



## The Outcast Dead

*Elly Griffiths*

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**Ruth Galloway uncovers the bones of what might be a notorious Victorian child murdress and a baby snatcher known as "The Childminder" threatens modern-day Norfolk in the latest irresistible mystery from Elly Griffiths.**

Forensic archaeologist Ruth Galloway uncovers the bones of a Victorian murderer while a baby snatcher threatens modern-day Norfolk in this exciting new entry in a beloved series.

Every year a ceremony is held in Norwich for the bodies in the paupers' graves: the Service for the Outcast Dead. Ruth has a particular interest in this year's proceedings. Her recent dig at Norwich Castle turned up the body of the notorious Mother Hook, who was hanged in 1867 for the murder of five children. Now Ruth is the reluctant star of the TV series Women Who Kill, working alongside the program's alluring history expert, Professor Frank Barker.

DCI Harry Nelson is immersed in the case of three children found dead in their home. He is sure that the mother is responsible. Then another child is abducted and a kidnapper dubbed the Childminder claims responsibility. Are there two murderers afoot, or is the Childminder behind all the deaths? The team must race to find out-and the stakes couldn't be any higher when another child goes missing.

## The Outcast Dead Details

Date : Published March 11th 2014 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (first published 2014)

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## From Reader Review The Outcast Dead for online ebook

### Rachel Hall says

After the highs of Dying Fall and Dr Ruth Galloway and her fantastic ensemble cast going "on tour" in Blackpool, The Outcast Dead is a thrilling and triumphant return to the Fens for everyone's favourite dysfunctional family! Introducing new characters to the party and serving up a whopping three mysteries into a single novel, this is once again an utter delight.

As Ruth discovers what looks to be the remains of the reputed body-farmer and child murderer Mother Hook, in the grounds of Norwich Castle, the past threatens to collide with modern-day Norfolk and for DCI Harry Nelson the memories of his failures on the Scarlet Henderson case pervade his thoughts. For Ruth's boss, the opportunity of publicity for the archaeology department of the University of North Norfolk sees Ruth featuring on a forthcoming cable TV show, chillingly entitled 'Woman Who Kill'. Despite Ruth's reluctance to face the camera, she is drawn into the filming as dishy American and Victorian history expert, Professor Frank Barker, interests her in his quest to exonerate Jemima Green, the woman dubbed Mother Hook and something of a local legend. Hanged in 1867 and now regarded as a body-farmer, is there fresh evidence to be discovered and will Ruth be a TV natural? As she hides from the cameras, events closer to home keep Ruth fully occupied, namely Kate, her forty-third birthday and a fleeting visit from her brother.

Alongside this DCI Nelson has more pressing problems of investigating the death of a child, the third child of now separated Liz and Bob Donaldson. Hot on the heels on their two older sons sudden and unexpected deaths, Nelson faces the rancorous media brigade as he investigates suspicions surrounding the mother. Whilst Judy is back on the job, her and DS Dave Clough have joined alliances in their suspicion of the new DS in the team, Tim Heathfield, fresh down from "up North". As Nelson tackles the only job that no one wants and questions Liz, a modern day child snatcher rears their head, ominously signing their notes as 'The Childminder'. Bringing the return of the much missed druid in the cloak in the form of Cathbad, it is a surprise that the gang find time to solve both of the current investigations and provide an answer for the longer standing question of Jemima Hook and her innocence.

Inherent to the success of this Dr Ruth Galloway novels are the characters that she brings to life for her readers, becoming as addictive as a soap opera for committed fans, yet Elly Griffiths never makes Ruth the sole focus of the dramas. Fundamental to readers enjoyment is that the supporting cast are all well drawn and believable personalities with their own lives and situations evolving alongside Ruth and Nelson. Full of gentle humour and brimming with feel-good moments, an opportunity to catch up with Ruth and company is pure manna from heaven! The Dr Ruth Galloway series continues to provide original and innovative plots, a satisfying mystery component and a cast who feel like family!

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### Sue says

In what is the sixth Ruth Galloway novel, the titled character, a forensic archaeologist, is involved in a local dig and uncovers remains that might be those of a notorious child killer of the 19th century. This act, though outwardly not much different than other digs she has been involved in, unleashes something entirely new---television and television commentators who want to report on the bones of a woman who killed!

Meanwhile, there also seems to be a modern day child kidnapper in the area too which is casting a heavy shadow on many people that Ruth cares about within the local police department as well as making her fear for her own child.

