

The background of the cover is a circular porthole view of a stormy sea. The water is dark and turbulent, with white-capped waves. The glass of the porthole is covered in raindrops and streaks of water, creating a sense of being inside a ship during a heavy rainstorm. The title text is overlaid on this scene.

THE
WOMAN
IN
CABIN
10

a novel

The #1
New York
Times
Bestseller

RUTH WARE

Author of *In a Dark, Dark Wood*

PRAISE FOR RUTH WARE'S
INSTANT *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

in a dark, dark wood

An NPR Best Book of the Year • An *Entertainment Weekly* Top Ten Summer Read • A *BuzzFeed* “31 Perfect Books to Get Excited About This Summer” Pick • A *Publishers Weekly* “Top Ten Mysteries and Thrillers” Pick • A *Bookreporter* Summer Reading Pick • A *New York Post* “Best Novels to Read This Summer” Pick • A *Shelf Awareness* “Book Expo America 2015 Buzz Book” Pick

“Prepare to be scared . . . Really scared! When I read this page-turning book about a bachelorette party gone wrong, I almost bit all my fingernails off!”

—Reese Witherspoon

“Who pulls a gun at a bachelorette party? The answers are unveiled with Gillian Flynn–style trickery.”

—*O, The Oprah Magazine*

“Reese Witherspoon’s making it into a movie, so read the book now. Before bed at your own risk.”

—*theSkimm*

“Just try to guess how sinister this plot can get (hint: VERY).”

—*Marie Claire*

“[It] packs a noirish punch that would make the Queen of Crime herself proud.”

—*Bustle*

“Ware hews [close] to the new genre of twisty-mystery women’s books.”

—*Vulture*

“Ruth Ware has written an exciting and amazing book that never stops circling the reader and clapping its cold hands over her eyes.”

—Peter Straub, *New York Times* bestselling author

“The pulse-quickening plot will keep you up until the small hours.”

—*Good Housekeeping*, UK

“Read it on a dark and stormy night—with all the lights on.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“An enchantingly unsettling thriller with mysterious characters and a classically spooky setting.”

—*Shelf Awareness*

“[It] will appeal to fans of Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl* and Paula Hawkins’s *The Girl on the Train*.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“You’ll find it almost impossible to put this twisting, electrifying debut down . . . [The] foggy atmosphere and chilling revelations will leave you breathless.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“A sinister mood lurks in [*In a Dark, Dark Wood*].”

—*ELLE*, UK

“Ware writes with verve and energy, building up the suspense and keeping the pages flying.”

—*Library Journal*

“Ware’s debut novel sets the stage for her to become a household name . . . Engaging, suspenseful and mysterious.”

—*RT Book Reviews*

“Haunting.”

—*styleboston*

“WARNING: This book is hot. Do not pick it up late at night or if you are in a dark, dark wood . . . Ruth Ware has a gift. This British author’s first foray into fiction is a hit . . . it delivers a punch and keeps you guessing—an ideal August psychodrama that reminds us why mysteries remain such fun—except at night.”

—*New York Journal of Books*

“I raced through this, totally unable to put it down . . . Dark, smart, and compulsive.”

—Nicci Cloke, author of *Lay Me Down*

“So gripping. So glad my hen days are behind me. It’s going to be huge.”

—Tamar Cohen, author of *Dying for Christmas* and *The Broken*

“Likely to be the next *Gone Girl*.”

—*Surrounded by Books*

“If the premise might be the sort that Agatha Christie would have toyed with had she been a twenty-first-century graduate, Ware’s analysis of the power games some women revel in—and the toxicity in the undertow of some female friendships—is more reminiscent of Sophie Hannah, Christobel Kent, or even Gillian Flynn and Harriet Lane.”

—*Independent*

“The best thing about *In A Dark, Dark Wood* is the eerie atmosphere it creates for this ill-fated weekend, never overwrought, just ominous enough, the glass house where the guests are trapped ‘dark and silent, blending into the trees, almost invisible.’”

