



One Great Book: Volume II, Episode 6 *A Share in Death* by Deborah Crombie

[Show Notes](#)

[00:00]

One Great Book Volume II, Book 6: *A Share in Death*

[UPBEAT INTRO MUSIC]

Hey readers, I'm Anne Bogel, and you're listening to *One Great Book*, the short-form podcast from the team behind *What Should I Read Next?*, where each week I pull one stand-out selection off my personal bookshelves and tell you all about it in ten minutes or less.

[MUSIC]

Readers, have you ever experienced the serendipity of reading exactly the right book at exactly the right time? It's a magical thing. Sometimes the reason is significant—you read a laugh-out-loud memoir when you really need the lift, or a book set in a certain city right before you travel there, and your visit is richer for it. Sometimes a book bears an uncanny and delightful similarity to real life: On July 5 of this year I began *The Lager Queen of Minnesota*, a book, I was surprised to discover, not only began on July 5 but also featured coffee shop owners Anne and Will. (My husband's name is Will, and we both love coffee.)

Well, this happened to me yet again this summer with another book. I took a beloved mystery to the beach with me, and on a sunny summer morning, I popped it open at the pool. I'd read the book before, but it took me til page 11 to realize what I'd done: the book I'd chosen for my pool-side vacation enjoyment was about a man, whose vacation is ruined when someone dies at his resort, murdered, by drowning, in the pool.



[01:34]

I would *not* call this serendipity, but I *would* call it uncanny. And it gave me pause, as I sat by the pool, book in hand—did I really want to read this book *now*? Suprising myself I decided I did, yes I did despite the place of murder being uncomfortably similar to my own just then, because over the years I've come to trust the carefully plotted procedurals written by Deborah Crombie, and to love the convincing fictional world she's created in London's very real Scotland Yard—especially her characters Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James. I feel like I'm in good hands with them. The series opener—and actually Crombie's first novel ever, is *A Share in Death*, and not matter where you read it, it is One Great Book.

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[03:24]

Deborah Crombie may seem an unlikely author for a long-running series, soon to be *eighteen* books strong, set in London and the United Kingdom. She's Texas born and bred, she graduated from a Texas university, she has a degree in *biology*. But after graduating, she took a trip to England and fell in love with the place and people, eventually immigrating and living for a time in both Scotland and England, before returning home to Dallas.

A trip to Yorkshire inspired *A Share in Death*, a novel Crombie sets in a picture-book Yorkshire Village, at the stately (and also fictional) Followdale House. It begins with Detective superintendent Duncan Kincaid setting off for a holiday. It's not the holiday he would have chosen for himself, it's much too posh, and sociable, for his taste—at the kind of place where guests mix and mingle, and dine all together—but his cousin's wife is expecting, and their doctor decided at the last moment she shouldn't leave London, and so they gave their week at the timeshare to Duncan, rather than letting it go to waste. Despite his doubts about the place, he badly needs a holiday—and when he checks himself in, the calm promise of the week ahead, at a place where nobody knows *who he is* or *what he does*, couldn't be more welcome. And the guests, Duncan has to admit, are actually pretty interesting.

The peace doesn't last long: early the next morning, two children find a body in the resort pool. The local constable rules suicide—and they *don't* want Scotland Yard butting in to their investigation. But Kincaid is certain there's more to the story. And while he hadn't known the victim long, he had *liked* him, and wants to see justice served—especially because the only possible killer is still moving among them, at Followdale House.

[MUSIC]

This first series installment focuses on Kincaid, newly promoted to a senior position at Scotland Yard. He takes the lead in *this* story, but we get glimpses of Gemma James, his sergeant—who just might be the best part of his promotion. She's intelligent and ambitious, with good instincts and great people skills. The two work well together, and even in the series opener the dynamic between them—the one that serves the series well, over the long run—is evident.



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The foundation may be laid in book one, but one of the most rewarding things about a long-running series is you get to see the characters evolve. And you feel like you really understand what they're going through in this series, because Crombie is viewpoint obsessive: she swears she'll never use an omniscient point of view because she wants you in her characters' heads, seeing the world through their eyes, understanding the choices they make, and why they make them. As the series progresses, Crombie devotes considerable ink to not just solving crimes, but also to her detectives' personal dramas and romantic entanglements. I'm not giving anything away here, but as a reader I've especially enjoyed following the characters' personal lives through the years.

A Share in Death was first published in 1993, but the series carries on, though perhaps not as speedily as Crombie fans would like, as Crombie claims to be such a slow writer that her publisher finally stretched out the time between her deadlines. But your patience will be rewarded, because like so many series, the books get better as you go, and I'm looking forward to reading the 18th installment in the Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James series, *A Bitter Feast*, when it hits shelves in October.

I first came to Crombie's work years ago, at the suggestion of fellow mystery lovers who knew I'd run out of Louise Penny novels, and was looking for another good series to fill the Three Pines-shaped hole in my heart—or at least, on my bookshelf. These works are a likely match for Penny fans, yes, as well as any readers who enjoy good old-fashioned mysteries, like Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie series, or, the Lord Peter Whimsy books by Dorothy Sayers.

Like all those series, Crombie's books have a smashing sense of place, and that's no accident; she travels to England, most often London, several times a year to soak up the atmosphere, which makes the setting feel incredibly *real*. Britishisms in the book abound, and are sure to delight mystery-loving Anglophiles: after a long day, Duncan is knackered, he witnesses an unpleasant row at Followdale House, he treats himself to a cream tea in the village. Her characters are *constantly* drinking tea, and you may feel like you're right there with your own cuppa.



[07:35]

In short, if you're looking for an award-winning British mystery series with compelling characters whose personal lives matter every bit as much as their police work, a strong sense of place that will transport you straight to the U.K., and that could keep you busy for a good long time if it's your cup of tea, *A Share in Death* may be the next great book you're looking for.

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I'd love to hear what you think about *A Share in Death* on Twitter or Instagram @AnneBogel that's Anne with an E, B as in books, O-G-E-L. You can also find me on Instagram @WhatShouldIReadNext.

Thanks to Kellen Pechacek for his sound design on today's episode.

Readers, that's it for this episode, thanks so much for listening.

And as Rainer Maria Rilke said, "ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading."

Happy reading, everyone.