



Exit Lines

Reginald Hill

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Three old men die on a stormy November night: one by deliberate violence, one in a road accident and one by an unknown cause,

Inspector Pascoe is called in to investigate the first death, but when the dying words of the accident victim suggest that a drunken Superintendent Dalziel had been behind the wheel, the integrity of the entire Mid-Yorkshire CID is called into question.

Helped by the bright but wayward Detective-Constable Seymour, hindered by 'Maggie's Moron', the half-witted Constable Hector, Peter Pascoe enters the twilight and vulnerable world of the senior citizen - to discover that the beckoning darkness at the end of the tunnel holds few comforts.

Exit Lines Details

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Author : Reginald Hill

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From Reader Review Exit Lines for online ebook

Jon says

I've been reading this series in order, and there has only been one that I thought was not up to par. What sets this one apart is the fulfillment of the title: each chapter has as an epigraph the reported last words of some famous historical person. And in each case those words are at least somewhat relevant to the chapter. Three men in their seventies die on the same night in the first three pages. Are their deaths as unrelated as they appear? Is Superintendent Dalziel really guilty of killing one of them while driving drunk? Written with Hill's usual grace and flare, with laugh-out-loud humor and a beautifully literate style.

Robert says

A 3 for 1 deal! Not much Fat Man in this one but he is implicated in one of the three deaths. All very nicely tied up and presented with a level of ease that can only come from Hill's obvious fondness for D&P.

Peggi Warner-lalonde says

A good mystery, and true to its time.

Amanda Wells says

Although there wasn't much I objected to in this one (aside from the rather flimsy female characters, but that's pretty standard so far, something I hope will be rectified as the series progresses towards current day), I felt the plot didn't grab me. It almost felt as though I was waiting for the climax, even at the end.

I did like the way things came together for Dalziel, though I thought if it turned out he had done something bad it would make for some interesting conflict...

I also liked seeing more of my favourite stony faced officer, Sgt. Wield... but he didn't seem to have as much agency this time.

Altogether, it was not my favourite D&P book so far, but it won't stop me reading the next.

Felicity says

One of the best books of the Dalziel and Pascoe series so far. Hill manages to write well as well as making the story line gripping and portraying some very realistic characters. It runs off the page and is easy to read and some of the exchanges between the main characters are very amusing and made me laugh. There was less of Dalziel in this book but I thought it managed without him very well. A must read if you are a fan of

crime fiction.

LJ says

First Sentence: On a cold and storm-racked November night, while Peter and Ellie Pascoe were still celebrating with wine and wassail the first birthday which their daughter Rose had greeted with huge indifference, three old men, who felt far from indifferent, died.

The local population has been decreased by the death of three elderly gentlemen in one night; one died of exposure on a playing field, one having been attacked in his bath, and one after being struck by a car possibly driven by Andy Dalziel.

It is always such fun to read a book by Hill.

There is a great central cast of characters. In DS Andy Dalziel, Hill has created a highly offensive character and made him very likable. He is type the person you'd most want to avoid, yet there is innocence to his uncouthness and a heart beneath the girth.

DI Peter Pascoe is the perfect counterpart with his university education and proper manner. He has come to be known as the murder specialist. Supported by their team, including the naïve Constable Hector, Hill combines good police procedure and a touch of humor.

When it comes to the victims, Hill is serious and presents the challenges and vulnerability of the aging with great respect and care.

There are essentially five threads to the story; the three deaths, trying to figure out what Dalziel is doing and Ellie Pascoe's concern for her own aging father. I appreciated the realism of having the police investigate more than one case at a time and was stunned by the way they came together in the end.

Hill is a wonderful writer and Dalziel and Pascoe a great combination I enjoy more with each book.

EXIT LINES (Pol Proc-Dalziel/Pascoe-England-Cont) – VG

Hill, Reginald – 8th in series

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cloudyskye says

Not too bad, with some surprising twists. Dalziel was a little too much in the background perhaps. I liked the very fitting "famous last words" quotes at the beginning of each chapter. But I had my usual problem with the very big cast of new characters, even bigger with three victims this time. I don't think it's me, I had no trouble at all with all those Russians in "War and Peace" ...

Kate says

"SOMETHING OLD MAY BE FATAL

"It's reasonable to question mere coincidence when three elderly men die violently on the same rainy night. One succumbs on a muddy playing field muttering *Polly*. Another goes under in his bath gasping *Charley*. The third chap, run down by a car, lives long enough to blurt out three understandably churlish expletives. Their final words may be clues to their sudden deaths ... but do they point to murder?

"Naturally, Detective-Inspector Peter Pascoe is looking for foul play. But he must tread lightly to avoid stepping on some very big toes belonging to none other than his boss, Detective-Superintendent Dalziel ... who is playing a most suspicious part in this three-case drama of the old men who died saying ... *Exit Lines*."
~~back cover

And of course they all come together in the end, and Detective-Superintendent Dalziel proves smarter than them all in the end, as he always does. The plot seemed contrived, and difficult to follow until the very end of the book.

J. Merwin says

I'm really enjoying this series by Reginald Hill, his characters are very well drawn, dialog is real and occasionally laugh out loud...the way he uses a particular theme for his chapter titles I like very much...although in this particular book he plays a bit of a dirty trick on the reader making them have to not only flip back to the front to find out who spoke the dying words but also (the bastard!)...put them in alphabetical order rather than chapter order! Naughty.

