their least favorite suspect. In **Harm Done**, the violence is near at hand, and evil lies just a few doors down the block.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In *Harm Done*, Rendell has added a remarkable strand of acute social commentary to a book that still functions as an utterly compelling piece of detective fiction. In exploring the controversial subject of pedophilia, she takes the mainstay of her work--the problems of modern life--to a level of passion and commitment that gives the book a truly powerful underpinning.

Back in the familiar Sussex town of Kingsmarkham, Rendell's dogged sleuth Wexford is investigating the strange abductions of two young girls: Rachel, a bright middle-class student, and Lizzie, a mentally disabled 16-year-old living with her unsympathetic parents on a grim council estate. When both girls return home, apparently unharmed, Wexford is faced with a curious mystery: what really happened to them? As Wexford begins to uncover the disturbing truth, the dark psychological world that Rendell is so adroit at exploring suddenly comes into focus. And her gift for sharp but concise characterization remains untouched, as in the case of a reluctant witness: "'We don't talk about that sort of thing.' She very nearly but not quite tossed her head." --Barry Forshaw, *Amazon.co.uk*

From Publishers Weekly

In her latest Inspector Wexford mystery (following *Road Rage*), the prolific Rendell shows that, like Wexford, she too is a master of indirection. Like a stout, aging British Columbo, Wexford hides his intuition and keen powers of observation behind a rumpled, grandfatherly facade. Three of the cases that he unravels in this satisfyingly complex work have to do with the abuse of women or children. The crimes range from the ridiculous (a petulant university girl and a mentally challenged girl from a low-income housing project are each kidnapped to do housework and returned for ineptitude) to the monstrous (Wexford and his men must protect a child molester who was released from prison while a rich man tortures his wife in the comfort of his spacious home). Rendell is too realistic a writer to link her crimes together in a sensational way. Instead, each offense galvanizes a slew of colorful characters of all classes who live in the suburban community of Kingsmarkham. Wexford's daughter Sylvia, a strident volunteer for a battered women's shelter, fills in her father on the signs of abuse and abusers, and it is a measure of Rendell's subtle skill that she manages to address a social blight without ever losing track of her plot or flattening her characterizations. Thanks to Rendell's steadfast devotion to what is real over what is mere theory, what comes through in her 47th book is the unique human mystery at the heart of a crime.

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From Library Journal

In this latest Inspector Wexford mystery by the prolific, talented Rendell, two young women go missing successively, are held for several days by an older woman and a young, inarticulate man, and are released. Then the story moves on to the kidnapping of a three-year-old girl at the same time a pedophile has been released from prison; ultimately, two murders are committed. Much of the novel is tied together by the overriding issue of abuseAboth physical and emotional. Nevertheless, despite the reappearance of faces from the earlier cases, the disjointedness between the earlier investigation and the subsequent ones is jarring. Wexford's ruminations are always fascinating, and Rendell has lost none of her writing skill, but the multiple plots don't quite hang together. Still, fans will want this.AFrancine Fialkoff, "Library Journal"

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Charlotte Kuester:

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