



His First Lie

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THE GRIPPING THRILLER PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED AS *TWO O'CLOCK BOY*

'A fantastic debut: dark, addictive and original. I couldn't put it down'
Robert Bryndza, author of *The Girl in the Ice*

Do you want a thriller that grips from the first line?

Do you want a thriller to leave you gasping for air?

Connor Laird frightens people: he's intense, he's fearless, and he seems to be willing to do anything to protect himself and those he loves. He arrives in the Longacre Children's Home seemingly from nowhere, and instantly becomes hero and villain to every other child there.

Thirty years later, someone is killing all of those who grew up in the Longacre, one by one. Each of them has secrets, not least investigating cop DI Ray Drake.

One by one the mysteries of the past are revealed as Drake finds himself in a race against time before the killer gets to him.

Who is killing to hide their secret?

And can YOU guess the ending?

'Grips from the start and never lets up'

The Times

'Wreaks havoc with your assumptions. Hill has a hell of a career ahead of him'
Alex Marwood, author of *The Wicked Girls* and *The Darkest Secret*

'A cracking debut. I can't wait to see more of Ray Drake.'
Mark Billingham, #1 bestselling author of *Love Like Blood* and *In The Dark*

'Utterly gripping, packed with unforgettable characters - and SO well-written. The twists had me reeling!'
Louise Voss

His First Lie Details

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Author : Mark Hill

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Gary says

Have you ever started a book and struggled to get into it, well that happened to me with this one. I was about 20% into it and not really connecting when all of a sudden things started to click. This book completely changed for me, I was preempting maybe a 3 star rating but by the end of it it was an easy 5 stars. This book is full of fascinating characters and so many twists, turns and complete surprises that it will have your jaw dropping open at times.

The novel goes from present day where DI Ray Drake investigates several murders with a common link that they were all at Longacre Children's Home during the the 1980's and tells the story during that time at the home. DI Ray Drake was recently widowed and is struggling in his relationship with his daughter and he is also hiding a dark secret.

Telling the story from the 1980s, we are told of the residents of the Longacre Children's Home and staff who rule with fear and abuse. What is the link between this home and the present day murders.

I found this novel a great read and it never stopped surprising me, I am so glad I carried on reading it.

I would like to thank Net Galley and Little Brown Book Group for supplying a copy of this novel in exchange for a honest review.

Paromjit says

This is dark, violent, and compelling crime fiction from this debut author. Mark Hill knows how to weave a story that grabs you by the throat and never lets go. The ramshackle Longacre Children's Home in 1984 is run by the criminal and abusive Gordon Tallis. He terrorises the children, and uses them for his criminal enterprises, making their lives absolute hell. The events that occur in the home are set to have devastating repercussions through the years. Set in London, there are two timelines, that from 1984 and one in the present that begins with murders that have wiped out Kenny Overton and his entire family. DS Flick Crowley has been recently promoted with the support of DI Ray Drake, her mentor. She has been appointed lead investigator on this gruesome case.

From the very beginning Flick finds herself being hindered by Ray, and she assumes that this is because she is new to the job and she needs to do it better. Ray has lost his wife to cancer and is struggling to maintain any kind of relationship with his daughter. It soon becomes clear from his behaviour that he has some connection with the Children's Home that he is desperate to keep buried. This is despite the fact that it soon becomes clear that he and his daughter are in danger. A serial killer calling himself the Two O'Clock Boy, is stalking him. Flick finds the inner strength to challenge her perception of herself as someone who thinks and acts inside the box. Nothing is going to stop her getting to the truth. Not even Ray. There are lies, secrets, and deception galore and the twists come from every direction. And it becomes clear the body count is higher than it could ever be imagined.

This is a smart, intricately plotted tale with a tense suspense driven narrative. There are no black and white characters, everyone is differing shades of grey. Underpinning the damaged characters is a past that would test anyone. It is why you find that you cannot help but feel for those that have been so sinned against. Even when they do such horrific things. It is this complex characterisation that holds the reader enthralled with the story. Not many writers can pull this off, Mark Hill certainly can. Cannot wait to read his next book, he has

set the bar high. Highly recommended. Thanks to Little, Brown for an ARC.

