



The Kitchen: A Chastity Riley Investigation

Simone Buchholz

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Orenda Books (Oct 15, 2024)

Softcover \$16.99 (276pp)

978-1-916788-07-7

A troubled prosecutor reconsiders her definition of justice in Simone Buchholz's thriller *The Kitchen*.

During a sweltering Hamburg summer, garbage bags filled with body parts keep turning up in the bay. Riley, the public prosecutor, has enough to worry about: a sex trafficking case has her ready to spit fire, and her best friend was just raped. But Riley can't refuse to investigate a case like this. At first, there seems to be no relationship between the victims, but when the connection reveals itself, Riley has to make important decisions about whether the system she works within is doing its job ... and, if not, what she should do about it.

Chain-smoking Riley and her colleagues navigate the extremes of Hamburg society, from drug- and bug-infested apartment complexes filled with hot-tempered men to extravagant mansions inhabited by cold-blooded parents who care most about their reputations. The brief chapters result in a staccato pace, and interstitial spaces are made grisly by all they do not say.

Even as a serial killer stalks her city, Riley has personal problems on her mind: she struggles to patch up her casual relationship with her roguish next-door neighbor and sometimes-boyfriend and helps her friend find a healthy way to cope with the trauma of the assault. Riley's dark, irreverent sense of humor takes the edge off the disturbing subject matter, while her precise observations keep her and the story grounded in what matters most: the people it is her job to seek justice for. The deeper she goes into the case, however, the more she realizes that she might not be working on the side of justice after all.

Part of a series, *The Kitchen* is a vengeance-fueled thriller in which women take power back from anyone and everyone who denies their autonomy.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2024)

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