

"One of the most original thriller writers out there."

Simon Kernick

NOW WITH
A BONUS
CHAPTER

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

JOHN MARRS

THE MULTI-MILLION COPY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

PRAISE FOR JOHN MARRS

‘Clever, twisted, and dark as mighty hell.’

—Lisa Jewell

‘Marrs is brilliant at twists.’

—Peter James

‘A proper twisty thriller.’

—Sarah Pinborough

‘Whatever you do, don’t read this in the dark . . .’

—Cara Hunter

‘John’s thrillers never fail to keep me furiously turning the pages.’

—Sarah Pearse

‘John Marrs is a master of suspense.’

—*Jeneva Rose*

‘This one will leave you with paper cuts.’

—*C. J. Tudor*

‘Tensely plotted and terrifyingly imagined.’

—*Harriet Tyce*

‘A smart, gripping and scarily believable story.’

—*T. M. Logan*

‘What a twisted sinister book that was. Loved it.’

—*Peter Swanson*

‘One of the most exciting, original thriller writers out there. I never miss one of his books.’

—*Simon Kernick*

**THE
GOOD
SAMARITAN**

ALSO BY JOHN MARRS

When You Disappeared

The One

Her Last Move

The Passengers

What Lies Between Us

The Minders

The Vacation

Keep It in the Family

The Marriage Act

The Stranger in Her House

The Family Experiment

You Killed Me First

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

JOHN MARRS

 **THOMAS & MERCER**

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, organizations, places, events, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Otherwise, any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Text copyright © 2017, 2018, 2025 by John Marrs
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher.

Published by Thomas & Mercer, Seattle

Previously published in 2017, and in 2018 with editorial revisions. This 2025 edition of *The Good Samaritan* includes a bonus chapter.

www.apub.com

Amazon, the Amazon logo, and Thomas & Mercer are trademarks of Amazon.com, Inc., or its affiliates.

EU Product Safety contact:

Amazon Publishing, Amazon Media EU S.à r.l.
38, avenue John F. Kennedy, L-1855 Luxembourg
amazonpublishing-gpsr@amazon.com

ISBN-13: 9781662533341

eISBN-13: 9781662533334

Cover design by Liron Gilenber g

Cover Image: © Magdalena Russocka / ArcAngel



CONTENTS

EPIGRAPH

PROLOGUE

PART ONE: LAURA

CHAPTER 1: FOUR MONTHS AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4: FOUR MONTHS, TWO WEEKS AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 8: FOUR MONTHS, THREE WEEKS AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 9

CHAPTER 10: FIVE MONTHS AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 11

CHAPTER 12: FIVE MONTHS, ONE WEEK AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 13

CHAPTER 14: FIVE MONTHS, TWO WEEKS AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 15

CHAPTER 16

CHAPTER 17

CHAPTER 18: SIX MONTHS AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 19: SEVEN MONTHS AFTER DAVID

CHAPTER 20: SEVEN MONTHS, ONE WEEK AFTER DAVID

RYAN

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2: ONE DAY AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 3: THREE DAYS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 4: SIX DAYS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 5: EIGHT DAYS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 6: TWELVE DAYS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 7: THREE WEEKS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 8: TWO MONTHS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 9: FOUR MONTHS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 10: FOUR MONTHS, ONE WEEK AFTER
CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 11: FOUR MONTHS, TWO WEEKS AFTER
CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 12

CHAPTER 13: FOUR MONTHS, THREE WEEKS AFTER
CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 14: FIVE MONTHS, TWO WEEKS AFTER
CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 15

CHAPTER 16: SIX MONTHS AFTER CHARLOTTE

CHAPTER 17: SEVEN MONTHS, ONE WEEK AFTER
CHARLOTTE

PART TWO

CHAPTER 1: LAURA

CHAPTER 2: RYAN

CHAPTER 3: LAURA

CHAPTER 4: RYAN

CHAPTER 5: LAURA

CHAPTER 6: RYAN

CHAPTER 7: LAURA
CHAPTER 8: RYAN
CHAPTER 9: LAURA
CHAPTER 10: RYAN
CHAPTER 11: LAURA
CHAPTER 12: RYAN
CHAPTER 13: LAURA
CHAPTER 14: RYAN
CHAPTER 15: LAURA
CHAPTER 16: RYAN
CHAPTER 17: LAURA
CHAPTER 18: RYAN
CHAPTER 19: LAURA
CHAPTER 20: RYAN
CHAPTER 21: LAURA
CHAPTER 22: RYAN
CHAPTER 23: LAURA
CHAPTER 24: RYAN
CHAPTER 25: LAURA
CHAPTER 26: RYAN
CHAPTER 27: LAURA
CHAPTER 28: RYAN
CHAPTER 29: LAURA
CHAPTER 30: RYAN

