

# BRITTEN & BRÜLIGHTLY

HANNAH BERRY



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Jonathan Cape  
London

## **THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE DESERVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**NIGEL BALDWIN**, the man who encouraged me to write and rewrite and rewrite until my ears bled, for being right every time; **EMILY GRAVETT**, for providing a discerning eye, a sympathetic ear, and beans on toast; **MUM, DAD and CHRIS**, for unconditional (and often undeserved) love and support; and all those other good friends who know who they are and will forgive me for not naming them for fear of accidental omission. You are, all of you, a tribute to humanity.

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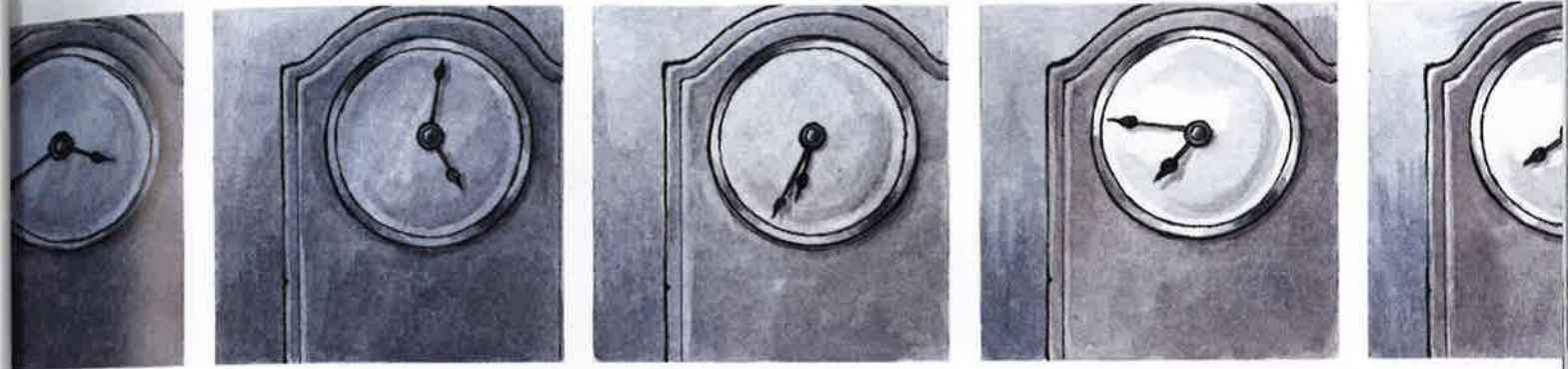
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**For  
Nan and Granddad,  
'Bifa y 'Bifo**



*As it did every morning*



*with spiteful inevitability*



*the sun rose.*



It rose in a sky that was bruised and tender to look at, if you could  
see it through the weather. The view from the window changed so rarely  
that I didn't bother to look at it any more.





Ten years ago I began a private investigation agency with the glorious aim of serving humanity and righting wrongs. In all those years the only wrongs righted have been on my tax returns.



The people who burst righteously through my door are either jealous lovers seeking justification for their jealousy, or vengeful lovers seeking dirt on jealous lovers. Most of them already knew what they paid me to tell them, and those that didn't would have worked it out on their own. None of them liked what I had to say.



I had made something of a name for myself in the field. That name was 'The Heartbreaker'.



My partner in the agency, Stewart Brilighthy, suggested we be more discriminating in the work we accept. No more lovers, either jealous or vengeful. Nowadays I don't get out of bed for less than a murder. I don't get out of bed much.



Until today.





My office neighbours that of 'freelance moral guardian' Marvin Kelp: a mouth that speaks unimpeded by thought.



FERNÁNDEZ! I THOUGHT PERHAPS YOU'D TRIED TO KILL YOURSELF AGAIN!



YOU KNOW YOU WOULDN'T HAVE THOSE THOUGHTS IF YOU'D ONLY LEARN TO KEEP THE WORD OF THE LORD IN YOUR HEART!



HAVE SOME PAMPHLETS THAT YOU MIGHT FIND INTERESTING ABOUT HOW TO KEEP YOUR FAITH...



The room was just as I'd left it - dissatisfaction hanging in the air with the dust motes.

While catching up with my correspondence I thought about the scribbled note that had brought me back here - a barrage of imperatives peppered with formal niceties, it was a command wrapped in silk and thrown through my window.



