

## Red Handed with Denise Mina

- Nyla Ahmad, host
- Suruthi Bala, Red Handed
- Denise Mina
- Hannah Maguire, Red Handed

NYLA	<p>Hello and welcome to Book Week Scotland</p> <p>The event you're watching today is part of the Book Week Scotland 2020 digital festival.</p> <p>Crime writer extraordinaire and true crime podcast super fan Denise Mina is joined by true crime podcast Red Handed to discuss among many other things her new novel <i>The Less Dead</i>.</p> <p>Denise Mina is one of the brightest stars of Scotland's rich crime writing scene. She is the author of the Garnethill trilogy, the Paddy Meehan series and the Alex Morrow series.</p> <p>She has won the Theakston Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year award twice and was inducted into the Crime Writers' Association hall of fame in 2014.</p> <p><i>The Long Drop</i> won The McIlvanney Prize for Scottish Crime Book of the Year in 2017 as well as the Gordon Byrne prize and was named by The Times as one of the top ten crime novels of the decade.</p> <p>Denise's award-winning 2019 novel, <i>Conviction</i>, championed by Reece Witherspoon in her excellent <i>Tartan Pyjamas</i>, features a fictional true crime podcast.</p> <p>Her most recent novel <i>The Less Dead</i> is based on real murders committed in Glasgow in the 1980s.</p> <p>We are joined today by a very much real true crime podcast Red Handed. Red Handed is an internationally renowned hit podcast with thousands of fans tuning in every week.</p> <p>It was described by Dan Harmon, creator of <i>Rick &amp; Morty</i> and <i>Community</i>, as "the best true crime podcast I've heard. Ever."</p> <p>Red Handed won silver in the British Podcasts Awards' Listeners' Choice category this year and was in the top 20 for the category British Podcast of the Year in 2019.</p> <p>Red Handed offers a weekly dose of murder, wit and 'oh, thank god I wasn't eating when he said that'.</p> <p>It's delivered with all the facts, anecdotal tangents a-plenty, serious societal scrutiny and real British flavour. It is hosted by our wonderful chairs for today, the excellent Hannah Maguire and Suruthi Bala.</p> <p>I'm now going to hand over to Denise, Suruthi and Hannah. You're in for an amazing event. Thank you so much.</p>
SURUTHI	Denise, how have you been coping with 2020? What's going on? What's going on in your world...your house?
DENISE	I'm working wildly. I'm working wildly and I'm vacillating in between absolutely terrified and - not that - I'm all right with it.

SURUTHI	Mmmm...similar.
DENISE	What about you? Yeah.
SURUTHI	<p>I would say so. I would say the energy's coming in bursts. I felt like at the start of 2020 when we went into lockdown, Hannah and I were sort of like 'we're gonna make the best of this. We're going to get loads of work done.'</p> <p>And then we were like 'I'm so tired, I'm so burnt out. I haven't seen anything else in the last however many months.'</p> <p>But yeah. I oscillate between fear and anxiety and...just enjoying not having to make plans with people, I guess.</p>
HANNAH	I'm almost the same. I'm a bit more, eh, socially, like...I need people a lot...but we're so lucky to be working. I can't really complain. And at least we can sit in pubs now, so that's something.
SURUTHI	That is something.
DENISE	We're so lucky to be working, honestly, 'cos it's so..I mean, I know I sound a million years old and I'm not, I'm 54, but I'm so scared for younger people. 'Cos you just think this is going to be carnage and nobody really seems to care. Anyway, that's too depressing really, but...
HANNAH	Well, you've actually led me on to the next question. Because of the theme of the book week is the future, what in the future do you think people will look back at? What will stand out the most about 2020 do you think?
DENISE	Well, I think what's really weird is, em, when you look back on catastrophes like the war, people always think it was a brilliant time because they're very present, because everything's changing all the time, so you don't really remember these things as scary and I think in thirty years' time they'll probably have pandemic-themed cos-play and people will (laughs) wear fancy tops and pyjama trousers and, you know, I think people are going to remember this very differently than the way it feels. But...
SURUTHI	Yes.
DENISE	I think this is a great time for climate - the climate - it's a great time to re-set humanity and the way we...I mean, I travel all the time. I don't need to. This is a great time to re-set the way we behave. And...and how much we're using up and, and I think it might be remembered as a turning point. But I don't think people'll remember how, how intense it was, or how strange it was. What do you think?
SURUTHI	I agree. I think people are gonna look back on this with some sort of weird nostalgia and they're gonna talk about all the weird lockdown

	<p>foods we ate and how we all hung out in our pyjamas the whole time and they'll forget how, like, just mind-crushingly boring it was if you were lucky enough to have work. And if not, how soul-crushingly hard it was because you were scared about your future.</p> <p>Again, that's very depressing so I'll stop. But yeah, I agree with you.</p>
HANNAH	<p>I totally agree. You're totally right about, the nostalgic view of the war. My grandma's the only person who I know who lived through it and she says it was the best time of her life. Didn't have a man telling me what to do, had a job, had my own money, like, so that's always been my narrative of the war which is odd. But maybe it's a bit of a coping mechanism to sort of look at it back through rose-tinted glasses. I think I'm gonna have a hard time looking back in and thinking this was...</p>
DENISE	<p>No, but...see I think because we're all very present. That was what was good about the war was people had today and if they fancied someone, they just went with them.</p>
SURUTHI	<p>Yeah...</p>
DENISE	<p>'Cos they might be dead tomorrow.</p>
SURUTHI	<p>Yup...</p>
DENISE	<p>And if they wanted to eat something, they just ate it. Do you know what I mean? It shaves a lot of worries away when you're in the middle of a catastrophe. And so, I think that's what people are, are nostalgic for, is living in the present moment.</p> <p>Whereas normally we're dieting for a wedding in five years' time or...do you know what I mean...</p>
SURUTHI	<p>I tend to agree.</p>
DENISE	<p>Wishing we got a two in one or whatever.</p> <p>Yeah so, I think that's what...</p>
SURUTHI	<p>I tend to agree, yeah - and I do think this has forced a lot of people to re-set what's gonna happen 'cos nobody knows what's gonna happen. Nobody knows what they have to diet for next year 'cos, is your friend even getting married? Because who know what'll happen. No, I totally agree..and I think aside from the pandemic as well, obviously in 2020 we've seen, em, so much sort of social upheaval this year as well.</p> <p>And I think that this is something we wanted to bring up because we feel like it's a really key theme of your work and also something at Red Handed that we try to be cognoscente of in every episode. Kind of ideas around, if you look at the black lives matter movement and stuff like that</p>

