

No Place of Safety: A CRIME NOVEL

Robert Barnard



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Fifteen-year-old Katy Bourne and sixteen-year-old Alan Coughlan are missing. Though they are students at the same school, they hardly know each other, so it's strange that they should disappear together. Katy's mother, self-centered and unloving, doesn't mind if her daughter never comes home. Alan's solid working-class parents are pained and puzzled by their son's departure.

There's not much the police can do about runaway teenagers, but Detective Constable Charlie Peace goes through the motions. He interviews the families, he visits the school. Alan had friends and had aspired to a good education. Katy had nothing, least of all self-esteem.

The two teens could be anywhere, even living dangerously on the streets of Leeds, so it's with relief that Charlie discovers them in a hostel for homeless young people. But are they safe? And who is Ben Marchant, the man who runs the shelter?

Whoever he is, he seems to be doing well. Young people beg or work as street musicians during the day, then eat and sleep at the hostel at night. They can remain there two weeks and then must leave for two weeks before beginning the cycle again. Only Katy and Alan stay longer. Only they have a special, mysterious understanding with Ben.

But all is not well at the shelter. Neighbors complain about strange goings-on. Residents too often display feelings of jealousy and suspicion. A young woman flees from a violent family member, perhaps bringing danger with her. Emotions run high, ranging from love and gratitude to fear and hate.

One person may even hate enough to murder. One person's hate may destroy this place that some regard as a haven of peace and safety and others fear as something more complex and diabolical.

No Place of Safety combines brilliant social commentary with a mesmerizing mystery plot that will once again enthrall Robert Barnard's legion of fans. Recognized as one of the best of all contemporary crime writers, Barnard is in top form.

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