Timothy says

A clever opening presages a well written mystery involving geriatrics, smugglers, and villains. Hector, Wield, Pascoe, Seymour and Dalziel interact through a series of seemingly unrelated cases but are all drawn together in a satisfying conclusion.

Kirsty Darbyshire says

Three men in their seventies die on the same winter's evening. One is murdered in his bath, the second dies of exposure on a playing field, the third is run down on his bicycle. It's up to Pascoe to suss out what has happened to them, though only one of them is really his case. And Andy Dalziel is muddled up in one of the deaths and behaving decidedly furtively about it.

I thought this was a pretty good story though it took a while for me to get the three separate incidents being

investigated straight in my head.

I like the way Hill weaves in parts of his detectives lives with the themes in his tales. This book has a lot to say about the care of the elderly and this is reflected in Ellie Pascoe's parents problems as her father begins to show signs of senile dementia.

The story telling is, as ever, excellent, but I think Hill is beginning to really pick up at about this point in the series and I think the later books are just going to get better until I get back to where I started at the first Hill book I read, *On Beulah Height*.

[This is book 8 in the Dalziel & Pascoe series]

Rog Harrison says

I last read this on 24 November 1990 (actually August 1999 was the last time) but I must have read it at least once before then as this was published in 1984 and by then I was a firm fan of this series and read the books as soon as they came out.

By the time of this book the author was really hitting his stride in this series. Dalziel and Pascoe are fully developed characters and the author is tentatively trying to develop Detective Sergeant Wield who will become much more important in later books. I think this book also introduces Police Constable Hector who is mainly there for comic relief. This is a great story which also manages to combine humour with some social comment about the problems of senile dementia.

Wendy says

This is a particularly intricately plotted police procedural. It starts with the deaths of three elderly men. One is clearly a case of murder. One dies in a road accident, but there are suspicions about whether a drunk Andy Dalziel, who claims to have been a passenger, was actually at the wheel. The third has died of exposure after falling while out on a cold night, but Peter Pascoe can't quite shake a feeling that something more than a tragic accident occurred.

The investigations of these three cases end up peculiarly intertwined. Suspects or witnesses in one case often have unexpected information about one of the other cases. Even a small subplot involving Ellie's worries about her aging father turns out to shed light on one mystery. There's also a lot of evidence that turns out not to mean what it initially seemed to mean. It all makes for a great puzzle. I can think of any number of mystery novels that I've stayed up late to finish reading and find out who committed the crime. I can think of far fewer where I've dutifully put the book away in the interests of getting a good night's sleep, and then lain awake trying to work out the solution myself. This was one of those books.

Hill's writing is brought to life excellently by narrator Colin Buchanan. I found myself laughing out loud at the antics of gormless young Constable Hector and the green but slightly more clueful Constable Seymour, especially in those scenes when one of them is paired up with the patient and long-suffering Sergeant Wield. Their antics do a lot to lighten up a book that might otherwise be pretty grim, given the subject matter.

Mike says

I heard this twice on CD while travelling from Dunedin to Christchurch and back, in 2013. When I say 'heard it twice' I mean that the first time I heard about the first 60 pages, and then didn't hear any more, and then on a second trip, heard about 90 pages, and still didn't hear any more. So rather than trying to listen to the rest - I'm not good at just sitting listening to CDs unless I'm lying in bed sick - I bought a copy of the book, started it yesterday and finished it today. It's immensely readable, often very funny, and has a wonderfully complex plot.

There's a strong theme of the difficulties of old age - people with Alzheimer's, or trying to live on their own without family - and also the horror that many young people have for the idea of growing old. The story begins with the deaths of three old men, in fact; two of them may be accidents, the third appears to be the result of an attack. Nothing is quite like it seems, and the further the story goes, the more our original views about the deaths and their aftermaths are altered. There are some wonderfully innocent people, and some surprisingly devious ones. There are some that appear suspicious and aren't, and some that appear to be all above board - and aren't. Hill holds out attention right to the end, even though we think we've got to grips with what's going on at an earlier point.

There are an endless number of lines that could be quoted (one character, Mrs Spillings, is almost Dickensian in her speeches), but Hill reserves some of his best lines for the taciturn, and ugly, policemen, Wield (a regular in the series of books).

'Back door,' said Wield. 'Glass panel broken. Key in lock. Hand through. Open. Easy.'

Sergeant Wield was in fine telegraphic style. He also seemed to have been practising not moving his lips, so that the words came out of his slant and ugly face like a ritual chant through a primitive devil-mask.

or

Wield looked at the new acquisition and raised his eyebrows, producing an effect not unlike the vernal shifting of some Arctic landscape as the sun sets an ice-bound river flowing once more through a waste of snows.

I've read some other Dalziel and Pascoe, but I think this remains my favourite.

Update 1st November 2015: Listened to this again while travelling. I remain one of Hill's best, I think.

Alison C says

Three old men die on the same night: one in a road accident, one murdered and one apparently of exposure. While the last words of one man suggest that Detective Superintendent Dalziel might have been driving the car involved in one death, Detective Inspector Pascoe must try to unravel the causes in all three deaths, without Dalziel's guidance.... "Exit Lines" is the eighth novel in Hill's Dalziel and Pascoe series, and one that I found rather more literary than some of his other works; of course, that might just be because each chapter is headed with the final words from a well-known figure from history (Hill provides a handy rundown of who said what) and, in another clever twist, each quote itself provides a clue to the content of the chapter. Neat. I think one can dive into these books at any point, although it's always preferable to read a

series in order; this one might be my favourite of the series so far.