—*USAToday.com*

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THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10

RUTH WARE



SCOUT PRESS

New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

To Eleanor, with love

In my dream, the girl was drifting, far, far below the crashing waves and the cries of the gulls in the cold, sunless depths of the North Sea. Her laughing eyes were white and bloated with salt water; her pale skin was wrinkled; her clothes ripped by jagged rocks and disintegrating into rags.

Only her long black hair remained, floating through the water like fronds of dark seaweed, tangling in shells and fishing nets, washing up on the shore in hanks like frayed rope, where it lay, limp, the roar of the crashing waves against the shingle filling my ears.

I woke, heavy with dread. It took me a while to remember where I was, and still longer to realize that the roar in my ears was not part of the dream but real.

The room was dark, with the same damp mist I'd felt in my dream, and as I pulled myself to sitting I felt a cool breeze on my cheek. It sounded like the noise was coming from the bathroom.

I climbed off the bed, shivering slightly. The door was shut, but as I walked across to it, I could hear the roar building, the pitch of my heart rising alongside. Taking my courage in both hands, I flung open the door. The noise of the shower filled the small room as I groped for the switch. Light flooded the bathroom—and that's when I saw it.

Written across the steamy mirror, in letters maybe six inches high, were the words STOP DIGGING.



PART ONE

- CHAPTER 1 -

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

The first inkling that something was wrong was waking in darkness to find the cat pawing at my face. I must have forgotten to shut the kitchen door last night. Punishment for coming home drunk.

“Go away,” I groaned. Delilah mewed and butted me with her head. I tried to bury my face in the pillow but she continued rubbing herself against my ear, and eventually I rolled over and heartlessly pushed her off the bed.

She thumped to the floor with an indignant little *meep* and I pulled the duvet over my head, but even through the covers I could hear her scratching at the bottom of the door, rattling it in its frame.

The door was closed.

I sat up, my heart suddenly thumping, and Delilah leaped onto my bed with a glad little chirrup, but I snatched her to my chest, stilling her movements, listening.

I might well have forgotten to shut the kitchen door, or I could even have knocked it to without closing it properly. But my bedroom door opened outward—a quirk of the weird layout of my flat. There was no way Delilah could have shut herself inside. *Someone* must have closed it.

I sat, frozen, holding Delilah’s warm, panting body against my chest and trying to listen.

Nothing.

And then, with a gush of relief, it occurred to me—she'd probably been hiding under my bed and I'd shut her inside with me when I came home. I didn't remember closing my bedroom door, but I might have swung it absently shut behind me when I came in. To be honest, everything from the tube station onwards was a bit of a blur. The headache had started to set in on the journey home, and now that my panic was wearing off, I could feel it starting up again in the base of my skull. I *really* needed to stop drinking midweek. It had been okay in my twenties, but I just couldn't shake off the hangovers like I used to.

Delilah began squirming uneasily in my arms, digging her claws into my forearm, and I let her go while I reached for my dressing gown and belted it around myself. Then I scooped her up, ready to sling her out into the kitchen.

But when I opened the bedroom door, there was a man standing there.

There's no point in wondering what he looked like, because, believe me, I went over it about twenty-five times with the police. "Not even a bit of skin around his wrists?" they kept saying. No, no, and no. He had a hoodie on, and a bandanna around his nose and mouth, and everything else was in shadow. Except for his hands.

On these he was wearing latex gloves. It was that detail that scared the shit out of me. Those gloves said, "I know what I'm doing." They said, "I've come prepared." They said, "I might be after more than your money."

We stood there for a long second, facing each other, his shining eyes locked on to mine.

About a thousand thoughts raced through my mind: Where the hell is my phone? Why did I drink so much last night? I would have heard him come

in if I'd been sober. Oh Christ, I wish Judah was here.

And most of all—those gloves. Oh my God, those gloves. They were so professional. So *clinical*.

I didn't speak. I didn't move. I just stood there, my ratty dressing gown gaping, and I shook. Delilah wriggled out of my unresisting hands and shot away up the hallway to the kitchen, and I just stood there, shaking.

Please, I thought. Please don't hurt me.

Oh God, where was my phone?

Then I saw something in the man's hands. My handbag—my new Burberry handbag, although that detail seemed monumentally unimportant. There was only one thing that mattered about that bag. My mobile was inside.

