

RAVENA GURON

THIS
BOOK
KILLS



*She Wrote The Perfect Murder.
Someone Carried It Out.
... NOW SHE'S NEXT.*

*“I’ll make it clear from the start:
I did not kill Hugh Henry Van Boren.
I didn’t even help. Well, not intentionally.”*

When Hugh Henry Van Boren, one of the most popular and richest kids in Jess Choudhary’s school, is found dead, the student body is left reeling and wondering who the murderer could be... Jess, a student under strict instructions to keep her record clean or risk losing her scholarship, finds herself at the centre of the investigation when it’s revealed that Hugh died in the exact same way as a character in a short story she wrote.

And then Jess receives an anonymous text thanking her for the inspiration.

With time running out, Jess knows if she doesn’t solve this mystery she’ll finally have something in common with Hugh Henry.

She’ll be dead too.

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USBORNE

To Mum, for everything

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I'll make it clear from the start: I did not kill Hugh Henry Van Boren.

I didn't even help. Well, not intentionally.

Mum thinks I've got some latent trauma hanging around. She's not a psychologist or anything – she just watches loads of documentaries, and believes that makes her an expert on everything. Apparently, writing down what happened will help me *process*. I think that's a load of crap, but when I politely said that out loud, Mum got that steely look in her eye which said, *Better do what I say, Jess Choudhary, or I will beat you with this slipper.*

Mum's never actually beaten me. She just threatens The Slipper.

Anyway, I'm going to pour the truth into this notebook, even though I'd rather forget the entire thing.

Let's get cracking with my tale of misery and woe.

The week before Hugh was killed, I witnessed the first sign of trouble brewing.

I was sitting alone at the end of one of the long, polished wooden tables in the dining room. My best, and only, friend, Clementine-Tangerine Briggs, had decided to skip dinner so she could spend more time focusing on her new venture – a podcast detailing the sad plight of the Titicaca water frog. It was nicknamed the “scrotum frog” and was apparently very close to extinction (Clem was adamant that ugly creatures deserved to be saved too). And yes, Clementine-Tangerine is her real name – her parents said fruit was the biggest seller in their chain of organic superstores, and big sellers made them money, and Clem's parents love money.

I had a book propped up on the crystal jug of orange juice in front of me.

I wasn't actually reading, but I'd brought it along so people would think I'd intentionally sat by myself, to be alone with my thoughts. Mysterious, too cool to have friends. I'm sure everyone was fooled.

There was a big, empty space around me at the table, as if I repelled people. Further down the bench, my roommate was gossiping loudly with her friends. Their shrill laughter grated on my ears, but I still wished I could slide down and join them.

I never would, though. I didn't fit in at Heybuckle School. No matter what I did, or how nice I was, everyone else would always see me as the poor kid, the charity case.

Every so often, I turned a page of my book, to make the whole act of *mysterious loner* look more believable.

When I was about halfway through my fish and chips, Millicent Cordelia Calthrope-Newton-Rose (also, unbelievably, a real name) made her grand entrance, slamming open the wooden doors of the dining hall.

Millie sashayed down the empty space in the middle of the hall, her hips swaying like she was on a catwalk. Her blonde curls hung loose around her shoulders, and her deep blue eyes narrowed as she scanned the crowds. Her regulation grey skirt was hitched up around her waist to show off her long legs, and her tie dangled around her neck like a fashion accessory. She always wore her uniform like that – not even the teachers dared to tell her off.

“Where's Hugh?” she demanded.

Her voice carried across the room, but no one spoke up. I was at the other end, as far from her as I could possibly be. Still, I made myself smaller. Hugh rose from where he had been sitting, nestled comfortably amongst his squad of friends just metres away from Millie. Like her, he was incredibly good-looking, with curly blond hair and rosy cheeks. He rarely smiled, his face carved like a stone sculpture, and was over six foot, with broad shoulders from all the time he spent exercising. They could have ended up being a famous modelling couple, they were both so pretty. You know, if he hadn't cheated on her and then got killed.

“Here I am, babe,” Hugh said, sticking his hands in his pockets. His tone was bored. “What's wrong?”

“What's – wrong?” Millie's voice was strangled. “You lying, two-faced