

*A Simple Act of Violence* by R.J. Ellory

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Dead bodies – four of them – each provocatively positioned in similar patterns after having been beaten, then strangled and left with a brightly colored ribbon attached to a luggage tag around her neck. Thus, the media dubbed the serial killer as “The Ribbon Killer.” The quadruple murder scenes mar the internal landscape of the same upscale Washington, D.C. neighborhood, while all signs lead toward a serial killer on the loose. Yet, veteran D.C. cop, Detective Robert Miller senses a difference in this latest one as he enters the home of Catherine Sheridan. The scene appears to be intensely personal; yet the signs are virtually the same as in the first three murders with a few subtle differences. Ultimately, Miller discovers an additional similarity among the four victims; none of them officially exist, not in any of the data bases available to him, legal or otherwise. This complication quickly leads the detective onto a dangerous pathway of geopolitical intrigue best left uncovered if he values his life or the lives of those around him.

R.J. Ellory, while possibly besting his 2009 novel, *A Quiet Belief in Angels*, cleverly weaves in a parallel back story to alternate with Detective Miller’s already fuzzy reality. Miller is led into the clutches of John Robey, a mild-mannered professor with entirely too much knowledge of the victims. As the relationship develops, Robert Miller knows the killer is taunting him while leaving no tangible proof. Their conversations, centering on covert activities from Nicaragua to Managua to Miami and beyond, provide the reader a seldom seen view of the inner-workings of agencies such as the CIA and FBI as Robey expands his efforts to right a longstanding international wrong by allowing the detective to expose it. The back story is ingeniously written as a first person account of the relationship of the killer to his victims and relates how passions of the persons involved and their actions lead up to the present. The D.C. murder investigations, written in third person, provide a quick read and plenty of blood and gory scenes to satisfy the taste of the most blood-thirsty thriller fan.

There is something for everyone in *A Simple Act of Violence*, although the less sophisticated and uninformed readers in the realm of historical politics may tend to get lost in the back story. That aside, it delights the pallet of lovers of political intrigue with international incidents which contain a resounding ring of historical truth bringing the action closer to the heart of the reader.

R. J. Ellory’s ~~biography states that he~~ was born in Birmingham, England at Sorent Hospital. Although the hospital has been torn down, there is no direct evidence that the two events were linked.

The author was orphaned

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