His eyes crinkled in a way that made me think he might be smiling beneath the bandanna, and I felt the blood drain from my head and my fingers, pooling in the core of my body, ready to fight or flee, whichever it had to be.

He took a step forwards.

“No . . .” I said. I wanted it to sound like a command, but it came out like a plea—my voice small and squeaky and quavering pathetically with fear. “N—”

But I didn't even get to finish. He slammed the bedroom door in my face, hitting my cheek.

For a long moment I stood, frozen, holding my hand to my face, speechless with the shock and pain. My fingers felt ice-cold, but there was something warm and wet on my face, and it took a moment for me to realize it was blood, that the molding on the door had cut my cheek.

I wanted to run back to bed, to shove my head under the pillows and cry and cry. But a small, ugly voice in my skull kept saying, *He's still out there. What if he comes back? What if he comes back for you?*

There was a sound from out in the hall, something falling, and I felt a rush of fear that should have galvanized me but instead paralyzed me. *Don't come back. Don't come back.* I realized I was holding my breath, and I made myself exhale, long and shuddering, and then slowly, slowly, I forced my hand out towards the door.

There was another crash in the hallway outside, breaking glass, and with a rush I grabbed the knob and braced myself, my bare toes dug into the old, gappy floorboards, ready to hold the door closed as long as I could. I crouched there, against the door, hunched over with my knees to my chest, and I tried to muffle my sobs with my dressing gown while I listened to him ransacking the flat and hoped to God that Delilah had run out into the garden, out of harm's way.

At last, after a long time, I heard the front door open and shut, and I sat there, crying into my knees and unable to believe he'd really gone. That he wasn't coming back to hurt me. My hands felt numb and painfully stiff, but I didn't dare let go of the handle.

I saw again those strong hands in the pale latex gloves.

I don't know what would have happened next. Maybe I would have stayed there all night, unable to move. But then I heard Delilah outside, mewing and scratching at the other side of the door.

"Delilah," I said hoarsely. My voice was trembling so much I hardly sounded like myself. "Oh, Delilah."

Through the door I heard her purr, the familiar, deep, chainsaw rasp, and it was like a spell had been broken.

I let my cramped fingers loosen from the doorknob, flexing them painfully, and then stood up, trying to steady my trembling legs, and turned the door handle.

It turned. In fact it turned too easily, twisting without resistance under my hand, without moving the latch an inch. He'd removed the spindle from the other side.

Fuck.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

I was trapped.

- CHAPTER 2 -

It took me two hours to prize my way out of my bedroom. I didn't have a landline, so I had no way of calling for help, and the window was covered by security bars. I broke my best nail file, hammering away at the latch, but at last I got the door open and I ventured out into the narrow hallway. There are only four rooms in my flat—kitchen, living room, bedroom, and tiny bathroom—and you can pretty much see the full extent of it from outside my bedroom, but I couldn't stop myself from peering into each doorway, even checking the cupboard in the hallway where I keep my Hoover. Making sure he was really gone.

My head was pounding and my hands were shaking as I made my way outside and up the steps to my neighbor's front door, and I found myself looking over my shoulder into the dark street as I waited for her to answer. It was around four a.m., I guessed, and it took a long time and a lot of banging to wake her up. I heard grumbling, over the sound of Mrs. Johnson's feet clumping down her stairs, and her face when she cracked open the door was a mixture of bleary confusion and fright, but when she saw me huddled on the doorstep in my dressing gown, with blood on my face and on my hands, her expression changed in an instant and she took off the chain.

“Oh my days! Whatever's happened?”

“I got burgled.” It was hard to talk. I don’t know if it was the chilly autumn air, or the shock, but I had started shivering convulsively and my teeth chattered so hard I had a momentary horrible image of them shattering in my head. I pushed the thought away.

“You’re bleedin’!” Her face was full of distress. “Oh, bless my soul, come in, come in!”

She led the way into the paisley-carpeted entrance to her maisonette, which was small and dark and grimly overheated, but right now felt like a sanctuary.

