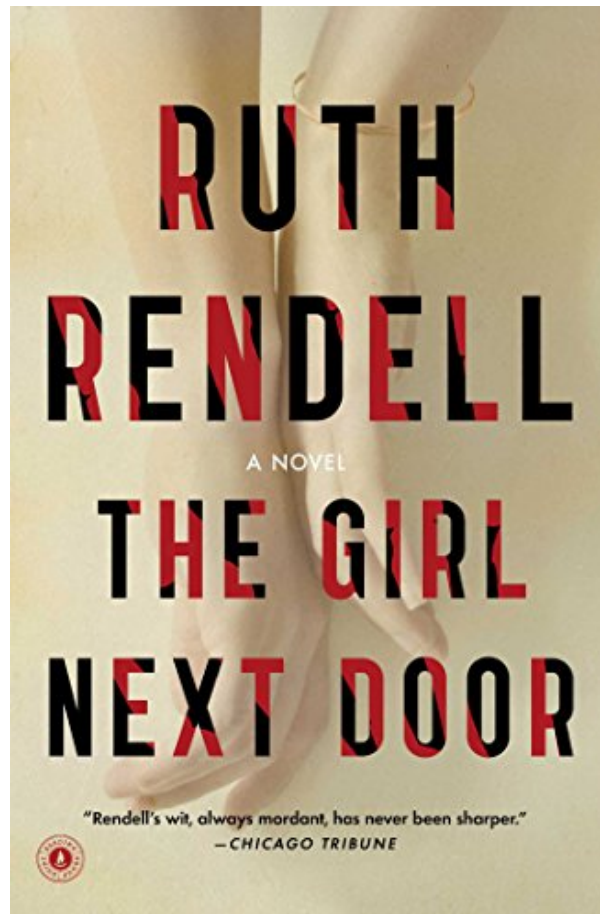
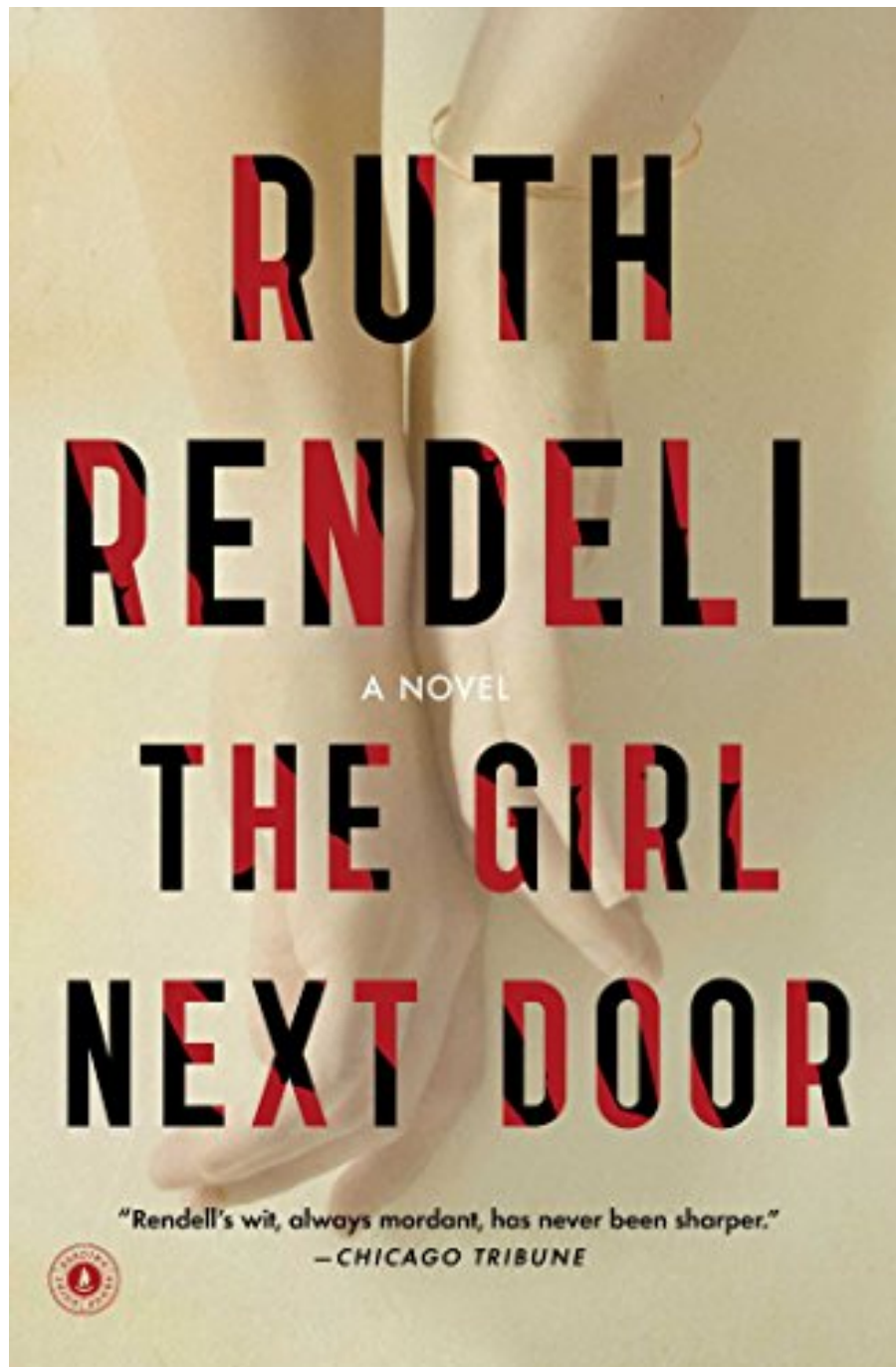


