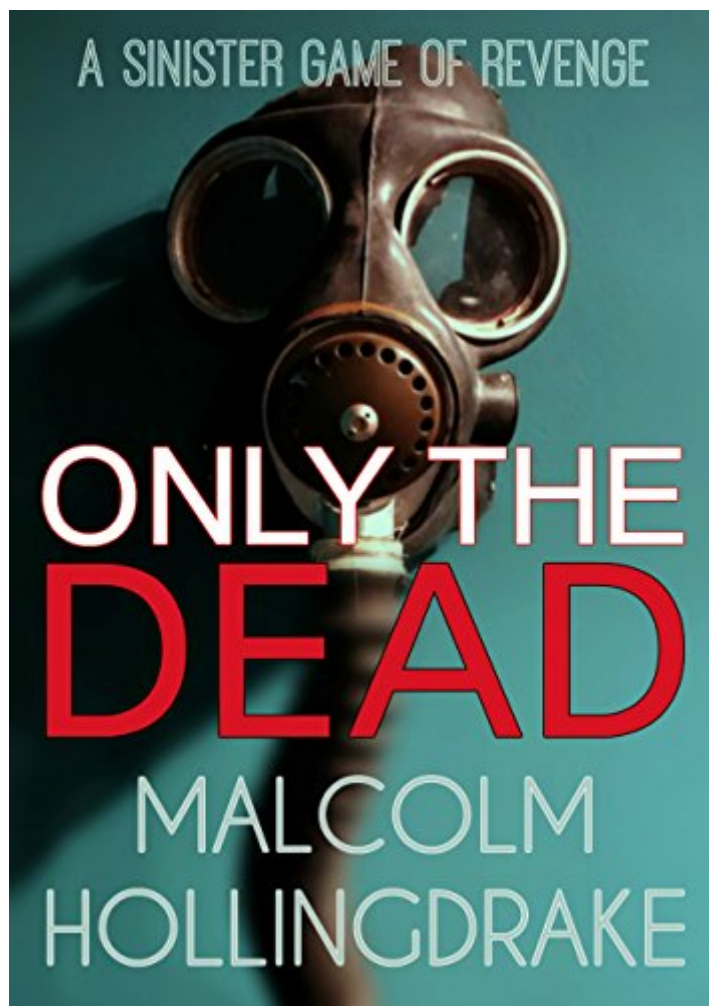


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Only The Dead (DCI Bennett Book 1)



Synopsis

ONLY THE DEAD: An utterly gripping crime thriller Meet DCI Cyril Bennett, a man with a passion for manners and efficiency, as well as an eye for the ladies. His partner, DS David Owen, is naïve and untidy but keen. Together they make a formidable pair. When the discovery of two infants' bodies is made at a Teacher Training College, Bennett and Owen are given the case. Soon a number of suspects are identified. At the same time, a killer is on the loose staging attacks using sulphur mustard. Is there a link between the infants' bodies and the sulphur mustard attacks? Do the answers lie in the past or the present? Bennett and Owen must work together to bring to justice a killer with revenge on his mind. What the readers say: "Beautifully written, this debut novel is a masterclass in tension. This is a perfect thriller that will have you on the edge of your seat." Betsy Reavley, Best-Selling Author "totally riveting and... thought provoking" Sarah Hardy, ByTheLetterBookReviews Also available from the DCI Cyril Bennett Harrogate Crime Series: Book 2: Hell's Gate Book 3: Flesh Evidence

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was my introduction to author Malcolm Hollingdrake and his wonderful police characters. DCI Cyril Bennett and his law-enforcement sidekick David Owen create a fun give-and-take for readers because their personalities are so different. Only The Dead grabbed me from the beginning. Without spoiling, just know that the predator has his seemingly-justifiable reasons for seeking out specific victims, and his method of getting even with them is unlike anything I've previously encountered. Hollingdrake offers several historical references to World War I, which help explain the present circumstances in the book without slowing down the story. Those references were much appreciated and shows the author did some research before setting fingers to laptop. I'd highly recommend this book and look forward to reading his other works.

I found Only The Dead to be highly original, combining a police investigation with historical events that inspire a killer set on revenge. Gripping and engrossing with a cast of characters I look forward to reading about again.

What a great mystery! I'm glad I discovered this series and will read all of them. Kept me glued to the page.

DCI Bennett is becoming a firm favourite for me. Now reading my third book.

