

The *And by Fire* Readers Guide

Dear Readers,

Ambitions—everybody’s got them. No crime in that. What some people are willing to do to pursue their ambitions on the other hand . . . that’s where things can get ugly, even murderous.

As a writer, I am interested in the creative process. Art requires sacrifice, so the conventional wisdom goes. But surely that adage refers to self-sacrifice not the sacrifice of others? In *And by Fire*, I explore what happens when two London artists—one past and one present—fail to make that distinction, committing arson and murder for the sake of their craft.

Solving these crimes falls to a pair of fierce, ambitious female detectives. Like the “artists” they pursue, tough choices must be made regarding what they’re willing to sacrifice for success.

In the here-and-now, London City Police DI Nigella Parker faces not only the daunting task of catching a “sculptor” who uses burnt flesh, but her own fears. She’s feared fire since childhood. But Nigella’s biggest fear is emotional intimacy. Relationships take time and, as she muses, being a professional woman means being “first to arrive, last to leave, overkilling it to make certain you were seen as being as competent as male colleagues who do less.” One of the things Nigella sacrificed in pursuit of her work—though he mightn’t like being referred to that way—is DI Colm O’Leary. Now awkwardly partnered with her former lover in the multi-jurisdictional homicide investigation, maybe there’s a chance for personal growth?




In 17th century England, royal Lady-in-Waiting turned sleuth Margaret Dove is fascinated by science. But when asked by Royal Fireworks maker Etienne Belland, “Are you a woman of science?” her answer is telling: “There is no such thing.” When a friend disappears during London’s Great Fire, Margaret uses science and deductive reasoning to find him and pursue justice. Justice that requires painful sacrifice. But unlike the criminal she pursues, Margaret understands the difference between giving all of herself and sacrificing Etienne for the cause.

I hope you enjoy my time-twisty mystery, and that it makes you think just a little bit about what we do in pursuit of both ambition and love.

Cheers! Evie



Keep reading for the following goodies . . .

-  **An explanation of the TWO Londons**
-  **A suggested book club menu with recipes**
-  **An extra scene that takes you inside the mind of a killer**



Two Cops, Two Police Departments . . . Two Londons

In *And By Fire*'s modern plotline, two Detective Inspectors—Nigella Parker and Colm O'Leary—partner to track a an “artist” creating sculptures using burnt flesh. As their investigation moves from crime scene to crime scene it is multi-jurisdictional because . . . (get ready for a shock) . . .

There are two Londons.

Most people don't realize that when they pop into the British capital as tourists. They aren't aware, as they race from the Tower to St. Paul's Cathedral, from Christopher Wren's Monument to the Great Fire to Harrods, that they are crossing and recrossing the boundaries between two independent Londons.

Sometimes called “the Square Mile,” a nickname dating to the Victorian era, the City of London proper is one of the 33 boroughs making up sprawling Metropolitan London. **But it is something more—something extraordinary: a self-governing island in the sea of greater London.**

The City of London (or “the City” for short) contains 1.12 square miles of prime real-estate. That's a miniscule portion of the whopping 607 square miles comprising Metropolitan London. But while it may be small, the City is mighty—boasting Britain's oldest local government (the City of London Corporation); its own, gloriously costumed, Lord Mayor; **and an independent police force—The London City Police—professional home to my fictional detective Nigella Parker.**

The City Police of London: Welcome to Detective Inspector Nigella Parker's ground . . .

The jurisdictional area of the London City Police can roughly be described as running from the River Thames in the south to the Barbican Centre in the north, and from Fleet Street and Chancery Lane in the west to Aldgate and Liverpool Street in the east. Like their territory, the police force is small—the smallest in the UK—with less than 800 full-time officers as of 2020.



“Policing the Square Mile brings with it particular challenges, quite unlike any other policing area within the UK.”

(London City Police website)

Because its ground (aka territory) includes most of London's high-flying financial district, with its ultra-modern architecture (the Gherkin, the Cheesegrater), the City Police have considerable expertise in financial/ economic crime. But money laundering and fraud aren't all that they handle. One-hundred-and-twenty full-time officers are assigned to the Crime Directorate, charged with solving violent crimes, like those committed by the murderous arsonist DI Parker is chasing in *And by Fire*. Some of the most famous and salacious crimes in the history of the British Capital were investigated by the City Police—think Jack the Ripper (whose victim Catherine Eddowes was killed in the Square Mile) and the Houndsditch Murders!