PART THREE

CHAPTER 1: LAURA – TWO MONTHS AFTER RYAN
CHAPTER 2: LAURA – THREE MONTHS AFTER RYAN
CHAPTER 3: JOHNNY

[CHAPTER 4: LAURA](#)

[CHAPTER 5: LAURA – TWO MONTHS AFTER JOHNNY](#)

[EPILOGUE: EFFIE](#)

[BONUS CHAPTER: EIGHTEEN MONTHS LATER](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS](#)

[AUTHOR'S NOTE](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

[Follow the Author on Amazon](#)

'Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.'

—Muhammad Ali

'While seeking revenge, dig two graves – one for yourself.'

—Douglas Horton

PROLOGUE

‘Where are you?’ My voice was calm and my tone measured as I spoke softly into the receiver.

‘My taxi has just pulled up in the car park and I’m trying to give away my loose change.’

‘Why?’ I asked.

‘Because I don’t have any need for it.’

‘I understand.’ I rolled my eyes. It felt like a waste of time and it concerned me that it might be a delaying tactic. But I couldn’t pressure him. ‘You do what you feel is for the best, and remember,’ I continued, ‘I’m with you every step of the way.’

I heard him mumble something to the driver, then he exited the taxi, closing the door behind him. I assumed it was raining lightly, because every few seconds I heard the rubber wiper blades squeak as they arched across the windscreen before the cab pulled away.

‘How are we doing?’ I asked, purposefully using ‘we’ instead of ‘you’ to emphasise that we were in this together, if not side by side then certainly in spirit. It was not my choice of location and I wondered if, once he saw its magnitude, it might give him second thoughts. If that were the case, I’d have to accept his decision. It had taken time for me to get in the right headspace, but now that I was, I wanted him to see it through to the end. And I’d make sure to remind him why he was there and how far we had come.

He read my mind. ‘Don’t worry,’ he said, ‘I’ve not had a change of heart.’

I let out a sigh of relief.

‘Really,’ he continued, ‘I’m in a good place and I’m ready for this. Now that I’m here, now that I can see what’s before me, I know one hundred and ten per cent that it’s the right thing to do.’

I believed him. I don’t think he’d ever lied to me, because he’d never had a reason to. He’d told me many times that he was more honest with me than with anyone he had ever known, and I was proud to hear it.

‘Can you see her yet?’ I asked. ‘She’s driving a red Vauxhall Astra. Registration number V987—’

‘. . . THG. Yes, she’s just flashed her lights at me. It feels like we’re in a spy film and you’ve arranged for me to pass her secret documents.’ He gave a nervous laugh and I pretended to laugh back.

‘OK, let me give her a call,’ I said. ‘Stay where you are for now. We don’t want to scare her.’

My number was automatically withheld when I dialled her. She answered after seven rings, too many for my liking.

‘Hi there,’ I began softly. ‘How are we doing?’

‘I’m not sure,’ she replied. Her voice lacked the confidence of his. I’d accompanied enough people in her situation to recognise a heightened state of anxiety. I’d have to tread carefully.

‘It’s good to hear you,’ I said soothingly. ‘Did your journey go well? Did you find the place okay?’

‘I got here an hour ago, so I had a cup of tea in a café up the road.’

This was another red flag. She’d had time on her own to think.

‘Is there anything you want to talk about before we start?’ I asked.

She hesitated. ‘I’m really sorry, but now I’m here I’m starting to think I might not be doing the right thing anymore,’ she replied.

I gritted my teeth. I was not going to let it end like this. I needed to reaffirm her sense of purpose.

‘It’s about the baby, isn’t it?’ I asked gently.

‘Yes.’

‘You’re worried that you’re making a selfish decision.’

‘Yes,’ she said again, this time in a barely audible voice.

I sank back into my chair. ‘That’s perfectly understandable, but you need to realise this isn’t you talking, it’s your hormones. They’re giving you a false sense of what might be possible; making you think that everything could be all right in the end if you just give it time. Listen to someone who has learned from experience. When that child is born, things are only going to get so much worse for you. They’ll up your medication so that your life is even more of a blur than it is now. You won’t be fit for purpose as a mother, and the chemicals you’ve put into your body already are going to have a knock-on effect on your baby. It will grow up exactly like you, with exactly the same pain and problems you have; it’ll be history repeating itself. Do you really want to be responsible for all that? Unlike you, I can see things clearly and I know that is exactly what is going to happen. Your

baby doesn't stand a chance in this world. And deep down you know that too, don't you?'

