

# 'The Shortest Day of the Year' by Peter Ritchie



Fictional detective Grace Den Herder returns in the second part of the trilogy written by former Lothian and Borders police officer Peter Ritchie.

After a varied career in Edinburgh, London, The Hague and Belfast, Peter has drawn on his considerable experience as an investigator to write a trilogy of novels which provide an authentic picture of how criminals, their victims and the detectives who try to catch them think, act and feel.

The latest book, 'The Shortest Day of the Year' was published yesterday and follows on from the acclaimed 'Noble Cause' finding Grace Den Herder promoted to superintendent in the in the specialist crime and counter terrorism directorate in the new Scottish police force structure.

The story surrounds the return to Belfast of Billy Nelson. Brought up in the Shankill and scarred by the Troubles, he joins the army and after distinguished service he is discharged after fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. He returns to his loyalist roots, but Belfast and the people he knew have changed. Responsible for a series of violent attacks on innocent victims, he is ordered out of the city and moves to Edinburgh with his team.

Nelson moves into the drugs business in Edinburgh and takes on the family who have been the main players in the city for years. The result is a series of events where Glasgow and Belfast criminals battle for control, upsetting the balance of power among the underworld.

They attract attention from the police and Grace den Herder

takes on the case. The old demons of the Troubles come back to haunt her again. The rest of the story is the complicated manoeuvring between the various factions including the Police in Scotland, PSNI and the Security Services who have an interest in Nelson and his paramilitary contacts in Belfast.

The subsequent events unleash a series of unforeseen incidents and a trail of victims.

Peter has plenty of experience to draw on having started his working life at 15 as a deep sea fisherman before joining the police service and moving through the ranks of CID/Murder Squad/Regional Crime Squad in Scotland. He then went on to manage the Organised Crime Unit in the National Criminal Intelligence Service in London where he ran a multi-agency team drawn from various branches of the law enforcement and the security services. This was a unique concept at the time and Peter travelled to many parts of the world in this role. He was subsequently appointed as the UK Liaison Officer to Europol in The Hague where he spent five years.

On returning to Lothian and Borders he took charge of the Major Crime Team before taking on an advisory role for a project in Croatia. After retiring, he worked on a number of private investigations before spending the next few years as part of the public inquiry team looking into the murder of the LVF leader Billy Wright in the Maze Prison. He also worked on a public inquiry into the death of eighteen patients in the Vale of Leven Hospital from a hospital acquired infection.

Yesterday Peter took time out from his busy schedule to tell the Edinburgh Reporter about his latest project. He said: "The second book is a much longer and more complex story with a number of sub plots taking place at the same time. I've loved inventing a number of new villains and one particular from Glasgow. What I've enjoyed most with this one is telling the story about the people at the very lowest level of the criminal chain who get caught between law enforcement on one

side and the successful career criminals on the other. An example would be one of the characters who is a prostitute and her partner who never gets above low level dealing. You know who the villains are from the start but not who's pulling the strings or why!' "

Available on Amazon, in print or as an ebook.