	<p>about which victims in society, do we decide to care about or do we decide feel worthy of our empathy or our sympathy or of justice. And I think in particular your latest book, which I've been reading, The Less Dead takes a really sort of stark look, we felt, at something that we try to bring up a lot on the podcast – so we really, really enjoyed looking at your book on this which is about victims who don't attract a lot of sort of emotional outpouring like, for example, street level sex workers which is, em, the key, the key victim type in your book...so what role, I guess do you think fictional story telling in particular can play in transforming the way that society thinks about different types of victims.</p>
DENISE	<p>I think it's fundamental. I mean, I think crime fiction reflects society so there was a prize started for thrillers that didn't focus on sexual attacks on young blonde women about three years ago and I think that's a good, I think that's asking the right question but I think it's the wrong answer 'cos the problem really isn't crime fiction, but what fiction can do and what story telling can do is it can show us other possible worlds so maybe you know someone who's a street sex worker you know. And I was listening to a podcast and it was, em, a discussion about the new regulations in the States where people were no longer allowed to advertise for clients and sex workers were no longer allowed to sort of check people out before they met them. And so, and it was the trafficking law that was introduced in Congress and it meant that basically as you made contact you had to decide whether or not you were gonna go with someone,. And...you know...make money that way. Em, and she said, do you know, it, it cams work and internet sex work, em, is so common now that everyone knows a sex worker and if you think you don't, it's because they don't feel safe to talk to you about it and I thought that was so insightful, you know, that, that this, this is everywhere and, em, we're not protecting people and, em, and we pretend that these are other but they're actually friends of ours. I mean, I have friends who have been street sex workers and friends who have worked in saunas which is quite old-fashioned now actually. Em, and, em, it's like talking about the wild west saloons now I think, taking about saunas, but, em, eh, but, in crime fiction they're always seen as disposable characters that the reader will not sympathise with and I always sympathised with them 'cos I know people who do that job. And, eh, em, and, and I think if we start to actually empathise and humanise these characters, em, instead of just having them be super sex 'cos there's so male gazey all that narrative, so male gazey. And, and you could just focus on them and make them people, I mean, actually Laurence Block had a sex worker as the, as the love interest in his, em, eh, his, em...I can't remember the...in one of his books the detective was in love with the sex worker and didn't make her stop. So interesting 'cos it was such, eh, interesting kinda ethical attitude to what she was doing and her autonomy and all that kind of thing, you know. She was a really brilliant character and she owned a lot of flats that she rented out that she bought with the money from her sex work. Em, I feel as if I've been talking for 50 minutes...</p>

SURUTHI	You...
HANNAH	I'm in awe, honestly – I know we could just listen to you speak, em...
SURUTHI	<p>Em...no..you're completely right though – everything you've said. I think it's something that Hannah and I have spent a lot of time thinking about as two women, particularly into crime. This idea of you know, people always say how do you pick the cases that you wanna cover and...you know..part of it is like, we pick cases that we think are going to be interesting but. One of the key things at Red Handed is also picking cases that we think are gonna tell, make a point, and, almost like a trojan horse, the point is like a trojan horse, we want you to get in because you think it's gonna be well told, you think it's gonna be well researched, em, you know it's an interesting narrative - we're gonna hit you, were gonna hit you with a point about why you don't empathise with this person and I think, you know, it's something that we've been really cognoscente of and trying to do. For example, this year every single month we've been trying to do an episode on Black Lives Matter and, I thought it was just the most obvious thing to do, the least we could do given the space that we're in. So, it's all about, em, black people who have died in police custody and the messages we get about people, like, why are you doing this? Do you not understand, like, that that's kind of saying, that's what they deserve? And we're, like, this is absolutely mind-boggling - the lack of empathy that people have with that, with "the other". It's exactly what you said Denise, like the otherisation, The Less Dead, em, it's just so predominant, isn't it?</p> <p>And I think newspapers have a lot to answer for, 'cos it's something we railed against. Whether like, prostitute found dead – and we're like...</p>
HANNAH	Yeah, or like, underage sex offen...like...no...like rape...child rapist.
SURUTHI	Child prostitute, that's the other one, isn't it? Child prostitute found murdered...mmm...
DENISE	But you what, they're not responsible for it. They reflect the attitudes in society, and we are come, we are moving forward. And, em, you there was a book out called the The Hounding of David Alloali by a guy called, called Kestra Aspen – it sounds like an anagram – but it was out about 15 years ago and it was about the first em, eh, the first, em, person of colour who died in police custody and it came out about 15 years ago and it is an absolutely brilliant book, and it was pretty much ignored. But you compare the

	<p>reception of that – if that came out now – and people are still finding that book. Em, things are really changing and those people who write and say, you know, I think, em, child prostitutes, em, are immigrants or whatever – they’re really outliers, those people. The really tiny minority...things are changing fundamentally and, and it really starts with people questioning their privilege, and questioning their white privilege. And, eh, and people are starting to do that, and they can’t stop us. That’s the thing, these nut jobs, these white supremacist nut jobs, they can’t stop things changing and, you know, feminism is one of the most successful social movements worldwide ever.</p> <p>It’s incredible that the strides we’ve made, and so you get depressed about these people, but they’re idiots and they, and they’ll be forgotten.</p>
SURUTHI	<p>Absolutely, absolutely...no, if you needed perking up after that then, yeah, I dunno. I feel better, I feel better hearing you say...I say thank you.</p>
HANNAH	<p>Can you tell us a bit about, I understand your book The Less Dead is, eh, based on real life events. Can you tell us a bit about what these are and how you came across them?</p>
DENISE	<p>Well I lived in Glasgow then. I moved up here from London in about 1986 an, em, there were, a, the heroin epidemic had just hit Glasgow and, em , I mean, people in the States are starting to talk about the crack epidemic and the fact that, that was a huge social event. But nobody talked about it for a long time, in the same way that nobody talked about the heroin epidemic in Glasgow. And, eh, em, because it happened to working class people - so a lot of street sex workers were killed then and the story kept coming up that, em, it was serial killer working in Glasgow, because that’s a really easy narrative – I’m really interested in serial killer story and why we’re also attracted to that. I love a serial killer movie. I love it because it makes sense – but actually it seems that what actually happened was a lot of different men did appalling things at the same time in Glasgow - because they could - and the very last one had a very different reception and the last woman who was killed was called Emma Caldwell and she came from a really lovely family and she was a very sweet person and that was thoroughly investigated. But of course, they hadn’t thoroughly investigated the other ones - so they don’t have the skill set - they don’t know – I mean this is one of the things, if you talk to street sex workers they say, em, you know, they could be practicing their skills on us but they just don’t bother and then suddenly it happens in the straight</p>