A letter from someone who got what they wanted.



I needed to tell Marvin to stop giving out my home address.





HELLO?



CHARLOTTE MAUGHTON?

YES?

THIS IS FERNÁNDEZ BRITTEN.



YES?



YOU LEFT ME A MESSAGE ABOUT AN INVESTIGATION.

OF COURSE, OF COURSE. YOU TOOK YOUR TIME IN REPLYING.



I'VE BEEN A LITTLE PREOCCUPIED.

WILL YOU MEET ME AT BENSON'S AT TWELVE?



HOW WILL I KNOW WHO YOU ARE?

I'LL KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

YOU'LL BE WEARING A RED FLOWER.



A HELLEBORE?

IS THAT A FLOWER? WHAT COLOUR IS IT, RED?

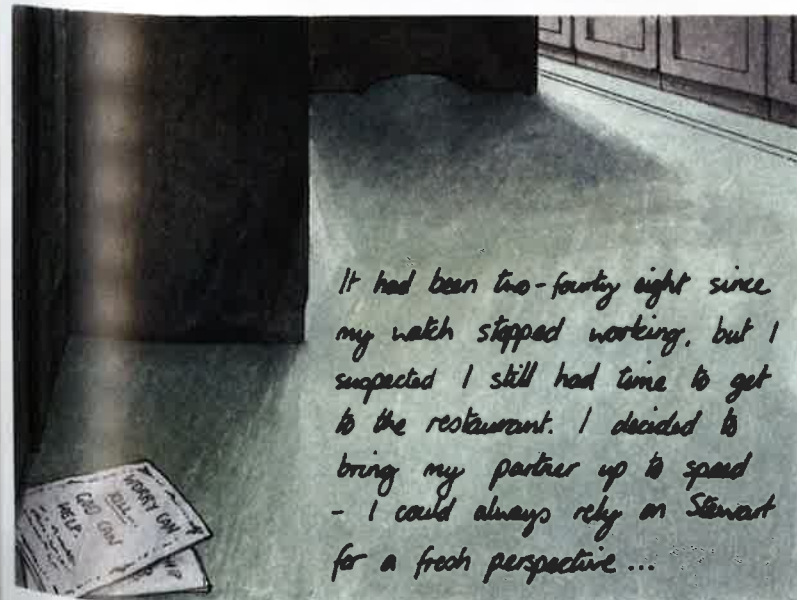


REDDISH.

OK, WEAR THAT.



\*CLICK\*



It had been two-forty eight since my watch stopped working, but I suspected I still had time to get to the restaurant. I decided to bring my partner up to speed - I could always rely on Stewart for a fresh perspective...



welcome or otherwise.



MORNING, FERN!

MORNING.

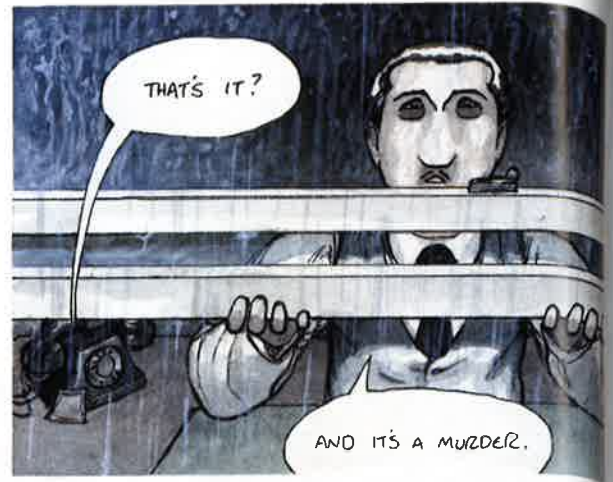




DID YOU CALL HER?  
WHAT'S THE STATE OF PLAY?

