



And now, a pro: Elizabeth George is a very fine and very popular mystery writer. I have eagerly awaited every one of her books, and aside from her last (*What Came Before He Shot Her*, which was both more than a mystery and, for some of us—her more plodding, bloodthirsty readers—less), I have never been disappointed. Her latest effort, *Careless in Red*, gets off to a slow start; Inspector Thomas Lynley—tall, aristocratic but rugged, lightly scarred, and heartbroken (we love him)—is walking through Cornwall to get over the brutal murder of his wife. Soon enough, though, he encounters a corpse in rock-climbing gear, a dodgy veterinarian, and a bunch of surfers (in Cornwall—who knew?), and thus are set in motion all the usual goings-on (people lying to the police about matters great and small, misrepresentations, the withholding and destroying of evidence by both police and suspects, and so on).

Lynley, like the real Preston and the real Harrison, becomes more entangled in the crime's aftermath than is wise—first as a suspect, later as an adjunct to the local constabulary, and, for the first time in his well-heeled, well-mannered life, as a snitch. The loss of his wife has blinded him, his arrogance slows him down, and even his supreme intelligence can't avert disaster. There are some nice subplots: Lynley's Girl Friday, Sergeant Barbara Havers (short, stocky, working-class, and dressed like a cross between Bart Simpson and Bozo the Clown—we love her, too), tries to help her boss recover psychically; a manic-depressive woman sleeps with everyone and destroys her family in the process. The story could move faster, and a few of the characters could have fallen into that cold Cornish sea without my missing them, but still there is the reassuring buildup, the offhand, surprising, and fresh insights, the moments of true grief and true redemption, and in all, *Careless in Red* is, if not entirely thrilling, an awfully good time. And only \$27.95—no hang-over, no debt, and no remorse. ■