“Sit down, sit down.” She pointed to a red plush sofa and then went creakily to her knees and began to fiddle with the gas fire. The gas popped and flared, and I felt the heat rise a degree as she got painfully to her feet again. “I’ll make you some hot tea.”

“I’m fine, honestly, Mrs. Johnson. Do you think—”

But she was shaking her head sternly.

“There’s nothin’ to beat hot sweet tea when you’ve had a shock.”

So I sat, my shaky hands clasped around my knees, while she rattled around in the tiny kitchen and then came back with two mugs on a tray. I reached out for the closest and took a sip, wincing at the heat against the cut on my hand. It was so sweet I could barely taste the dissolving blood in my mouth, which I supposed was a blessing.

Mrs. Johnson didn’t drink but just watched me, her forehead wrinkled in distress.

“Did he . . .” Her voice faltered. “Did he *hurt* you?”

I knew what she meant. I shook my head, but I took another scalding sip before I could trust myself to speak.

“No. He didn’t touch me. He slammed a door in my face—that’s the cut on my cheek. And then I cut my hand trying to get out of the bedroom. He’d locked me in.”

I had a jolting flash of myself battering at the lock with a nail file and a pair of scissors. Judah was always teasing about using the proper tools for the job—you know, not undoing a screw with the tip of a dinner knife, or prizing off a bike tire using a garden trowel. Only last weekend he’d laughed at my attempt to fix my showerhead with duct tape, and spent a whole afternoon painstakingly mending it with epoxy resin. He was away in Ukraine and I couldn’t think about him right now. If I did, I’d cry, and if I cried now, I might never stop.

“Oh, you poor love.”

I swallowed.

“Mrs. Johnson, thank you for the tea—but I really came to ask, can I use your phone? He took my mobile, so I’ve got no way of calling the police.”

“Of course, of course. Drink your tea, and then it’s over there.” She indicated a doily-covered side table, with what was probably the last turn-dial phone in London outside an Islington vintage-retro boutique. Obediently I finished my tea and then I picked up the phone. For a moment my finger hovered over the nine, but then I sighed. He was gone. What could they reasonably do now? It was no longer an emergency, after all.

Instead, I dialed 101 for nonemergency response and waited to be put through.

And I sat and thought about the insurance I didn’t have, and the reinforced lock I hadn’t installed, and the mess tonight had become.

I was still thinking about that, hours later, as I watched the emergency locksmith replace the crappy bolt-on latch of my front door with a proper deadlock, and listened to his lecture on home security and the joke that was my back door.

“That panel’s nuffing but MDF, love. It’d take one kick to bash it in. Want me to show you?”

“No,” I said hastily. “No, thanks. I’ll get it fixed. You don’t do doors, do you?”

“Nah, but I got a mate who does. I’ll give you his number before I go. Meantime, you get your hubby to whack a good piece of eighteen-mil plywood over that panel. You don’t want a repeat of last night.”

“No,” I agreed. Understatement of the century.

“Mate in the police says a quarter of all burglaries are repeats. Same guys come back for more.”

“Great,” I said thinly. Just what I needed to hear.

“Eighteen-mil. Want me to write it down for your husband?”

“No, thanks. I’m not married.” And even in spite of my ovaries, I *can* remember a simple two-digit number.

“Aaaah, right, gotcha. Well, there you go, then,” he said, as if that proved something. “This doorframe ain’t nothing to write home about, neither. You want one of them London bars to reinforce it. Otherwise you can have the best lock in the business, but if they kick it out the frame you’re back in the same place as before. I got one in the van that might fit. Do you know them things I’m talking about?”

“I know what they are,” I said wearily. “A piece of metal that goes over the lock, right?” I suspected he was milking me for all the business he could get, but I didn’t care at this point.

“Tell you what”—he stood up, shoving his chisel in his back pocket—“I’ll do the London bar, and I’ll chuck in a piece of ply over the back door for free. I got a bit in the van about the right size. Chin up, love. He ain’t getting back in *this* way, at any rate.”

For some reason the words weren’t reassuring.

