



## The Business of Dying

*Simon Kernick*

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## **The Business of Dying** Simon Kernick

It's a typical cold November night and Detective Sergeant Dennis Milne, a very atypical policeman, waits in the Traveller's Rest Hotel parking lot for the arrival of three men. Cynical and jaded, Milne earns money on the side by doing what he does best: punishing the bad guys. But this time he's been duped. Instead of blowing away drug dealers, he kills three innocent people, their deaths starting an investigation that sees him and his conscience heading for trouble.

Less than twelve hours later, Milne is out on the streets again. Eighteen-year-old Miriam Fox has been found dead by Regent's Canal---her throat slashed. Desperate to find Miriam's killer, Milne uncovers a web of depravity far more shocking than he could ever have imagined. Can he evade arrest for his own crimes and solve a case so sickening that it may provide the key to his personal redemption?

The clock is ticking and everyone's watching their backs as a war of morality is fought in the mind of one renegade policeman in this gripping first novel by a talented young crime writer.

## **The Business of Dying Details**

Date : Published September 1st 2005 by Minotaur Books (first published 2002)

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Author : Simon Kernick

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## From Reader Review The Business of Dying for online ebook

### Sean Peters says

What can I say, my friends know Simon Kernick is one of my favourite authors, members of my group " A Good Thriller", know I love his books, so how am I reading his first book?

Guilty, I have read number 3, first, yes first !

Now reading part 1 in the Dennis Milne books, have read most of Tina Boyd books.

But pleased to say loved this book and a great introduction to this great author, that I can recommend to all my friends, and I can tell you he gets stronger and better.

Very pleased to read this books as a Book pal and my pal also gave the book four stars like myself, so happy to recommend this book and author.

Dennis Milne is a cop, but a corrupt cop makes money on the side as a killer for the bad guys, but the question I asked myself and you, does this make him a bad guy?

He main case is a murder of a eighteen year old prostitute Miriam Fox, but there is so much more to this gripping, taut cop thriller.

With great story telling, strong characters, great twists and shocks at a fast pace, I just know why I always come back to this author, not many authors can keep up the pace as Simon Kernick does in his books.

Highly recommended, and a great way to start with this author, yes his first book !

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### Tim The Enchanter says

Posted to The Literary Laywer

#### A Unique Police Procedural - 4 Stars

This is my first experience with the writing of Simon Kernick. Overall I enjoyed his writing style and method of storytelling. In this, his first installment in the Dennis Milne series, I wasn't blown away by a single aspect of the novel but steady writing, plotting and an interesting twist to the regular police procedural kept me interested.

#### **Plot Summary**

Dennis Milne is what some might call a dirty cop. This is not to say he is a bad cop. He is quite good at his job. He puts away the bad guys, keeps the city safe and from time to time pockets a little extra money when drugs mysteriously disappear from lockup. Dennis finds himself in over his head when his latest side job, a contracted murder, does not go quite as planned. After killing three people he has been told were committing dirty deeds, Dennis finds himself in a web of lies, backstabbing all of which might result in his own death.

## **My Take**

Dennis is the real draw of this story. I have read many different crime novels and Dennis Milne stands out as one of the most unique. By most standards, he is a criminal. He makes money selling confiscated drugs and is willing to kill a criminal that he feels will evade justice. He is more than just a bad guy. He is a bad guy with a code. Whether or not you agree with his code, he is able to justify his actions and live with himself. When things begin to fall off the rails, I found myself rooting for the guy. A relatable bad guy. What I think makes you want to root for him is that despite his criminal nature, he is engaged in solving other crime. Although his own misdeeds are causing his world to crash around him, he refuses to give up his investigation. Dennis Milne is a well drawn character.

The plot is multilayered. Dennis must balance his own troubles with an ongoing investigation into the grisly deaths of several young prostitutes. While most of the force is content to accept the easiest resolution to the matter, Dennis follows the leads no one wants explored. The combination of the two storylines is well plotted and entertaining. The story is a plus.

There were a few sections of the novel that lagged. While Dennis Milne was well drawn, the supporting cast was less so. I found much of the supporting cast to be stereotypical and no one character matched the colour and excitement of Dennis Milne.

## **Final Thoughts**

Overall, this was an exciting book with an interesting hook. This book really could stand alone. Given the ending, I am not sure how the author extends the series. Regardless, I will be reading the next one.

