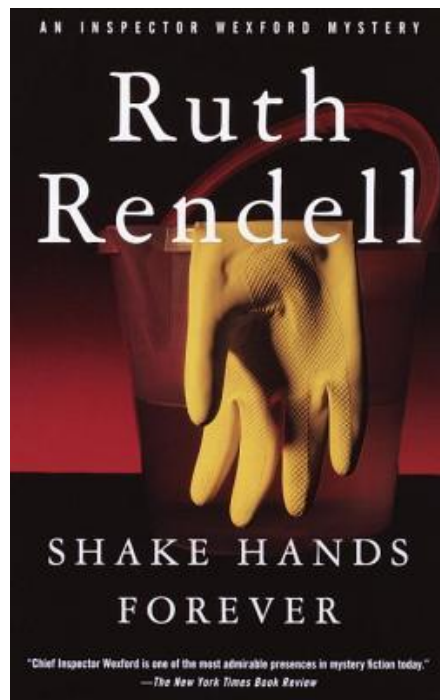




Shake Hands Forever

Ruth Rendell

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Shake Hands Forever Ruth Rendell

The bed was neatly made, and the woman on top neatly strangled.

According to all accounts, Angela Hathall was deeply in love with her husband and far too paranoid to invite an unknown person into their home. So who managed to gain entry and strangle her without a struggle? That is the problem facing Inspector Wexford in **Shake Hands Forever**. Perhaps it was the mystery woman who left her fingerprints on the Hathall's bathtub? Perhaps it was Angela's husband who lied about a stolen library book? And why was the Hathall home, usually so unkempt, exquisitely clean the day of Angela's death? Then a neighbor--friendly, knowing, disarmingly beautiful--offers Wexford her assistance. And what begins as a rather tricky case turns into an obsession that threatens to destroy the Inspector's career--as well as his marriage.

Maddeningly addictive, smart and surprising, **Shake Hands Forever** showcases Ruth Rendell at the height of her storytelling powers.

Shake Hands Forever Details

Date : Published July 11th 2000 by Vintage Crime/Black Lizard (first published 1975)

ISBN : 9780375704956

Author : Ruth Rendell

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Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction

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From Reader Review Shake Hands Forever for online ebook

Bruce Beckham says

This is an Inspector Wexford novel – and it reminds me that I much prefer Ruth Rendell's suspense stories to her mysteries.

For the most part the plot is satisfactory – it certainly kept me reading – but when it came to the denouement I felt the motive was unconvincing and the practical details of the crime implausibly intricate.

In short a woman is found strangled on her bed by her returning husband and mother-in-law. From very early on the husband is identified as the only likely suspect – and indeed the plot becomes more of a 'howdunit' than a whodunit. If Wexford can answer 'how' – he will nail the murderer.

But Wexford is taken off the case and has to resort to subterfuge – and simultaneously he is rather bizarrely distracted by a peripheral temptress who seems to have designs upon his new trim figure!

The prose is rather clunky and the narrative a bit disjointed at times, and I frequently felt the interactions between characters were unnatural. I understand this was the 9th Wexford mystery (1975), so I'm a little baffled that I gained impressions that were slightly more towards the negative.

Trish says

All I really did yesterday was bake in the sun (in SPF 50, of course) and read this book. I picked up an absolutely pristine copy at the library book sale and decided to make my first foray into Rendell's Inspector Wexford series. Not my favorite Rendell, but certainly a solid showing.

When Angela Hathall is found strangled to death in her country home, Wexford's attention is drawn to the husband. Although by all accounts devoted to his wife, Robert doesn't seem to behave just as a bereaved spouse should. His grief is a bit too studied, he's a bit too impatient for news of fingerprints, and why did he send his mother upstairs where the body was found instead of looking for his absent wife there himself?

Before Wexford can ferret out any solid evidence, his superior orders him to leave Robert Hathall alone--the man has complained that he is being "persecuted" and Wexford's boss believes it's in the best interests of Sussex to leave Hathall alone.