After he’d gone, I made myself a tea and paced the flat. I felt like Delilah after a tomcat broke in through the cat flap and pissed in the hallway—she had prowled every room for hours, rubbing herself up against bits of furniture, peeing into corners, reclaiming her space.

I didn’t go as far as peeing on the bed, but I felt the same sense of space invaded, a need to reclaim what had been violated. *Violated?* said a sarcastic little voice in my head. *Puh-lease, you drama queen.*

But I did feel violated. My little flat felt ruined—soiled and unsafe. Even describing it to the police had felt like an ordeal—yes, I saw the intruder; no, I can’t describe him. What was in the bag? Oh, just, you know, my life: money, mobile phone, driver’s license, medication, pretty much everything of use from my mascara right through to my travel card.

The brisk impersonal tone of the police operator’s voice still echoed in my head.

“What kind of phone?”

“Nothing valuable,” I said wearily. “Just an old iPhone. I can’t remember the model, but I can find out.”

“Thanks. Anything you can remember in terms of the exact make and serial number might help. And you mentioned medication—what kind, if you don’t mind me asking?”

I was instantly on the defensive.

“What’s my medical history got to do with this?”

“Nothing.” The operator was patient, irritatingly so. “It’s just some pills have got a street value.”

I knew the anger that flooded through me at his questions was unreasonable—he was only doing his job. But the burglar was the person who’d committed the crime. So why did I feel like I was the one being interrogated?

I was halfway to the living room with my tea when there was a banging at the door—so loud in the silent, echoing flat that I tripped and then froze, half standing, half crouching in the doorway.

I had a horrible jarring flash of a hooded face, of hands in latex gloves.

It was only when the door thudded again that I looked down and realized that my cup of tea was now lying smashed on the hallway tiles and that my feet were soaked in rapidly cooling liquid.

The door banged again.

“Just a minute!” I yelled, suddenly furious and close to tears. “I’m coming! Will you stop banging the bloody door!”

“Sorry, miss,” the policeman said when I finally opened the door. “Wasn’t sure if you’d heard.” And then, seeing the puddle of tea and the smashed shards of my cup: “Crikey, what’s been going on here then? Another break-in? Ha-ha!”

It was the afternoon by the time the policeman finished taking his report, and when he left, I opened up my laptop. It had been in the bedroom with me, and it was the only bit of tech the burglar hadn’t taken. Aside from my work, which was mostly not backed up, it had all my passwords on it, including—and I cringed as I thought about it—a file helpfully named

“Banking stuff.” I didn’t actually have my pin numbers listed. But pretty much everything else was there.

As the usual deluge of e-mails dropped into my in-box, I caught sight of one headed “Planning on showing up today ;)?” and I realized with a jolt that I’d completely forgotten to contact *Velocity*.

I thought about e-mailing, but in the end, I fetched out the twenty-pound note I kept in the tea caddy for emergency cab money and walked to the dodgy phone shop at the tube station. It took some haggling, but eventually the guy sold me a cheap pay-as-you-go plus SIM card for fifteen pounds and I sat in the café opposite and phoned the assistant features editor, Jenn, who has the desk opposite mine.

I told her what happened, making it sound funnier and more farcical than it really had been. I dwelled heavily on the image of me chipping away at the lock with a nail file and didn’t tell her about the gloves, or the general sense of powerless terror, or the horribly vivid flashbacks that kept ambushing me just as I was rummaging for change, or stirring tea, or thinking of something else completely.

“Shit.” Her voice at the end of the crackly line was full of horror. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, more or less. But I won’t be in today, I’ve got to clear up the flat.” Although, in actual fact, it wasn’t that bad. He’d been commendably neat. For, you know, a criminal.

“God, Lo, you poor thing. Listen, do you want me to get someone else to cover you on this northern lights thing?”

For a minute I had no idea what she was talking about—then I remembered. The *Aurora*. A boutique super-luxury cruise liner traveling around the Norwegian fjords, and somehow, I still wasn’t quite sure how, I

had been lucky enough to snag one of the handful of press passes on its maiden voyage.

