

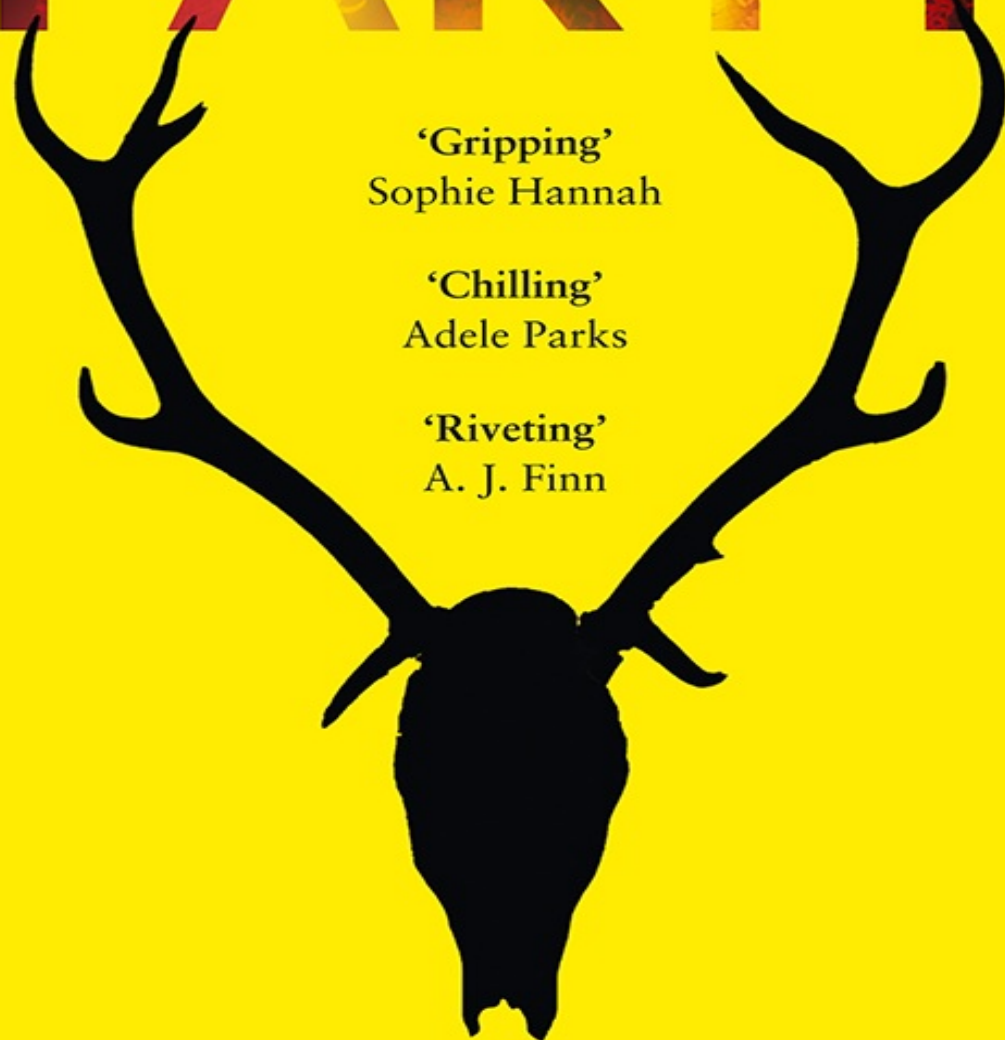
Everyone's invited
Everyone's a suspect

THE HUNTING PARTY

'Gripping'
Sophie Hannah

'Chilling'
Adele Parks

'Riveting'
A. J. Finn



LUCY FOLEY

THE HUNTING PARTY

LUCY FOLEY



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Dedication

For AC, my partner in crime.

Epigraph

*Should old acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?*

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NOW
2nd January 2019

HEATHER

I see a man coming through the falling snow. From a distance through the curtain of white he looks hardly human, like a shadow figure.

As he nears me I see that it is Doug, the gamekeeper.

He is hurrying towards the Lodge, I realise, trying to run. But the fallen, falling snow hampers him. He stumbles with each step. Something bad. I know this without being able to see his face.

As he comes closer I see that his features are frozen with shock. I know this look. I have seen it before. This is the expression of someone who has witnessed something horrific, beyond the bounds of normal human experience.

I open the door of the Lodge, let him in. He brings with him a rush of freezing air, a spill of snow.

‘What’s happened?’ I ask him.

There is a moment – a long pause – in which he tries to catch his breath. But his eyes tell the story before he can, a mute communication of horror.

Finally, he speaks. ‘I’ve found the missing guest.’

‘Well, that’s great,’ I say. ‘Where—’

He shakes his head, and I feel the question expire on my lips.

‘I found a body.’