



Finders Keepers

Belinda Bauer

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At the height of summer a dark shadow falls across Exmoor. Children are being stolen from cars. Each disappearance is marked only by a terse note - a brutal accusation. There are no explanations, no ransom demands... and no hope.

Policeman Jonas Holly faces a precarious journey into the warped mind of the kidnapper if he's to stand any chance of catching him. But - still reeling from a personal tragedy - is Jonas really up to the task?

Because there's at least one person on Exmoor who thinks that, when it comes to being the first line of defence, Jonas Holly may be the *last* man to trust...

Finders Keepers Details

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From Reader Review Finders Keepers for online ebook

Janette Fleming says

"No one in their right mind would choose to go on holiday to Exmoor after reading Belinda Bauer. Six children were buried on the moor in her award-winning debut novel, Blacklands. Eight vulnerable victims met their ends in its follow-up, Darkside. But the curse isn't over yet for the residents of Shipcott, the Somerset village where the author sets her thrillers: now their children are being stolen, taken from cars and replaced with a note: "You don't love her", or him, or them."

From one of my newest fav authors Finders Keepers is the third of the Exmoor based crime series, it can be read as a stand alone but please read the previous as the experience will be so much more rewarding.

Central to all the stories are the characters of Steven Lamb and Jonas Holly and they do require some background as to how their lives become intertwined which you get in the first two books.

Seventeen year old Steven has grown before this reader into a fine young man, decent and likeable, despite or in spite of his horrific experiences at the hands of the author Ms Bauer. In the previous books Steven has acted as bait for a serial child-killer and seen Jonas' wife Lucy die in circumstances which have haunted Steven since.

I love the pastoral crime noirness of the bleakness of the moors and the claustrophobic, gothic feel to the very unlucky town of Shipcott.

But it's not all doom and gloom, every now and then humour breaks through Since the abductions garden shed thefts in the village soars (doubled in fact!) as the police concentrate on more important matters... "prompting one police control-room officer to sigh without irony, 'It's all gone Chicago out there'"

Finders Keepers is everything I want from a crime novel; brilliant characterisation, right down to the most fleeting appearances, taut stories and descriptions like the following:

Under a sky that was already pale Wedgwood, Exmoor had burst into life. Heather that had made the hills look scorched and black through the winter had magically revived and mottled them green. Grass that had been muddy just a month before had become like straw, while the yellow sprays of gorse and broom hid countless birds, betrayed only by their summer songs. Foals tripped along behind sleek mares, and lambs that imagined themselves lost bleated plaintively – a sound that carried for miles on a still day. Buzzards and kestrels looked down on it all – poised to bring sudden death without disturbing the peace.

Paul Bryant says

Can we really believe in the crime and the criminal here? I don't want to spoilerate this review, but the plot is

a fairly big Ask, here. Disbelief has to be suspended from big rusty meathooks (hint hint) dangling from the fleshroom of an abbatoir (nudge).

British crime writers have a major problem that Americans don't – a relative lack of **horrendosity**. In the past decades American horrors have been plentiful but British crims tend to play it low-key. So I was thinking – can a guy get to be *as completely insane* as the perp is in this book? There are a notable British cases – Harold Shipman, an apparently average family doctor living in Manchester, killed between 200 and 500 of his patients over many years, that was fairly spectacular; Steve Wright killed five prostitutes in six weeks in Ipswich in 2006, that was unique; we had the Dunblane massacre, but that was 16 years ago – so these things are few and far between. And thank the heavens above for that. But the British thriller writer tends to give the ridiculous impression that spectacular crime is happening every other month all over the UK because they have to, it's what their chosen genre does, they don't want to bore us with ordinary crime, that's been done.

So they over-egg the British pudding.

When you watch a good sitcom you see a lot of compressed wit, highly mannered unrealistic dialogue contrived for maximum hilarity. When you watch *Watership Down* you don't think I bet this is exactly how rabbits are when our backs are turned (I used to think that, of course, but in my late 20s I met a few rabbits and they clued me in.) So all genre fiction – and of course, all *normal* fiction – compresses and thus distorts; we would hope in the name of greater truth, or greater entertainment. Thrillers do this a LOT whilst at the same time poncing about pretending to be grittily realistic. Liars! I generally don't care for them for that reason. I like the tedious grinding of police procedurals as written by Richard Price.

This is a brutal and frankly nutty story which teeters between the usual thrillerish silliness and reasonable believability. I think the book editor let **three or four Grotesquely Cliched Expressions** through the net, and you can put money on Belinda never winning the Nobel Prize for Pretty Good Writing, but she can crank up the fear and the adrenalin, and she has an excellent command of tone which is where you get the jokes in the right places not the wrong places.