## **If You Liked...**

Dennis Milne really is an anti-hero. Fans of such characters will enjoy this one. If you have read and enjoyed (or in my case did not enjoy) the classic *The Butcher's Boy*, you will find lots to like here without the feeling that the story is aged.

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## **Eric\_W says**

“Three murders and now we got a witness.” Dennis and Danny have just finished shooting three hoodlums behind a house. Dennis is Detective Sergeant Milne and he kills criminals. In this case at the behest of criminals.

DS Milne is also a very tenacious cop and is in the midst of an investigation into the death of Miriam Fox. He has reason to suspect that the pimp all the evidence points to may not be the actual killer; something just doesn’t seem right, especially as another runaway has disappeared and is presumed to have been killed. Everyone else is just thrilled to close out the case.

But things are beginning to spiral out of control as the witness to his killing (the supposed bad guys turn out to be Customs officers) has managed to produce an ID-drawing that remarkably resembles Milne and

Raymond, the guy who ordered and paid for the hit, now wants to tie up loose ends.

Excellent novel. I will definitely read more from this author.

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### **Sharon says**

This year - 2015 - I'm making it a point to read thriller series from the beginning instead of dipping into them randomly. Of course it seems almost every author these days has some series on the go along with their stand alone novels so there's a lot of reading ahead of me, lol.

My first read of 2015 is Simon Kernick's The Business Of Dying which turns out to be "Dennis Milne #1" This was a pretty good read - good enough for me to want to continue reading the other 2 books in the series.

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### **Mike says**

A different type of police story/mystery. Our hero/anti-hero is Officer Milne, a divorced, hard drinking, smoking cop. He's good at his job - interviewing miscreants and using logic to jump between different hypothesis. The bad side - he moonlights for extra money by dallying into some of the same things he arrests others for.

In his day job, he's on the trail of someone who has murdered a young lady. It turns out this could be part of a series of killings. While investigating, our guy also balances on the sword of justice because officers in another jurisdiction are searching for him for his latest night job.

You find yourself rooting for this flawed character as the pincers of fate and his own choices close in on him.

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### **Buchstapler says**

Vor vielen Jahren habe ich mir den 2. Band dieser Reihe gekauft und hatte dann festgestellt, dass es einen ersten Band dazu gibt. Diesen ersten Band habe ich dann damals auch schonmal begonnen zu lesen und bin nie so richtig reingekommen, obwohl ich zu 3/4 durchgekommen war. Auch dieses Mal, als ich es nochmals von vorne gelesen habe, bin ich gefühlt nie so richtig in die Geschichte abgetaucht. Der Protagonist ist mir ziemlich unsympathisch und es hat mich wenig interessiert was mit ihm ist. An vielen Stellen war es mir dann irgendwie viel zu zäh und letztlich war ich jetzt doch froh, dass ich durch bin. Der 2. Band soll allerdings deutlich besser sein, deshalb werde ich der Reihe definitiv auch noch eine Chance geben und den 2. Band, den ich damals ja eigentlich aufgrund des Klappentextes gekauft hatte, lesen.

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### **Paul says**

The Business Of Dying - Simon Kernick

'The Business of Dying' is the debut novel by the British novelist, Simon Kernick, published by Bantam in 2002. Since the publication of this novel Kernick has written twelve more novels, several of which feature Dennis Milne, the main character & first person narrator of this novel.

#### The Plot:

Dennis Milne is a full time police officer, part time 'killer-for-hire'. Milne is a 20 year veteran of the police force, who has become disillusioned & cynical about his job & humanity in general. His extracurricular employer is a hood by the name of Raymond Keene, ostensibly a businessman, who amongst other enterprises, operates a funeral home. Milne has carried out several hits for Keene & rationalizes his hits as justice meted out to those who deserve it, but would likely evade punishment. Milne regards the justice system as weak & impotent. He sees himself as a champion of justice & 'judge-jury-executioner'.

Keene instructs Milne to kill 3 men. Only after the hit does Milne learn that Keene has misled him & the men he has killed are two customs officers & an accountant. Keene explains his deception by telling Milne the three men were corrupt, but Milne knows the police will not rest until the three men's killer is brought to justice.

At the same time, Milne is investigating the murder of a teenage runaway-turned-prostitute & the possible disappearance of another girl. He suspects Keene may have something to do with this case, but struggles to find a connection.