The City Police have a unique identity. And they also have a unique appearance, from their brass badges (most UK police wear silver) to their red and white checkered colours in a nation where standard police colours are black and white.

If the City of London Police patrol only one square mile, who pursues London's criminals in the rest of the Metropolitan area?

That would be the Metropolitan police (aka Scotland Yard). In *And by Fire* the first crime scene and the first fatality both occur on City ground. But the second crime scene and a subsequent fatality are on Metropolitan Police territory. Which is how Ni ends up working the case with Met officer and former lover Colm O'Leary.

[Interested in the history of the City of London Police? You can visit my blog where there's a longer discussion of the department. Or, there's a museum for that . . . Isn't there a museum for everything in London? "The City of London Police Museum" is tucked into a corner of the London Guildhall and is the free-of-charge. Stop by next time you are in the City.]

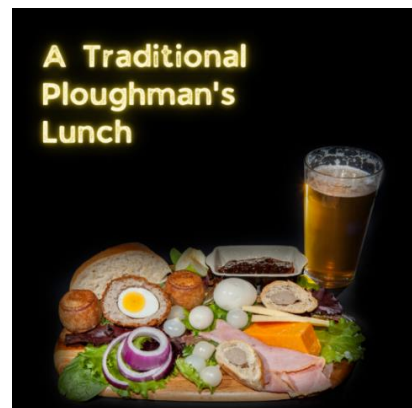


Suggested *And by Fire* Book Club Menu with Recipes

And by Fire is dual timeline mystery, so some multi-era menu fun is in order!

When readers meet Lady Margaret Dove, a seventeenth-century Maid of Honour to the Queen turned detective, the English royal court has just returned to Whitehall Palace after fleeing London due to an outbreak of plague. Since I have a recipe for "plague-water" on my desk (doesn't everybody?), I suggest you start your bookish evening with a plague-water inspired cocktail. Although, if the idea of herbaceous white wine doesn't tickle your fancy, I am certain most members of your club would enjoy a proper cocktail made with good British gin 😊

That's the drinks sorted. For snack inspiration let's head to the twenty-first century where Detective Inspectors Nigella Parker (City Police of London) and Colm O'Leary (Metropolitan Police) don't have much time for fine dining (or dining at all). They're chasing a murderous arsonist across Greater London—a killer who creates sculptures using burnt flesh. Any wonder then that eating isn't a top priority for my detective duo? Burned bodies aren't exactly great for the appetite.



Book club meetings on the other hand . . . discussing a good book always makes me crave a plate full of nibbles. Since *And by Fire* is British as British can be, I am recommending a Ploughman's Platter—inspired by a traditional ploughman's lunch that appears early in *And by Fire*, when Parker and O'Leary meet at a pub to grab a bite and review CCTV footage from their first crime scene.

After the savory, I suggest scones for your book club sweet treat. I am scone-oholic. From the traditional buttery variety full of plump sultanas, to the Fat Rascals at Betty's in York (my all-time favorite Tearoom), to my personal chocolate chocolate-chip take, I love scones. Especially smeared generously with thick clotted cream (Double Devon anyone?) and strawberry preserves. Is it teatime yet?

Recipes:

Plague Water Cocktail

The base for the original, medicinal brew was white wine (admit it, you were expecting something far more gruesome). Not a lot of change is needed to make a modern version . . .

Ingredients:

- A bottle of Sauvignon Blanc, preferable with good citrus notes
- Fresh Rosemary
- Fresh Sorrel (if you can find sorrel it's worth adding—it has a very complex, bright and some might say fruity flavor) or Sage (both are optional if you just want to stick with Rosemary that's fine)
- Fresh lemon peel

Directions:

1. Four days before your book club gathers (because that's how long they steeped the original remedy), open your bottle of wine.
2. Use a peeler or paring knife to make nice long curls of lemon peel. Don't be stingy—use all the peel from your lemon. Then push the lemon peel into the open bottle.
3. Rinse your rosemary and sorrel or sage and then add your herbs—on their stems is best so you'll be able to pour-out without getting bits and pieces—to your wine.
4. Recork or otherwise cover the wine bottle and put it upright in your fridge to let the flavors of your herbs and lemons infuse into the wine.