Emma says

Oh this is a good one. Without doubt the 'one became a detective, one became a killer' hook demands attention. Yet within the pages, the line between good and bad isn't quite so clear cut, it's difficult to know who to trust. I love it in fiction when there's that moment you think 'hang on, am I *supposed* to be throwing my support behind this person?? Are they *lying* to me???' It's that kind of story and it's brilliantly surprising because of it. I felt super proud of myself for guessing parts of it, only to be blind sighted by others. The plot is pacey, dark, and flicks back and forth between the past and present, but for me it's the characters that hold you till the end. The moment I put the book down (after reading it in one sitting), I checked to see what would come next.... because THAT ENDING!! Anyway, i'll say no more.

Except that this should be on every crime lover's TBR. Engrossingly suspenseful crime fiction at it's best and without doubt will be one of the hits of this year.

Many thanks to Mark Hill, Sphere/Little, Brown Book Group, and Netgalley for this review copy in exchange for an honest review.

Susan says

The idea behind this novel is not particularly unique – a violent murder case leads back to events in the past. However, saying that, it is a good start to what, I hope, will become a series and has an interesting, ambiguous feel to characters and plot. Detective Inspector Ray Drake is widowed when we meet him and having a difficult relationship with daughter, April. He has pushed for the promotion of Flick Crowley to Detective Sergeant, but he may regret her being lead in a case which he is heavily involved in...

When a man, and his family, are found murdered, the case leads back to events at the Longacre Children's Home in the 1980's. The murdered man was working on a book about his life and, amongst his notes, Flick comes across a list of names. Some of the people the victim knew are dead and the others may be in danger. As Flick gets closer to the truth, Drake attempts to lead her down another path, or close down the investigation.

This is a novel about lies and secrets, blurred morals and of how the past affects the present. Both Drake and Crowley are people who are very much rounded. They do not just go to work; they have backgrounds, families, problems and concerns. The murders are really quite ingenious and shocking and, if you enjoy your crime novels dark and violent, then you will probably find this a good read. I would certainly like to read on and see Drake investigating a crime that was less close to home. However, this is a good start to what promises to be a good series.

Kate says

*** 4.5 out of 5 stars ***

When I started this book I was grabbed by the story, it was interesting and the explosive first pages really set the tone for the rest of the book. The description promised mystery, intrigue and murder but this turned out to be so much more, a brilliantly compelling read that was almost impossible to put down.

Skilfully, Mark Hill weaves together numerous threads to bring the reader an enticing story that tangles along the way with some dangerous and devastating events. The reader is plunged into the chaotic and desolate Longacre Children's Home in the 1980s, the details of the goings on there are harrowing reading at times, and the impacts of the abuse towards the children resident there are far reaching, so much so that some are still living in the shadows of their torment. The tormentor in the home ruled with an iron fist, somewhat drunkenly and never missed an opportunity to exploit his charges for his criminal activities.

The recent promotion of DS Flick Crowley should be a cause for celebration, but for this character she is constantly checking herself, ensuring she is not reading subtle context into remarks of her mentor DI Ray Drake and superiors. Determined not to show signs she is struggling under pressure or not up to the challenge of leading a murder investigation, Flick looks for connections between the victims not realising that someone is working hard to cover up the evidence she needs to solve the case.

Rich with lies and secrets, this is a well plotted novel, it draws the reader in and builds a level of tension that makes this an incredibly fast paced read. The characters in this are very well written, each one of them is damaged in their own way, be it Elliot and his time at Longacre which turned him into an alcohol abusing criminal, Flick Crowley with her strained relationship with her father, or indeed Ray Drake who recently lost his wife to cancer and has a troubled relationship with his daughter. Each character is a victim in their own way, and through clever and insightful writing Mark Hill makes the reader feel empathy towards their plights. The strong characters really bring this book alive, there are elements of the personalities that readers will connect with, and will understand but will ultimately feel driven to read on to discover what happens to that character(s).

The writing itself is impressive, and it is hard to believe that this is a debut novel. It's chilling, it's compelling and it's brilliant. The deception and danger in this book are so well constructed that the reader may guess what happens from time to time, but Hill ensures that they are kept on their toes with some of the unexpected twists he throws into the story.

Now I just need the details for the next outing for DI Drake and DS Crowley.....any hints when we can expect book two Mr Hill!?

Many thanks to Sphere and Netgally for the opportunity to read this book, all view are my own.

Maureen says

Thank you to Netgalley & Sphere/Little, Brown Book Group for my ARC in exchange for a fair and honest review

Wow! I've just discovered another contender for my favourite book of the year.