	<p>community and, uh, and they just don't know how to do anything about that and the signs are all there. Anyway, so, a whole lot of women were killed in lots of different ways and the public response wasn't great and when Emma died a lot of people came forward and said they'd witnessed, you know, where she was in the last few, few hours of her life. But, em, I got in touch with the police officer who was retired now - Nanette Pollock – who had been in charge of those, em, investigations originally and one of the brilliant things was, the red light area was a really small area in the centre of Glasgow, so these women would be stabbed to death really violently and no-one saw anything even though it was, like, it was super busy, it was like Oxford Street on Christmas Eve. No-one saw anything and she went on the news and she said, em, men of Glasgow who were hanging about there then – we know who you are and we have the registration numbers – and we have your identities 'cos we've been watching you and if you don't come forward, em, and tell us what you saw, we'll come to your work. We'll come to your house. And we'll ask your in front of your wife what you were doing in the red-light district at four in the morning. She's amazin'.</p>
SURUTHI	Oh wow – that is amazing.
DENISE	<p>She is so rock'n'roll this woman. So, I got in touch with her and, eh, and she invited me over to her house and we had lunch and I quizzed her about all the cases and I was kinda thing, and I was gonna make it, the story - I was gonna make The Less Dead very close to the actual cases and she said, no, don't do that - that's disrespectful to those women - they've been victimised and used all their lives, you're not allowed to do that. And I as kind like that - aargh .</p> <p>But she was right, wasn't she? She's right isn't she? She's spot on.</p>
SURUTHI	<p>It's really, it's really difficult isn't it, because, uk, you now I would say, we – we do exactly that, we tell the exact story. We don't even try and...we try and get it as close to as possible. So I guess the question that we often get is this, eh, how do you do your research for an episode. And Hannah and I are always very straightforward, you know, we always say we are not investigative podcasters, we are not journalists, we haven't come from that kind of a background. We're just two women who happen to have an interest in true crime - and all of our research is, is secondary research - so we read books, we will, um, we will, eh, read articles – anything that's been written and try and put together what we believe is closest to the truth. When you're, em, taking a story that</p>

	<p>has been inspired by real life events like in this case with The Less Dead, how do you go about doing the research and then deciding which bits can influence it without you, you know, feeling like it's maybe ethically not where you want it to be? Um, how do you go - what's the process there...</p>
<p>DENISE</p>	<p>Well, I wrote a true crime book called The Long Drop, em, about four years ago, three years ago and I hadn't considered the ethics of true crime at all. I just really loved true crime and I loved that form of storytelling. An, em, I really hadn't thought about it and somebody said to me, I would worry about the children of the man that you're accusing 'cos it was kinda investigative. And it did accuse someone that wasn't found guilty. And, to my shame, I really hadn't thought about that, but he didn't have any kids and neither did the other guy, so there's two possible men and neither of them had kids so I kinda used that as a way of absolving myself. But it's such an interesting ethical issue, isn't it? And at the same time, it, do you know, it, do you know, I hear...I've heard women talk about why women particularly are interested in true crime for 20 years, like every few years there'll be an article saying 'out of interest, what are women so interested in crime, they could be, you know, they could be making soup for homeless people or something. Why are women interested?</p>
<p>HANNAH</p>	<p>We come across that so much. The amount of interviews we do - I'm not complaining, keep 'em coming - but, em, so why true crime? Why now? And, I think true crime has always...how long has CSI been on TV? Do you know what I mean? True crime's always been around. Podcasting's having a moment, and long may it continue, or we'll be out of a job. But, like, I think, it's not this new thing and that I'm baffled by people consistently thinking that it is. And you, like, talking about the ethics of it is something that, like, occupies both of our brains quite a lot of the time 'cos when we started, we had no idea this was gonna happen. It was, like, we had no idea - so we never really, similarly, thought about the ethics of what we were doing and all we can say is all that, just, 'allegedly' is your best friend - like 'cos, all we can do really, like, because it is...and then sometimes there is a bit of me that...ohhh...like...am I...am I exploiting these poor people who are dead now?</p>
<p>SURUTHI</p>	<p>Yeah, it's definitely something we've thought about, but I feel like the way that we...'cos you have to find a way to absolve yourself. You do, you have to find a way to feel like what we're doing - 'cos I would say we're coming from a very authentic and genuine place. We are not actively going out to be like hey, let's just export these</p>



	<p>people and then hope, hope nobody calls us out on it. I guess what I was coming back to with that trojan horse idea of the point, and I feel like if we can have a point to this, if we can point out a greater, eh, issue within society - or within our culture - and this person's story was used to get that pers...get somebody else to listen - and get somebody to maybe to change their mind. One other thing that we've always said with Red Handed was that, em, we want people to listen to an episode about something that they maybe had previously strongly held opinions about and to change - at least challenge - one perception that they had about something. And I feel like that is the closest we can get. And luckily up until now we've only had people have very positive reactions to the stories that we've told - eh, but, yeah, it is the ethical issue of true crime is an enduring one. And I do also think your idea about why women - 'cos this a question we get asked all the time - eh, Denise, are the majority of the people reading your books women? Do you know that?</p>
DENISE	No.
SURUTHI	Are they not?
DENISE	No, they're not. No, they're not...
SURUTHI	Are they not? That's really interesting...so, is that what you tell people when they say, "why women"?
DENISE	<p>No..but..when I was researching The Long Drop which was a serial murder case that happened in the 50s the newspapers that I read were full of articles about why are women interested in this case. Because it - during the court case - he was a serial killer and a rapist. And during the court case the court was absolutely packed, and it was exclusively women.</p> <p>And the stuff they came up with, 'cos it was the 50, they said, you know, women like powerful men. He was a rapist he was hitting in the face with bricks and raping them.</p>
SURUTHI	Oh my god.
DENISE	<p>You know women like, uh, see, an, but they had pictures of the women queueing up overnight to get into the court case. And it could honestly have been the three of us. Because they're sitting there in little suits. They've got flasks of hot tea; they've got blankets over their knees and they're all laughing their faces off. And it, and it's like 1950.</p>

SURUTHI	That's amazing...
DENISE	<p>No-one can explain why they're interested – and, I've heard so many, I've heard so many reasons over the years. Women re so afraid, we're so used to being afraid we're rehearsing the fear we feel being in the world. That's not what draws me to true crime. It's the fact that it's a little bit deviant - it's a little bit purple, it's a wee bit scary, it's a little bit..it's something you can't really talk to other people about – it's, you know, people slightly...it's...it's...in France they have the art forms they call brute art forms which are like comics which are crime fiction, which is true crime and they're slightly naive and they're outside the academy. You can't do them wrong. And there's something really freeing about working in those forms and those are the forms I really love and like.</p> <p>I don't know if you've noticed, but podcasts recently – everyone is struggling with this issue, so true crime podcasts recently have started to tip-toe around the ethics of it and a lot of them, men ones, ones presented by men, go on about how hungry they are for justice. Uhh-ooo...</p>
HANNAH	<p>That is something that's...we're doing it to like, we're doing it for the victims. No, you're not! That's more offensive to me than, like, to pretend that you're some sort of, eh, vigilante freedom fighter for these, you know, dead women. No, you're not! Give me a break! Like, I just...</p>
DENISE	<p>It's much more interesting than that. It's much more interesting than that. It's, it's, em, I don't know what the answer is, but I know what the question is.</p> <p>And that, that, in old true crime books – there was a brilliant one I read in the 80s called The Godson which was about the, it was about this, this mafia guy and he was like tangentially related to somebody, He was, he was a bagman for Meyer Lansky and he kept saying, you know, I would be running the mafia now if I didn't keep beating up junkies 'cos drugs are a cancer in the neighbourhood. It was really badly written.</p>
DENISE	<p>Really badly written. But he had this really sanctimonious "I love justice, therefore everything I do is OK" kinda thing.</p>
SURUTHI	Yeah.
DENISE	<p>And it feels like that again 'cos you used to get the, you know, there was always a bit in old true crime books where the writer</p>