In the denouement you get the cops realising The Truth at the same time as the perp has decided he must perp up a Violent Transformative End to the whole thing, so it's like every thriller since *The Perils of Pauline* (1914) – are they gonna make it In Time? Gag! Ah, time, where are you when we need you.

But hell - I read this book in about 2 days. Cavils aside, it was a blast. If you like gruesome crime stuff, Belinda Bauer will make you cower.

Gary says

The 3rd book in this series by Belinda Bauer. What an excellent series full of really strong characters that come to life through the outstanding narrative. I hope there is more to come from these characters as I have enjoyed these 3 books so much. I plan to read more of her work.

Tanja Berg says

Rating 1.4*. Listened to in Swedish. This isn't the worst book I have read this year and it's not terribly written. I just hated it, from start to finish. There are no interesting characters, the perpetrator is revealed somewhere in the middle and the motive for the crimes is tenuous at best.

Children are being abducted. A note is left where they were saying "you don't love them". And that's all I can think about saying in regards to the plot. I've read some decent books by this author, but I'm starting to lose faith now.

Lynn says

Riveting conclusion to the Exmoor Trilogy. For whatever reason this third book hasn't been published in the U.S. I read a UK paperback from a college library through inter-library loan. Worth the effort for this thriller.....thank you DCL.

Luni says

While it said this was a freestanding novel, the amounts of flasbacks to previous novels made it tiresome and I wished I'd started with them.

Speaking of tiresome, the personalities on the two main cops were as flat as the moor they work on. Most of the female characters served merely as background and a base for the guys' development.

After finishing I mainly feel frustrated, I want to learn more of the truth by reading the other books but the endings are already spoiled.

I read it in swedish and the translations were horrible. Like latenight tv when someone got their teenager to translate it with google translate. At one point a kid wants to get back at his brother, this is also illustrated by destroying something of his. The translation suggest the kid wants to get his brother back as if he had lost him.

Nigel says

8/10

Brilliant. A genuine thriller, scary and exciting. At times funny, at times moving, and at all times very readable. Steven Lamb returns, a little older and a little wiser than the 12yo he was in 'Blacklands', and finds himself having to deal with another killer. This rounds out the Exmoor trilogy, the books that made Belinda Bauer's name. I absolutely loved them, and her! Can't wait for her next book

Sharon Bolton says

"This fresh, brilliant scenery brought with it little pricks of guilt, like pins left in a new shirt."

Children on Exmoor are disappearing from parked vehicles and, 'as if by slick, sick magic' being replaced by a note on the steering wheel. "You don't love him." The town of Shipcott is ill equipped to cope. Not two years previously, a brutal killer killed a number of the residents and was never caught. Now, as the summer burns on, Shipcott starts to feel like a town cursed.

Of all the new crime writers to emerge in recent years, Belinda Bauer has attracted the lion's share of attention. Hardly surprising given her startlingly original plots, her flawless prose, dark humour and enviable gift for characterisation. This is the third book in what could be described as a loosely connected series. It works well as a stand-alone, but to fully appreciate the intricacy of the plotting and characterisation, you should probably read *Darkside* first.

In fact, start with *Blacklands* and read them all. She is an exceptional writer.

Nick Davies says

It is difficult to exactly pin-point what it is about Belinda Bauer's crime novels that I particularly enjoy, but particularly enjoy this novel I did. If forced to try and describe the appeal, it would be something to do with the accuracy and realism with which she portrays the inner thoughts of her characters, human and real and funny without ever resorting to the trivially repetitive introspection that some authors seem to resort to so often.

This novel, the third of a series but a good stand-alone read too, returns to the Exmoor setting of '*Blacklands*' and '*Darkside*', telling the tale of a number of children going missing from vehicles when left alone. It's powerful stuff, so compelling that five hundred pages shot by in double quick reading time. Two of the main characters from the preceding novels are returned to in detail and I thought both the plot and the characterisation were spot on, and the writing was witty and touching without ever feeling too wordy or too simplistic. Excellent.

Fred Shaw says

How long does it take for a child to go missing? The time it takes to go inside the quick-mart to get some milk? The time it takes to turn your back in a busy shopping mall? It's not because you don't love them that you are careless is it? In the county I live in, it is against the law to leave a dog alone in a car. It is not against the law to leave a child in a car alone.

This is a chilling novel created by Belinda Bauer, published 2017, about a small town in England where there is an outbreak of kidnappings. My copy was an audio book which in my opinion, increases the dramatic tension.

In Englad, before fox hunting was banned, a person called The Huntsman, was responsible for caring for the

fox hounds. When the hunting stopped, he lost his job and had to dispose of the hounds whom he considered his children. He was not happy.