THE GIRL NEXT DOOR: A NOVEL BY RUTH RENDELL



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Review

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(John Wilson, Chicago Tribune)

“[Rendell] is one of the most literate living writers of fiction...Her witty style and her endless trove of subtle references to fellow writers (living and dead) are matched by a timeliness that always takes on contemporary social issues along with the invented mystery that propels her plot into action. Part of the miracle is that with more than 60 books to her credit over a half-century career, Ms. Rendell never descends into mere formula. *The Girl Next Door* is no exception.” (Robert Croan, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)

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THE GIRL NEXT DOOR: A NOVEL BY RUTH RENDELL PDF

INCLUDES AN EXCERPT OF RENDELL'S FINAL NOVEL, DARK CORNERS

From crime legend Ruth Rendell, a psychologically intriguing novel about an old murder that sends shockwaves across a group of astonishingly carnal and appetitful elderly friends: "Refined, probing, and intelligent...never less than a pleasure" (USA TODAY).

In the waning months of the second World War, a group of children discover a tunnel in their neighborhood outside London. For that summer of 1944, the subterranean space becomes their "secret garden," where the friends play games, tell their fortunes, and perform for each other.

Six decades later, construction workers make a grisly discovery beneath a house on the same land: a tin box containing two skeletal hands, one male and one female. As the hands make national news, the friends come together once again, to recall their long ago days for a detective. Then the police investigation sputters, and the threads holding their friendship together begin to unravel. Is the truth buried amid the tangled relationships of these aging men and women and their memories? Will it emerge before it's too late?

Stephen King says, "no one surpasses Ruth Rendell when it comes to stories of obsession, instability, and malignant coincidence." In *The Girl Next Door*—"yet another gem" (The Washington Post)—Rendell brilliantly shows that the choices people make, and the emotions behind them, remain as potent in late life as they were in youth. "Rendell's wit, always mordant, has never been sharper than when she skewers patronizing assumptions about the elderly" (Chicago Tribune).

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- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

56 of 56 people found the following review helpful.