	would pause and say, I mean, I don't know about you, but I think raping is wrong.
DENISE	You know...sanctimonious.
SURUTHI	Oh my god.
DENISE	It's much more...but the interesting...
SURUTHI	Yup.
DENISE	It's much more interesting than that 'cos it's really engaging, true crime, It's, it gets you by the heart and it gets you, you know, it really gives you a physical sensation and, em, uh, I just think it's much more interesting than that. But I think everyone's struggling with those issues at the same time.
SURUTHI	I agree with you. I think especially now that true crime podcasting 'cos – like Hannah said – true crime is nothing new. I mean, you can even see, say, CSI but like the Victorians were publishing their penny dreadfuls, like, people have always been obsessed with true crime as long there was crime happening. Em, so, I think it is now just in the world that we live in people are a bit more aware of – some people – are a bit more aware of the ethics of true crime so, I think, yeah, especially in podcasting. And this is actually something we hear that you are, em, a bit of a lover of true crime podcasts and, eh, I guess, like, a question I would ask is, like, what is it – 'cos obviously we've talked about why true crime is potentially compelling – what is that you find compelling? Especially since, eh, you know, this, eh, Book Week Scotland is about the future. What is it people find compelling, do you think, about podcasts in particular?
DENISE	I think it's the informality. So, when you read a book it's very set form. A novel or non-fiction book is a very set form. But see the two of you - because I listen to your podcast quite obsessively – and see the two of you, and one of you says “and then did that” and the other one goes “what a fucking arsehole” and the other one goes “I know, what a fucking arsehole” - that sounds like people you know talking about it. Do you know, it's a different form. And also, the fact that, you know, when you're listening to a podcast it can go on for ages. It's not like 23.5 minutes..and precisely because it doesn't answer that question that you brought up Hannah, why you? Why now? I don't care why you or why now! I just want to hear a story.

SURUTHI	That's amazing.
DENISE	It doesn't do anything other than the thing it's to do. And also because of the way you listen to it, you can, it's, for me it's for times I can't read – like I need my eyes, like I'm cycling or shopping – or..do you know what I mean?
SURUTHI	Yuh.
DENISE	Power washing the garage..It's quite hard to read when you're doing that..
HANNAH	What was the first true crime one that you listened to? I'm really boring – my first podcast ever was Serial like everyone else in the world..
DENISE	So was mine.
HANNAH	Oh, Aladdin's cave is opened...yup.
DENISE	Yeah, so was mine.
DENISE	Yeah, it did...and it was the way she left questions open.
SURUTHI	Uh-huh.
DENISE	The way, it was the first one, I really loved the first..I wasn't so keen on the second one 'cos I felt it, sort of, changed its, its syncopation two thirds of the way through. But, em I just, I found it so engaging and my, it, podcasts are brilliant if you're worried because you can only hold one thought in your head at one time so if you're listening to a story that will occupy and all the, the scares can rumble about at the back of your head but it just gives you 15 minutes off sometimes.
SURUTHI	Yeah. I agree.
HANNAH	Have you got any recommendations for us? I'm a bit podcast dry at the moment. I need to be like re-inspired. What are you listening to currently?
DENISE	I call it a dry as well. Where does that word come from?

DENISE	Well, I've been listening to You're Wrong About. Have you heard that one?
SURUTHI	Oh yeah.
HANNAH	I've not listened, but I have heard of it.
DENISE	It's excellent. And at the moment they're doing Princess Diana who I give no stuffs about – I don't care - but they said we're doing this because it's not about anything. And this is such an alarming time maybe we all need a story...and they've done one about killer clowns, they've done one about the Stepford Wives – em...
SURUTHI	Oh wicked.
DENISE	Yeah – it's brilliant. And it's, it's really long as well...which is great if you're on a dry.
SURUTHI	Perfect.
DENISE	And also, The Fall. Have you heard The Fall? About Samuel Little.
SURUTHI	Uh huh.
DENISE	..which is really inserting about The Less Dead. I'm not saying that just to promote my book again but.
SURUTHI	Yes, you're right.
DENISE	...because they go into the whole, they're tracing all the victims in the same way that Halley Rubenstein did The Five which is the victims of Jack the Ripper. She's got little mini biographies of all the women who were killed by Jack The Ripper. Em, and em, eh, what else am I listening to? Dateline's always good – “hi, I'm Lester Holt..”. He's always good. And, em, and I know Marcus Parks - someone's ill run his family - so em, last podcaster's on a bit of a hiatus at the moment.
SURUTHI	Ohhhh...
DENISE	I know.
SURUTHI	Poor Marcus. I hope he's OK.
DENISE	As if we know him.

SURUTHI	Yeah, I know...as if we know him.
HANNAH	Last podcast was the one that brought Suruthi and I together and when, we're allowed to have offices again and not be socially distant we wanna get an office dog and call it Marcus Barks...
DENISE	Ahh...brilliant
SURUTHI	'Cos Hannah and I...
DENISE	I took six friends to see their live show and three of them still haven't spoken to me they were absolutely appalled.
HANNAH	We went to go see it in Manchester and it was one of the, like, I had a great time.
SURUTHI	I had a great time and it was a week before we did our UK tour, so we went there to get some, get some - you know - inspiration...
HANNAH	And see what the playing field is.
SURUTHI	And we were, like, walked out..we can do this...let's go. And then we went and did it. Denise, you must come to our next live show when we're allowed to be out.
DENISE	I'd love to.
SURUTHI	...in public again.
HANNAH	Yeah, we played Oran Mor last time when we were in...
DENISE	Did you...that's a great venue. I love that...downstairs or upstairs?
HANNAH	Downstairs – downstairs. we had a great time.
DENISE	...that's a great venue.
SURUTHI	It was amazing.
HANNAH	Glasgow is my favourite tour show.

