



## The Drop: A Slough House Novella

*Mick Herron*

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## **The Drop: A Slough House Novella** Mick Herron

Old spooks carry the memory of tradecraft in their bones, and when Solomon Dortmund sees an envelope being passed from one pair of hands to another in a Marylebone café, he knows he's witnessed more than an innocent encounter. But in relaying his suspicions to John Bachelor, who babysits retired spies like Solly, he sets in train events which will alter lives. Bachelor himself, a hair's breadth away from sleeping in his car, is clawing his way back to stability; Hannah Weiss, the double agent whose recruitment was his only success, is starting to enjoy the secrets and lies her role demands; and Lech Wicinski, an Intelligence Service analyst, finds that a simple favour for an old acquaintance might derail his career. Meanwhile, Lady Di Taverner is trying to keep the Service on an even keel, and if that means throwing the odd crew member overboard, well: collateral damage is her speciality.

A drop, in spook parlance, is the passing on of secret information.

It's also what happens just before you hit the ground.

## **The Drop: A Slough House Novella Details**

Date : Published November 1st 2018 by John Murray

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Author : Mick Herron

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# From Reader Review The Drop: A Slough House Novella for online ebook

## SueKich says

### Hailing Herron.

What a terrific writer Mick Herron is. In this slender novella – just 112 pages – he conjures up his whole Slough House world, peoples it with three-dimensional characters, provides a superb plot, gives it a credible Brexit slant, dispenses smart dialogue and delivers an abundance of enjoyable, even thought-provoking, quotes.

Here's one to whet your appetite describing the Marylebone restaurant Fischer's where 'the drop' takes place:

"So Fischer's was the starting point; as good a place as any, and better than most. To quote from its website, 'The menu includes an extensive choice of cured fish, salads, schnitzels, sausages, *brötchen* and sandwiches, *strudels*, biscuits, ice-cream coupes, hot chocolates and coffees with traditional *tortes mit schlag*.' How could that not set the heart racing with its enticing umlauts, its brazen italics, its artfully roman 'coupes'?"

Only Mick Herron could come up with enticing umlauts. Treat yourself to a couple of hours of first-class entertainment.

A big thank you to John Murray for the review copy courtesy of NetGalley.

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## Marianne says

The Drop aka The Marylebone Drop is a novella in the popular Jackson Lamb series by British author, Mick Herron. It takes place after the events in London Rules and features characters from the previous novella in this series, The List. Solomon Dortmund is an ageing asset, but he hasn't lost his ability to spot a spook. And in the Fischer café in Marylebone High Street, while enjoying a divine hot chocolate, he sees a drop taking place. He gives all the details to his minder, John Bachelor. But Bachelor's a bit distracted right now. Meanwhile, Bachelor's one recruitment success, Hannah Weiss will soon be moved to a position where she will be more useful to Regent's Park (and maybe the BND too?) at the Brexit Secretary's office.

Once again, the characters are all credibly flawed (Lady Di excels in nastiness, Jackson Lamb being absent from this one), their dialogue is full of dry wit, and there is humour, and a twist or two for good measure. Herron's last Slough House novella introduced the reader to J.K.Coe before his proper debut in Spook Street. This one sees a spook attract the wrong sort of notice from the wrong sort of people, ensuring a new face at Slough House in the next full-length novel. It's short, very true, just over 100 pages, but it's something to tide the reader over until Jackson Lamb #6 comes out: an excellent little dose of British spies, Herron style.

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## Rowena Hoseason says

If you've read the author's Slough House / Jackson Lamb series of intellectual espionage adventures then you'll find yourself on familiar territory with this tightly-plotted short story. The Drop shares the same themes of backbiting, in-fighting and double-bluffing in the shadowy backrooms of Brexit-Britain's MI5.

The action takes place away from Slough House, and I was certainly happy not to be spending any time with Jackson Lamb, whose anti-social attributes stopped being entertaining about three books ago. Instead, we're treated to a nostalgic reinterpretation of Cold War tradecraft, and some good old-fashioned double-agent action between competing agencies.

The Drop is a splendid showcase for Mick Herron's outstanding prose; the man's writing craft is pretty much unmatched in the genre these days. And here he has delivered an entirely different story featuring fresh characters, playing the great game to 21st century rules – complete with hi-tech interventions, departmental politics and international intrigue. His version of London in winter is beautifully drawn, pin-sharp and poignant.

