



# Slow Horses

*Mick Herron*

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## **Slow Horses** Mick Herron

Slough House is a dumping ground for British intelligence agents who've screwed up a case in any number of ways—by leaving a secret file on a train or blowing a surveillance. River Cartwright, one such “slow horse,” is bitter about his failure and about his tedious assignment transcribing cell phone conversations.

When a young man is abducted and his kidnappers threaten to broadcast his beheading live on the Internet, River sees an opportunity to redeem himself.

Is the victim who he first appears to be? And what's the kidnappers' connection with a disgraced journalist? As the clock ticks on the execution, River finds that everyone has his own agenda.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Slow Horses Details**

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Author : Mick Herron

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## From Reader Review Slow Horses for online ebook

### Carolyn says

I'm so glad I finally got around to reading the opening novel of this series. Friends kept telling me how good it was and boy were they right!

I loved the writing - wry and sharp, often darkly humorous and deprecating of the failed spies from MI5 who end up at the bottom of the heap, the so-called 'slow horses' working at London's Slough House. They've all done something irrecoverable and cringe-worthy, from leaving classified information on a train to spectacularly failing a terrorist training exercise as River Cartwright had, one which would have resulted in hundreds dead and millions of pounds in damages had it been real.

*"That was the true purpose of Slough House. It was a way of losing people without having to get rid of them, sidestepping legal hassle and tribunal threats."*

Ruling over all the misfits at Slough House, is Jackson Lamb. No one knows what Lamb did to end up at Slough House all those years ago. An ex field agent during the cold war, he's described as fat, lazy, unwashed with stained, greasy clothing but able to move rapidly with stealth when required. He also knows a lot of secrets and how to manipulate people.

Once condemned to work at Slough House there was no going back, the hope of MI5 being that agents would get bored to death of dead end paper shuffling and leave of their own accord. But some still hoped to redeem themselves and stayed on looking for that miracle opportunity. River Cartwright is one such hopeful who has his grandfather's spectacular cold war record in the service to thank for not being thrown out after his training debacle. When a young Pakistani student is taken captive by a white supremacist group with threats to behead him, River thinks there is a connection with a journalist they have had under surveillance. What River and the rest of the slow horses doesn't realise is the extent of the games being played behind their back until they are thrown in at the deep end.

Full of twists and turns, with the devious second in command at MI5, Diana Taverner (nicknamed 'Lady Di') playing dangerous games and using the slow horses for her own purpose, the novel is a delight as the slow horses try to find the kidnapped man and Jackson Lamb awakens from his long sleep to show his true talents. I'm so glad to find this re-invention of the spy novel, previously done so well by LeCarre, Forsyth and Deighton and to see the baton passed to a worthy successor. Now, for the next book in the series!

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### Bill Kupersmith says

There are now seven books in this series and they get good reviews in publications that usually look with disdain on crime fiction. So I was glad to have Slow Horses, the first of the series, as our monthly read for the Kindle English Mystery Group. And for about the first two hundred pages, I was quite taken. Then the story disintegrated into a succession of started hares haring off in all directions in pursuit of a hare-brained scheme involving a young Asian wannabe stand-up comedian whose uncle is supposed to a senior officer in Pakistani intelligence. The central premise is a branch office of MI-5 called Slough House where incompetent officers who've blotted their copy books (I nearly wrote "f-bombed-up" but I'm old-fashioned), are exiled, supervised by Jackson Lamb, who is basically an Andy Dalziel knock-off pretending to be

George Smiley, just as Slough House is le Carré's Brixton. Here both senior positions are held by women (one of whom is referred to as 'Lady Di' which I would regard as blasphemy). In my lifetime of reading spy novels I've progressed through Ian Fleming to Len Deighton to le Carré. I'd say the apogee was represented by Tinker Tailor, since then le Carré degenerated into cynicism, Moscow Centre being replaced by Big Pharma and American Evangelical Christians. Here we get an incoherent plot, a minor character who is based on a Cabinet Secretary (sheepdog coiffeur and bicycle – no Latin though). The only attractive character spends most of this book in a coma and it's unclear if she survives. My guess is she'll be back, but I'll not be. Just as le Carré had the Circus, Scalp-hunters and lamplighters, Herron has his own go at colourful nomenclature with Regent's Park, the Dogs (really) and Achievers (they 'get the job done' – get it?). If you're a certain kind of reader, you may like this series. I'm not.