'You're right,' she spluttered, no longer trying to fight back her sobs.

I'd been bad cop, now I needed to be good cop again.

'You know, I've been thinking about you all night and day,' I continued. 'I know how far you've come since you found me all those weeks ago. I'm so proud of you for your courage and strength. You know that, don't you?'

'Yes,' she replied. She didn't sound as convinced as I'd hoped. It was time to step it up a gear.

'I've been thinking about your family, too. They're very lucky to have someone in their lives like you, someone who is so selfless and so courageous. These are rare traits and I know that at first, it's going to be difficult for everyone to understand, but in time they're going to realise you loved them so much that you put their needs above your own. You've told me on so many occasions that you're never going to be the wife your husband needs. But that's not *your* fault, it's *his* for putting you on a pedestal. *He* has done this to you. Just keep reminding yourself of why you came looking for me in the first place. Together, we explored every avenue before you decided this was the only route that made sense. You are moving on and allowing everyone else you love to do the same. And I admire that so much.'

I'd spent so long repeating the same message, week after week, conversation after conversation, slowly reinforcing the belief that there was only one way forward. He, however, had required less work. There was no middle ground with him. Things were either black or white and never grey. He told me once I was like a rope that had pulled him from the quicksand and then set him on the right path.

'You're right,' she sniffed. 'Thank you.'

'Okay then. Well, blow your nose, take a deep breath and we'll do this together. Start by opening the door and walking towards him.' I tried to imagine I was there with them. 'Now, can you carefully describe what you're seeing in front of you?'

'I think that's him waiting for me,' she said. 'He's smiling. And behind him the sun is trying to make its way through the clouds. It's cold, but not freezing.'

I heard the crunch of the gravel under her feet, the pitter-patter of January rain bouncing off the shoulders of her overcoat, and the squawking seagulls above. I could almost smell the salty sea air around them. I switched telephone line to his.

‘Hi,’ I began. ‘She’s coming towards you now, but she’s a little more anxious than you are. You will look after her, won’t you?’

‘Of course,’ he replied, more assured than I’d ever heard him.

As they came face-to-face for the first time, I imagined them smiling at one another. I opened up both phone lines and heard a muffled, scratching sound of fabric against fabric, as if they were embracing. I’d told her to wear a coat big enough to hide her baby bump. The last thing I needed was for it to spook him now that we were so close.

I felt my skin burning under my shirt and adrenaline coursing through the sixty thousand miles of veins in my body, edging me towards a kind of euphoria.

Bide your time. Keep a firm grip on yourself, because too much can still go wrong.

I pictured them standing there, two perfect strangers who hadn’t needed to speak to communicate. They were united in a common purpose and I had brought them together. Their lives would be forever connected because of me. I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

‘Can you both hear me?’ I asked them.

‘Yes,’ they replied in unison.

‘If you’re still comfortable with it, I’d like to stay with you for as long as possible. So, when you’re ready, each take a deep breath, then take hold of each other’s hand and start to walk. No matter how tough it gets or how heavy your legs might feel, hold on to each other for support. Don’t turn around and don’t stop. We can do this together.’

‘Thank you,’ he said. ‘Thank you for understanding me. You’ve been incredible.’

‘It’s been my pleasure,’ I replied. In the past when I’d reached this point, I’d been so much stronger. But he’d been too big a part of my life for this not to hurt. I balled my fists as our journey came to an end. Now it was their turn to continue the story.

I closed my eyes tightly. I inhaled and exhaled in time with their breaths as they made their way further and further from the car park. The gravel faded into grass and the rain fell more heavily. She began to weep,

but I was convinced they were happy tears. I was sure he was clasping her hand in his just that little bit tighter, offering her the strength I so admired in him.

And then—

Nothing.

Nothing but the sound of their last breaths and the coastal wind howling through their phones as they fell five hundred and thirty feet into the water below. And as their bodies sank and their souls soared, I bit my bottom lip hard until I tasted blood. It was over.

I gave myself a few moments before reluctantly replacing the receiver in the cradle. I took a tissue from my desk drawer, blew my nose, uncurled my toes and thought about my anchor until calmness once again took control of my body.

I lifted my head briefly and glanced around the room to reassure myself that no one beyond the confines of my booth had heard me.

‘Are you all right?’ Mary’s honeyed voice came from the side, making me jump. She shuffled from the kitchen to my desk, sensing something was wrong. The years had not been kind to her face.