There are two distinct story lines in the first DCI Cyril Bennett series, and while I expected them to converge, they never did. One is a tale of revenge, making those pay for transgressions upon the elderly, the infirm. At its beginning, it was difficult to know just what was in the character's mind and where the story was going. If you persevere, it does become clear. This thread was the best part of the novel, to me. The second is a long ago crime (1970's) that is discovered through the unearthing of two baby skeletons. Not only does this crime date back almost 50 years, those responsible have continued a life of crime and debauchery, benefiting by human trafficking, prostitution, and organ harvesting while maintaining seemingly blameless lives. This part of the book was less believable, less compelling, and I found myself skimming some parts, especially the very graphic descriptions of crime scenes and the commission of the crimes committed against those trafficked individuals. I considered calling it quits, but I did want to find out the final act in the first case. It did end rather spectacularly and fittingly. I did like the DCI Bennett character, but he was not sufficiently drawn - I had no idea how old he is supposed to be, no real feeling for him, other than his nattiness and

temporary Bell's palsy. A number of times, he would say, "I'll do that tomorrow, if I don't forget," implying age? There were some peculiar language errors that caused me to see if this book was a translation - no sir, this author hales from the locale of the book. One instance, "Her vision were clouded;" another misuse of benefactor for beneficiary. These lapses were often enough to be jarring. I did like the writing style and the main character has promise, so I may try one more installment.

There are the poppies still, a token of remembrance for those who have fallen in the line of duty in WWI on Flanders' fields. What made the war even more horrible, if possible, was when the trenches were assaulted by an until then unknown and hidden enemy, the vicious mustard gas. What is the connection with Detective Chief Inspector Cyril Bennett of the Harrogate Police? He struggles with the case on his desk: that of two bodies of young children, buried around the 1970s. Impossible is not a word known by Bennett, nor by his DS David Owen, who is determined to find those responsible and the parents of the little victims. The two infants share the same mother and when Owen searches the old school records of Ripon College he finds one Mary Nixon, a former student, who had been in the sick ward on several occasions. Apparently a Doctor Peter Flint attended her, later to become her husband. The Doctor informs Bennett about his life in Sierra Leone and shows him diamonds that are in fact blood diamonds, given to him by relatives of children he saved. It appears the Doctor also has a little establishment in the South of France, which makes the reader wonder how one man could afford such luxury. Little does Bennett know that he has stumbled upon something much bigger than he could have dreamed of, a nightmare of chilling and appalling crimes with an international impact, involving young victims. Owen's persistence to find the parents of the young children, found in the graves, could with hindsight be a major breakthrough in finding those international criminals. However, both Bennett and his DS Owen are unaware of the implications and far-reaching consequences of their investigations. Meanwhile the reader is introduced to Lawrence Young, obsessed with WWI, standing in a field, covered with poppies, once the place where thousands of men were met with the deadly mustard gas. It seems Lawrence is honouring those men, but he is also harvesting the shells from long ago, carefully securing the metal cylinder, containing leftovers of the deadly poison. What is Lawrence doing? There is harm intended, that much is obvious. "They had no choice" is what Lawrence is saying. They are the lost souls of WWI but there is another: Lawrence is speaking from personal experience: his own

dear mother, whom he loved so much that he felt the need to choose the best nursing home for, died shortly after. Similar to the look of fear on the soldiers' faces when they faced death, was the frightened look in the eyes of his mother and Lawrence is haunted by it, determined to seek revenge for her and all those neglected elderly in homes. As we watch him retract the poisonous gas from the cylinders, taking every precaution, we can only shudder in horror to what he will do. Lawrence is so careful in eliminating every possible clue leading to him that it will be an enormous, if not impossible job for the police, for DCI Bennett, his DS Owen and newly appointed DS Liz Graydon. This is Malcolm Hollingdrake's first crime novel featuring the enigmatic DCI Cyril Bennett and it is a captivating and thrilling read. I love how the author describes his main characters, especially the detective team under DCI Bennett, DS Owen and DS Graydon and I hope, no expect to hear much more of these three in the next books of the series. It's also intriguing because there are more cases than the one and the ending is something of a cliff hanger... but you'll have to read it for yourself to find out!

This was the first book that I have read by this author and I had it on my Kindle for a while having treated myself a couple of months ago. I am so glad that I decided to start it as I thoroughly enjoyed it - the pace was great, I loved the length of the book, it was just what I needed to get me back in to reading after having my little girl and spending a fair amount of time going to and from hospital (all is fine with her now). In fact I enjoyed the writing style and characters so much that I started reading the second book in the series, Hell's Gate last night and have nearly finished! I gave this book 4 stars and its definitely one I'd recommend - it was a great introduction for me to this author!

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