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## Andrea says

River Cartwright is following the family tradition, serving his country by joining MI5. All is going well until a spectacular stuff-up during an assessment exercise sees him relegated to the 'Slow Horses' of Slough House; where agents are sent to work on non-operational tasks until they either die of boredom or quietly resign.

*That was the true purpose of Slough House. It was a way of losing people without having to get rid of them, sidestepping legal hassle and tribunal threats.*

The Slow Horses are a bunch of misfits, to say the least, and their boss Jackson Lamb is (outwardly) a truly odious character.

When a video loop appears on the BBC website one morning, showing a British youth trapped in a cellar, establishing a timeline for his beheading, the Slow Horses find themselves unprecedentedly in the middle of a delicate operation.

Considering this was published in 2010, I found it somewhat prophetic in relation to a few things that are happening in our world right now - Brexit, the rise of the far right, and some of the acts of terrorism that have become all too common in recent times. One scene in particular had me raising my eyebrows.

*'Because we both know the tide's turning. The decent people in this country are sick to death of being held hostage by mad liberals in Brussels, and the sooner we take control over our own future, our own borders—'*

and soon after

*You're PM material. With you at the helm, this country can be **great again**.*

This book had all the action and treachery you would hope for in a spy thriller, and on top of that there was a good dose of humour, too. Happily, it's #1 in a series, which I will be continuing to read.

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## William says

4-stars and a bit. You can tell from the start that this is going to be good. Herron is a good writer, and this is

the first in his "Slough House" (Slough as in "Ow!"). This is Quality writing. Fewer than one book in ten that I read is this good. Lots of worthwhile quotes below...

*As usual with my reviews, please first read the publisher's blurb/summary of the book. Thank you.*

From the start, there is a very "Le Carré" feeling here, a feeling of wrecked lives in situations and characters. If you screw up in a British military or government organisation, especially one under budget or personnel stress, you can be exiled and your career abused forever. The disgraced agents are sent to Slough House, a name to humiliate them, and they are called "Slow Horses" to rub it in.

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The head of the Slough House exiles is Jackson Lamb, an exile himself, and the stories of the Slow Horses is presented in bits and pieces. Lamb himself is a "secret" badass, once a true-warrior, faded and fat and physically unsavoury. We learn that he's even now a wolf in sheep's clothing, a "joe" from the "old school" Cold War days.

River Cartwright has screwed up, *or possibly not*, but the wheels of power have laid the blame on him anyway. He is exiled now, and forever, to the worst jobs of MI5, buried alive in Slough House ...

*Half of the future is buried in the past. That was the prevailing Service culture. Hence the obsessive sifting of twice-ploughed ground, attempting to understand history before it came round again. The modern realities of men, women, children, wandering into city centres with explosives strapped to their chests had shattered lives but not moulds. Or that was the operating wisdom, to the dismay of many.*

River and Sidonie working a typical, terrible job, sorting through old bags of street garbage ...

*'Are you going to clear this mess up?' said Sidonie.*

*River said, 'When'd you ever hear of a joe being sent out solo? Domestic, I mean. Middle of London.' This amused her.*

*'So now I'm a joe?'*

*'And how come Lamb's running an op off his own bat?'*

*'You'd have to ask him. I'm going for coffee.'*

*'You've already had coffee.'*

*'Okay then. I'm going somewhere else until you've got rid of all this crap.'*

*'I haven't written it up yet.'*

*'Then I'll be gone a while. The gloves suit you, by the way.'*

*'Are you taking the piss?'*

*'I wouldn't know where to start.' Unhooking her bag from her chair, she left.*

River escaped prison and censure, due to his grandfather's legendary spymaster skills...

*His grandfather was the soul of discretion, or so he liked to think; imagining that a lifetime's sealed lips had left him close with a secret. This belief persevered despite the evident truth that he liked nothing better than Service gossip. Maybe this was what age did, thought River. Confirmed you in your image of yourself even while it unpicked the reality, leaving you the tattered remnant of the person you'd once been.*

River considers his old "friend", Spider Webb, who's gone on to better things, while River thinks about the

training they both received not so long ago...

