



## **The Art of the Imperfect: A Murder Mystery Set in Scarborough, North Yorkshire**

*Kate Evans*

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## **The Art of the Imperfect: A Murder Mystery Set in Scarborough, North Yorkshire** Kate Evans

The death of the renowned psychotherapist Dr Themis Greene in Scarborough sends storm waves through the intertwining lives of three of the small seaside town's residents. The murder in the town perched on the edge of land and sea, pushes: Hannah Poole, Aurora Harris and DS Theo Akande to the borderlands. They are forced to explore the edges of reason, understanding, justice and love. What they discover gets them through but is far from perfect. This isn't gritty crime, this isn't cosy crime, this isn't police procedural. This is poetic storytelling which peels back the psychological layers to reveal the raw centre. The Art of the Imperfect is the first in a series of crime novels based in Scarborough. AvenuePressScarb@talktalk.net

## **The Art of the Imperfect: A Murder Mystery Set in Scarborough, North Yorkshire** **Details**

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Author : Kate Evans

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## **From Reader Review *The Art of the Imperfect: A Murder Mystery Set in Scarborough, North Yorkshire* for online ebook**

### **Debbie Kinsey says**

It took me a while to get into this, but once I did it was a nice easy-read sort of book. I loved the chapters about Aurora and her post-natal depression as they were very vividly and interestingly written, and I liked Hannah's interactions with the other students on the psychotherapy course, but the rest was kind of average to me. For a self-published book, the production on this was good quality in that the cover had a nice texture and it didn't have that difficult-to-read ink/page contrast that other self-published books I've read have had (though there were quite a few proofreading errors).

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### **R.J. Lynch says**

In 1985 I read *Every Day is Mother's Day*, a first novel by the unknown author Hilary Mantel, and I knew I wanted to read more by her. A year later I read *Vacant Possession* and I was hooked. Three days ago I picked up *The Art of the Imperfect* by unknown author Kate Evans, and I felt the same sense of discovery as I had known thirty years earlier.

The book begins with a quote from the late Petruska Clarkson to the effect that the only way a therapist can let down a client is by dying. I met Petruska Clarkson (probably at about the same time as I first read Hilary Mantel) at Metanoia, the therapeutic practice she ran with her partner at that time, Sue Fish. Kate Evans clearly knows a lot about the therapeutic process, but whether there is any connection between her fictional "Dr" Thelmis Greene (baptised Thelma Green) and Petruska Clarkson is her business – and nor does it matter, because (a) the book stands on its own as an entertainment and (b) reading it will do you at least as much good as being in therapy.

The setting is Scarborough. Dr Thelmis Greene's murder is investigated by DS Theo Akinde who suffers from being: an outsider (he's not even a Yorkshireman, let alone a Scarborough native; black in a predominantly white skinned and white thinking town; and gay. He isn't short of suspects, most of whom demonstrate forms of what Yorkshire folk would call madness ranging from post-natal depression through obsession to simple, out-and-out barminess and one of the pleasures of the book is the way in which characters' mental fragility is not spelled out from the beginning but emerges over time. The way we see character development through watching what people do is far more accomplished than is usual in a first novel. Akinde is fortunate to have the help of a local woman in threading his way through Scarborough family connections but it takes a coincidence of an unsatisfactory kind (the only weak point in the book) before he is able to identify the killer. That, though, is hardly the point; *The Art of the Imperfect* is an absorbing and sometimes hilarious romp through a seaside resort that still thrives as many today do not but maintains its individual character. Thirty years ago, I recognised Hilary Mantel as a name to watch. Today I give you Kate Evans as another.

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### **Maureen says**

When renowned psychotherapist Dr Themis Greene is found dead with terrible wounds, it's very much a softly softly approach for the detectives of the North Yorkshire town of Scarborough - nothing wrong with

that of course, it suited this little seaside resort perfectly. It was a good storyline, with many suspects, and it did maintain my interest. I understand that there are more books to follow in this series, and I would definitely be interested to see how they develop.

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### **Diana Skelton says**

For me to enjoy this book fully, it was helpful to set aside my ideas about the "murder mystery" genre, and instead believe the blurb on the back that warns: "This isn't police procedural. This is poetic storytelling, which peels back the psychological layers...." If the reader doesn't actually expect a neatly organised ending, then the psychological story is intriguing and well told. Some excerpts:

"How she hates these two hours of 'processing' at the beginning of each training day. At first, they had startled her, the concept that anyone in their group of five could just say anything, whatever was in their heads, and take the consequences. [...] What a stupid idea: human civilisation wouldn't last a minute if everyone behaved like this. There was nothing to be learned from people emptying their undigested thoughts onto the carpet."

"She had a restless night and had finally slept from about 7 am, so had not emerged for breakfast until ten. This brought a lecture from her father about lazing around and wasting her life before she had even made herself coffee. [...] He was bristling, his face as sharp as leaded type."

"The sea is brimful, shopping over its confines onto the land. There is too much water to be contained. The moon is dragging at it, a carpet of indigo. It creeps stealthily until the borderlands become wet, become liquid, become ocean."