SURUTHI	It was the only venue that allowed the bar to be open afterwards so we actually got to hang out with the audience.
DENISE	Alright.
SURUTHI	And drank Irn Bru for the first time. It was wild. We had a great time.
DENISE	Were you awake for three days? 'Cos it's got more sugar and caffeine than coke.
SURUTHI	It was delicious. I don't remember what happened after that.
DENISE	It is, it's great.
SURUTHI	..but it was delicious ahh, no, it was a really good time. So yes, we must, eh, we must get you, um, along for next time we are allowed to actually do it again. But em.
DENISE	It will happen.
SURUTHI	I hope so, I hope so..but obviously there's been a lot of podcast talk, uh, so far, during this, eh, you know, Book Week Scotland interview. It was bound to happen when you invite us along but true-crime podcasts, um, they do play somewhat an important role in one of your pieces of work at least. Your 2019 book that we've already sort of touched upon – Conviction – I don't want to give any major spoilers away but it's about a woman who loves true crime podcasts - eh, what was the inspiration for that? Do you wanna tell us a little about that book?
DENISE	Oh, I don't know where I got that idea! Alright, so it's about a woman that gets up one morning and she's listening to a true crime podcast and she recognises one of the guys in it. And he, they think he's killed his kids and she thinks he hasn't killed his kid. And then she hears the front door knocking and she goes out and she opens it and it's her best friend - they're supposed to be going to yoga – but she's wearing loads of make-up and she's like “why are you wearing all this make up” and she turns round and she sees her own husband standing at the top of the stairs with a suitcase. So, her whole life explodes, and she basically decides to step out of her own life and go and solve this podcast story. And, eh, so that's what she does. So it's half podcast and half, em, the story of her trying to solve the podcast and what I wanted to do was write a book about why we get so, why as a listener, I get so involved in

	<p>these stories and what, what is, and I also as a reader because I think crime fiction for me really comes from an oral tradition so it's, it's much closer to podcasts than maybe a poem or, do you know what I mean? It's like I think, I think, em, why do we want to get lost in other narratives? It's not always because we're looking for the, em, answers to our own situation. Sometimes it's just to escape. And sometimes it's yeah, do you know what I mean? So that's what the whole book is about anyway. But it was a Reece Witherspoon pick for her book club.</p>
SURUTHI	<p>Yes, I saw..I saw...</p>
DENISE	<p>Yeah, they sent me big poster of, em, of that and now it's in my office and I'm too, em, embarrassed and nervous to look at it.</p>
SURUTHI	<p>Oh no..you must – that was so cool. I did see that. That it was in the Reece Witherspoon pick. And I think it was just such a, like, unique concept for a story and so like of the moment because, like, you know, true crime it's – and podcasting in general – is having a moment. And that is exactly what I took away when I read the book. This idea of a woman whose life was so, just, catastrophically falling apart because of what was happening to her.</p> <p>And how all of us have looked for escapes and how a lot of us have used true crime podcasts in particular as a way to escape, maybe, whatever is going on in our lives that we have no control over. And I do think that over involvement with cases that you talk about is something, it's almost like metaphorical for what is happening in the real world. We see all these super web sleuths, these people ignoring the ethics of true crime, going on social media accusing lots of people of doing things, talking about live, unadjudicated true crime cases. There's a whole heap of mess. Eh, but no, I thought it was so, so interesting as, as a concept as well so, eh, yeah thank you for tuning it out there.</p>
DENISE	<p>Do you know, in the States what the police have started to say to people, em, if you have any information please come forward but please don't investigate this yourself or interview any of the people because you're ruining the cases and we can't prosecute them because, like, in Serial, people went rushing to the scene of the crime and trampled over anything that might've remained. But you understand why...</p>
SURUTHI	<p>Yeah...</p>



HANNAH	Ohhh, absolutely. Is there a podcast on your horizon? Because you, you've done loads of things. Books, graphic novels, all sorts...are you gonna come for our gig Denise?
SURUTHI	No, we can't compete.
DENISE	Do you know, em, I don't think so, because I've, I've done some radio programmes which are not podcasts and radio companies keep trying to make a podcast and they don't really get that the ramshackleness and the speaking in a cupboardness is the essence of podcasts for a lot of us. It is, though, isn't it? Em, so, but, you know if you make TV you can never really enjoy TV the same again and if you write a film you can never really...and I really love podcasts and I don't think, eh, I don't think, I think would really want to do an investigative one and then I'd probably be paralysed by the ethics of it. Do you know what I mean?
SURUTHI	Yeah...
DENISE	So, I think, just enjoy some things – you don't have to make everything. Everything doesn't have to be by me. And also, I don't really like, em, eh, I don't really like talking that much.
SURUTHI	I don't believe it Denise. You're so good.
DENISE	I'm quite introverted. I've got two and a quarter hour of this and then I have to go and lie down.
SURUTHI	Same – that's all it needs. That's all you need. Two hours a week. Talk into a mic and then go lie down in the recovery position for a few days. It's all good. You'd be great. I think.
DENISE	Are you introverted? Are you introverted?
SURUTHI	I am. I am introverted for sure. And I can give it on stage, I can give it into a microphone and then afterward I'm, like, oh my god, someone just needs to plug something into my brain now. To re-charge me. For however long it takes to get back to a hundred percent. But, eh, no – I'm not telling you to come for it because you might steal all of our listeners but I do think you'd be a very, very good podcaster. And I think you would enjoy it. But, eh, you're welcome on Red Handed anytime. At least we can say that.
DENISE	I'd just do that instead. Then I don't have to employ people.

<p>HANNAH</p>	<p>If you could do, eh, an investigative...I think one of the reasons we've never done it is it sort of, if people hate an episode we've done they've got a week and they get over it and then they listen to the next one. If we did an investigative eight-piece, eight-episode thing and poured our souls into it for six months and everyone hated it I don't think I'd ever recover. Em, but, if you were gonna do one is there a true crime case that you are obsessed with?</p>
<p>DENISE</p>	<p>Oh, there's so many. There's loads and loads and loads of them. There's a case that was heard very recently and they found the people guilty and it was a girl with special needs whose dad had died and she had sort of been left to this couple and the couple went a wee bit mental and she disappeared 20 years ago. This is out in a really beautiful area of Scotland, em, by the seaside and eventually 20 – she was missing for 20 years and they still don't know what happened to her, but they were found guilty of her murder. And I would love to find out what happened to her because I just think she's somebody that, her dad died, she was unsupported, they were a really unpleasant couple. They sort of chased everyone away. But when they arrived at the house – there's a really good documentary about the case. When they arrived at the house, they had this beautiful oriel window look out on a bay and they had smashed it open and it was like – you know those hoarding things? Those hoarding house things. And it was just, like, broken settees everywhere and, oh, it was just...I'd just love to know what happened to that girl because, em, she, it, she just feels like really no-one was there to care for her because she had learning difficulties and..em..and she was so isolated. I'd love to know what happened to her and I'd love to honour her. You know?</p>
<p>SURUTHI</p>	<p>Absolutely...</p>
<p>DENISE</p>	<p>But I'm too lazy, so...so full of compassion but also quite lazy.</p>
<p>SURUTHI</p>	<p>It's hard work though. I wouldn't describe you as lazy, Denise. I mean the work that you put in because I would say that being a fictional crime writer, in many ways, I would say is much more difficult than what Hannah and I do. Because what Hannah and I do is, we pick cases that have already happened, you know, the conclusion is there. The story has happened. Here are your characters, here are their personalities, here is the plot line and here is the timeline. Off you go. And our job is really just to, eh, to tell a story – not just in a coherent way - but, in hopefully, quite an entertaining way with that</p>