*[Torture] Resistance techniques were taught slowly. Things had to be broken down before being built up again. Breaking down happened best in darkness. When you'd been through that, you wanted to be near others who'd been through it too. Not because you needed to talk about it, but because you needed your need not to talk about it to be shared by those you were with.*

Wow, chapter 4, the presentation of Catherine as a character, faded and semi-tragic, is fabulous stuff... Truly wonderful. This is amazing prose, heartfelt. I'm impressed.

The introduction of the Slow Horses continues with losers Min, Louisa, Jed, and Roderick, and although good prose and well-presented, it's perhaps too many characterisations for a single chapter.

The brutal, right-wing kidnappers call themselves "The Voice of Albion", Blake's mythical name for Britain. It's worth reading about Blake's mythology...

Albion (Blake)

"Lady Di" Taverner, "Second Desk" at MI5, thinks about the kidnapped, condemned boy on TV ...

*Fear lives in the guts. That's where it makes its home. It moves in, shifts stuff around; empties a space for itself—it likes the echoes its wingbeats make.*

River and Sidonie on a stakeout...

*Sid wore black jeans and hooded sweater. Tradecraft, but she looked good in it. She'd pushed the car seat back and was mostly in shadow, but every so often her eyes picked up light from a nearby streetlamp and threw it in his direction. She was thinking about him. When a woman was thinking about you, it was always either a good thing or a bad thing.*

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Two right-wing scumbags meet up... Does this remind you of the dangerous buffoon, **Boris "me-first" Johnson**?

*Fluffyhaired and youthful at forty-eight, and with a vocabulary peppered with archaic expostulations –Balderdash! Tommy-rot!! Oh my giddy aunt!!! –[clown Boris] had long established himself as the unthreatening face of the old-school right, popular enough with the Great British Public, which thought him an amiable idiot, to make a second living outside Parliament as a rent-aquote-media-whore-cum-quiz-show-panel-favourite, and to get away with minor peccadilloes like dicking his kids' nanny, robbing the taxman blind, and giving his party leader conniptions with off-script flourishes. ('Damn fine city,' he'd remarked on a trip to Paris. 'Probably worth defending next time.') .... but by and large [clown Boris] seemed happy with the image he'd either fostered or been born with: a loose cannon with a floppy haircut and a bicycle.*

Here, Herron more or less calls Johnson a Nazi traitor, via the right-wing journalist who tells "Boris" -  
*"Because we both know the tide's turning. The decent people in this country are sick to death of being held hostage by mad liberals in Brussels, and the sooner we take control over our own future, our own borders ...  
... You're PM material. With you at the helm, this country can be great again."*

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Lamb considers the two possible "flavours" of the betrayal he faces ...

*If Moscow rules meant watch your back, London rules meant cover your arse. Moscow rules had been written on the streets, but London rules were devised in the corridors of Westminster, and the short version read: someone always pays. Make sure it isn't you.*

This is an impressive first book of the series. The pacing is good in the first half book, and superb and compelling in the second half. Very hard to put down once the fuse is lit. Some chapters are a bit uneven, some plot twists are a bit strained, and the overall plot is a bit too fantastic for anything other than spy noir entertainment.

And, sadly, the culmination is a bit clumsy, a bit of an info-dump, sadly unsatisfying, and clearly sets up for future books in the series. This would only be 3 stars if not for the very good prose throughout.

Still, it's head-and-shoulders above most spy noir these days! Recommended.

ARC courtesy of Hachette and NetGalley.com. Thank you!

Notes:

7.19% "... nice prose, already dark and hidden. Not bad."

43.0% "... uneven in some places, often brilliant."

58.0% "... Holy carp! Herron was prescient! This was published in 2010 and it has Boris clown Johnson lusting to be PM and swinging the government far to the right, and then leaving Europe! All on the back of Tory manipulation of rabid racism. Wow."

76.0% "... this book reads very true regarding MI5 procedures, jargon and tradecraft and, and if so I hope they're not spending most of their time stabbing each other in the back, as implied here."