Things start to unravel for Milne when he learns the witness who saw him gun down the men, has given a detailed description to the police & an identikit portrait is his spitting image. Milne's accomplice, Danny, the brother of an old girlfriend, is the nervous type & voices his concern about the inevitability of their capture. This makes Milne nervous & he begins to wonder if he will have to 'take care' of Danny. However Danny disappears & Milne suspects Keene has killed Danny. Milne realizes that if Keene has dispatched Danny, then surely he must be next.

What follows is a dance of death, involving Milne, Keene & various other dodgy characters.

I like the premise of this story. The policeman-as-killer scenario, although it's hardly original. James Ellroy, to name just one author, has used a similar scenario. In my opinion this was a story with a lot of potential; the dodgy criminal characters, the sleazy backstreets of London, street level prostitution, drug addiction & it's unhappy consequences. Where Kernick let himself down a little, is not fully realizing the potential for a really taut crime thriller. What i thought was missing was atmosphere & characters the reader could empathize with. Having said that i thought this was a good first novel. I look forward to reading Kernick's subsequent novels, particularly those novels in which Dennis Milne appears. I'm sure Kernick would have learned from this first novel. I give this novel 3 out of 5 stars, maybe 3 1/2.

Good reading.

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#### Sharon Wickiewicz says

A steady 3 stars. Good holiday read as easy to pick up and remember where you left off. He made me think a bit of Strike, but more not as endearing. Would read the next one, if I found it on a shelf, but not champing at the literary bit to rush out and buy it.

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## Tze-Wen says

The novel starts out fast, with a coldblooded execution of three men. Within minutes the deed is done and the perpetrators even have time to change escape vehicles. It's just like Milne said at the beginning of the story: if you're going to kill someone, plan it. But, despite careful planning, there is a witness, and when the cop in him spares her life, his decision comes back later to bite him.

As the opening scene illustrates, *The Business of Dying* is not for the faint of heart; there is no lack of violence, brutal slaughter or (teenage) prostitution. Innocent people are scarce, everyone has skeletons in his or her closet, bad guys don't always get caught, rainy days drain the joy from life and there seems to be incessant smoking; Kernick's London makes a credible background for *film noir*.

What better protagonist to feature against that backdrop than Dennis Milne, hardboiled detective anti-hero? He is the embodiment of the good cop gone bad. One bad decision a long time ago set back his career, after which he started doing some shady business on the side to supplement his meager salary. Milne eventually graduates to the occasional contract killing, but he probably sees it as vigilantism, as he's doing society a favor by taking out criminals. But what exactly is his definition of a criminal? According to Milne, some thugs can be useful while others are decidedly not... he conveniently neglects to clarify where he himself belongs.

The storyline itself is put together soundly, slowed down here to showcase the day-to-day dealings of Milne, sped up there to catch him running from his enemies. Dennis Milne is an average man, with simple desires and a(n albeit distorted) sense of duty. It's a disturbing thought, but there are probably many thousands if not millions of very similar men in this world.

A few questions I kept asking myself were: what distinguishes Milne from any other murderer? Should Milne die at the hands of his persecutors? Or does he deserve to escape unscathed? Is there a way for him to gain redemption?

I am still unsure how to answer. It is therefore a relief that the author has found a decent solution to this moral dilemma, and woven all the loose ends together in an impressive *noir* tapestry.

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## Toni Osborne says

“The Business of Dying” is this author’s first book so after enjoying his latest books immensely I knew I had to go back in time to search out the roots of this author’s imagination.

Mr. Kernick’s first novel is a mystery with a twist providing the reader with plenty of action and intrigue. The engaging protagonist, Dennis Milne, a full time cop and part time murderer, is always at the heart of it all. The storytelling flows smoothly and delivers a saga that engulfs your imagination till the last page.

The story is fast of the mark with the coldblooded execution of two customs agents and an accountant. This assignment is handed to Dennis by London’s toughest members of society the underworld elite that expects results, with them failure is not an option. As a reader my attention was immediately seized by the captivating description of London’s underbelly life, a world that is generally hidden from the public and a culture that thrives on fear and secrecy.

Dennis’s day job as a London detective investigating the death of a young girl found by the side of a canal is on a direct collision course with his underworld assignment. Working both sides against the middle is a no win situation that puts Dennis in the very precarious position of being the hunter and hunted at the same time. The result is an edge of the seat drama that turns into Dennis’s worse nightmare. He becomes a man on

the run with no place to hide.