On the downside, the experience was all over far too soon. Just as the story felt like it was getting going... so it came to a sudden halt. I suspect that The Drop actually functions as an introduction to Herron's next spook story, and its brevity left me vaguely unsatisfied.

Nor is it particularly accessible to anyone who hasn't read the Slough House series. References to The Park, Lady Di, the Dogs, the Guardians of the Gate and the general MI5 scenario will be baffling to new readers. The Drop might be intended to encourage people to try Slow Horses but I suspect it could have the opposite effect.

So this is a tricky book to rate. If it pops up on special offer then it's definitely worth grabbing. Otherwise...  
6/10

There's a more detailed version of this review - and many more crime / thrillers - over at <http://www.murdermayhemandmore.net>

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## Col says

Synopsis/blurb.....

A drop, in spook parlance, is the passing on of secret information.  
It's also what happens just before you hit the ground.

Old spooks carry the memory of tradecraft in their bones, and when Solomon Dortmund sees an envelope being passed from one pair of hands to another in a Marylebone café, he knows he's witnessed more than an innocent encounter. But in relaying his suspicions to John Bachelor, who babysits retired spies like Solly for MI5, he sets in motion a train of events that will alter lives.

Story Locale: London, UK

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My take.....

Another short offering from Mick Herron and a reappearance of a few characters previously encountered in The List. Herron sits comfortably in my current top ten favourite authors list.

80-odd pages long with a further 30 or so introducing the full length novel London Rules.

Really, really enjoyable, and a fantastic couple of hours reading which has me wanting to pick up something longer by him.

I liked the chain reaction of events set in place by the witnessing of a drop by a retired spy. Unintended consequences indeed and an outcome which ends well for a couple of our participants and not so swimmingly for others. In some ways its a frightening reveal of the power held by intelligence services with their ability to re-arrange and destroy a life with a couple of key strokes. Yeah I know it's fiction, but it does set you thinking.

I enjoyed glimpsing the hierarchy within the service: the woman at the top, the arrogance and stupidity of the one currently on the way up, the skill, ambition and cunning of the agent in the middle and the existence of the messenger boys or pond life running errands and doing scut work at the bottom.

John Bachelor is the latter. Career going nowhere, and dimly regarded in the service, hanging onto his job, in fear of the axe, a personal relationship ended which currently sees him residing in the back of his vehicle. Probably not a situation too dissimilar to many in modern day society - only a couple of absent pay cheques away from homelessness. I was rooting for him. Down but not out and still possessing enough wit and chutzpah to prevail, for now at least. I'm hoping he reappears in future works from Herron and that the author deals him a kinder hand. I live in hope.

5 from 5

Mick Herron is the author of about a dozen novels, including five in his Slough House series, of which this forms a tasty add-on.

Slow Horses and Dead Lions and The List have been enjoyed so far.

Read in July, 2018

Published - 2018 (later this year)

Page count - 112

Source - Edelweiss early reviewer site, courtesy of publisher Soho Crime

Format - Epub file

<https://col2910.blogspot.com/2018/08/...>

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## **Sandy says**

This is a short story from the author of the fabulous "Slow Horses" series. It's in a similar vein but a little darker in tone & the only character from that series who features here is Diana Taverner, MI5's own "Iron Lady".

Instead we get reacquainted with John Bachelor, an old spook mentioned in a previous story by Herron. John's in the process of being not so much nudged as pushed out to pasture. After years with British Intelligence, he has little to show except a part time job babysitting some third string spies left over from the good old (and "cold") days.

John is preoccupied with finding somewhere to sleep tonight when he's contacted by Solomon Dortmund, one of his ancient charges. Sol may be long retired but he knows a drop when he sees one & once he describes the people involved he's got John's attention. The woman sounds a little too like Hannah Weiss. She's a German asset John turned into a double agent. Just what he needs....his one shining success turning into a train wreck.

And they're off. As John quietly investigates Sol's story he's pulled back into the world of lies, favours & double crosses. It's spy vs. spy as John's actions set in motion a chain of events that have ramifications for all involved. But he still has a few tricks up his sleeve & you'll be cheering for him to pull it off under the nose of Lady Di. A few nice twists will keep you guessing as you're trying to figure out who's on the same side.

Herron is one of my favourite authors & I expect his stuff to be smart & intricately plotted. It's amazing how much he weaves together in such a small space (the last 30% is actually a preview for London Rules). It's always a looooong wait between books so it was a pleasure to have a little snack to help tide me over.