83.0% "... one of my least favourite plot devices is when a central character, normally fully observed by the reader, suddenly speaks to the others but the reader This Time is not allowed to hear what he says. Argh!"

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## Marita says

*"Congratufuckingslations."* River Cartwright has made it to Slough House. Slough House for slow horses. Slow horses who messed up big time like leaving discs of information marked "Top Secret" on the train only to be handed in to the BBC and broadcast to the nation. Not a smart move if you are working for MI5! But this wasn't River's mess. No, the opening sentence of this novel is: *"This is how River Cartwright slipped off the fast track and joined the slow horses."* And then proceeds to tell you, the reader, about River's spectacular blunder and subsequent sideways career move - one which is a downward spiral and an encouragement to depart without fuss. A job at Slough House could mean transcribing mobile phone

conversations, picking through garbage or being in charge of the shredder or photocopier. Fortunately for River his grandfather had been in the spook business, so at least River has a job. He might well have ended up as an “*exit-coordinator at a club*” - a ‘bouncer’ to the likes of us. But River can be quite upbeat, and responds to “*How’s your career looking?*” with “*Well, I don’t have an arse two inches in front of my nose, so my view beats yours.*”

Jackson Lamb, a human wolf disguised as lamb, heads up the motley crowd of failures. A fat, unkempt, rude crude man, BUT a very savvy fat, unkempt, rude, crude man. Lamb does not mince his words, and he eats agents for breakfast.

Meet the other misfits, including computer geek Roderick Ho: “*Roderick Ho knew exactly what sins had brought his colleagues to Slough House; the precise nature of the gaffes and blunders that had condemned them to the twilight of the second-rate.*” Ho doesn’t like people, but he LOVES computers, and heaven help those who cross him - in a blink of an eye he can remorselessly wreck lives by tweaking a wee bit of data. Luisa Guy on the other hand does some virtual surveillance and thinks to herself: “*To pass for real in the world of the web she’d had to forget everything she’d ever known about grammar, wit, spelling, manners and literary criticism.*”

You might also run into some of the Dogs, the Service’s internal security: “*The Dogs were kennelled at Regent’s Park, but had licence to roam.*” “*It didn’t matter which rung of the ladder you were on: when the Dogs appeared uninvited, your first reaction was guilt.*” Regent's Park is where the successes spend their time propelling themselves along the swords planted in their colleagues’ backs. Then there are also the Achievers, namely the guys sporting balaclavas, who are also known as the SWAT team.

However, in between back stabbing and wasting tax payers’ money there is work to be done. In this instance a young British born man of Pakistani origin had been kidnapped, presumably by yobbos from the extreme right, and it so happens that the unfortunate young man is related to someone very important. What follows is a comedy of errors, but are the slow horses of Slough House quite as slow from their stalls as they are purported to be? Are these has-beens redeemable?

This novel is an hilarious sendup of the British Secret Service. You can expect the best of British humour, as well as plenty of suspense.

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## **Susan says**

This is the first book in the Slough House series. I have mean to try this series for a long while and, now that I have finally got around to starting it, I am sure I will be reading on. Author Mick Herron has taken the traditional spy story, given it a unique slant and, with many nods to classic spy novels, has created his own world; sly, darkly funny and utterly British.

Slough House is the dumping ground for members of the intelligence service who have messed up. Rather than sack them, those at Regents Park hope that doling out endless administrative tasks will lead the now defunct spooks, to take a job in security, or elsewhere. However, most of those side- lined to this department of, so-called, ‘Slow Horses,’ cannot envision a life outside of the service and dream of being of use again. The reasons why these former agents end up here vary; alcoholism, leaving top secret information on a train, or making a mistake in a training operation are some of the reasons given, although we learn these may not all be the agents fault.



River Cartwright certainly does not feel it was his fault that he has ended up at Slough House. His grandfather was a famous, much revered, ex spook, and so he dreams of another chance. It does seem that everyone at Slough House has pretty much given up though and the sarcastic, slovenly, Jackson Lamb, who presides over his small kingdom, seems to accept the status quo as much as anyone. However, when a young man is kidnapped off the street and appears on the internet, with those holding him threatening to behead him online, the Slow Horses become involved in the case. Can they throw off their mantle as failures and save the day?

