

The Shape of Snakes



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The Edgar Award-winning, bestselling author hailed by *The Washington Post Book World* as "a master of the macabre who imbues her novels with an intensely eerie atmosphere" weaves an astonishing tale of mystery, intrigue, and revenge.

In just seven years, Minette Walters has burst from the ranks of mystery writers to become a bestselling author the world over and today's preeminent practitioner of psychological suspense. With constant comparisons to P. D. James and Ruth Rendell and a growing American audience, Walters is poised for breakout success with *The Shape of Snakes*, her finest, and most finely wrought, novel yet.

November 1978. The winter of discontent. Britain is on strike. The dead lie unburied, garbage piles in the streets-and somewhere in West London a black woman dies in a rain-filled gutter. Known as "Mad Annie," she was despised by her neighbors.

Her passing would have gone unmourned and unnoticed but for the young woman who finds her and who believes-apparently against reason-that Annie was murdered.

But whatever the truth about Annie-whether she was as mad as her neighbors claimed,

whether she lived in squalor as the police said, whether she cruelly mistreated the cats found starving in her house-something passed between her and Mrs. Ranelagh in the moment of death that binds this one woman to her cause for the next twenty years.

But why is Mrs. Ranelagh so convinced it was murder, when, by her own account, Annie died without speaking? Why does the subject make her husband so angry that he refuses to talk about what happened that night? And why would any woman spend twenty painstaking years uncovering the truth-unless her reasons are personal?

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