"Then Hannah realises that everyone's eyes are on her. The bland room trimmed in terracotta and navy becomes hotter and stuffier, she feels the flurry of phantom bird wings trapped inside her ribcage."

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### **Lizzy Baldwin says**

As the blurb describes the book follows the death of Themis Greene a psychotherapist who is bludgeoned to death. Discovered by the waif like Hannah a trainee therapist, the investigation begins pulling together different characters and interweaving subplots including Theo, the sergeant investigating and Aurora an expectant, exhausted mother. As the case continues we as a reader are drawn into the different difficult lives of those affected by the death as their hopes and fears are thrown into turmoil and we as the reader get to discover more about them as characters.

The first thing to mention is the writing style is incredibly strong. The description for example is wonderful throughout; the words used help to set the reader right in the heart of Scarborough. I often disagree with bloggers when it comes to description as I like it plentiful, and often overly so. The description through this book is brilliantly constructed so that I really felt completely immersed. This also leads to very strong character profiles. Hannah is a difficult character, insecure and easily daunted I found her story rather heartbreaking. Aurora was my favourite of the characters, a new mother, tired and struggling her anguish felt incredibly real and difficult to swallow. Throughout the author also introduces a number of deep and richly described supporting characters.

The most important point to make however is that this book is less about the crime; this is a softly spoken story on how a sudden event can seriously affect the lives of others and how us as individuals cope and deal with this as people. Yes the book does incorporate a crime, Themis Greene is a rather tricky character and as the plot thickens we learn that she hasn't been the most ethical in her work after embarking in an affair with one of her patients. By the author acknowledging that a number of characters not only knew but were affected by this it opens the pool of suspects helping to make the crime more intriguing. However the book tends to look at the after effects and weaves these into a thoughtful story.

Overall I really enjoyed this book. I always remark on how well characters are scripted and built up and reading a book so heavily involved in the lives of the characters was very enjoyable. I think the crime should have been made more of a focal point instead of being used as just a host to explore the characters however I will be definitely reading this book again and cannot wait to read more from this author.

I received this copy in exchange of an honest and fair review of the book

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### **Clare O'Dea says**

This book worked best for me as a portrait of two emotionally isolated women losing their grip on reality. The characters were interesting and unusual, as was the backdrop of the counselling course. I enjoyed the humour and darkness in Hannah's character, for example her thoughts when she was suffering through the group therapy sessions. Descriptions of nature and the city setting are beautifully done, giving the story a distinctive mood. The most haunting passages describe Aurora's psychotic imaginings. With all that was going on, I felt a bit removed from the victim and the murder investigation. I'm curious to get to know the detective better. For this reason and for the quality of the writing, I'd be interested to read more Scarborough mysteries.

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### **Julie says**

The blurb to this book makes it clear that it's not a cosy mystery or police procedural, so if you read this expecting a thriller / suspense then you may be disappointed. On the other hand, if you want to read a novel showing how a person's death can impact on others then this may interest you. It is very much told from the point of view of a psychotherapist as we watch the breakdown of Aurora as well as Hannah's lack of confidence in her abilities to do her job. The writing has a poetic quality to it, which I'm not sure fits quite so well with the genre. The breakdown scenario is very well handled yet as a result it makes the story bitty and at times difficult to follow. Personally, as a former resident of Scarborough I would have loved more reference to the town to distinguish it from any other seaside town and more about solving the crime. That doesn't mean I didn't appreciate the writing or the way in which mental breakdown is handled in the story but for me it didn't quite gel as a complete package.

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### **Renita D'Silva says**

Wow! I am so thrilled to have discovered this amazing author! What a brilliant read! This was so much more than a crime story. I was hooked from the first page to the last - I didn't want it to end. A beautifully written,

clever tale. Loved reading the different perspectives. A multi-layered, intelligent story. I would give it ten stars if I could. Will definitely be reading more from this author. Very highly recommended.

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### **Michael Tweed says**

I love visiting Scarborough, and I am a fan of crime fiction I downloaded this book expecting a cozy read but wow what a rollercoaster of a ride. Must look out for more Kate Evans in future.

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### **Hilary Atkins says**

I borrowed this book after attending a talk by Kate Evans in which she read a passage and talked about writing crime fiction.

I enjoyed Kate's writing style and use of language. I know Scarborough so was able to follow the characters and visualise the places. I felt I got to know the characters as I progressed through the book.

I enjoyed the first two thirds but then found it difficult to follow as all of the characters seemed to sink into their own personal hell and the 'who done it' plot got lost. Even at the end it wasn't entirely clear who the guilty party was. That may have been deliberate but, for me, it spoiled the book and made me unsure as to whether I would want to continue reading the series as they are published.