This is clever, realistic, well plotted and funny. I liked the characters, the plot twists and the setting. I am a fan of spy novels and, if you like Le Carre or Eric Ambler, you might like to give this a try. It is a modern take on the spy novel; with a realistic setting, where politics and office politics combine and where Herron takes all our preconceptions and turns them on their head.

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**PattyMacDotComma says**

5★

**“Always, in railway stations, there was this sense of pent-up movement. A crowd was an explosion waiting to happen. People were fragments. They just didn’t know it yet.”**

This is not only spooks and spies and intrigue (and it definitely is all that), it is very funny and entertaining! It’s also a wonderful combination of old school sleuthing and networking and never burning bridges (well, not completely) and brave-new-world technology like CCTV mobile (cell) phones and database hacking. All wrapped up in some delicious writing like this.

**“... the grey isn’t grey but black with the stuffing knocked out of it.”**

and

**“... she turned to find him reaching for her arm. The look she bestowed upon him would have stuck six inches out the back of a more sensitive man. ‘Not a good time, Roger.’” \*\***

There are lots of characters, and I’ll admit I had to backtrack a few times to remember who Hobbs and Hobden and Ho were, but I got the hang of it soon enough. Ho is the computer geek of the slow horses.

**“Ho was usually first in, often last out, and how he spent the hours between was a mystery to River. Though the cola cans and pizza boxes surrounding his desk suggested he was building a fort.”**

And there did need to be a bunch of characters since some were stationed in the real headquarters, Regent Park, and our “heroes” are the spies who’ve been relegated to a pre-retirement holding pattern in Slough House. **Slough** rhymes with **cow** in British English (*or with bough as in the bough that will break in the rock-a-bye-baby lullaby, but I digress*). Close enough to **house** to make **Slow Horse** a kind of rhyming slang nickname that is their “department”. (*Americans will have to make a mental adjustment not to hear slough as sloo. But I digress again.*)

Pre-retirement is what the government intends this place to be — a job so boring and demoralising that people will retire, saving the embarrassment of being sacked. Sometimes it works that way, sometimes not.

So far, nobody's ever been promoted back up the ranks, though. They are located in a less-than-desirable area in an old building.

**“The front door, as stated, lurks in a recess. Its ancient black paintwork is spattered with roadsplash, and the shallow pane of glass above betrays no light within. An empty milk bottle has stood in its shadow so long, city lichen has bonded it to the pavement.”**

Got it? If you're a slow horse, this is your lot. There are many reasons the men and women there have been demoted, and we learn early that River Cartwright (so named by his rebellious mother) was saved from being sacked outright because of the OB, or the Old Bastard, as River fondly refers to his mother's father, who raised him and in whose footsteps he's chosen to follow.

River is still close to his grandfather, who was a spook of some renown, and it's his reputation that stands between River and the door.

**“Without this connection, River wouldn't have been a slow horse, he'd have been melted down for glue.”**

The boss of all of these losers is Jackson Lamb, and there is no love lost between Lamb and any of his underlings.

**“Lamb's laugh wasn't a genuine surrender to amusement; more of a temporary derangement. Not a laugh you'd want to hear from anyone holding a stick.”**

During a meeting, River contemplates what he'd really like to do.

**“River had measured the distance between Lamb's chair and the window. That blind wasn't going to offer resistance. If River got the leverage right, Lamb would be a pizza-shaped stain on the pavement instead of drawing another breath;”**

The main story is a kidnapping with a video circulating of a young man, head covered by a hood, being threatened with being beheaded in 48 hours. There is a disgraced journalist who seems to be involved in some dodgy activities, and the powers-that-be want to know what he's doing. Some of the slow horses are surprisingly involved in an actual operation for once in a very long time, but things don't work out all that well.

When the action heats up, and I start thinking to myself “How did she get in there? Where did the gun come from? How did they spot him?” Herron switches back to a previous scene which explains it. It's done so easily and subtly that it doesn't interrupt the action, but it makes it very satisfying to feel that there are no loose ends.