It was a huge perk—in spite of working for a travel magazine, my normal beat was cutting and pasting press releases and finding images for articles sent back from luxury destinations by my boss, Rowan. It was Rowan who had been supposed to go, but unfortunately, after saying yes she had discovered that pregnancy didn't agree with her—hyperemesis, apparently—and the cruise had landed in my lap like a big present, fraught with responsibility and possibilities. It was a vote of confidence from her, giving it to me when there were more senior people she could have buttered up, and I knew if I played my cards right on this trip, it would be a big point in my favor when it came to jockeying for Rowan's maternity cover and maybe—just maybe—getting that promotion she'd been promising for the last few years.

It was also this weekend. Sunday, in fact. I'd be leaving in two days.

“No,” I said, surprising myself with the firmness in my voice. “No, I definitely don't want to pull out. I'm fine.”

“Are you sure? What about your passport?”

“It was in my bedroom; he didn't find it.” Thank God.

“Are you *absolutely* sure?” she said again, and I could hear the concern in her voice. “This is a big deal—not just for you, for the mag I mean. If you don't feel up to it, Rowan wouldn't want you—”

“I am up to it,” I said, cutting her off. There was no way I was letting this opportunity slip through my fingers. If I did, it might be the last one I had. “I promise. I really want to do this, Jenn.”

“Okay . . .” she said, almost reluctantly. “Well, in that case, full steam ahead, eh? They sent through a press pack this morning, so I'll courier that

across along with your train tickets. I've got Rowan's notes somewhere; I think the main thing is to do a really nice puff piece on the boat, because she's hoping to get them on board as advertisers, but there should be some interesting people among the other guests, so if you can get anything else done in the way of profiles, so much the better."

"Sure." I grabbed a pen from the counter of the café and began taking notes on a paper napkin. "And remind me what time it leaves?"

"You're catching the ten thirty train from King's Cross—but I'll put it all in the press pack."

"That's fine. And thanks, Jenn."

"No worries," she said. Her voice was a little wistful, and I wondered if she'd been planning to step into the breach herself. "Take care, Lo. And 'bye."

It was still just about light as I trudged slowly home. My feet hurt, my cheek ached, and I wanted to go home and sink into a long, hot bath.

The door of my basement flat was bathed in shadow as it always was, and I thought once again that I must get a security light, if only so that I could see my own keys in my handbag, but even in the dimness I could see the splintered wood where he'd forced the lock. The miracle was that I hadn't heard him. *Well, what do you expect, you were drunk, after all,* said the nasty little voice in my head.

But the new deadlock felt reassuringly solid as it clunked back, and inside I locked it shut again, kicked off my shoes, and walked wearily down the hall to the bathroom, stifling a yawn as I set the taps running and slumped onto the toilet to pull off my tights. Next I began to unbutton my top . . . but then I stopped.

Normally I leave the bathroom door open—it's only me and Delilah, and the walls are prone to damp, being under ground level. I'm also not great with enclosed spaces, and the room feels very small when the window blinds are down.

The front door was locked, and the new London bar was in place, but I still checked the window and closed and locked the bathroom door before I finished peeling off my clothes. I was tired—God, I was *so* tired. I had an image of falling asleep in the tub, slipping below the water, Judah finding my naked bloated body a week later . . . I shook myself. I needed to stop being so bloody dramatic. The tub was barely four feet long. I had trouble contorting myself so I could rinse my hair, let alone drown.

The bath was hot enough to make the cut on my cheek sting, and I shut my eyes and tried to imagine myself somewhere else, somewhere quite different from this chilly, claustrophobic little space, far away from sordid, crime-ridden London. Walking on a cool Nordic shore, perhaps, in my ears the soothing sound of the . . . er . . . would it be the Baltic? For a travel journalist I'm worryingly bad at geography.

But unwanted images kept intruding. The locksmith saying “a quarter of all burglaries are repeats.” Me, cowering in my own bedroom, feet braced against the floorboards. The sight of strong hands encased in pale latex, the black hairs just showing through . . .

Shit. *Shit.*

I opened my eyes, but for once the reality check didn't help. Instead, I saw the damp bathroom walls looming over me, shutting me in. . . .