There are some very cold and calculating characters in this book, but the question also presents itself "Are any of them wholly evil" ? Well, Mark Hill made me believe that there was a shade of good in all of them. How on earth did he manage that? The story veers between 1984 and the present - the earlier years centred around a children's home. Oh boy! This story dragged me along at an impossible pace and left me both breathless, and excited. The characters though, are what makes this one stand out, although let's not take anything away from the plot because it was extremely clever. There were times when I thought I had this story sussed out, and yes, sometimes I was right, but with twist after twist, followed by the mother of all twists, I guess I wasn't so smart after all!

This was, without question a humdinger of a crime novel - the characterisation was superb, as was the plot. I didn't want it to end, but all good things MUST come to an end, but I feel really lucky to have received an ARC of 'The Two O'clock Boy'. Wow again.

Holly says

What an excellent thriller! Kept me on the edge of my seat. After the murder of a family, DI Drake and a newly appointed investigator, Flick, come to a horrific crime scene. Flick is the main investigator on this crime but Drake can't help but stick around because he realizes that he knows the male victim. He hasn't seen him since he was a child but something about the murder gets under his skin. There will be flashbacks to when Drake was a child. Showing us a horrific situation at a children's home, run by a despicable man. Drake, however, doesn't want Flick to investigate to where her inquiries lead to this children's home.....for good reason! But Flick is tenacious and won't leave things alone. There will be twists and turns, leading to an explosive ending. Who's good and who's bad? Hmmmmmm.....? I cannot wait to read the next book Mark writes!!!

*Thank you to the publisher and Netgalley for an arc in exchange for an honest review.

Jen says

Kenny Overton is a petty criminal trying to go straight. Working the night shift in a supermarket he is trying his best to do the right thing, to make up for a life of mistakes, a life which began in a dismal and deprived children's home many years ago. But someone doesn't want to give Kenny that second chance. Someone has been watching him, waiting for the right time to make Kenny pay for his past, to deny him his happy ending. And that time is now.

When DI Ray Drake and newly promoted DS Flick Crowley are called out to the scene of a vicious multiple murder, they sense that this is not going to be a straightforward case. Three members of one family slain, the fourth escaping only by virtue of having left his phone at home. But who would want to kill them all, and in such a personal and heinous way?

Drake knows instinctively that this is a message. That secrets which have laid buried for years are about to be exposed. Secrets which link back to the Longacre Children's home, its manager, Gordon Tallis and one of

the former residents, Connor Laird – a boy who harboured such anger and intensity within, that he terrified anyone he ever met.

With Drake fearing for his family's safety and with the knowledge that so much depends on keeping the truth hidden, he knows he needs to find a way to prevent Crowley from following her instincts and investigating the children's home with its ill-fated history and residents. But the killer, the 'Two O'Clock Boy', begins to taunt Drake, reminding him that no matter how much he denies it, their pasts, and their futures, are inextricably linked. The killer wants their secrets exposed and the question Drake has to ask himself is simply this – how far is he willing to go to stop the murders, protect his daughter and cover up the truth?

...

'The Two O'Clock Boy' is a stunning offering from author Mark Hill. Moving between the present day investigations and the weeks in 1984 after Connor Laird first went to Longacre, Hill offers the reader a thrill ride full of twists, shocks and complete moral ambiguity. Are the characters simply victims of their past, driven to poor life choices by a difficult and abusive start, or is this merely an excuse to justify their crimes? What is it that creates a criminal? A killer? Nature or nurture?

Hill's eponymous killer, the 'Two O'Clock Boy' is an emotionally complex character. As his past is slowly revealed to the reader, you are put in a strange position of feeling a little sympathy for him as much as for all of those he targets. What happens at the home is something which will make victims of them all, emotionally and, ultimately, physically. Whether as a result you can forgive his actions – well for me the jury is still out. Is he a killer? Undoubtedly. But the truth is far more complicated than that and it's not that easy to simply condemn. In some way, Hill's writing toyed with my emotions such that I couldn't truly hate him, no matter what, and yet could still fear the clinical execution of his plans.

With Ray Drake, you have an almost impossible character. An anti-hero. He is driven by a love for his family, a need to keep them safe, which you have to respect, and yet his methods leave a lot to be desired. I can honestly say that I didn't know how to feel about him. I liked his character at first, but then as the story went on I found myself wondering how far he was involved and what it was that the killer had over him. I didn't trust him, and as the past was unveiled, scene by scene, he became that little bit more complicated. My feelings mirrored those of DS Crowley; confused by Drake's change in character, his determination to avoid the obvious truth and to derail the investigation. He shocked me and made me go gah! in frustration. But I still liked him. A lot. I wanted to hate him but found myself rooting for him instead. Good boy gone bad or simply a father placed in an impossible situation? You'll have to read to decide for yourself.

