



# The Headhunters

*Peter Lovesey*

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## **The Headhunters** Peter Lovesey

Gemma loathes her sleazy boss; Jo is her confidante. On a double date with Rick and Jake, they discuss forming a mutual murder society, in jest of course. The next day, Jo, walking on Selsey Beach, discovers the corpse of a drowned woman, a stranger. But one of the men in the lineup at the police station is Gemma's date Jake, who Jo rather fancies.

Then Gemma and Jo discover the corpse of Fiona, Gemma's annoying colleague from work. And Gemma's boss is missing. When an older woman whom Rick was involved with is drowned in her pool, the police begin to close in.

Can this outbreak of deaths by drowning be coincidental? Or has the joke gone too far?

## **The Headhunters Details**

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## From Reader Review The Headhunters for online ebook

### The Listmaker says

An intriguing read. A whodunit that has the reader guessing until almost the very end. I say almost because I figured out who the murderer was with about 100 pages to go.

The story moved along well, had great pacing, some decent humor and enough red herrings to throw off even the most studious of readers.

The ending seemed a bit too "wrapped up" though. As if the writer wanted to end the story rather than flesh out the ending with maybe just one more chapter. You went from not suspecting this person at all to suddenly you're getting a life story with explanations for why they're killing people, all within maybe four pages. There was very little revelation in between. Only one small "AH HA" type moment as opposed to a slow build to that moment.

All in all though this was a good read, one I'd recommend to anyone looking for a quick and easy mystery.

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### Carol says

Fantastic mystery! I loved the point of view between Jo, the young woman who unwittingly stumbles into a murder investigation, and Henrietta Mallin, the chief detective, although the reader doesn't get to hear from Hen for quite a while. Lots of British slang and great sense of place beautifully captured.

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### Adelaide Blair says

This is the second of Lovesey's book to feature Inspector Hen Mallin, and I wish he had written more of them. ("The Circle" is the other one.) Both novels follow a similar format in that there are two narratives, one about an ordinary citizen trying to solve a crime and the other about Inspector Mallin, who is also trying to solve the same crime. This book is a lot of fun, but is hampered by the fact that the protagonist in the not-Mallin thread is not particularly likable. Her motivations are also fairly unclear, so I spent a large part of the novel wondering why the heck she was doing what she was doing. But, this is still a very enjoyable read and the character of Hen Mallin is very engaging.

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### Maynard says

An excellent read that had me guessing and speculating from the beginning of the book to the very end. Peter Lovesey definitely is a master and he has been recognized as such with the awarding of the British Crime Writers Association's "Lifetime Achievement Award".

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## Mary says

One of my favorite authors. He gives you a great murder mystery, along with a detailed tour of the English countryside, which I follow along on the map. The places he names (restaurants, roads, churches, etc.) are always real, and I just love traveling to England with him!

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## Fran says

What I learned is: Don't EVER discuss killing your boss with anyone.

A fun, twisting, plot and an enjoyable read. People are dead. Is it just a coincidence or did a boyfriend kill them for you? Or did he kill them for his own sick reasons? Or is he not the killer at all? This has twists and turns that last clear up to the final pages, and makes you remember why you love Peter Lovesey novels.

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## Kate says

Another good Peter Lovesey mystery. My only thought is why do innocent people lie to the police? Or withhold information? Can never figure that out. Makes them look even more suspicious.

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## Jill Hutchinson says

I usually read this author's Peter Diamond series which I enjoy immensely but this is a one-off about four friends who, over drinks, come up with wild schemes to kill one of the lady's boss who she hates. It is all in fun.....or is it? Women are being found murdered by drowning and the victims all seem to have some connection to one of the four friends, the boss, or their workplaces. The identity of the killer, which I assume the author meant to be the twist ending, was telegraphed early on and the story become a matter of how the police would tie all the disparate clues together.

This is the second book I have read lately where the female protagonists are dumber than dirt...but for that matter, so are the men in this story. Not very satisfying and really not up to par with Lovesey's other works.