	trojan horse point if we can get one. But with you having to sort of put together this plot line, put together a story that is as compelling as can be. Em, and if you are inspired by real life events, what have you discovered in your time, sort of writing tartan noire – which is a term that I hadn’t come across before until very recently, which is a term I absolutely love – and I wish I was Scottish so that we could say that we were a tartan noir podcast. But, eh, what have you found that people look for in a fiction crime story? ‘Cos, we know what our listeners love, but what is it that gets them going? Your readers.
DENISE	Well, it’s funny you should say that because when you’re – when I’m – researching true crime, there’s always a bit when I’m a bit bored. And if you’re writing crime fiction you can just have someone explode, or.
SURUTHI	Exactly...
DENISE	You don’t have to do the bridging bits of the story you know. Or, he trained as an accountant – did very well in the CA exams. I don’t care, he’s just gonna explode two pages before that.
DENISE	Em, but, em it, it, you know, it changes at – I remember seeing Billy Bragg on stage and he said, you know, some people are here for the political songs and some people are here for the romantic songs and, they have nothing in common those two constituencies, so, when I brought out, em, Conviction, which was about a woman being obsessed with a true crime podcast, em, the, the very grimy, down noir-ish, em, fans,em, had written, em reviews on Amazon and there were things like “what happened, Denise, because it was a bit cheery?” - and it was a romp, and it was an escape story and I was kinda thing...so, em, you know, if you listen to negs, you, you’ll never please anybody. But, basically I just imagine me x 6 reading, and I think when you’re writing fiction particularly you can’t be too aware of the audience. You just can’t. No, you have to just kind of ignore them and just say “well that’s just what happened” – you just go to style it out. Like, I know that you’ve both, em, em, had jobs that you were not happy in..and, eh..have maybe lied about why you weren’t there..and so if you imagine telling a lie and then that doesn’t sound feasible, eh, the tube was off..eh...obviously the tube wasn’t off but what actually ha-, you’re just adding a lie onto a lie onto lie to make it credible.
SURUTHI	I’m sorry I’m late – I didn’t want to come. I don’t want to be here. I still don’t wanna be here.

DENISE	I'm sorry I'm late – I don't trust you... ...I disagree fundamentally with the objectives of this organisation.
SURUTHI	Amazing.
DENISE	We should do an investigation into NGOs.
SURUTHI	Oh my god – that is something we massively want to do. Like, I'm not only saying that because you've said it. We, we have discussed at the pub, eh, once we're allowed back at the pub – guys, chill out, we didn't break lockdown – em, and we were like, our big next thing we would love to look into like a corruption scandal or something like that.
DENISE	I just think it's so interesting
SURUTHI	Ahh – what's the one, what's the one? Do you know one that you wanna do?
DENISE	Eh, well I have a friend who's currently in Tanzania and I think she could just spin bottle and point us to one.
SURUTHI	Yuh...
HANNAH	Let's go to Tanzania. Let's do it...
DENISE	It's finding one. It's finding one that's engaging that has that hook.
SURUTHI	Absolutely...that's our challenge. Always.
DENISE	I read a, I read a crime fiction, I read a fiction book for the women's prize and it was so, it had the trojan horse. But it didn't have the narrative hook and it was about, em, girls being abducted by Boko Haram and an NGO but also in it, obviously some editor has intervened and said "look, she needs to have something she that wants" ...the main character was looking for love in the middle of all this. And it just didn't work she was going ballooning with a nice man, then 40 girls were being stolen and raped by Boko Haram and then she's trying water-skiing maybe and maybe this was the guy...it was just, but, so we need a good hook. A western audience care and John Le Carré's doing it. He's brilliant and that but, but, so we need to, we need to keep our eyes peeled – and then we'll get in touch with each other.

SURUTHI	Absolutely...I think we should do it. A ten-part series in Tanzania. On a corrupt NGO. Guys I'm so in for this.
DENISE	I can be the, I can be the Gary Kemp one so I can do the – not Gary Kemp, what's his name – I can do the look to camera. Fucking hell. Imagine getting..imagine that.
SURUTHI	I'm so pumped for this 'cos, em, we, we don't often stray into the world of, like, we haven't really done corruption cases yet. I guess the closest we've come is – have you listened to the podcast called Missionary? If you haven't, I'd recommend it.
DENISE	Awwww...I've heard it. It's great. Yeah, yeah... Renee Bachach...so we did a case about a Panama jungle death cult and about the impact of missionary work that had led to, sort of, these people were coming radicalised, really. And then linking it back to this Renee Bach lady in Uganda and..the more you listen to that podcast the more would love to do something like that.
DENISE	That Missionary podcast that you did was absolutely brilliant, and it is Apocalypse Now. It is Apocalypse now. It was so, 'cos I was listening to it and I suddenly thought, I feel as if I've strayed into a horror.
SURUTHI	Yup.
DENISE	Do you know what I mean? Because it goes from true crime to absolute horror and it...
SURUTHI	It's like some Eli Roth horror movie you're suddenly standing in. It's horrific.
DENISE	So much, so much. And, and the fact that they were all related – that's - as I get older one of the things that's interesting about being old is you start to see the way power works.
SURUTHI	Uh-huh...
DENISE	And how everyone is implicated in everything. And you when Julius Caesar was killed and all the, em, senators stabbed him. So that everyone is implicated and no-one can do anything about it.
SURUTHI	Uh-huh...
DENISE	And one of the good things about being an introvert and slightly argumentative and a bit frightening is you're not implicated but you

	can see it in all your friends are implicated in mild corruption and you think, if you write this bigger, this is how that happens.
SURUTHI	Absolutely...
DENISE	You look at the States. Why are, are all the people around Trump not denouncing him because they're implicated. Because they've got money in him. Because, if, you know, for a multiplicity of reasons good people go along with bad people and that's, you know, that's really what came over in that podcast, that one that you did. It was so scary. About the heads being cut off.
SURUTHI	Yuh, it was a lot. But, eh, I think that's our trojan horse. We need a hook. We just to find a case and then it's happening. Let's do it, let's do it.
HANNAH	Get on the phone to Tanzania right now and get us a fixer.
DENISE	Whatsapp group?!
SURUTHI	Oh please, please. It's happening, it's happening. We'll call it WhatsApp for Justice. I can't wait. ...I love it, oh my god, how exciting.
DENISE	In 50 years' time were gonna be the dominant political party and we're gonna be right-wing fascist nut cases 'cos we'll get killed and someone'll take it over.
SURUTHI	That is the natural progression. We can't fight it. We will eventually become a far-right fascist group. Let's just embrace it.
HANNAH	That means we get statues on Parliament Square...so...
SURUTHI	Who's gonna stop us? Who's gonna stop...we
DENISE	of this Zoom call...
SURUTHI	And then, in a history lesson one day they'll study this Zoom call as the beginning of where that party started. Guys, I'm pumped.
DENISE	And laughter will be outlawed, and they'll watch us laughing and they'll say that's an old custom.
SURUTHI	Absolutely...I'm so excited. There's so much potential, So much potential.