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### **Margarita Morris says**

This is an unusual crime story in that the actual crime is almost incidental to the overall book. The story is told from three perspectives: Hannah, who discovers the body of the murder victim; Theo, the police officer investigating the murder; and Aurora, a new mother who is tangentially related to the other characters. All the characters in the book are inter-related in some way, either by being neighbours or friends, or having some connection to the murder victim, or because they are on Hannah's counselling course. The crime is really just a catalyst for exploring the inner lives of Hannah, Aurora and Theo, and the author does this exceptionally well. The prose has a mesmeric beauty to it, so that a lot of the time it's like reading poetry. The natural world (the sea, the weather, the trees etc.) is conveyed with emotional vividness. The human exchanges, particularly those in the counselling and training sessions, are handled with empathy and just the right amount of gentle humour.

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### **Anne Goodwin says**

The Art of the Imperfect is set in and around a psychotherapy centre in Scarborough, a decaying seaside town in the north of England. It begins with a kick when trainee counsellor, Hannah Poole, discovers the body of one of the therapists, the renowned Dr Themis Greene. That Dr Greene has been a bit of a maverick is perhaps an understatement, having had an affair with one of her patients and in failing to report a high level of risk in another, but her rule breaking is at least acknowledged by the other characters and, of course, serves to widen the net of potential suspects for her murder. It's a clever move of the author's in making one

of the main characters a trainee, giving her access to secrets while still prone to the kind of blunders that move the story along. For me, however, Hannah doesn't come across as the ideal candidate for a therapy training – although it could be that some of her defensiveness could be attributed to the trauma of moving in with her parents to complete her course – but she is in receipt, albeit reluctantly initially, of both clinical supervision and personal therapy. While I would have wanted to see her better prepared for meeting with a new client in a GP surgery, and offered admin support to obviate the temptation to give away her personal phone number to her regular clients, I did enjoy seeing how she overcame her initial terror of her patients in order to begin to be of use to them, alongside discovering the value of her own therapy.

Full review <http://annegoodwin.weebly.com/annecdo...>

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### **Catherine G. says**

a multi-layered novel with interesting characters and an intriguing insight into the world of psychological therapies.

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### **Kate M. Colby says**

**Disclaimer: I received a free electronic copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.**

*The Art of the Imperfect*, a murder mystery set in Scarborough by Kate Evans follows the lives of characters in a seaside town after the murder of a well-known psychotherapist, Dr. Greene. While the novel certainly is a murder mystery, as a fair portion of the plot revolves around solving Dr. Greene's murder, the reader should note that the novel is more than just a crime novel. In fact, I daresay this novel may not be for fans of dark, gritty, police procedural novels. The purpose of the novel lies much more in how Dr. Greene's murder affects the residents of Scarborough and the way their lives intertwine because of the crime.

*The Art of the Imperfect* has multiple narrators, but the protagonist is Hannah, the woman who first discovers Dr. Greene's corpse. Despite training to be a counselor herself, Hannah struggles with depression and possibly a bit of post-traumatic stress after the experience. The reader watches, as if from the outside, as Hannah battles her own insecurity, her inability to trust and connect with others, family problems, and darker demons that lurk within her psyche.

The other primary narrators of *The Art of the Imperfect* are Detective Sergeant Theo Akande, who is investigating Dr. Greene's death, and Aurora, a solicitor who is experiencing postpartum depression. Theo seems to be the most reliable narrator, and the reader follows him on the journey to solve Dr. Greene's murder, which hits numerous dead ends and reveals more unreliable suspects. Aurora, who happened to be my favorite character, believes her husband may be Dr. Greene's killer. Evans writes Aurora's passages poetically and with some of the most unique descriptions I have read. It is through Aurora's eyes that the language truly shines.

Given the various and psychologically unstable characters, the plot of *The Art of the Imperfect* is a bit difficult to follow. I found it difficult to separate the facts from the delusions, which at times made me lose focus on the action and left me uncertain as to who actually killed Dr. Greene. For me, the murder mystery itself was the weakest part of the novel, but the characters and their fascinating journeys made up for it. (On a cultural note, I should also add that, as an American, I did not know all of the abbreviations used and

places referred to, which may have taken some of the depth of the novel away from me.)

Overall, *The Art of the Imperfect* is a beautifully-written psychological journey into the minds of characters after a trauma. The way Evans writes from unstable perspectives is poetic, and the way she interwove the lives of the characters is clever. While I found the actual crime mystery lacking, Evans more than makes up with it with her language and understanding of the human mind. I recommend this novel to anyone interested in psychology, psychological issues, and light crime.

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### **Lucy's Weight says**

I started this book some while ago and the reason I decided to read it, is because the rest of the title said:

'.....a crime mystery set in Scarborough'

Just right up my street, or so I thought. Baring in mind I haven't finished the book and I am struggling to finish, I will say its a well written book. The story line just hasn't grabbed me. If you are the kind of person who likes a softly, softly story, then this is the book for you, but I do like my murder mysteries a bit more forthcoming.

This book tries to explore relationships between the different characters who are brought together by the person that was found murdered at the beginning of the book!

Also the book is written in a way to make you the reader be on the outside and looking into what is happening, but for me it meant I couldn't get a deeper understanding of the characters and therefore not as involved in the plot.

The book is so worth a try though!

I finished reading the book late last night and I must admit the end did come together really well - just not my type of book though!

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