



Finders Keepers

Belinda Bauer

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This artfully narrated mystery lures readers into a town with a dark secret.

Finders Keepers, by Belinda Bauer, pits an elusive kidnapper against a close-knit town. This is an engrossing and atmospheric crime thriller with a coming-of-age tale at its core.

In the already troubled town of Shipcott, children are snatched from their families with only an accusatory note of “You don’t love them” left behind. Jonas Holly—a cop on leave after the recent murder of his wife—finds himself drawn into the mystery, even as the locals shift their suspicions onto him. The disappearances mount, and with no clear evidence, the once idyllic town grows ever more claustrophobic. It becomes increasingly clear that the abductor lives and works among them.

The final book in the Exmoor Trilogy, *Finders Keepers* is an accessible and engaging story in its own right. Bauer lovingly crafts the village of Shipcott and its villagers, with special attention given to the children. A slow start allows tension to build, and atmospheric unease slowly sets in as the story reaches a shocking crescendo.

Jonas Holly’s descent into and out of madness plays a large role, but Steven Lamb’s recovery from the previous book steals the show. Steven overcomes trauma without losing his innocence, even while violence once again sets off around him.

Narrator John Sackville’s crisp British accent and sharp command of local dialects heightens the tension of the novel, especially with the inflection he places on certain words and pauses. Subtle jokes pop because of this artful narrative attention, while taut moments tighten even more. Distinct voices and flowing prose complement each other nicely, even within the more violent and gruesome events.

Finders Keepers starts off with a strange abduction and slowly builds to a satisfying, if bittersweet, ending. Flashbacks and subtle explanations lure new readers into the series while unspooling a mystery that will shock extant fans.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May/June 2017)

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