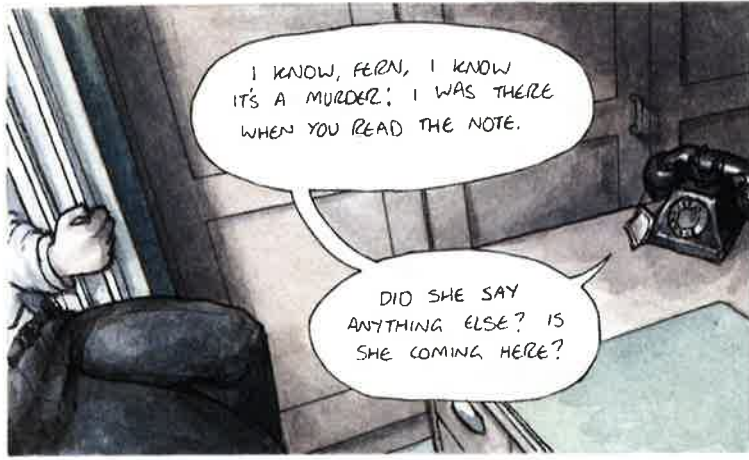


SHE'S NOT A  
GARDENER.



THAT'S IT?

AND IT'S A MURDER.



I KNOW, FERN, I KNOW  
IT'S A MURDER. I WAS THERE  
WHEN YOU READ THE NOTE.

DID SHE SAY  
ANYTHING ELSE? IS  
SHE COMING HERE?



SHE WANTS TO  
MEET AT BENSON'S.



THE RESTAURANT?  
O-HO. NOW YOU'RE  
TALKING.



YOU KNOW WHAT  
THEY SAY ABOUT  
BENSON'S, DON'T  
YOU?

YES. THEY MAKE  
A GOOD CRUMBLE.



YOU'RE GOING TO  
BE DIFFICULT TODAY,  
AREN'T YOU.



I IMAGINE IT'LL BE  
THE USUAL STORY: SHE'S  
DISSATISFIED WITH THE  
OFFICIAL CONCLUSION AND  
WANTS A SECOND  
OPINION...



LIKE AN INVESTIGATIVE  
CONSULTANT







There were several establishments patronized by people with problems -  
the kind of problems that should be solved quietly.



If you wanted to find someone to solve  
your problem, you went to Mario's Chipshop.



If you wanted an alibi for the time your problem  
was solved, you went to The Jade Garden.



If you wanted to discuss  
your problem discreetly with  
someone who could solve  
it for you, you went to  
Finnigan's where, for an  
unspecified tip, they would  
forget you were ever there.



Benson's,  
unknown to  
most, worked  
on a similar  
principle to  
Finnigan's:  
the size of the  
tip directly related

to the sensitivity of  
the information the waiter  
was to forget they overheard.

The woman I took to be Charlotte  
Maughton, however, appeared blissfully  
unaware of this.



Gliding serenely past  
the troubled clientele,  
she looked how I  
imagine a swan  
might if it were  
on lithium.



FUCKING WEATHER.











BERNI KUDOS  
WAS MY FIANCEE.

HE WAS  
KILLED.



I knew that name from somewhere -  
it was ringing quiet but  
insistent bells.

I'M SORRY.



YES. PEOPLE ARE,  
AREN'T THEY.



I THOUGHT HE'D GONE  
TO WORK. HE'S MY FATHER'S  
ASSISTANT, THAT'S HOW  
WE MET.

HE LEFT FOR WORK EVERY DAY  
AT TEN PAST EIGHT, WEARING ONE  
OF HIS STUPID GOLF TIES. HE NEVER  
PLAYED GOLF IN HIS LIFE - HE WORE  
THEM BECAUSE THEY WERE A GIFT  
FROM MY FATHER.

HE WASN'T TRYING  
TO CURRY FAVOUR WITH  
THE BOSS, EITHER; HE  
WANTED DADDY TO FEEL  
THAT HIS GIFTS WERE  
APPRECIATED.



THAT WAS THE  
KIND OF MAN HE WAS:  
A GOOD SAMARITAN  
IN A BAD TIE.

ONE OF OUR NEIGHBOURS  
LETS HIS DOG CRAP IN THE  
STREET. BERNI WOULD GO OUT  
AND CLEAN IT UP BEFORE  
ANYONE STEPPED IN IT.

AN IDIOT.  
A WONDERFUL, BIG-HEARTED  
IDIOT.



I'D LEFT THE  
HOUSE BEFORE HIM  
THAT MORNING TO HAVE  
AN ARGUMENT WITH  
THE WEDDING  
CATERERS

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG  
- THEY DIDN'T PUT UP  
MUCH OF A FIGHT.