I loved it and have already started *Dead Lions*, #2 in the series, so many thanks to NetGalley for the copy from which I've quoted and to Hachette Australia who have reissued the first five in the series before #5 is published on February 13.

Excuse me now while I go back to catch up with the slow horses and their old-world expertise and new-world tech! (I should add that this can be read as a stand-alone without needing to follow up.)

*\*\* I've just discovered that the wonderful quote about the look sticking out of someone's back is a variation*

*on Raymond Chandler's line from The Long Goodbye, which is: "The girl gave him a look which ought to have stuck at least four inches out of his back."*

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## **Manda Scott says**

So.... I listened to BBC Radio 4 Front Row last night, and there was Mick Herron, talking about his Slow Horses series and he mentioned Len Deighton who was one of my writing heroes in my youth... and the wonder of e-living is that I was able to download it on the Kindle and ... lose an evening. I know something of this standard is a year's hard writing and there's something sacrilegious about reading it in slightly under 6 hours, but Mick, if you're reading this and it's any consolation, I switched off the light about 3am.

and heck, but this is good. I thought Night Heron by Adam Brookes signalled the new Le Carré (because that's our benchmark, like it or not) and Night Heron is good - but this... this is outstanding. Truly, it has the feel of an industry insider, but one with a sharp, deep, compassionate - and utterly ruthless - view of the good and the bad of his profession. The washed-up has-beens of the Slow Horses of Slough House are humanised and given depth so that when they begin to shine it is not implausible, but a huge and glorious relief. I won't go through the plot again, others have done so - I will only say: start it some time before 8pm if you don't want to wake feeling as if you've been sandbagged. And read it with joy that there is still some truly great writing in the world.

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## **Brenda says**

This was a pretty clever book. Slough House is an old derelict building. Its occupants are slow horses, spies who have screwed up in various ways and been demoted. They are essentially paper pushers doing mundane work. They are a motley crew who are not friends, very suspicious, always alert and aware, and bitter. When one of them is sent on a field op, albeit just to pick up a bag of trash outside a disgraced journalist's home, mental alarms begin going off. They are never let out in the field.

By my count, there are ten slow horses including the boss. Most of their downfalls are learned over the course of developing the characters. They may be screw-ups, but I liked most of them a lot. When an online video of an abducted young Pakistani man is discovered, the slow horses start questioning and discovering things. They can't help it; it's who they are. They are spooks and they want to be back in MI5.

The writing style was interesting and included quite a bit of dry humor and sarcasm. There were a few uniquely British references that I didn't get, but I don't believe that ruined my reading experience. In fact, I'm eager to see what happens with the slow horses in future books!

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## **Sharon Bolton says**

River Cartwright made a big mistake. As big as they come. Heading up an MI5 operation to apprehend a known terrorist, River made the wrong call. Or maybe he was fed the wrong information. That's what he claims, but it makes no difference. The Op goes badly wrong, and River's career hits the pan.

Fortunately for River he has connections. His grandfather is one of the most famous and revered 'spooks' of

all time, and sacking his much-loved grandson isn't really on the cards. So River, rather than being shown his P45, is consigned to Slough House, a despised, far-bastion of 'Five' that fills its day with tedious and menial administrative tasks.

Enter a cast of characters that can best be described as losers and misfits. All of them have secrets. None of them like each other. There's the ex-alcoholic secretary, the socially inept IT expert, the couple who think they're having a secret affair. This motely crew is headed up by overweight, ill-mannered slob, Jackson Lamb. Every Slow Horse has done something wrong, something that led to their exile, and finding out what that something was occupies both them and us for much of the book.

Few residents of Slough House (a group known as the Slow Horses) last long. Boredom and frustration gets to them sooner or later. They resign and disappear. Problem solved.

So, when a young man is kidnapped and held by terrorists, who threaten to execute him publicly at a given time if their demands aren't met, you'd better hope his fate is in more competent hands than those of the Slow Horses. Except, that's exactly how it turns out and, guess what, the Slow Horses turn out to be pretty sharp operators after all. They kick ass! Herron spends some time building up their characters but it proves to be time well spent because as we near the climax, the emergence of ninjas from the pantomime horse costumes isn't just believable, its hugely satisfying.