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## **Susan says**

This novella follows on from the previous Slough House novella, "The List," and features John Bachelor and the continuing story of agent, Hannah Weiss (code named 'Snow White').

After events in the previous instalment, this story sees Bachelor even more side-lined than before – having lost his task of handling Hannah, and still shuttling around on his 'milk round,' checking on the elderly ex-spooks who are slowly dying. This ever-decreasing task, which sees him being shunted to a part-time role, is rapidly losing him his, already tenuous, financial security. As always, Mick Herron is wonderful at highlighting the reality of people's lives – and of un-glamorising the world of spies and espionage.

Meanwhile, Hannah Weiss, is spotted, taking part in a 'drop' by one of Bachelor's elderly Joes – the gentlemanly Solomon Dortmund. His excited recognition of spycraft, on the streets of London, results in events which will see death (for danger is always present in Herron's sly, dark writing) and at least one, hapless member of the park, about to be shunted sideways to join Slough House...

I like this alternative view of the Slough House series, which plays out in the novella's, very much indeed. They are shorter, but equally as interesting – filling in gaps, showing us different aspects of the Park and the characters. I will happily continue reading about Bachelor, and the other characters, as long as Mick Herron will keep writing.

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## David C Ward says

Herron is using these novellas to construct a serial novel about the triple agent Hannah Weiss and the English spies not associated with Slough House, his main body of work. This is a very well done nasty little story about the consequences after a thread in Hannah's identity is pulled at by one of the superannuated spies run by the hapless John Bachelor. It's deliberately written very much in the style of the middle period Le Carre (the opening is pitch perfect) - an homage not a parody - which fits the theme (aging spies and their ways/fixations). The ending is nice....

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## Paromjit says

So Mick Herron sets out to provide us dedicated fans of the 'slow horses' a short story that serves to keep us going until the next full length installment of Slough House, and which I suspect will provide us with juicy future storylines from the repercussions of what happens here. Old spies never forget their trade, as Solomon Dortmund proves when he visits his regular Marylebone cafe. Dortmund observes a 'drop', a now old fashioned practice amongst spies, taking place between a young woman and a man that is to set off a chain of unexpected events. Dortmund is not suffering from dementia, he knows what he has seen, as he reports to John Bachelor, a part time babysitter for retired spies. Bachelor's only success in his now severely curtailed career was the recruitment of Hannah Weiss, aka Snow White. He is now skittering on the edges of homelessness in a London struggling to cope with snow. Having misgivings about reporting this officially, he calls in a favour from a man he met at a funeral, Alec/ Lech Wicinski. Wickinski is to learn the hard way that no good deed goes unpunished. Always a pleasure to step into the world of Slough House, even if it is an all too brief visit. Many thanks to John Murray Press for an ARC.

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## Roman Clodia says

A short filler from Herron which doesn't feature his wonderful 'Slow Horses' but which does offer the backstory to a new member of the Slough House team. The story here is slight but informed, and lit by Herron's usual sly humour. Something to keep us going till the next Jackson Lamb novel...

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## Gram says

A delightful addition to the "Slough House" series, this is a follow-up to "The List" which introduced us to the "milkman" John Bachelor who babysits retired spies and Hannah Weiss, the double agent whose recruitment was Bachelor's only success when he was more active in MI5, Britain's secret service. One of Bachelor's current charges, Solomon "Solly" Dortmund is witness to "a drop" - an envelope being passed from one pair of hands to another in a London cafe. A drop is a legacy of old time spying - and when Solly informs John Bachelor of what he saw, Bachelor feels obliged to act on the information.

Between them, Solly & Bachelor set wheels in motion which will cause ripples within "The Hub", MI5's HQ located at London's Regent Park, where the boss, Diana "Lady Di" Taverner is doing her utmost to ensure that nothing disturbs the smooth running of the service. Slough House and its' ubiquitous boss, Jackson Lamb get only the briefest of brief mentions in this story. Along the way, author Mick Herron takes some delightful digs at Brexit and London's failure to cope with snowfalls in winter. This tale will keep fans of

"Slough House" temporarily happy until the next full novel due in June 2019.

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## **William says**

A novella.

5-stars again. Herron is on a roll.

One thing I love about Herron is his disheartening depiction of modern intelligence services as very tightly controlled operations of poorly trained staff... Tightly controlled by political self-servers and shortsighted incompetents, often cruel.

With the previous novella, *The List*, Herron is showing his finest prose to date. Smooth, rich, with lovely complexities. Pacing is assured and effective, driving the characters forward to their fates.

