

# A man for all seasons

*Crime writer explores the tensions of our times*

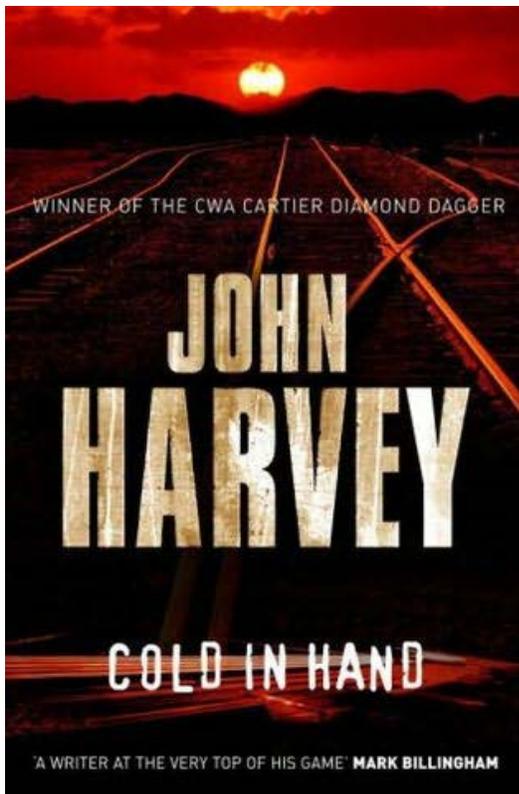
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## *Suspended Sentences*

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by Jim Napier

Ten years ago a British crime writer asked if I'd read anything by an author named John Harvey. When I confessed that I hadn't, in true British understatement she drily suggested that I should. It wasn't exactly an enthusiastic endorsement, and with the many crime novels being published each year, I only got around to taking up her suggestion recently. I'm glad I did, and now I'm passing on that same suggestion to my readers, albeit with a somewhat less-restrained judgment: his writing is bloody marvelous!



### *John Harvey*

John Harvey was born in London in 1938 and lived in Nottingham for many years. After studying at the University of London and at Hatfield Polytechnic, he took his Masters Degree in American Studies at the University of Nottingham.

A prolific author, Harvey has over 90 published books to his credit, including a collection of short stories and two volumes of poetry. But he is perhaps best known as the creator of ten police procedurals featuring Detective Inspector Charlie Resnick, who has been described as "British crime fiction's best-kept secret."

Although I regularly feature authors who are outstanding in their field, very few authors reviewed in this column have won the widespread critical acclaim that John Harvey has enjoyed. A *partial* list of his awards includes the following:

- After being shortlisted for the British-based CWA Gold Dagger for Best Novel of 1990, his first Charley Resnick novel, *Lonely Hearts*, went on to be named by *The Times* as one of the 100 most notable crime novels of the last *century*;
- Harvey was shortlisted for the CWA Dagger in the Library in 1995, and shortlisted as well for the French CWA Best Foreign Novel in 1997, for *Off Minor*;

- In 1999 he was awarded the Sherlock Award for Best British Detective, for Charley Resnick in *Last Rites*;
- Harvey won the Silver prize in the Sony Radio Drama Awards of 1999, for his adaptation of Graham Green's *The End of the Affair*;
- In 2000 he won the Grand Prix du Romain Noir Etranger du Cognac, for his novel *Cold Light*;
- Awarded the CWA Silver Dagger for Fiction in 2004, Harvey went on to win the (U.S.) Barry Award for Best British Crime Novel of 2004 for the same novel;
- Finally, in 2007 Harvey was awarded the CWA Cartier Diamond Dagger for Sustained Excellence in Crime Writing.

As they say, not too shabby. Did I mention that John Harvey is also an authority on jazz, and has recorded some of his poems to a background of jazz music?

***Cold In Hand***  
(Heinemann/Random House, 2008)

Charles Resnick is a middle-aged Detective Inspector with the Nottingham Police. His lover, Lynn Kellogg is also a DI. One evening, while expecting her to return home, he gets a call that shatters his life: Kellogg has been shot while responding to a call.

Rushing to the hospital, he is relieved to find that her wounds are superficial. But a local teenager involved in the disturbance was not so lucky. Kelly Brent has died from her wounds, and her family blames Kellogg for using her as a shield.

Resnick's superior asks him to head the homicide inquiry. On the surface the case seems straightforward enough: a

conflict between rival gangs. But it is not long before Lynn Kellogg begins receiving anonymous death threats.

As an experienced officer, DI Kellogg has her share of enemies. Nine months earlier she had investigated the killing of a sex trade worker in a massage parlour owned by an Albanian thug named Viktor Zoukas. A key witness in the case, Andrea Florescu, had disappeared, and Stuart Daines a senior officer with the Serious Crimes Command (SOCA) seemed overly protective of Zoukas, arguing that a SOCA investigation could be compromised. When Kellogg became suspicious and tried to look further into Daines' connection with Zoukas, the officer had threatened her.

When Lynn Kellogg is shot and killed on Resnick's doorstep, his world falls to pieces. Even as he tries to cope with his loss, he is determined to kind her killer. Is it Howard Brent, Kelly's father, who blamed Kellogg for his daughter's death, and has since disappeared? Perhaps it was Viktor Zoukas, anxious to stall her investigation of his illicit activities? Or was it Stuart Daines, whose relationship with Zoukas raises flags? When Howard Brent reappears, Resnick tries to attack him, and is declared unfit for duty and suspended.

But his lover has been murdered, and with a visceral outrage that reaches to the very core of his being, Charley Resnick is not about to leave the case alone.

***A multi-layered puzzle***

Harvey is an accomplished storyteller, and he has put together a multi-layered puzzle grounded in the tensions of our times. As he moves from the comfortable world of Nottingham to a small village in Romania, John Harvey

skillfully explores the themes of love and loss, and the corrupting power of hatred.

With a professional's eye for atmosphere, the dark storyline is leavened by informed allusions to both esoteric and classical jazz. This is no accident, nor mere appendage; in an interview in the *Chicago Sun Times* Harvey notes that "*One of the things Resnick draws from music is the ability to sense deeper possibilities in people, criminals as well as victims of crime. ...He sees people leading difficult lives being able to produce something of worth too. Maybe even something beautiful.*" For those who wish to pursue his interest in music, Harvey has even provided an annotated discography of classical jazz artists at [www.mellotone.co.uk](http://www.mellotone.co.uk).

An insightful look at race relations and the illicit trade in women and weapons, *Cold In Hand* is at its roots a compelling tale of victims and those they leave behind. It is also the poignant story of a caring, decent man whom tragedy has visited too often. You will come away wanting to read much more from the pen of this talented author.

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