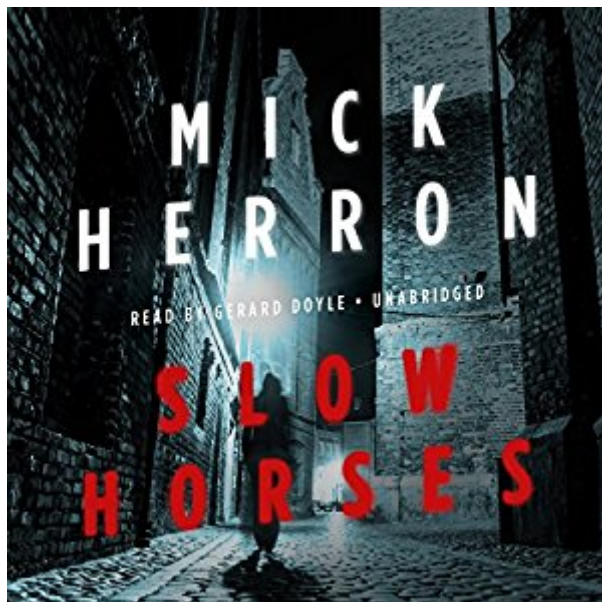


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Slow Horses: Slough House, Book 1



Synopsis

Slough House is a dumping ground for British intelligence agents who've screwed up cases in any number of ways - by leaving a secret file on a train or blowing a surveillance. River Cartwright, one such "slow horse", is bitter about his failure and about his tedious assignment transcribing cell phone conversations. When a young man is abducted and his kidnappers threaten to broadcast his beheading live on the Internet, River sees an opportunity to redeem himself. Is the victim whom he first appears to be? And what's the kidnappers' connection with a disgraced journalist? As the clock ticks on the execution, River finds that everyone has his own agenda.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book introduces the dysfunctional characters at Slough House where failed MI-5 agents meet their fate. They can't fire them, but they don't want them working at headquarters. Jackson Lamb is the boss at Slough House. He runs a loose ship. Even though his staff mess up all of the time, they manage to help solve crimes and outwit their supposed betters at headquarters. In this mystery novel, a boy has been kidnapped and is slated to be beheaded on film. The Slough House characters have to save him, and protect their reputation as headquarters wants to blame everything on Slough House. How Jackson Lamb outwits them is marvelous fun. There is usually a high body count in these books. But the dark humor keeps the story upbeat. I thoroughly enjoyed the fine writing, plotting and humor in this book. I will be recommending this series to my mystery book club as a monthly selection.

Slow Horses by Mickey Herron was a very good read. In the beginning it was a little confusing at times but once I figured out Mick's writing style, it really took off. I became attached to the characters and started rooting for them. I can't wait to read the next book in the series.

The spies who work out of Slough House are "a post-useful crew of misfits [who] can be stored and left to gather dust." Every one of them. MI5 has dumped them all there after they screwed up royally. Now they labor at menial tasks under the direction of a misanthropic ex-operative named Jackson Lamb. They're called "Slow Horses," which is the title of the first novel in this engaging and sometimes hilarious four-book series. Slow Horses is British satire of the first order. The victim is MI5. Not yet thirty, River Cartwright is one of the youngest of the Slow Horses and one of the latest arrivals. He has been at Slough House for just four months. Even before completing his training, River managed to trigger a catastrophic terrorist attack in the London Underground. This resulted in "killing or maiming an estimated 120 people and causing 30m [pounds] worth of actual damage, along with a projected 2.5 billion [pounds] in lost tourist revenue . . . The fact that his training partner set him up hasn't prevented River from being relegated to this contemporary version of purgatory. In fact, the only reason River hasn't been fired outright is that his grandfather (the O.B., or Old Bastard) had retired from a senior position in MI5 and still has considerable influence in the agency. It seems that nobody at Slough House likes anyone else. In fact, the hostility is palpable. Every one of the Slow Horses harbors a fantasy of getting back to work at Regent's Park, MI5 headquarters and seems to think that nobody else ever will. Actually, nobody ever has. They're all expected to get bored and leave the service. The Byzantine plot in Slow Horses begins to unfold when River is assigned to retrieve and comb through the garbage of a notorious, right-wing journalist. Every night. Meanwhile, River's office-mate, Sid Baker (a woman) has been detailed to steal the journalist's electronic files. Somehow, these two and all their colleagues at Slough House become embroiled in an extremely messy set of circumstances involving a young Pakistani student, three right-wing extremists, a cabinet minister, their superiors in MI5, and the aforementioned journalist. It's a sorry tale full of suspense, and often a funny one. The large cast of characters in Slow Horses illustrates the broad range of their incompetence. There's "Lady Di," Diane Taverner, who is the

agency's insufferably manipulative deputy director. Jackson Lamb runs Slough House from behind an upper-floor office door that never seems to open. Catherine Standish was the executive assistant to MI5's managing director; she may have been involved somehow in his mysterious death. Min Harper left a computer disk containing classified information on a seat in the Underground and was moved to Slough House when the press published the embarrassing contents. Practically nobody knows what crimes or misdemeanors anyone else of these misfits may have committed. Except for Roderick Ho, a consummate computer hacker, who knows practically everyone else's secret. Appreciating British satire may require a perverse view of life and the world. Whatever it is, I've got it. Facebook

The title points to the most important element of the novel -- the characters exiled to Slough House. Taken from active duty for a variety of reasons that range from performance to politically motivated ass-covering to nuisance relocation, the people who report for work at Slough House under the eagle-eye of Jackson Lamb are the skeleton of the story the plot is hung upon. The synopsis provided by Publishers Weekly adequately outlines the plot of *Slow Horses*, and too much more would spoiler some parts of the novel that are best discovered slowly. While River Cartwright may be the first major character introduced, the story is as much about his fellow exiles finding new life and mission, and may ultimately be mostly about the canny, overweight, determined head of Slough House, Jackson Lamb. I look forward to reading future novels by Mick Herron. I get the feeling that he's still working on the perfect balance of plot/character/action. He's very close to perfect with *Slow Horses*.

Overall the kindle edition suffers greatly from the poor layout and you cannot tell when perspectives change because of run on sentences without any separations. The story lines starts slow and I nearly gave up on it. It picks up steam and stays at a good clip after 25%. Many different plot lines come together towards the end. Some may be more complicated than needed. Story relies on misdirection of reader, some unexpected many more predictable. I wished for more clear story telling but overall still good.

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