

# Agenda

## Review

# Tea room terror

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EHN

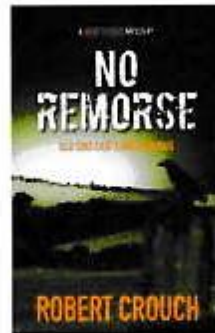


If you think about it, EHPs would make good detectives. The ability to build cases and take people to court is an important part of their job. Former environmental health manager Robert Crouch is using this premise to create a series of novels in which a fictional principal EHO, Kent Fisher, juggles his messy personal and professional life with solving crimes.

The books are set in a 'real' location. Crouch last worked as an EHO in East Sussex and he lovingly recreates it as the backdrop to his stories - its quaint high streets and sink estates, its tracts of pretty down land scenery and iconic landmarks (like Beachy Head and the Birling Gap). But, like the idealized West Country of the TV series *Midsomer Murders*, his pastoral setting is racking up some grizzly goings-on behind its Tudor timbers and net curtains.

The third Kent Fisher novel (following *No Accident* and *No Bodies*), *No Remorse* adds to the rural mayhem. In this case the victim is one Anthony Trimble. Suffering from dementia, Mr Trimble is the resident of a private nursing home run by the appallingly mercenary and officious Miss Nightingale, who likes spreadsheets more than people. It's a racket of course. The home, Nightingales, looks pristine enough and hits all of the Care Quality Commission's targets but the residents are being ripped off - their accounts raided in dodgy equity release schemes and over-charged for their hair-dressing appointments.

When he visits the home with his West Highland terrier Colombo to provide a pet therapy session (would someone as harassed



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and self-centred as Kent actually do this?) his EHO's instincts tell him that something is amiss. Mr Trimble is lucid enough to communicate that someone is trying to kill him - an accurate prediction, as it turns out. Despite his dementia, he provides clues to the culprit and his - or her - motives in a number-based cryptogram that relates to his cherished books of crossword puzzles.

Solving such puzzles is a trope of detective stories going back to Conan Doyle and *No Remorse* echoes more modern crime novels, such as the alphabet mysteries of Sue Grafton and Peter Robinson's Inspector Banks books. This is the kind of crime fiction that is layered with false leads and dead-ends, challenging the reader to keep ahead of the author's twist and turns.

The Kent Fisher books work because their milieu (tea-room terror) is skillfully drawn and we can empathise with their hero's insanely demanding work environment and his terrible life choices. Kent is set to head-up a newly-merged food safety and pollution control team that he is ill-equipped to manage and, as in the previous books, his humourless boss, Dani (another spreadsheet merchant) is trying to get rid of him.

Any EHP will find much in here that will make them smile with recognition and they will enjoy travelling down the highways and by-ways of East Sussex to discover the surprising circumstances of Anthony Trimble's death.

**Crouch r (2018) No Remorse RWC publishing, Kindle Edition, ASIN: B07C27G9ZR**

[www.robertcrouch.co.uk](http://www.robertcrouch.co.uk)