But Wexford continues to investigate on the sly, enlisting the aid of his nephew and of a petty crook looking to pick up funds to exchange for a foul mix of Guinness and Pernod. Wexford is convinced that Hathall did away with his wife with the help of a female accomplice, a new lover. If he can catch Hathall with the woman, he'll know he's on the right track.

I had suspected for a while that the dead woman was *not* Angela Hathall, and I turned out to be right (very satisfying to feel smart, even though it was more likely just because I've become suspicious of any plot that seems too straightforward). It was too strange that Angela would be wearing the very same outfit she had worn the first and only prior time she had met her mother-in-law, particularly since the mother-in-law detested those clothes. Hathall's devotion to Angela seemed genuine--the two twisted souls had found one another and now would stick at nothing to stay together.

Wexford finally manages to connect the murder of "Angela" with the disappearance of a woman who once worked at the same company as Hathall. She must have tumbled to his payroll fraud, and as an honest woman she posed a great risk to Robert and Angela. They contrived to get rid of her while laying the groundwork for secretly skipping the country. They are only barely caught before they can depart for Brazil.

Leslie says

What a fiendishly clever story! I was afraid I'd figured out the mystery halfway through, and didn't want that to be the solution: first, because I liked the character who'd've been "guilty"; second, because I didn't want it to be that easy.

I needn't have feared such a thing, although I did have a glimmer of an idea early on but dismissed it. And I'd thought what I considered the solution because that's what Ruth Rendell wanted me to think.

Rare is the book that finds me slowing down as I reach the end so as not to miss a thing. But most of Rendell's books are this way for me; reading her is more than tracking a mystery...it's often like listening to a friend who's, for example, telling you about a neighborhood that used to be quite something but has sadly fallen on hard times. The tone is matter of fact, but chummy.

And as always, her descriptions are nearly beyond compare...particularly when it comes to unpleasant characters. Oh, she's cutting. So dry. A woman of few words...but you get it. I love Rendell's Inspector Wexford novels, and look forward to sitting down with the next.

Deb W says

Ruth writes a steady mystery and her characters have their endearing qualities, but this particular work lingered on the edge of "why am I still reading this?" and only marginally satisfied me once completed. I will keep reading her, but I hope this isn't an indication of the quality of work that follows.

Katie says

I thought I had it all figured out. I was wrong, again. Per usual, red herrings abound in this Inspector Wexford centered mystery.

A woman is found dead in her home; she's been strangled by what appears to be a gilded necklace. The only evidence? Three coarse hairs and a fingerprint showing a small half-moon scar.

It's 1975, so there aren't any computer data bases, and other modern detective devices, which makes Inspector Wexford's job all the more difficult, and interesting.

Ruth Rendell is a powerhouse when it comes to characterization. Her economy of language is admirable. She is able to conjure up fantastic visuals, not only in character appearance, but also in their behaviors, with only a few words.

I used to read the series out of order, and I'm glad I've turned around to reading Rendell's earliest work.

Inspector Wexford shows major character development book by book, and his connections within the London scene, as well as his home life, make for a much more satisfying and sensical read.

I did find fault with the endless descriptions of who crossed what street, rode the tube to what station, and took the bus to what stop, but those bits are easily skimmed, and as long as you get the general idea, they aren't important to the story as a whole, although I understand why she included them.

It ends neatly with a clever twist, loose ends are tied up in surprising ways, and I was left satisfied. Hooray! 3.5 stars.

Marie says

Shake Hands Forever was a good mystery. This is my 3rd Ruth Rendell/Inspector Wexford mystery and I am hooked on her writing and story-telling.

Also, listening to this book was a pleasure. Nigel Anthony, the man who reads and acts all the parts, is wonderful.