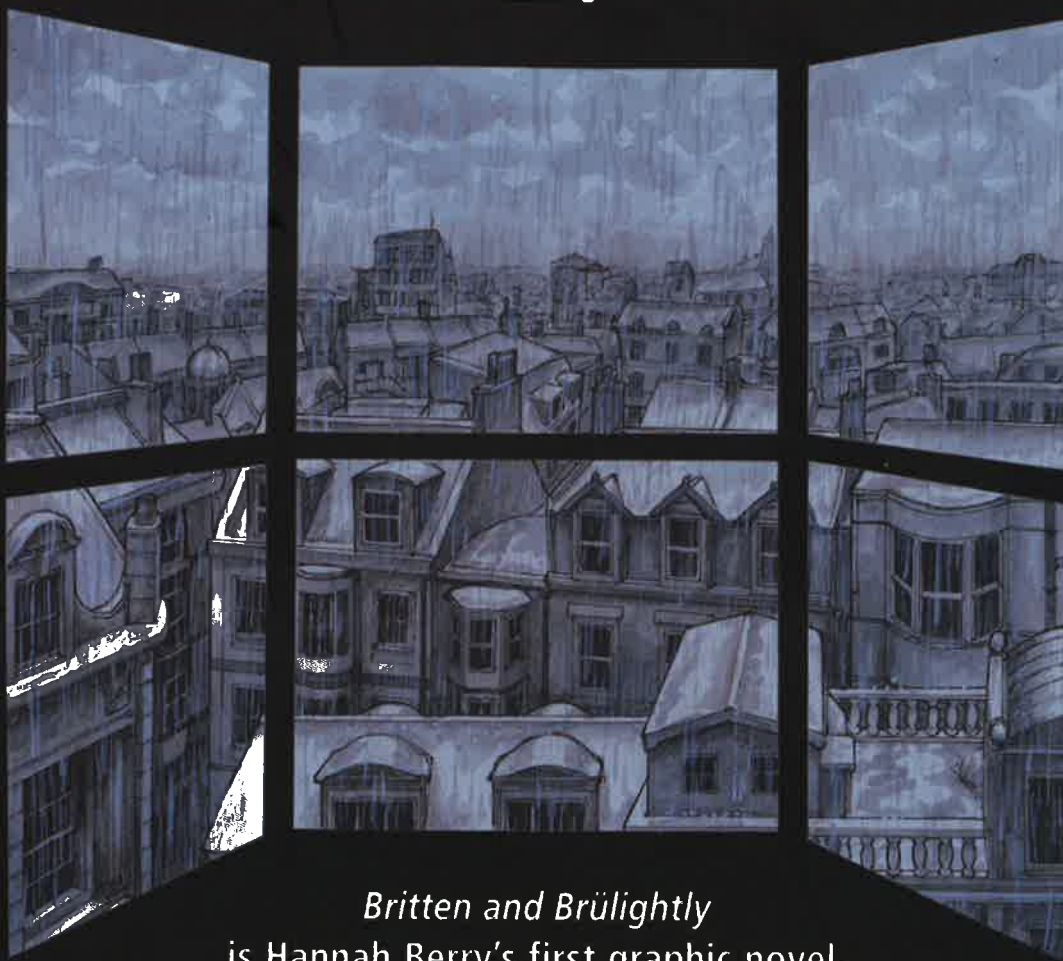
**'Nowadays I don't get out of bed for less than a murder.  
I don't get out of bed much...Until today.'**

'Private Researcher' Fernández Britten is the messenger who would view being shot as a blessing. The years spent uncovering people's secret dramas and helping to confirm their darkest suspicions have taken their toll. Battered by remorse over the lives he has ruined, he clings to the hope of redemption through delivering, just once, a truth with a positive impact. It's a hope he has been clinging to for a long time.

And so Britten and his 'unconventional' partner, Brülightly, take on the case of suicide Berni Kudos. At least suicide was the official verdict. His fiancée, Charlotte Maughton, believes his death was something more sinister.

Blackmail, revenge, murder: desperate acts are exposed, and this is no tree-lined avenue to justice. Each new revelation stirs the muddy waters of a family's dark secrets, and each fresh twist takes them further from that elusive redemption.

**There are murder mysteries and there are murder mysteries, but  
this is a noir where nothing is black and white.**



*Britten and Brülightly*  
is Hannah Berry's first graphic novel.  
It is a real gem.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

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