You're losing it again, my internal voice sniped. *You can feel it, can't you?*

Shut up. Shut up, shut up, shut up. I squeezed my eyes closed again and began to count, deliberately, trying to force the pictures out of my head. *One. Two. Three. Breathe in. Four. Five. Six. Breathe out. One. Two. Three. Breathe in. Four. Five. Six. Breathe out.*

At last the pictures receded, but the bath was spoiled, and the need to get out of the airless little room was suddenly overwhelming. I got up, wrapped a towel around myself and another around my hair, and went into the bedroom, where my laptop was still lying on the bed from earlier.

I opened it, fired up Google, and typed: *What % burglars return.*

A page of links came up and I clicked on one at random and scanned down it until I came to a paragraph that read:

WHEN BURGLARS RETURN . . .

A nationwide survey indicated that, over a twelve-month period, approximately 25 to 50 percent of burglaries are repeat incidents; and between 25 and 35 percent of victims are repeat victims. Figures gathered by UK police forces suggest that 28 to 51 percent of repeat burglaries occur within one month, 11 to 25 percent within a week.

Great. So it seemed like my friendly doom-and-gloom merchant, the locksmith, had actually been *understating* the problem, not winding me up. Although the maths involved in up to 50 percent repeat offenses but only 35 percent repeat victims made my head hurt. Either way, I didn't relish the idea of being among their number.

I had promised myself I wouldn't drink tonight, so after I had checked the front door, back door, window locks, and front door for the second—or maybe even the third—time, and put the pay-as-you-go phone on to charge beside my bed, I made myself a cup of chamomile tea.

I took it back through to the bedroom with my laptop, the press file for the trip, and a packet of chocolate cookies. It was only eight o'clock and I hadn't had any supper, but I was suddenly exhausted—too exhausted to cook, too exhausted even to phone for takeaway. I opened up the Nordic cruise press pack and huddled down into my duvet, and waited for sleep to claim me.

Except it didn't. I dunked my way through the whole packet of cookies and read page after page of facts and figures on the *Aurora*—just ten luxuriously appointed cabins . . . maximum of twenty passengers at any one time . . . handpicked staff from the world's top hotels and restaurants . . . Even the technical specifications of the boat's draft and tonnage weren't enough to lull me to sleep. I stayed awake, shattered yet somehow, at the same time, wired.

As I lay there in my cocoon I tried not to think about the burglar. I thought, very deliberately, about work, about all the practicalities I had to sort out before Sunday. Pick up my new bank cards. I had to pack and do my research for the trip. Would I see Jude before I left? He'd be trying my old phone.

I put down the press pack and pulled up my e-mails.

“Hi, love,” I typed, and then I paused and bit the side of my nail. What to say? No point in telling him about the burglary, not yet. He'd just feel bad about not being here when I needed him. “I've lost my phone,” I wrote instead. “Long story, I'll explain when you get back. But if you need me, e-mail, don't text. What's your ETA on Sunday? I'm off to Hull early, for this Nordic thing. Hope we can see each other before I leave—otherwise, see you next week? Lo x”

I pressed send, hoping he didn't wonder what I was doing up and e-mailing at 12:45 a.m., and then shut down the computer, picked up my book, and tried to read myself to sleep.

It didn't work.

At 3:35 a.m. I staggered through to the kitchen, picked up the bottle of gin, and poured myself the stiffest gin and tonic I could bring myself to drink. I gulped it down like medicine, shuddering at the harsh taste, and then poured a second and drank that, too, more slowly this time. I stood for a moment, feeling the alcohol tingling through my veins, relaxing my muscles, damping down my jangled nerves.

I poured the dregs of the gin into the glass and took it back to the bedroom, where I lay down, stiff and anxious, my eyes on the glowing face of the clock, and waited for the alcohol to take effect.

One. Two. Three. Breathe in. Four. . . . Five. . . . Fi . . .

I don't remember falling asleep, but I must have. One minute I was looking at the clock with bleary, headachy eyes, waiting for it to click over onto 4:44, the next minute I was blinking into Delilah's furry face as she butted her whiskery nose against mine and tried to tell me it was time for breakfast. I groaned. My head ached worse than yesterday—although I wasn't sure if it was my cheek or another hangover. The last gin and tonic was half full on my bedside table, beside the clock. I sniffed it and almost choked. It must have been two-thirds gin. What had I been thinking?