Bettie? says

Read by..... Nigel Anthony
Total Runtime..... 6 Hours 43 Mins

Description: *The bed was neatly made, and the woman on top neatly strangled.*

According to all accounts, Angela Hathall was deeply in love with her husband and far too paranoid to invite an unknown person into their home. So who managed to gain entry and strangle her without a struggle? That is the problem facing Inspector Wexford in Shake Hands Forever. Perhaps it was the mystery woman who left her fingerprints on the Hathall's bathtub? Perhaps it was Angela's husband who lied about a stolen library book? And why was the Hathall home, usually so unkempt, exquisitely clean the day of Angela's death? Then a neighbor--friendly, knowing, disarmingly beautiful--offers Wexford her assistance. And what begins as a rather tricky case turns into an obsession that threatens to destroy the Inspector's career--as well as his marriage.

Did Charles Lamb say, as per this story, that he would rather see a theatre queue than all the sheep on Epsom Downs? No sheep there when and since I was born!

'Virtue is its own reward'

'Sic transit gloria mundi'

- 3* From Doon With Death (Inspector Wexford, #1)
- 3* A New Lease of Death (Inspector Wexford, #2)
- 3* Wolf to the Slaughter (Inspector Wexford, #3)
- 2* The Best Man to Die (Inspector Wexford, #4)

3* A Guilty Thing Suprised #5
3* No More Dying Then (Inspector Wexford, #6)
3* Murder Being Once Done (Inspector Wexford, #7)
3* Some Lie and Some Die (Inspector Wexford, #8)
3* Shake Hands Forever (Inspector Wexford, #9)

3* Not in the Flesh (Inspector Wexford, #21)
2* The Vault (Inspector Wexford, #23)

Jaksen says

I am reading Rendell (and Barbara Vine) not because she recently passed away, but because I'd read so many of her books years ago, and rather in a haphazard way. I'd read one, liked it; read another, not liked it. But I remembered 'A Dark-Adapted Eye' as one of my favorites. I was re-reading it when I learned of her passing.

I also remembered how much I did like so many of her books, so now I am reading the Wexford novels, though I couldn't find the first or, or any of numbers 1-8, at my local library. They did have 'Shake Hands Forever,' which I'd never read, so I figured...

Well, it's a short book, but a great read. Crisp writing. Great MC - I do like Mr. Wexford a lot. He's a plain-spoken, (sometimes outspoken) police inspector who has a way of ingratiating himself to some, and not so much to others. The kind of person I think I'd like in real life, who some of my friends would openly dislike and others think he's as charming as I do. No in-betweens. Anyhow, in this novel Wexford is trying to solve the murder of a young wife who is surrounded by horribly horrible people. There is a mother-in-law who I swear Rendell modeled after one of my own female relatives (or one of my mother's disapproving friends), and a husband who's also a huge jerk. Just. A. Jerk. As Wexford goes through his investigation he's handicapped by his own, sometimes-abrasive, and always outspoken way of questioning people. So the case is more or less taken away from him and given to less senior police investigators.

Handicapped by this, and determined to solve the young woman's murder, he has to conduct his own inquiries in a roundabout sort of way, using old friends and family contacts to help him learn just how and why the young wife died.

There are diversions along the way. (Rendell is nothing if not a capable mystery writer.) And lots of introspection. It's a deeply psychological murder mystery, as so many of her books are.

Anyhow, a quick read. I totally enjoyed it. Read it during lunch, brief periods of waiting for family members who were going here or there or needed me for something. Also while the grandson took a nap in a nice quiet house. Enjoyable.

I have requested some of Rendell's earlier books, including the first four of the Wexford novels, through my library's shared management system. I can't wait to read them.

Rita says

1975. Well-written, though not memorably so.

Some nice bits of psychology, though the characters do not come alive for me.

goodreads reviews all focused on the plot, nobody mentioned anything 'literary'... that tells us something. A nice way to pass the time.