This is another satisfying installment in a very satisfying series. I could read Griffiths' books weekly if she could write them that quickly!

I highly recommend this series to mystery readers, Anglophiles who like an extra bit of atmosphere and archaeological information added in.

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### **Mike Gabor says**

Forensic archaeologist Ruth Galloway uncovers the bones of a Victorian murderer while a baby snatcher threatens modern-day Norfolk in this exciting new entry in a beloved series.

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A very chilling and complex story of murder and kidnapping. The book grabs you from the beginning and moves along very swiftly. The characters are well fleshed out, the plot very interesting, and the ending a bit of a surprise. I'm a big fan of this series and am looking forward too much more.

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### **Liz Barnsley says**

Published 6th February by Quercus.

Thank you for the review copy via Netgalley.

Ruth Galloway uncovers the bones of what might be a notorious Victorian child murderer and a baby snatcher known as "The Childminder" threatens modern-day Norfolk in the latest irresistible mystery from Elly Griffiths.

Yep irresistible is right. I've read all of the Ruth Galloway novels but this is the first one I've read since I started the blog and serious reviewing and actually I would say its one of my favourites so far.

Ruth Galloway is a forensic archaeologist, in this instalment she uncovers some bones that she believes may be "Mother Hook" a notorious Victorian child murderer. At the same time she is drawn into a modern day case involving a possibly murdered child and an abduction..

This is a series best read in order – the first being ” The Crossing Places” – as character development for me is a big part of these books. Having said that, enough information is also available so you could pick up whichever one takes your fancy and have a great reading experience...and you can go backwards because nothing is ever spoilt.

What I love about Elly Griffiths writing is the way she creates such great fictional stories around a fascinating subject – and ALWAYS encourages my interest in the more fact based portions of her tales when it comes to archeology. I never fail, having read another of Ruth's adventures, to end up on Google researching various titbits that have arisen to find out more about how it all works. Add to that a great writing style that digs you deep into the atmosphere of the setting, some great characters to follow along with and an always compelling tale and you have a recipe for success.

There are some mythological undertones to these books that give them a slight edge over the rest, an aspect of them that this reader loves – and overall I would have to say this is one of my favourite “comfort” series in that they never let me down.

A great addition to the Ruth Galloway adventures and I look forward very much to the next.

Happy Reading Folks!

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### **John Carter McKnight says**

I love this series. The characters are (mostly) people I just really enjoy spending time with, and I don't much need the pretext of a plot. Which accounts for the 3 stars in this review, because otherwise this book is pretty thin.

It seems to mark a transition in the series story structure from local archaeological expedition/thematically related murder, which had been stretched a little farther than it could go, to Ruth being affiliated with a lurid-archaeology TV show, which allows for a wider scope of stories going forward. It's a good direction for the series, and as a novella, The Outcast Dead could've been a nice setup for the change. But there just isn't enough there there for a novel.

The archaeology is negligible, and includes an ill-justified professional-ethical lapse on Ruth's part, and the criminal case is a confusing muddle of multiple missing and/or dead children. The whodunit is unsatisfying and feels contrived, though clues were planted.

On the plus side, there's a major positive development for some of the characters, and, it's a pleasant evening spent with dear friends, even if they don't have a lot of news to relate this time out.

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### **Diane S ? says**

A wonderful series that combines archeology, mystery and some amazing characters, one who has a delightful three year old. The personal relationships are almost as interesting as the storylines. Of course Cathbad, the druid, is one of my favorites. Also appreciate the author's not at the end, explaining what was true in history, the buildings, graveyards and churches as well as people, in this particular installment.

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### **Sam H Arnold says**

I think it is important to say before I start this review that I love Elly Griffiths. She has fast become one of my favourite authors and this book does nothing to change this. Elly Griffiths is that rare writing talent that can mix; historical fact, familiar character developments and a dame good thriller into one.

This book is one of the best I have read from her and as usual I find myself enthralled by the historical information which is passed throughout this book. The book also has a fair amount of dealing with familiar characters such as Cathbad, Ruth and Nelson. Whilst reading this story you find yourself investing in all the characters as you always have. I am as excited to know what happens to my favourites as I am to solve the mystery.

This mystery is as good as any others she has written. The story kept you guessing until the last minute and I found myself working out who was the culprit at exactly the same time as the lead characters. The story is harrowing in places and on more than one occasion I found a tear coming to my eye.

This is a brilliant read as a stand alone or if you are a fan like me.

