



## The Old Silent

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A woman kills her husband in front of a police detective--an open-and-shut case. Except that this police detective, Superintendent Richard Jury of the Metropolitan C.I.D. (New Scotland Yard), has just spent the day following the woman in question for no reason, unless perhaps because of some fey feeling he has toward her. After witnessing her crime, he feels obligated to help her, even though she neither requests nor seems to desire his help.

Jury suspects that it may have been a crime connected with her stepson's long-ago disappearance, and he immediately decides to investigate, much to his cat-hating superior's dismay. Jury's friend Melrose Plant joins him in the investigation, which takes them to the south coast of England (the scene of the kidnapping) and to the bleak wilds of Yorkshire, the scene of much more horrendous crimes (the murders of the Yorkshire Ripper, a case in which Jury is hinted to have been involved). Among these gloomy, storm-swept settings, the mystery almost takes a backseat, as it does to the attire and rank of its characters. The book is liberally laced with royalty and its trappings: Plant is a former earl (what happened to his earldom is never really explained) who drives a Bentley and wears cashmere; there is also a faded Italian princess fond of pricey dress designers, as well as an Englishwoman who is off to Venice to marry an unrelated Italian prince. Mix in a motorcycle-riding American authoress from Maryland who pretends to be from New York, and the whole group becomes too fantastic for the area in which it is set. May the Brontes rest in peace; London's Soho would have been a much more appropriate setting than the north of England's quiet towns.

Ultimately, the mystery is sacrificed to the characters peopling it. The unreality of the personalities that Grimes has chosen to create sinks the plot and forces the reader to continually surface from suspension of disbelief, gasping with the realization that not even poetic license can make THE OLD SILENT more than pretentious, too-hip reading.

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