Serve chilled on the day of your book club meeting, and toast each other's health because, allegedly, this cocktail should protect you from the black death!

[Want to go more “old school”—by which I mean plague era old? Instead of the herbs listed above you can add mugwort and celandine if you have them laying around. But nobody does these days.]

O'Leary's Ploughman's Platter

Ingredients:

- Crusty bread, sliced
- 2-3 UK cheese choices (I suggest a Wensleydale, paired with a Blue British Stilton, and rounded out with an English Cheddar)
- Thick slices of ham
- Hardboiled egg halves (or, if you are an adventurous cook, some scotch eggs—soft-boiled eggs wrapped in layers of sausage meat and breadcrumbs and deep fried)
- Celery (rinsed, peeled, and cut into sticks)
- A jar of good gherkins.
- Colman's mustard
- Fresh watercress (rinsed)
- A nice chunky chutney of your choice
- A large (and preferably rustic looking) platter or tray—the kind you'd use for a charcuterie spread.
- Some knives (cheese or otherwise) for the cheese, and serving utensils for the ham, chutney etc.

Directions: Talk about EASY . . .

1. Arrange your cheese on the platter. I tend to leave mine in wedges, and go with a triangular configuration, filling in between the cheeses with my other items.
2. Add your nice crusty bread slices (I go right down the middle of my platter with these).
3. Fill in the remaining spaces with your ham, celery, gherkins, and eggs.
4. Add little bunches of watercress to dress up your platter (in a rustic way) and because water cress is yummy.
5. Open your mustard and chutney and set them beside your platter with a little spoon or knife for each.

Watch everyone load their plates—it's that delightfully simple. Maybe point at someone with a celery stick while discussing *And by Fire* (the way O'Leary points at Nigella with celery over lunch at the Three Crows pub). Oh, and don't forget to save room because scones—my personal and previously private recipe for them—is next!

Evie Hawtrey's Chocolate Chocolate-Chip Scones

Warning, these disappear quickly! The recipe makes eight to twelve. So you'll probably need to make more than one batch for your book club depending on the number of members and whether—like me—some are scone-oholics.

Ingredients:

- 1 ²/₃ cup all-purpose flour
- ¹/₂ cup sugar
- ¹/₃ cup un-sweetened cocoa powder (preferably Dutch processed)
- 1 Tablespoon baking powder
- ¹/₂ teaspoon salt
- 6 Tablespoons unsalted butter—COLD—cut into small pieces
- ¹/₂ cup of mini-semi-sweet chocolate morsels (or you can use diced pieces of dried cherries if you prefer)
- 1 large egg
- ¹/₂ cup of heavy cream (with a bit more standing by)
- A jar (or two) of clotted cream (make it double Devon) for serving

Directions:

1. Preheat your oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, unsweetened coco powder, baking soda and salt.
3. Drop in your 6 tablespoons of cold butter pieces and cut the butter into your dry ingredients using a pastry cutter, your whisk, or a couple of knives.
Your goal is for the biggest pieces of butter to be pea-sized or smaller and the rest to resemble breadcrumbs. You do NOT want the butter to soften or get mushy.
4. Stir in mini-morsels or chopped pieces of dried cherries. Then set this bowl aside for a moment.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together: your egg and heavy cream.
6. Add your wet ingredients to your dry ingredients all at once, and stir with a rubber spoon or spatula until everything is moist and starting to cling together.
7. Use your hand to gently knead the dough against the sides of the bowl until you form a ball and the bowl is mostly clean (during this process it may be necessary to add a bit more cream).
8. Your ball will not (and should not be) smooth, and it will be on the crumbly side.
9. Turn your dough ball out onto a floured surface and roll it into a round about ¹/₄ inch thick.

10. Cut the rolled-out dough into wedges (as you would a pie). You should have 8-12 finished scones depending on the wedge size you cut.
11. Place scones on an un-greased cookie sheet and brush the tops with cream or milk.
12. Bake for 12-15 minutes (they should be set, but still have some spring to them when you touch the tops).
13. Cool on a wire rack.

These scones are wonderful served warm or cold with double Devon cream!



Extra Scene: Inside the Mind of a Killer

Authors must know more than they say.