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### **Tanja Berg says**

I totally forgot to mark this as "currently reading". I had it on audio and it was pleasant and quite sure. As usual, the present-day crimes aren't stellar. What weighs up for it are the developments in the lives of the returning cast.

Judy has isn't sure whether her one-year old son is sired by her husband or her ex-lover. What she does know is that when he disappears, she wants Michael back. Desperately.

Ruth is helping with the excavation of a woman hanged for being an "angel maker", for killing the children in her care. Worse, this Jemima, had a hook for a hand which led to quite a few horrible myths. The story is even being filmed.

Another in the series. Quickly devoured, easily forgotten. I'll continue with the series though, it's pleasant enough and I do care about Ruth and her friends.

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### **LJ says**

First Sentence: Every year a ceremony is held at Norwich Castle for the bodies in the paupers' graves: the Service for the Outcast Dead.

Archeologist Ruth Galloway is on a dig at Norwich Castle when she uncovers the remains of a woman who may be Jemima Green, aka Mother Hook. She was a woman in the 1800s, thought to have taken in orphaned and abandoned children, only to murder and sell them to a resurrectionist. Her boss interests a television station in including the dig in their program, "Women who Kill," but the show's historian Professor Frank

Barker, believes Mother Hook was innocent. DCI Harry Nelson, father to Ruth's daughter, suspects a mother of recently killing her son. Did she also kill her two other children? And who is the "Childminder" who claims responsibility for newly abducted children?

It is from the opening of Ruth attending the Prayers for the Outcast Dead, a service to remember the buried unknown souls buried, that we learn the reasons why Ruth became an archeologist..."To find out about how ordinary people lived their lives. We are their recorders...."

Griffiths has created a wonderful assortment of characters. However, one criticism is that there are so many, they are hard to keep straight. Also, if one is new to the series, I suspect they might find it a bit challenging keeping straight those new to this story and those carried forward from the past, especially those only referenced but not actual participants. That said, one of the things most appreciated is that Griffiths not only presents the events happening to the characters, but lets us see inside them to their fears and insecurities. She also captures perfectly the one-upmanship that can occur amongst strangers in a social setting.

Although Ruth is a wonderful character—not young, not svelte, not gorgeous, somewhat insecure about her skills as a mother, but an excellent archeologist, and we learn about more about her immediate family, it is her friend Cathbad, a druid who believes in things unseen but also suffers from heartache, who quickly becomes a favorite. "...He could burn some herbs and try to meditate. ...He sighs and goes to look up Judy's house on Google Earth."

"The Outcast Dead" was an enjoyable read but, sadly, not Ms. Griffiths best book. There were just too many characters and families with crossed lines to one another that made it difficult to follow. I like the series very much, but this needed to be pared back, perhaps to only one, or two story lines. Still, that doesn't put me off looking forward to Ms. Griffiths next book.

THE OUTCAST DEAD (Lic Invest-Ruth Galloway-England-Contemp) – G+  
Griffiths, Elly – 6th in series  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014

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### **Jacki (Julia Flyte) says**

Julia sits down to write her review of The Outcast Dead. She has read all of the books in this series and enjoyed them. However she's torn about what to write about this instalment. The story worked well, encompassing two main plotlines, both centered on the relationships between mother and child. All the familiar characters made an appearance and somehow Cathbad seemed less annoying this time round.

And yet, something makes Julia hesitate. It's the way that Elly Griffiths writes all her books in the present tense. And keeps telling you what every character is thinking. Julia can't help feeling that the writing style should somehow disappear for the reader. That you should get caught up in the story and not notice the way that it's being told to you. She feels badly that she can't say this is the case.

Also, she feels that the book lost some of its momentum at the end. The mysteries were genuinely intriguing but the solutions were rushed and didn't feel entirely realistic.

(At this point Julia breaks away to look at her children and be reminded how much she loves them and how

precious they are. Because if we're not told that frequently, we might think that perhaps she doesn't).

So in the end, Julia is torn. She feels that this was one of the best in the series, she read it quickly and enjoyed it, but there were also things about it that annoyed her.

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### **Mike Sumner says**

The best of six, so far. Well, that is my opinion! I love this series. I like the characters. The vulnerable Dr. Ruth Galloway and her daughter Kate, the old-fashioned copper DCI Harry Nelson, his bagman DS David Clough, a tough, dedicated officer and Cathbad (Michael Malone), raised a Catholic and now a druid and self-professed shaman. The series knits seamlessly together; elements of forensic archeology, myth, the supernatural and superstition. In The Outcast Dead child abduction is a major element in the plot, which adds to the tension and results in a breathless race against time.