Flick Crowley is a well written, well rounded, character. With her own demons to battle, a poor relationship with her estranged father and an over reliance upon her sister, she is a very likeable character. Tenacious and determined, she carries on with her investigations, in spite of Drake and I can see her being a character with so much to give. She is certainly no pushover and acts on instinct. You can't help but like her.

The writing is pacey, the tension gradually building to the final dramatic crescendo, as, chapter by chapter, more of the past and motivations are revealed. The twists in the story, the duplicity, the deception, are so well hidden that I didn't see most of them coming until they were staring me in the face. I thought I knew ... but I was so very wrong. I love it when that happens. The thrill of the chase, the developing sense of jeopardy and threat, all driven by a truly tight narrative, make this a literal page turner. And then that ending ... wow. Just ... more gah and then a sense of foreboding and ... Oh heck. Loved it.

The murders are grizzly, the perpetrator without remorse and the protagonist divisive. But I was compelled to keep reading. I wanted to learn all of their secrets. To understand why the killer was so hell bent on such a vicious revenge. I want to know what the heck happens next for Drake and Crowley. What they have been though is definitely going to make for an interesting and complex dynamic in future books. I can hardly wait.

A brilliantly crafted, fabulously dark and vengeful 5 stars from me.

My thanks to NetGalley and publishers Little Brown Book Group UK for the copy of 'The Two O'clock Boy' in exchange for my review.

Laura says

More book reviews on www.snazzybooks.com

Well, this was an explosive and impressive start to what promises to be a great new crime series!

The Two O'Clock Boy features an intricate, interesting and fast-paced plot which kept my intrigued - and guessing - until the end. The main character, DI Drake, is a bit of a maverick and is certainly different in many ways to the usual high-up Detective, though I won't say how, and the rest of the team have their own quirks and personality traits which make them an interesting team to read about. I really liked Flick, too, although at times she didn't really help herself in being liked by others! Described as being a great book for fans of Luther, I'd have to agree - it's got a real edge to it and I always love reading crime series set in the UK (this series being set in London).

In this book people are not who they seem to be, and those who should be helping others don't always set up to the mark. No one is perfect, nothing is too clear cut - some people have good parts and bad parts to them, but it doesn't make them good or bad, just human. It also poses the question: can people really change? The characters in this novel really make it such a gripping, impressive read - they're complex and full of surprises.

The story twists and turns with plenty of action and grit. The narrative focuses on two main timeframes - the present day, as Drake and his team set about furiously trying to solve the case, and back in the 80's at a horrible children's home. Some parts are quite hard to read about, particularly those set in the past narrative, with the poor kids stuck at Longacre Children's home, but it all adds to the shocking feel of the book.

Dark, deep and deliciously twisted... I raced through The Two O'Clock Boy and am already looking forward to number 2 in the series!

Many thanks to Sphere for providing a copy of this novel, on which I chose to write an honest and unbiased review.

Bookread2day says

The English Channel 1986 . The boy loved his parents more than anything on this Earth. And so he had to kill them. You can picture the lovely family scene with a house rented in north London by a middle-aged couple Kenny and Barbara Overton with two twin sons Philip and Ryan. But an ugly slaughter has developed

that made my stomach churn. . Kenneth and Barbara Overton. aged forty-eight and fifty two, and their son Philip Overton, aged twenty-seven were found bound to chairs and stabbed repeatedly in the chest and stomach. With no valuables stolen and there was no sign of forced entry and the door always unlocked, the police will have to accelerate to find out who committed this wicked slaughter. The first part of this story found disturbing and sad, but brilliantly a fast paced story, one that I could quite easily imagine happening in real life.

Tracy Fenton says

This book opens with a cracking chapter which is both gripping and disturbing in equal measures. Then we meet DI Ray Drake who has a very dodgy past and a questionable policing attitude . Now chasing a mysterious killer who is targeting families from Ray's past.

I struggled throughout this book, mainly because there were so many characters I found it hard to remember who was who. I was also left with so many unanswered questions at the end but hopefully those will be addressed in the sequel. 3.5 stars from me.

Joanne Robertson says

I have to admit that when I first started reading this book, I nearly put it down. I read so many crime books that I have pretty high standards nowadays and if a story doesn't grab me straight away then I do sometimes walk away. But this one slowly started to intrigued me so I kept going...and then going some more....until I physically couldn't put it down! Honestly, the more I read the more I had to read! And it was pretty much going to be a 4* review but that last quarter of the book just blew me away!! How many twists and turns could one writer throw at me in one book?! Plenty it seemed as I raced to the end!