Here we see Hannah in a cafe, and an old hand retired spy observes something exciting and clear, and reports it into the creaking and cruel modern intelligence service, where it goes astray due to political expediency and incompetence. All this wonderfully presented by Herron.

Delicious! I could read one of this series every day.

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## **Sid Nuncius says**

*The Drop* is a very brief "novella" (an extended short story, really) which is in parallel to the *Slough House* series and continues the story of Hannah Weiss which began in *The List*. I suspect that this story may become an important feature of future Jackson Lamb books, but for now it's a sidelight on goings on elsewhere in the Service and an introduction to a new character for *Slough House*.

Be aware that Jackson Lamb does not appear at all in *The List*, so his brilliant, hilarious cynicism is absent here and this is a much more straight-down-the-line spy story. It's good, if not fantastic. I have to say that charging as much as many full-length books for a story of well under 100 pages does seem wrong to me, but I enjoyed reading it very much and can recommend it.

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## **Beverley says**

I'm not particularly shy about my love for Mick Herron and his *Slough House* series of books. The latest, *London Rules* was published earlier this year and I have been chomping at the bit ever since for another slice of acerbic wit and hapless spies. *The Drop* is a novella from the *Slough House* world and although it doesn't feature Jackson Lamb or my *Slough House* crush River Cartwright, we do get to meet the head of MI6 (Lady) Di Taverner again and we are also introduced to the next victim employee of *Slough House*. Lucky



us.

John Bachelor's job is to look after spies who have been put out to pasture. He is their handler cum babysitter and ensures that they don't go spilling any secrets from the good old days of the Cold War and inadvertently set off World War 3. He is down on his luck, a financial gamble didn't pay off and he is living in his car and working out where he can cadge a cup of coffee and a shower. He is visited by an old spook, Solomon Dortmund who is convinced he has seen a drop in a cafe. John isn't as convinced and is pretty sure that all Sol saw was a woman drop some envelopes but agrees to investigate nevertheless. This may be a mistake because this drop causes a huge ripple and things are going to get interesting.

What follows is both a masterclass in what not to do when you are a spy and in storytelling. The Drop is a short book that comes in at just over 100 pages but there is a massive amount packed into it with twists and turns galore. Mick Herron is an exceptional writer creating full, living, breathing characters and with a few words can make you like or loathe them almost immediately. I missed Jackson Lamb but the book isn't poorer without him. There is still the trademark humour, satirical wit and clever plotting that makes this a stand out read and it whetted my appetite for the next book in the series.

<https://beverleyhasread.wordpress.com/>

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### **Elaine Tomasso says**

I would like to thank Netgalley and John Murray Press for a review copy of The Drop, a short novella set in the world of spooks.

When former asset Solomon Dortmund sees a drop in a coffee shop he passes on the information to his handler, John Bachelor. Drops are an old fashioned way of passing information so nobody puts much credence in Solly's claim and John uses unofficial channels to check. What happens after that changes lives.

I thoroughly enjoyed The Drop which casts a rather cynical eye over the self interest which rules the actions of The Park (as MI5 is colloquially known). The concept is fairly absurd, making it amusing, but it is extremely sharp on characterisation and motivation. It doesn't take Mr Herron many words to draw a comprehensive picture and while it is very clever it doesn't paint the Secret Services in a great light. The novella does not have the laugh out loud moments of the Slow Horses series, none of whom put in an appearance except the scheming Lady Di, but it has the same arch, knowing tone which adds to the reading pleasure.

The Drop is a short, clever read which I have no hesitation in recommending.

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### **Judy Lesley says**

A lovely little novella from Mick Herron to fill in some blanks about the workings of Regent's Park, home of MI5, while keeping touch with the banished agents working out of Slough House. If you missed the first in this novella series (The List, Slough House, #2.5), you definitely want to go back and pick that one up to read because the main character in that one, John Bachelor, is at work again here with his job of keeping track of old spooks sent out into retirement. Solomon Dortmund knows old tradecraft when he sees it take

place right in front of him and what he witnessed was a "drop". Bachelor can't figure why anybody would be using these old methods to pass on information but he has no choice but to take this Cold War veteran on his milk round seriously.

Diana Taverner is here being her usual tricky self and we also find what happened inside MI5 that caused one of the agents to be assigned to the Slough House team. This was a very entertaining story and I really am glad to better understand some of the characters from the novels. Now I'm in the mood to read one of the novels again.

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