Ruth has excavated a body from the grounds of Norwich Castle, thought to be that of Jemima Green, called Mother Hook for her claw-like hand. Jemima was hanged for the murders of five children. But, was she guilty? Frank, an American historian, thinks otherwise. Present as part of a US film crew, to create a documentary.

Harry Nelson is investigating the case of three infants found dead, one after the other and he is convinced that their mother is responsible. A clever interweaving of story-lines here.

And then a child goes missing.... Is there a possible link to the long-dead Mother Hook?

A rich, dark and fast-moving plot. Thank you Elly Griffiths for another cracking read!

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### **Gail says**

This is the last in the series at present; a series I have enjoyed very much. The first book was just great and this, the last one, is just fantastic.

Ruth finds some bones which appear to be of the notorious child killer Mother Hook (aka Jemima Green) who was hanged for her crimes some 150 years previously.

Nelson, simultaneously, is working on a case of a mother, Liz Donaldson, whose two children, Samuel and Isaac, had died suddenly in infancy and now the new baby, David, has suddenly died at 8 months old. Nelson is certain it is the mother who has committed these murders but there seems to be a lot of evidence to the contrary.

Ruth meanwhile meets a dashing 'George Clooney lookalike' American historian, Frank Barker, who is involved in a factual tv series, Women Who Kill. The producers want to include Ruth in this particular documentary to discuss the finding of the bones of Mother Hook.

Amidst all this, a baby goes missing whilst she is asleep in her bed and a mysterious note is found. Soon afterwards another child is kidnapped and it becomes a race against time to discover who is doing this and,

more importantly, to get the baby back and reunited with the mother.

The pace never lets up and I couldn't put it down. I thoroughly enjoyed it and never guessed the perpetrator at all.

I loved this book very much and am going to miss Ruth, Nelson and the wonderful Cathbad et al until the next book.

Brilliant and highly recommended.

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### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

The Outcast Dead is the sixth book Ruth Galloway by Elly Griffiths and as usually I'm having a bit of a problem reading the book, because even though I often enjoy the stories in the books I just can't stand the characters. Well, I don't hate them, they just annoy me, things they say or thinks can make me mentally roll my eyes. So when I pick up and read a book by Elly Griffith will I know that Ruth will as usually always bring up in her mind how fat she is and how thin everyone else is. Nelson, the cop she has a baby with will constantly nag her about what's best for their daughter and so on...

But I keep coming back to the books for the stories, for the cases, for the archaeology, for the mix of the past and the present time. In this book, a woman gets accused of killing her own child and at the same time, Ruth has discovered the body of who they think is notorious Mother Hook who was hanged 1867 accused of killing children.

So the rating for the books is 3.5 stars with less annoying characters it would have gotten 4 stars.

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### **Moonlight Reader says**

This one reminded me a lot of A Dying Fall, reaching back into the past for a significant part of the mystery. I also developed a distinct fondness for Dave Clough in this book - his character just keeps getting more and more engaging.

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### **Damaskcat says**

Ruth Galloway is involved in an archaeological dig at Norwich Castle. She finds what appears to be the body of Jemima Green (Mother Hook) a Victorian baby farmer who was convicted of murdering the babies in her care. A TV company expresses interest in filming part of the dig for a series about women who kill. Shy Ruth is reluctant to take part but her boss, Phil, is keen on the publicity. DCI Harry Nelson – Ruth's friend and father of her daughter, Kate – is involved in investigating a possible killing of a young child and suspects the child's mother.

This is a harrowing novel featuring some highly emotive issues. Small children go missing and notes are left

signed by someone calling themselves ‘The Childminder’. Tempers are frayed and everyone is on high alert as modern events appear to echo Victorian history. Emotions are involved as well as professional expertise when the kidnapping moves closer to home. I read this book over the course of an afternoon and evening and found myself totally immersed in it.

The plot is complex and the characters are believable and interesting. Nelson with his unusual private life, his colleague, Judy adjusting to working motherhood, Ruth fearing for her daughter’s safety for the second time in a year and wondering whether unlooked publicity is going to turn her life upside down. The suspense builds to a tension filled climax and I was sorry when I turned the last page. I’m looking forward to the next book in the series.

I received a free copy of this book for review purposes.

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