

THE FIRST STONE

Eight year old Donna's father died in mysterious circumstances when she was a baby. Shy, naïve and friendless, Donna has become the powerless butt of her older sister Sarah's vindictive rages. Only the encouragement of a special needs teacher makes her classroom life tolerable.

Donna is prone to fantasies in which she conjures the friends she does not have. When a stranger takes up residence next door she imagines him to be the father she never knew unaware that he is a member of a criminal syndicate of bullion robbers using the house as their operations centre. The stranger's guilty past and Donna's innocent, needy present become points of departure in this story of loss, connection, betrayal and growing up.

How do we learn to say goodbye to our loved ones when they die and move on in our lives? How do we understand and adapt to Christian values when we are brought up in an agnostic family? How do we forgive those who injure or deceive us? These are the underlying themes of a novel set in the local community of St Margaret's.

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Here is an excerpt from a review written by Valerie Hey, a Professor of Education at Brunel University about "The First Stone"

"This is a powerful and subtle account of being a younger sister, spectating and not quite understanding the vexed world of school, schoolgirl friendships and family life.....a bold narrative told with compelling psychological truth.....the small scale domestic drama connects in a delicate way with the crime and suspense story spun the other side of the garden fence.....this is a deceptively simple story told with wit and an engaging style that deserves a wide audience."