Slow Horses is clever, original, thoroughly researched and the most enormous fun. Highly recommended.

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### **Phrynne says**

Well I have to give this book five stars because I read it in one day when I should have been doing other things, and now I really want to move straight into book 2

Not just another mystery/thriller, Slow Horses is totally original in style and content. The main characters are apparently a bunch of losers and misfits which made it all the more exciting when they tried to pull together and achieve something. And of course from the reader's perspective it was anyone's guess if and when they were ever going to win.

River Cartwright (yes, there were lots of jokes about his first name) managed to be a very appealing lead character and I hope he features in subsequent books. His boss, Jackson Lamb, is also more than meets the eye and is well versed in coming out on top regardless of events around him.

This book is clever, funny, well paced and always interesting. I believe I have found myself another good series!

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### **Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says**

I was thrilled when I had my wish granted by the Publisher via NetGalley to read this book. I was expecting some great thrills. Sadly I got to 40% through and just felt like I was going nowhere with this one. The first chapter and opening had seemed really promising but this one just did not float my boat.

With quite an unusual writing style this book may be one of those that some indeed love and adore. It's certainly not a terrible book. I just could not get into it and wondered where it was going. It wasn't enough buzz to hold me to keep going. I am not going to give it a rating as I did not finish. Disappointed. :-(

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## **Veronica ?? says**

Slow Horses is Herron's first book in the Slough House series, recently re-released in conjunction with the release of book 4, Spook Street.

After a mission gone terribly wrong River Cartwright is sent to Slough House, a place where tasks that didn't matter were preformed by people that didn't care. Where alongside a pre-digital overflow of paperwork, a post-useful crew of misfits can be stored and left to gather dust.

The story is told with a wry wit, in metaphors, retrospect and hypotheticals with plenty of laugh out loud moments and dark humour.

Slow Horses is an introduction to the main characters, the cast outs, at Slough House and their boss Jackson Lamb. The characterization is brilliant as Herron brings together a mismatched bunch of has-beens, loners that haven't quite given up on the hope of one day returning to Regents Park.

Under all the character development is a great plot with backstabbing, twists, conspiracy theories, double crossing and buck passing. It's compelling and edgy and pulls the story along with a rush of adrenaline as the pace quickens and events spiral out of control.

Wanting to read more of Jackson Lamb and his Slough House crew will be difficult to resist.

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## **Brenda says**

3.5★s

After River Cartwright made several wrong decisions - or someone laid the blame squarely on his shoulders - he was told to report at Slough House, the place all misfits, rogues, and unreliaables were sent to lick their wounds while working at mundane tasks. The boredom was horrific; the anger at what had happened ate at River, day in and day out...

Jackson Lamb, boss of the slow horses (those same has-been spies from MI5) didn't seem to garner respect from any of the people under his command - few knew why he was chief of London's Slough House. Would he have a chance to show his true colours? Perhaps the abduction of a young student and the terrorists' threat of beheading could give him as well as River and the team a chance to redeem themselves.

Slow Horses by Mick Herron is the first in the Slough House series, and a more different and intriguing plot I haven't read in awhile. After an explosive start, it settled into a slow and plodding plot, with twists, conspiracy theories, blame cast on others and more. Slow Horses is definitely worth the read and I'm looking forward to book #2. Recommended.

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## **Gary says**

This is the 1st book in the 'Slough House' series by author Mick Herron. Slough House is a dumping ground for British intelligence agents who have messed up a case. The "slow horses," are given menial tasks rather than be trusted on bigger cases. This is the second book I have read from this series having inadvertently started reading this series with the second book. I hesitated starting this book having not been completely blown away by the first book., but found this one personally a lot more enjoyable.

In this novel a young man is abducted and his kidnappers threaten to broadcast his beheading live on the Internet, Slow Horse River Cartwright sees an opportunity to redeem himself. i really enjoyed this book and having experienced a slow start with the first novel intend to continue reading this series. Maybe the characters are starting to grow on me as well as getting used to the authors style.

I would like to thank Net Galley and John Murray Press for supplying a copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

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