In writing *And by Fire* I did many hours of research on details historical to gruesome (and sometimes both at once) that never made it into the pages of my book. In addition to getting my facts straight—from how bodies burned to the street names in pre-Great-Fire London—I also needed to climb inside the minds and lives of my characters. I needed to know what hand they write with; understand what makes them happy, and their deepest fears. This was true not only for my detectives—past and present—but also my killers.

And by Fire's modern-day murderer has no voice in the finished novel. But he spoke to me, and I initially drafted some scenes in his voice to make sure that I understood him fully. Below is an excerpt from one such scene . . . the first time he and I “met” actually, just after his initial crime, the one that called DI Nigella Parker away from her Sunday morning breakfast table.



London, Monday

I make myself wait until the doors have been unlocked for thirty minutes. Each of those minutes—sitting at one of the tacky little tables that inexcusably clutter the space outside the main doors, holding a coffee I have no intention of drinking—is agony. Already I've waited more than 29 hours, to tell my Patron Saint that I've begun. When at last I desert the coffee and open the familiar black doors, a feeling of relief, of intense joy, washes over me.

It is Monday morning, and my church is empty.

The City boys can't be bothered with this place. Their god is money. When one of them suffers a serious trading loss or professional setback he might pop in for a lunch-hour service some Thursday, but I doubt he stays for the whole thing. Not that he would be chastised for that. The parish website makes it quite clear that God is meant to be convenient, and that worshipers can come and go.

God is NOT convenient—neither is art.

But I am unfair. I have as little use for Christ as the City boys. That is not who I've come to offer my whispered prayers and confessions. Not "the" God but "a" god will hear me here, as he always does.

I stop near the three columns to the right of the door—one of four such trios framing the sacred heart of the place. I've touched each a hundred times, but I cannot resist putting out a hand again, stroking and then leaning as I absorb the foreshortened squareness of St. Mary Woolnoth. The sun pours in from the lunettes above. Yet I take a seat in the shadows where I know Nicholas—relegated so long to the shadows himself by dismissive, sanctimonious critics—can see me.

Bless me oh patron saint of underappreciated artists, man overlooked, ridiculed, and turned devil-worshiper by novelists. No, no, forgive me. I must start again. I meant to give you thanks, for you have blessed me already. You inspire me. You sustain me. And you watch over me. It was you, surely, who caused me to drop the keys as I withdrew them from the ignition of the van so that I was stooped to retrieve them from the floor mat, face hidden, as the stupid man with his dog passed so close. When I sat up, I saw his retreating back and I wondered at him being there so late, as the City is home to very few. Then his dog took a piss against the base of the thing, right where I intended to begin it all—anointing it. And I knew that the dog was a sign sent to let me know you were watching when, at 3 a.m. I placed the linseed-soaked ball of paper, when I flicked the lighter. I felt no fear, for you were there, and what I created was not just for my glory but for yours.

I pull out the clipping and unfold it. *We made all the London papers. But not as I hoped. Mostly small, one paragraph blurbs. And none of the reporters understood that they were seeing art. They used phrases like "bizarre stunt" and "nutter burns effigy." But this one featured a picture, and I know you will see in it what I do: a sculptural masterpiece. A man: made by chisel, rasp and sweat, but completed by fire. A sculpture far more daring and meaningful than any of the "public art" displayed with such pride in Spitalfields where I live.*

I look down at my man, coiled on the pavement. Boring, pedestrian, Ethan F's work cannot compare. Never could. Not in school. Not now. Yet all of London gushes about his three pale works included in the "What's Next—10 British Artists to Keep An Eye On" exhibit.

I feel bile rising in my throat. I close my eyes and take deep breaths hoping the scent of old wood and dust will calm me. I hear a noise—paper being crumpled. I start, and, eyes popping open, I search the church interior. No one! Then I glance at my lap and realize I have compacted the news clipping into a ball just as I crumpled the coverage of that damn exhibit—of Ethan's. The gushing reviews, crumpled and burned—tinder to light the rough starting places of my own great work. I will show them—we will show them—those fawning critics. We will show them something so unique, so glorious, so new, that Ethan's little twisted heaps of metal and wood will be forgotten. Yesterday was only the beginning. I have other men waiting to be perfected, waiting to be set alight.

 **End** 