A better book of hers is Anna's Book, written under a pseudonym [Barbara Vine]

Bev says

Despite the fact that neither Robert Hathall nor his wife Angela seemed particularly likeable...and that each appeared to outsiders to be as paranoid and "nervy" as all get out, no one seemed to dispute the fact that they were very much in love with each other. There's not much money rolling about--Robert has been married before and his extra cash is destined for alimony and child support. So...no jealousy motive, no money motive, and a poor showing of a burglary motive...why was Angela Hathall strangled to death in her own home and found dead in the bedroom by her mother-in-law? From the beginning Inspector Reginald Wexford suspects the husband. But Robert has an iron-clad alibi that puts him in London at the time Angela was being murdered in Kingsmarkham.

There's not a shred of proof to point to the husband (or anyone else for that matter) and Wexford's Chief Constable tells him to back off of Robert after the man complains that Wexford is persecuting him. With no official backing...and even his subordinate Mike Burden wondering if the chief inspector doesn't just have a bee in his bonnet about the husband, Wexford uses up some of his leave time, employs an out of work acquaintance to "tail" Hathall, and even convinces his nephew, a police superintendent in London, to lend him a hand. Has Wexford gotten obsessed with a single idea? Is he over-reacting as his Chief Constable believes? Or are they up against a murder more ingenious than anyone else can believe?

Shake Hands Forever employs a rather nice twist that readers with less crime fiction experience will definitely find surprising. Even those of us who have been reading mysteries for thirty-some years can appreciate the way Ruth Rendell turns things upside down and forces you to look at the evidence from an entirely different point of view. Not an incredible amount of action--the solution is more slow and steady wins the race than the hurly burly of a dramatic chase and slam-bang finish. Lots of red herrings and it's fun to watch Inspector Wexford vamped by a beautiful witness. Highly enjoyable read at 3.5 stars.

First posted on my blog My Reader's Block. Please request permission before reposting. Thanks.

Shonna Froebel says

This is one of Rendell's that I missed and finally got around to reading. Inspector Wexford and his sidekick Burden, get a case of a murdered wife. The woman is discovered by her mother-in-law upon arrival for a weekend visit. The husband was at work when the murder occurred, but Wexford is sure of his involvement. Wexford is however forbidden from more contact with the man after a complaint of harassment and is forced to take his actions on the case onto his own time. He gets his nephew, in the London police, interested

and along with him finds out more about the man's actions. When another investigator does Wexford a favour, things really start to come together, but it is a close thing. Good plot with interesting characters.

Laura says

Just arrived from Porto Alegre through BM.

Another great masterpiece written by the "new Lady of Crime". I do love the Wexford's series, the best in my opinion.

There is a movie version based on this book Shake Hands Forever: Part One (1988) with Tom Wilkinson acting as Robert Hathall.

Irma says

Great Rendell Mystery

A challenging case for detective Wexford. He's challenged and left alone to his devices to make sense of this murder of a wife. I've always liked Wexford's vulnerabilities, here they are as a man as well as a detective. Enjoy a great mystery.

Nancy says

As my husband and I listened to this book in the car, we stopped the CD a couple times to wonder why Wexford was being blocked by his supervisor from from investigating people who seemed to us to be the most likely murderers. Needless to say there are twists and surprises that make it worth 4 stars so the delay was needed as a plot device. Surely some more plausible plot device could have been devised.

A caution for those who plan to listen to the audio version read by Nigel Anthony. He voices one of the women characters at such a low volume that it is impossible to understand the words in an economy car such as ours. Maybe it is not a problem in quiet luxury car. We had to constantly change the volume whenever Wexford had a conversation with Nancy, often missing the first part of her replies to his questions.

Bev Taylor says

is not your usual wexford mystery

sorry - difficult to believe that wexford would get away with his detecting methods in this day and age

also the post mortem would have taken fingerprints and dental records to reconfirm identity of dead person

what was the acrimonious dispute between mrs lake and the hathalls? difficult to believe that such a necklace could be flushed down a plug hole and why go to so much trouble? library was 17 on the map but he entered 7; why not ask in travel agency for details?

back to the drawing board with this one but i have not given up

bev