The kidnapped children simply vanished. For weeks, there was not a clue. However, a couple of enterprising teens decide they will capture the kidnapper simply by playing along and collect the reward money. Let's just say nothing went according to plan. One thing did happen; one of the boys escaped, but his friend and older brother were captured. Now there was an eye witness.

An excellent read, but please don't read it alone.

Brenda says

With the benefit of reading the previous two books, *Blacklands* and *Darkside*, I welcomed their history's impact on this third in the Exmoor trilogy. Individuals "damaged" as children experience life as adults with a bias. They see things through a filter that is not always true or realistic. With Stevie's experiences in the previous books, he believes Jonas to be a murderer. I was unprepared for this, as I liked both Stevie and Jonas. Even as Stevie's beliefs wavered, mine became more sure. I believe Jonas acted based on his own childhood and out of grief and love for his late wife. Now that Stevie has found love, perhaps he will understand Jonas a little more. I think he may find himself in the same position as Jonas some day.

One difficult part of this trilogy is the involvement of cruelty against children. In this book, it continues, but with the addition of cruelty to dogs and other animals. While not graphic, all it takes is imagination to make it so.

Janet says

Children are going missing in the village of Shipcott in Exmoor. Being snatched and told in 'post it' form that they are not loved. DI Reynolds along with DS Rice are tasked with solving the case as they revisit old ground from the previous case.

Jonas is slowly recovering from the loss of his wife and Stephen has found love. All brilliant strands that weave beautifully together as Ms Bauer takes us for the last time to Exmoor to wrap up this brilliant trilogy. Reading this so soon after *Darkside* kept characters fresh and I wish now that I had read the three books in fairly quick succession. Reading so much crime fiction I find sometimes characters can get lost in my head as I go from book to book.

Again we're treated to a brilliant storyline that had me gripped once I became immersed. The characters, settings sucking me in without even realising it. I couldn't put it down once I had picked it up again after being unwell for a while. It was just the thing to get me out of a reading slump and give me my mojo back.

I cannot recommend Ms Bauer's books enough and this trilogy, in my humble opinion, is an absolute 'must read' for absorbing storylines and characters whose lives you begin to feel a part of.

Highly recommend.

Karen says

Another excellent read from Bauer, this is book 3 in the trilogy, I wish had read book 2 first. It can be read as a stand alone book. I did enjoy the twists, turns and suspense.

Carolyn says

I have recently become a big fan of Belinda Bauer's highly praised and popular psychological thrillers. I have read Snap (on the long list of 13 novels chosen for the Man Booker award) and the first two books in the Exmoor trilogy.

Finders Keepers is the third book in the Exmoor series and in my opinion the weakest. This is the third time a serial killer has targeted the tiny village. Some of the major characters from the two previous books are featured. Without reading those you miss some of the nuances of their personalities and growth.

It seems preposterous that several psychopathic killers have been carrying out their evil work in this tiny settlement, that one young person has been seized twice, and that all the villagers have not moved elsewhere in fright and despair.

Although the characters are so well developed that we feel we know them, I felt there were aspects of Jonas, the village policeman, which were unknown or that I failed to grasp. Steven has grown from a boy into an interesting young man. I enjoyed revisiting his family. Reynolds is struggling as newly head of the murder investigations. He worries about failure in his ability to identify the perpetrator and his hair is still a major concern to him. The supporting cast are very well written.

I found the story very dark and with some gruesome scenes. It started out slowly with the disappearance of a number of children. Notes were left for their parents accusing them of not loving their children enough. The plot reached a harrowing, pulse pounding conclusion. It is time to leave Exmoor and its nasty and far fetched events and to read some of Bauer's highly rated stand alone novels.

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

Bauer does it again , sheer genius. Firstly let me say that if you read her books or plan to, whilst not advertised as a trilogy, it would be best to read her first book Blacklands and then Darkside first, Bauer incorporates characters in this book from the previous two and if you read this one first it would have spoilers for the others.

This book started slower than her others I have read but super glad I hung on because from the halfway mark I could not put it down. Bauer has the knack of incorporating grisly themes that make you slightly shocked, horrified but desperate for more, I was cheering on characters in this book, like yelling at the TV thinking they could hear me.

Amazing book that has impact, I don't know where Bauer gets her imagination from but she has get some left

of centre ideas that I love. These are crime books with a difference, there is not an author out there like her at the moment and I am a huge fan.

The concept of this book once you realise what is going on is excellently bizarre and creepy. I liked that characters from other books were in this book, others don't I see from reviews.

Just read it, in fact read all her books.