I'm assuming that as this book is being marketed as Ray Drake #1 this will hopefully be the start of a new series and I for one will be preordering the next book as soon as I can! I just loved Ray Drake! He was dark, unconventional and with a depths so hidden I doubt we will get to the bottom of them in book #2 either! His relationship with his daughter especially, gave new meaning to the word intense but I loved his brooding personality and found myself practically hypnotised by him whenever he was on the page. His colleague Flick was also a character that I found myself taking to far more than I had expected from meeting her in the first few pages. Her personal life gave her a likeability that Drake didn't appear to have so it was interesting that my preconceptions had changed quite a lot by the end of the book!

This is a twisty, addictive crime read with some absolutely brilliant characterisations that lifted it to levels I hadn't expected. I like to be surprised and The Two O'Clock Boy definitely did that. An impressive debut that comes highly recommended by me!

I received a review copy of this book via netgalley.

Liz Barnsley says

There was a certain amount of angst involved in my reading of The Two O'Clock Boy – due to the fact that Mark is indeed a good friend of mine (well I say that anyway he may beg to differ and hide under a table

when he sees me coming) and also a lovely chap so the thought that I might not like it kept me up at night. I can't lie about the books. Doesn't matter how much I love you...

Then I started reading *The Two O'Clock Boy* and instead THAT kept me up at night. Because I couldn't put the blinking thing down and it was entirely brilliant. I can say in all honesty that it was banging good – insanely addictive – as dark as you like (and I like it dark) with a main protagonist you might literally die for if you reside within the pages. Add in a twisted, compelling storyline with some relevant and thought provoking themes and you have a magnificent read that will stay with you for ages. And ages. Then keep you up at night some more...

ANYWAY on the due diligence front, if you love tv shows like *Luther* and you like the good guys to be not quite as good as all that then you'll love *Ray Drake* even though he'll possibly terrify you too. But hey I always liked the bad boys. And to be fair he's going after a killer who is pretty terrifying too. If you like a thriller that has great depth of character, enough twists in the tail to satisfy a rattlesnake, a fantastic supporting cast and the ability to make you keep turning the pages as if they were a drug habit you just can't quite quit then this book is for you.

Basically this book is probably for you. More if you are a crime fan. Even MORE if you just like bloody good writing which tells a bloody good story and then leaves you just wanting more. More more more. With a hugely rebel yell...

Go on. You know you want to. Just don't blame ME for the lack of sleep and the need for much caffeine to get you through the next working day.

Christine says

Two O'Clock Boy is a rather promising debut by Mark Hill. I was swept away by the enigmatic and very flawed DI Ray Drake.

The story starts with a dramatic murder, as a boy in 1986 plots to kill his parents. Who is he? In the present day, we meet Detective Inspector Ray Drake. Drake is still coming to terms with the death of his wife and appears to be a bit of an outsider. Detective Sergeant Flick Crowley is promoted by Drake. She is soon on a horrific murder case, where a family is slaughtered. The brutal death of the Overton family alerts Drake to something terrible from the past coming back to haunt him. Everything links to the horrors of Longacre Children's Home, in the early 1980s. Drake is determined to keep his secrets and go it alone to chase a killer. He uses his authority to subvert the case. Will the truth finally come out?

This is a tale of child abuse and its repercussions. It is one that we have seen time and time again in crime fiction. The dark hidden history of abuse in institutional settings. Mark Hill combines two timelines, giving us the childhood history of his protagonist, Ray Drake, and the background to the present day murders. I felt very connected to Drake and his frustrated D.S Flick. It is hard for Flick to make progress in the investigation, with Drake breathing over her shoulder. I was a trifle confused at times by the characters and action in the 1980s. I would have liked this element to have been stronger and a fraction darker. Overall Hill pulls it off, thanks to Ray Drake and the present day police investigation.

I look forward to seeing where Mark Hill takes *Ray Drake* next. This is a series, with potential to blossom!

Louise Wilson says

Two childhood friends. One becomes a Detective the other becomes a killer.

DI Ray Drake investigates several murders that all have a common link, they were all at Longacre Children's Home in the 1980's. The children lived in terror of Gordon Tallis, the homes manager. When Connor Laird arrived he quickly becomes Tallis's favourite criminal helper. Now someone is killing everyone who lived there.

I was quickly drawn into this book and throughly enjoyed it. It's well written with believable characters.

I would like to thank NetGalley, Little Brown Book Group Uk and the author Mark Hill for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.