HANNAH	Right, let's move off fascism for a second.
DENISE	Right, OK.
SURUTHI	I'm surprised we haven't had a message from the organiser in the chat box like "please move on". Get back to books.
DENISE	They're in the toilet, smoking fags. ...making cups of tea like that, they're alright. It's OK.
HANNAH	Oh my god..uh...OK, right...book stuff. Book Week.
SURUTHI	Everyone make the most of this 'cos we're never getting invited back. Go...
HANNAH	Exactly...I suppose you must answer this question all the time, but what are you currently reading?
DENISE	Oooh...what am I reading? I'm reading loads of books about Mary Queen of Scots...
SURUTHI	Ooooh...OK...
DENISE	There was a, em, Mary Queen of Scots had a servant called David Rizzio and she was doing lots of things that lots of people didn't like. So, to teach her a lesson they dragged David Rizzio – who was Italian – out in the middle of supper and, em, 80 men stabbed him. Which is why I'm thinking about Julius Caesar right now. And they obviously didn't, Julius Caesar was in the, you know the assassination of Caesar was sort of in the air at the time an, em, they did it in her, em, front room basically, her reception room and it was to show her that they might do this to her, em, so I'm writing that, that just now and I wrote it before and it wasn't very good, and they could you re-write this a little bit and I read out and I thought 'this is pants". So, I've had to re-write the whole thing again, em, and, eh, eh, but – so I'm thinking about that all the time and I'm... She's 24 and she was six months pregnant and her husband didn't, her husband had a rival claim to the throne and he, during the assassination he was squeezing her tummy. He wanted her to have a miscarriage, 'cos if she had a miscarriage, she. would probably die. Mean it was just brutal.
SURUTHI	My god.

DENISE	I was trying to think about why they were doing that and there had been a, a , they killed a really evil cardinal 20 years before and I think they thought they were all, you know like Brexiteers think this is the Battle of Britain? And it just isn't – they thought that they were involved in the killing, of Cardinal Beaton who was a genuinely evil man. But what they were doing was just a really filthy, mean thing. That's...anyway, that's the long answer to a short question.
HANNAH	So, did you see the Margot Robbie film about Mary Queen of Scots.
DENISE	I haven't actually, no – because everyone focusses on Mary's relationship with Elizabeth.
HANNAH	Mmm.
DENISE	But Mary was amazing. Elizabeth was amazing – and Mary was amazing as well. She grew up in France and then she came to Scotland – and what did she make of it here? I don't know.... it's freezing cold. And, eh, you know, yeah. Anyway, but after she, after that night – basically they shut the doors on her apartments, 'cos they were covered in blood. And no-one really went in there except to just dump junk furniture and then 200 years later Walter Scott made her fashionable again. People started saying "can I see her rooms?" And they would go in and look at her rooms and they would take stuff and they thought it was Mary Queen of Scots' stuff. But all the Mary Queen of Scots' stuff we've got is about 50 years too late 'cos it was just junk that was shoved in this room.
SURUTHI	Ahhh – that's sad.
DENISE	I know. It's really sad, you know.
SURUTHI	So, when you say you were writing this and they asked you to re-write it, are you writing something about Mary Queen of Scots right now? What are you working on at the moment?
DENISE	It's a novella – it's a novella about, about that, about the murder of Rizzio.
SURUTHI	Wow.



DENISE	And then after that I'm writing a follow up to, em, to Conviction which is called Confidence. And it's about faith, and it's about the international, em, artefacts and art market. Em, so they're watching a, do you know urbex? Do you ever watch urbex videos? Where the, it's like people go into abandoned mansions and walk around and say "wow, wow" and they film themselves. It's really interesting hobby.
SURUTHI	uhhh...
DENISE	And, eh, so someone goes into this abandoned French mansion and sees a silver, em, box and the, somebody, an expert watches it and knows that, within this silver box is a message from Pontius Pilot and it's proof of the crucifixion. But she's very young and she's found dead and everyone thinks she's committed suicide and the box is missing. So, Anna and Finn go off and they start investigating what's happened. And if she did kill herself or not.
SURUTHI	Well, a sneak preview here on this interview...there you go guys.
HANNAH	How do you, em, do you ever have days where you just don't wanna do it? And how do you get past them?
DENISE	I don't...
HANNAH	Ohh...
DENISE	I know, I really, I have days when I can't do it. But, you know, I really, really love writing.
SURUTHI	Uh huh.
DENISE	And I really love, em, reading, and I love putting words, just, ahh, just when things fit together really nicely.
SURUTHI	Absolutely...
DENISE	You know, I just really, I really love it and I'm, and I'm, the older I get the more I'm aware of how lucky I am that I get to do this. You know. Had I spent...
SURUTHI	I must say all of us of us are.
DENISE	oh, aren't we. Do you feel the same?

SURUTHI	Yeah. Oh my gosh.
DENISE	Do you ever want days off?
SURUTHI	<p>Oh yes, want days off. All the time. Eh, I would say this year I, I've taken like afternoons off and days off where I...I can't do it. Like you said. I, I can't, I can't do this, I can't research this. I can't write this. Em, I can't record today but, eh, no, I actually haven't even had a holiday or taken time off this year. But, I'm gonna take it off at Christmas, that's when it's happening. 'Cos, eh, maybe thing'll be fine by then. Who knows? Fingers crossed. But, eh, no. I think, I just think whenever I feel tired or whenever I feel like "Oh god, I don't wanna do this today" I just think how incredibly lucky I am. That I get to do something that I love more than anything. Somebody asked us once "what's the coolest job in the world?" And I was like, being a true crime podcaster but just before that is be an astronaut. That's all that would've been better. The only way my, it could've been better, was if I could've been an astronaut. But being five foot two I don't think I would've been allowed to be an astronaut. But no-one cans top me being a true crime podcaster so I'm very lucky. So, I'm just, yeah, whenever I can't, I just remember how lucky I am. And have a nap.</p>
HANNAH	Or go out for a walk. I know.
SURUTHI	<p>But sometimes it happens. Like, for example the book I'm reading at the moment is for a case, eh, that we're recording, yeah, that's coming out in two weeks' time or something. And October we always try to pick, like, more sinister cases 'cos it's October. Let's go for it. It's hallowe'en, um, you know. Yeah, bring out the big guns so to speak. So, I'm doing some reading at the moment on the toolbox killers, from California...</p>
DENISE	Ohhhh.
SURUTHI	<p>They are some of the worst. They're the worst, so, em, I'm reading a book at the moment called The Toolbox Killers and it is horrific. And I was looking at my notes 'cos I thought, "oh yay, I'm done, I've finished the script" and I was scrolling back, and what I do is, when I miss something out or I haven't clarified something I highlight it in yellow so when I skim through it I know immediately you need to work on this. And in the state that I was, the I wrote it on Tuesday, I have written 'go to page 28 for description of torture – can't do this now" and I'd highlighted it because I physically couldn't bring myself to write down the horrible things that they did</p>