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## Larissa says

I loved the first Lovesey I read (*Cop to Corpse*, one of his Peter Diamond police procedurals), but this standalone just wasn't capturing me. The wrong place/wrong time conceit can be compelling, but it felt like a lot of red herrings beuilding up and I wasn't that thrilled with the main characters, so I decided to set this one aside for now...

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## Shonna Froebel says

This mystery had lots of twists and turns leading to a satisfying conclusion.

Jo and Gemma became friends after meeting at a yoga class. One night when Jo is out with Rick bowling they meet up with Gemma and Jake. Gemma complains about her boss and talks about how she could kill him. They joke about different odds ways to kill someone, and then move on to the movies.

Gemma and Rick have hit it off and Jo has no problem with that. In fact she is rather interested in Jake.

Hoping to meet him, she takes a walk early the next morning on Selsey beach. She is horrified to discover the body of a woman. DCI Hen Mallin gets the case and struggles to identify the woman.

Gemma notes to Jo that Fiona, a staff member who had been flirting with her boss, seems to have disappeared along with the boss. The two go to Fiona's house to see if she is there and report her missing, but the pair also find another body.

As the case keeps leading back to Jo and her friends, Jo fights to prove the innocence of those she cares about. This case kept me guessing until near the end and provides lots of interesting plot as well as characters. A good read (or listen).

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### **Kathy says**

Another "Inspector Hen Mallin Mystery" that doesn't focus on her, which is disappointing. Four co-workers jokingly plot the murder of a difficult boss, and then he goes missing. The murderer turns out to be a serial killer going back to childhood days. Chilling and suspenseful.

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### **Don says**

I've come to realize that characters making bad decisions is really something to overlook in murder mysteries; it's what keeps things interesting and moves the story along. I can forgive lapses in judgement in these cases, including the huge lapse in judgement that sets the story in motion in the first place (at least in a work of fiction). What I have a harder time buying is how characters who should never connect somehow do connect. Were the relationships established more realistically, this one would be a 5-star read.

Sidebar: One of my favorite things about English murder mysteries are the unusual (to me) turns of phrase. It appears in this version of England the phones have never rung; instead they "went" (as in, "the phone went"). Really? I would expect something more, such as "his phone chimed" or "her mobile tinkled". "The phone went" sounds too much like the phone is up and leaving, or perhaps piddling on the carpet. Oh well, it's all good, innit?

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### **Annabelle says**

The town of Bath is a character in and of itself. Gnarly detective Hen drives around working with her 2nd in command Stella, to solve the murder of a women's body found on the beach. The action revolves around Gemma, young, single, thoughtful and working at a plant nursery, and three of her friends her superficial date Rick, her yoga friend Jo, and Jo's friend Jake. They switch out. The interesting setting is a wildlife reserve manned by Rick the ranger. The young people are superficially developed, and Peter Lovesey, author, seems to be winking at the reader and saying seeing how silly these people are. The 20 year old singles dialogue rings false. Hen is the typical British detective, snarls at people, chain smokes, but has a heart of gold. The perpetrator is a surprise, but there really aren't any clues, she or he just shows her hand.

## Sheila Beaumont says

It had been a while since I'd read a Peter Lovesey novel, and I'd forgotten how very good they are. In this one, an Inspector Hen Mallin mystery, two young couples lightheartedly discuss, over coffee in a Chichester Starbucks, how one might go about committing the perfect murder, after one of the women says she could cheerfully murder her boss. They call themselves "The Headhunters." Soon corpses start showing up, and the young woman's boss goes missing. Has someone taken this jocular conversation too seriously?

This traditional police-procedural mystery is an expertly told story, with a clever, intricate plot, a fast pace, well-portrayed characters, and suspense interspersed with dark humor. An excellent read for those who enjoy traditional British crime fiction.

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## Jill says

I would give this book 3 1/2 stars if that were possible. I liked the breezy voice of this book but the plot was full of red herrings and felt contrived to me. The Inspector was not particularly likable as she seemed to latch on one person as a suspect and then another and then yet another. However, there were some great little phrases that were descriptive and funny. The narrator was excellent.

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