



The Lost

Roberta Kray

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There's no doubt that Ellen Shaw is at the heart of it all. But who is she? Is she simply the stylish, comfortable wife of an older gentleman who dotes on her? Or might she also be the grown-up incarnation of a little girl who disappeared twenty years earlier, setting off a wave of lurid tabloid headlines? *The Lost* is set in contemporary London just before Christmas. Hard-bitten newspaper reporter Len Curzon first encounters the woman he will come to know as Ellen Shaw while visiting a prison inmate. Noticing a resemblance between the woman and the mother of the missing child, Curzon follows her back to her apartment and begins his surveillance. If she turns out to be who he thinks she is, he'll have a big story, one he desperately needs if he is to save his plummeting career.

Early in his pursuit of the mysterious lady, Curzon enlists the aid of his cynical but sympathetic intern, Jessica Vaughan. At the same time, he reveals his suspicions about the woman to former police inspector, Harry Lind. Murder makes a team of the confidants, and investigations soon embroil them not only with the elusive (and increasingly alluring) Ellen Shaw, but also with one of London's most vicious and pervasive crime families.

The author develops her main characters with equal skill and an eye for revealing detail, but Lind emerges as the most complex and intriguing of them all. He is a man wounded in more ways than one. Besides a physical injury, there is the loss of self-respect he suffers as his new job outside the force saddles him with assignments that are either boring or ethically shaky. His live-in girlfriend, Valerie, has walked out on him, and the specter of his disapproving father looms ever present. Little wonder that Lind spends as much time gazing inward as he does looking for clues.

The story plays itself out under gray urban skies and through streets relentlessly pelted by rain and snow, elements that contribute to a gloom too profound even for Christmas festivities to lighten. Ellen Shaw remains an enigma to the end.

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