The clock said 6:04 and I calculated that meant I'd had less than an hour and a half's sleep, but I was awake now, no point in trying to fight it. Instead, I got up, pulled back the curtain, and peered into the gray dawn and the thin fingers of sun that trickled into my basement window. The day felt

cold and sour, and I shoved my feet into my slippers and shivered as I made my way down the hall to the thermostat, ready to override the automatic timer and start the heating for the day.

It was Saturday, so I didn't have to work, but somehow the work involved in getting my mobile number assigned to a new phone and my bank cards reissued took up most of the day, and by the evening I was drunk with tiredness.

It felt as bad as the time I'd flown back from Thailand via LA—a series of red-eyes that left me wild with sleep deprivation and hopelessly disoriented. Somewhere over the Atlantic, I realized that I had gone beyond sleep, that I might as well give up. Back home, I fell into bed like falling into a well, plunging headlong into oblivion, and I slept for twenty-two hours, coming up groggy and stiff-limbed to find Judah banging at my door with the Sunday papers. But this time, my bed was no longer a refuge.

I *had* to get myself together before I left for this trip. It was an unmissable, unrepeatable opportunity to prove myself after ten years at the coalface of boring cut-and-paste journalism. This was my chance to show I could hack it—that I, like Rowan, could network and schmooze and get *Velocity's* name in there with the high fliers. And Lord Bullmer, the owner of the *Aurora Borealis*, was a very high flier indeed, from what I'd gathered. Even 1 percent of his advertising budget could keep *Velocity* afloat for months, not to mention all the well-known names in travel and photography who would doubtless have been invited along on this maiden voyage, and whose bylines on our cover would look very nice indeed.

I wasn't about to start hard selling Bullmer over dinner—nothing as crude and commercial as that. But if I could get his number on my contacts

list and ensure that when I phoned him up, he took my call . . . well, it would go a long way to finally getting me that promotion.

As I ate supper, mechanically forking frozen pizza into my face until I felt too full to continue, I picked up where I'd left off with the press pack, but the words and pictures swam in front of my eyes, the adjectives blurring into one another: *boutique . . . glittering . . . luxury . . . handcrafted . . . artisan . . .*

I let the page drop with a yawn, then looked at my watch and realized it was past nine. I could go to bed, thank God. As I checked and rechecked the doors and locks, I reflected that the one silver lining to being so shattered was that it couldn't possibly be a repeat of last night.

I was so tired that even if a burglar *did* come, I'd probably sleep right through it.

At 10:47, I realized I was wrong.

At 11:23, I started to cry, weakly and stupidly.

Was this it, then? Was I never going to sleep again?

I had to sleep. I *had* to. I'd had . . . I counted on my fingers, unable to do the maths in my head. What . . . less than four hours of sleep in the last three days.

I could *taste* sleep. I could *feel* it, just out of my reach. I had to sleep. I had to. I was going to go crazy if I didn't sleep.

The tears were coming again—I didn't even know what they were. Tears of frustration? Rage, at myself, at the burglar? Or just exhaustion?

I only knew that I couldn't sleep—that it was dangling like an unkept promise just inches away from me. I felt like I was running towards a mirage that kept receding, slipping away faster and faster the more

desperately I ran. Or that it was like a fish in water, something I had to catch and hold, that kept slipping through my fingers.

Oh God, I want to sleep. . . .

Delilah turned her head towards me, startled. Had I really said it aloud? I couldn't even tell anymore. Christ, I was losing it.

A flash of a face—gleaming liquid eyes in the darkness.

I sat up, my heart pounding so hard that I could feel it in the back of my skull.

I had to get away from here.

I got up, stumbling, trancelike with exhaustion, and pushed my feet into my shoes, and my sleeves into my coat, over the top of my pajamas. Then I picked up my bag. If I couldn't sleep, I'd walk. Somewhere. Anywhere. I'd try to exhaust myself into sleeping.

If sleep wouldn't come to me, then I'd damn well hunt it down myself.