‘I’m fine,’ I replied.

‘Was it one of *those* calls?’

‘Yes.’

‘They didn’t do it while you were talking to them, did they?’

I nodded and she patted my arm with her hand. My skin prickled, as it did when anyone touched me uninvited. Such gestures had never comforted me.

‘I’m so sorry,’ Mary continued. ‘You hope that when they call us, all it’ll take is a friendly voice and someone to listen and it’ll put them off ending their lives for that little bit longer, don’t you?’

‘Yes,’ I lied.

‘And I know we’re not supposed to talk them out of it or even offer an opinion, but it’s hard when you just want people to see that life is worth living.’

‘It certainly is,’ I nodded. ‘I wish everyone could see the beauty of the world through our eyes.’

It was a busy afternoon and there weren’t enough volunteers to man the helplines, so Mary made her way back to her corner of the office. When

the red light on my phone began flashing to indicate another call, I cleared my throat and answered it, as required, within five rings.

‘Good afternoon,’ I began, ‘you’ve reached the End of the Line, this is Laura speaking. May I ask your name?’

PART ONE

LAURA

CHAPTER 1

FOUR MONTHS AFTER DAVID

I heard their muffled chatter as I made my way up the staircase and towards the door.

Inside End of the Line's call room, I counted five heads, all sitting in their individual booths. Some propped themselves up on their elbows as they sat listening to callers through their headsets; others casually leaned back in their chairs with receivers held to their ears. One doodled triangles in a newspaper crossword grid.

I was early for my shift and waved cheerfully at Kevin and Zoe, who were listening to their respective callers. I pointed to the cake tin under my arm then towards the kitchen. Mary, the eldest of the volunteers at the charity, sat in a corner booth at the front, her knitting needles moving almost silently at full throttle as she spoke into a headset. Today's colour of wool was as grey as the hair on her head.

I made my way into the poor excuse for a kitchenette and placed my lunchbox with the remains of last night's pasta bake inside the fridge. I tossed away the mounting number of out-of-date plastic milk bottles and removed the lid from the cake tin so that everyone could help themselves to my freshly iced cupcakes. There were more than enough for the afternoon shifts to enjoy; any that remained could be shared by those on evenings and nights.

I opened the sash window to allow some fresh May air in and the stale second-floor funk out. Then, back inside the call room, I plucked my notebook from my bag and sought out my favoured booth at the back. Our desks hadn't been officially allocated to us, so we couldn't stake a claim on one over another. But there was an unspoken hierarchy that said those who'd worked there for longer should be allowed the spot they felt the most comfortable in. I opted for the most private spot, by the boarded-up Victorian fireplace. There, behind the partition, my soft, calming telephone voice couldn't be heard anywhere else in the room. Not that we ever

admitted to listening in to each other's calls, but it's normal to be nosy once in a while.

For four and a half years I'd stared through the very same window across the rooftops of Northampton, and wondered who might be the first person I'd lift my receiver to today. The later – evening – shift was usually when things became more interesting. For the more vulnerable out there, once the darkness falls, so do their barriers. Night-time is their enemy, because with fewer visible distractions there's more opportunity to dwell on how hopeless their lives have become. It's when they reach out for somebody's hand.

We are supposed to treat every caller the same way, with kindness, respect and professionalism. Being listened to makes them feel valued, but it's unrealistic to think you can help – or even like – them all. Once they begin recounting their woes, there are some you take an instant dislike to and others you can see yourself in. Some you want to grab by the wrists, dig your fingernails in deeply until you draw blood and shake some sense into. Others you'll offer a non-judgemental shoulder to cry upon.

But when it comes down to it, almost every volunteer in that room is there for the same purpose – to be someone a caller can unload their problems onto.

And then there's me. I have my own agenda.

'You brought cupcakes!' said Kevin enthusiastically. He began to peel away the paper case from the sweet treat as he approached my desk.

'Remind me to get your shirt out of the car before I leave,' I replied.

'Careful now, or they'll start talking about us,' he said, and gave me a wink.

I pretended to laugh along with him. 'I've sewn the button back on the cuff and starched the collar.'

'Where would we be without you, Laura?'

'And don't forget it's your wedding anniversary at the weekend, so pick up a card and some flowers. And not those cheap petrol station ones. Order a bouquet online.'

'Will do.' He gave me a peck on the cheek and I rolled my eyes with false modesty. 'You're like the office mum,' he added.

I liked being thought of as the maternal type. To them, I was helpful, inoffensive and indispensable, and that suited me down to the ground.

Because when you're not considered to be a threat, you can get away with much, much more.