The author has combined an interesting first person narrative with emotionally complex characterisation. Dennis is portrayed as a person with a Jekyll and Hyde personality. The powerful prose, tight plotting, clever structure and the conundrum Dennis is faced with are the driving force behind this novel.

With Dennis on the run I can't wait to see what the author has in store next.

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### **Andrew says**

This was Simon Kernick's first book as an author and was a good honest attempt, which was very enjoyable to read. He is one of my favourite suspense authors but do know that other books he wrote later on build on this early promise. This was a very unique take on a story with a Detective a Sergeant (Dennis Milne) being a hit man! Read and enjoy.

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### **Bücherhäschchen says**

Reread 2017

There is an interesting story I have to tell about this book/series, before I come to the actual review. When I started reading Kernick's books, the first one I read was The Payback. When I came to know there was another part about Milne, I bought A Good Day to Die, finally realizing, that I had read the whole series in the wrong way.

So after I recently finished one of Kernick's later books, I decided to read all of them in order. Finally.

#### **CONTENT**

Dennis Milne is a cop, who's very frustrated. While reading, we get to know, that he is not allowed to use weapons, he does not get promoted, and criminals -the way he sees it- can do whatever they want, because the English law protects them, rather than the innocents.

So part-time Dennis works as a killer- BUT he only kills criminals. At least that's what he intends to do, because he gets set up and kills the wrong people.

#### **SOMETHING OVERALL**

The book is told in first person, from Dennis' POV. Apart from the last chapter, where he tells us what is happening to him right then, he tells us about events, that have already happened.

It's interesting to see, how the police system in England works, although I was a little bit confused when it came to the exact position characters had. DS, DC, DI if i got them right now. I can't tell you which of them is the higher rank, and not all of them were explained, I think. Also, as I am from Austria, it was kind of a shock for me, that policemen in England have to fight crime unarmed...? Is this still the case?

#### **STYLE OF WRITING**

Kernick's style of writing is quite fluent and was not hard to understand. Although I have to admit that I read the translation. Nonetheless I've also read some of his later books in English, so I think I can tell.

## CHARACTER(S)

Dennis Milne, (ex)cop and part-time killer. From the moment I first read about him, I was fascinated by his character. On the one hand he wants to do good, help people, make the world better, but he feels so restricted that he has to use other, illegal, means to accomplish this. It's interesting, how he makes a difference between criminals, which he can kill without mercy, and innocent people where he gets nightmares because he killed them. As the book progresses, and his possibilities get more and more limited, his actions become more and more illegal, brutal, cold. Nonetheless his change is well made and believable and in the end he can still tell good from bad. Even after it was clear that he could not go back to his old life, he still wants to find the killer of some underage prostitute.

## OPINION

As you might have already guessed, I love this book. I very much like Dennis and his way of acting/thinking. Kernick tends to have some very manly (does this sound weird) characters, for which I love him.

The story is funny, and apart from Dennis' (more or less) personal problems, he also gets to solve a murder. I loved how both storylines progressed at the same time, and especially, that one was not more, or less important than the other one.

This thriller is very fast paced and you just want to finish it asap.

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## Frances says

A gripping crime thriller follows a London detective sergeant Dennis Milne, a wise-cracking, heavy drinker and smoker. While Milne shows much sympathy and concern for many victims and will do everything feasible to attain justice, there is a ruthless personality trait lurking below the surface. During his career he becomes more cynical and realizes that the law in practice only serves to help the criminal, hinder the police, and ignore the victim. Soon DS Milne finds he is quite willing and even eager to accept various hit contracts to rid the streets of hardened and untouchable criminals. But it soon takes a turn for the worse when his latest three victims could actually be innocent law abiding people. Milne begins to examine all evidence still hopeful they deserved all the bullets he pumped into them, yet very much afraid all his misdeeds would soon be discovered destroying his career and sending him to jail for a very long time.

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## Richard White says

Like Lawrence Block's assassin Keller, you will just love cheering for Dennis Milne. Great new series. Can't wait to read the second installment. Great pace superb writing.

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## Linn Alund says

Dennis Milne är den mest korkade och inkonsekventa polisen någonsin. Så denna bok säg. 10/10 skulle inte rekommendera.

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