The Girl Next Door

By Damaskcat

The reader knows who has committed the murder from the start of this well written crime novel so it isn't a traditional 'who done it' and there is very little input from the police investigating the crime at a later date. The book primarily concerns a group of friends who were children at the time of the murder - near the end of World War II - and how the discovery of two severed hands in a biscuit tin sixty years later affects them.

It is fairly obvious who one of the hands belongs to but the reader must wait until almost the end of the book to find out who is the other victim. I thought the characters were well developed and the author paints a vivid picture of their lives as adults. I thought it was interesting how the dynamics between the group changed and developed as the discovery of the hands leads to them talking about what happened that Summer when the murders probably took place.

If you're looking for a conventional crime novel then this may not be for you but if you're looking for an excellent novel about how people change - and don't change - during their lifetime then this may be of interest to you. Whether or not you enjoy crime novels this is worth reading for its development of character and the way small events can have huge repercussions at the time as well as many years later. I received a free copy of this book for review purposes from NetGalley.

38 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

The Girl Next Door

By S Riaz

This novel, more literary than traditional crime fiction, veers between the present and the past. During the Second World War a group of children in Loughton, Essex, played together in some underground tunnels they found and renamed 'the qanats.' Nobody really remembers why, but time has passed and the group of children have grown up, grown old and, mostly, dispersed. However, the discovery of a pair of severed hands, buried in a biscuit tin so long ago, now brings many of those who played there so long ago back together again. Daphne Jones, three times married and still glamorous, Michael Winwood, whose father chased them from the tunnels and Lewis Newman, both now widowed, childhood sweethearts Alan Norris and Rosemary Wharton and the Batchelors – of whom George, Stanley and Norman are still alive.

The police are asked to investigate the crime – of which the reader is already aware of both victims and murderer . However, this book is more about the impact of the discovery and of unearthing old memories on those involved. In many ways this is a poignant and touching read – of both how age limits and frees us. It reunites old lovers, wreaks huge changes and forces people to confront their loss and childhood traumas. Ruth Rendell manages to make all the characters sympathetic, so you really care about what happens to them. Despite the length of time between the crime and the investigation, making even the police involved cynical about finding a conclusion, there is little doubt that confronting what happened at that time will help solve unanswered questions, make some characters doubt the way they are living their lives and, in some cases, make enormous changes. I really enjoyed this novel, even though it was not a traditional 'whodunnit' and it made me question why I have not read more of Ruth Rendell's novels. Luckily, that is something I can, and do, intend to rectify. Lastly, I received a copy of this book from the publishers, via NetGalley, for review.

30 of 31 people found the following review helpful.

Childhood playmates reunite after 70 years to solve murder

By Kirsten

This is closer to a novel of manners than a murder mystery, as a group of childhood friends are reunited in their 70s when a box containing two skeleton hands is found in their old play area. An early scene in the book reminded me of The Famous Five, with the older people sitting around being interviewed by a policeman about what they had noticed while playing all those years ago.

While the reader already knows the identity of the victims and the murderer, the friends have no idea... they are each more preoccupied by the impact of their reunion. Alan Norris starts daydreaming about his first love, Daphne, who is dazzling and glamorous in contrast to his dull and predictable wife Rosemary; Michael is steeling himself to meet his 99-year old father, who abandoned him as a child. The other couples are facing the inevitable health decline of old age, but one of the beautiful aspects of this book is that all the characters are still learning and growing and participating actively in life. None of them are defined by their age, even though their adult children and grandchildren are quick to dismiss any unpredictable behaviour as "Alzheimers".

The strongest and most engaging thread in the story is the "love triangle" between Rosemary, Alan and Daphne. This story makes a few surprising twists and turns, ending with a satisfying and believable conclusion. While I always enjoy Rendell's books, The Girl Next Door has a fresh and original style, and the intriguing, deceptively simple plot is handled with skill.

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