	to one of their victims. And I still haven't done it. I need to go back today and finish writing that description. But I still remind myself how lucky I am that I get to do this so...
DENISE	But that, that's such a great opening scene, The Toolbox Killers. That's what it's, it's such a great...when that woman's running down the road.
SURUTHI	Yup.
DENISE	That's the thing that, that really gets you in and I saw a brilliant art exhibition in the Sta...in, Edinburgh one Edinburgh festival and it was a really beautiful, em, eh, bus. And as you went though it got darker and darker and darker – actually, I've got to take you to the Inveraray Prison Museum.
SURUTHI	Oh my god, yes please.
DENISE	Which has the same narrative arc, right, when we're all free you come up here and I'll take you there 'cos it's a long tour. And it starts off like, mannequins in a courtroom with wigs slightly skew-whiff. It's a little bit funny and then it gets darker, and darker and darker...and it ends on a really dark case. It's got a lovely arc, you'll love it.
HANNAH	Amazing.
SURUTHI	It's happening, it's happening. I can't wait, even more now for this pandemic to be over.
DENISE	Hannah, do you ever want days off? Do you ever want to do something else?
HANNAH	I don't know. I think, I was thinking about... I'm also reading a book for the case that's coming up next week. And it not, I'm not finding s- ... unfortunately, some true crime books are just not very well written. But so, I find that, that whenever I'm feeling like it's like a trudge it's usually because the only place, I'm gonna get the information, is from this book that I'm finding really difficult to get through. And I'm super dyslexic anyway so reading already 'uh..kill me' but like, it's worse when it's like...and I don't know whether the..this is just me getting a bit too cocky now that we've been doing it for three years but I'm like "that's not where that bit should go."

	<p>It irritates me as I move on. But I think, what I have found difficult is that like, I love doing touring and live shows and events and, like, doing... and now all of that has gone, it like..we're doing obviously stuff like this now and we did the London Podcast Festival the other day also socially distanced so it's slowly coming back but we had sort of six months of none of that. And I was, like, oh it's just this, like, treadmill of getting the stuff out like. But it is... I do sometimes. I think, yeah, it maybe it's not days off it's just it's some days I can't do it. And think overall – but obviously it's so incredibly lucky to be, and I think I'm the only one of my friends who hasn't had their work affected in one way at all – which really is the wrong way round like, I shouldn't have jacked my job in two years and taken a chance and it be fine.</p>
DENISE	<p>Yeah, I know, A lot of my friends are actors and theatre people and technicians and, eh, lots of them are saying I'm just gonna have to re-think my whole career. I've spent ten years working for nothing on the basis that one day it would be a profession and a job...and it just isn't gonna be...</p>
HANNAH	<p>Well, that's what I did before, so I jumped ship at absolutely the right...</p>
DENISE	<p>Is that right?</p>
HANNAH	<p>Yeah, I worked in musical theatre before.</p>
DENISE	<p>Noooo...in the West End?</p>
HANNAH	<p>Yeah, so I worked, em, I worked at the Shaftesbury – it had Motown when I was working there. It's got &amp; Juliet now...</p>
DENISE	<p>Oh my god...what were you? Were you crew? Were you in the chorus?</p>
HANNAH	<p>No, I was, em, assistant to the chief exec so I did a lot of sort of, like, production co-ordination stuff. Mainly it was just proof-reading programmes really. But I used to like watching the swing rehearsals in the afternoon – that was my... and like there is something like quite nice about being able to swoop around a theatre in the middle of the day like the Phantom of the Opera. That was pretty good.</p>
DENISE	<p>That's amazing. That is so cool.</p>

HANNAH	Yeah, but this is better. Yeah.
SURUTHI	Yes, infinitely. Apart from my astronaut dreams which will never come true. This is the best...
DENISE	I would have thought being, I would have through being titchy was good for an astronaut. Like being a jockey or something. They could fit more in.
SURUTHI	I feel like. I feel like I'm saying it's my height. It's probably my severe lack of fitness that have, eh, stopped me becoming an astronaut. Eh, no core strength but, you know, so I don't think they'd have had me on the team. I would've been a liability. But anyway, we're getting warnings guys, of five minutes left so, as much as I'm enjoying this, I think we're gonna have to, we're gonna have wind down into our final question. Probably.
HANNAH	OK, I've got the final question. It's in black which is my colour – Suruthi's red inside...em, which author inspired you the most? Who got you going?
DENISE	Ohhh. I barely remembered one whose name I can hardly pronounce, and his name was Herman Vygotsky – something like that – I can never pronounce it. People are gonna go mad, but he wrote a book called Falling Angel which I read when I was 13 and I've tried to read since and isn't nearly as good as I remember it. But I remember it, it's Angel Heart which is a rubbish film of the book. But in the original book it starts off as quite a jokey, Chandler-esque, you know, one-liners, quite funny that I still remember some of the one-liners, you know, he put too much sugar in his boss's coffee – a small man's revenge he calls it. And then he comes - yeah, and he's back from the Crimean was and they've shot his nose off and in those days plastic surgery was, they, eh, made a nose with wax and they put a skin graft over it. But he fell asleep on the beach at Coney Island and the wax all melted, so he's got this mad nose. Yeah, and, em, so there's bits about it I really remember - and then, halfway though, it gets incredibly, incredibly dark and gothic. And what I loved about it was, it was a book that wasn't what you expected it to be and it was also dark and funny, which I know you two appreciate - but it's called Falling Angel. And it's barely remembered now, but it, it is an amazing read. It's, you know, especially first time it's really gorgeous.

SURUTHI	Amazing – well there you go. A recommendation for everybody to go pick up then, I think. And, eh, Denise, thank you so much. I can't, like, tell you how much we've enjoyed this. It's such a slog getting out of bed early, getting all of these things done but you've been an absolute delight to speak to and, I was reading when I was reading around about you ahead of this, em, chat – just so we could, you know, get, get a better picture for who, who Denise Mina was and I , I read somewhere that you call yourself a bit of a ghoul? Is that correct? And I thought, you know, after meeting you today, you probably know this – our listeners call themselves spooky bitches...and I think you are not a ghoul, but a spooky bitch. And that's...
DENISE	Ahhhh, I love that.
SURUTHI	...how everyone should know you so...thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today and...
HANNAH	And when we go to the muse-, when we go to the museum with you, we'll bring you a jumper...
SURUTHI	Yes, Absolutely..spooky bitch jumper, spooky jumpers...
DENISE	Have you got spooky bitch jumpers...uhhhhh.... fantastic.
SURUTHI	They are so good.
DENISE	Oh, amazing...
SURUTHI	It's happening, it's happening – we'll need it for all the press shots when we do this Tanzania corruption case, but anyway, thank you guys so much and, eh, yeah, so this Book Week Scotland event has been brought to you by Scottish Book Trust. Scottish Book Trust wants everyone living in Scotland to have equal access to books because their access to books means better life outcomes. And better life chances. And we couldn't agree more at Red Handed and, eh, if you can help by donating a book to a family who are struggling this Christmas you can do so via the Scottish Book Trust Christmas appeal at <a href="http://scottishbooktrust.com">scottishbooktrust.com</a> Thank you everyone for listening and thank you again to Denise Mina for joining us. And we've been Red Handed.