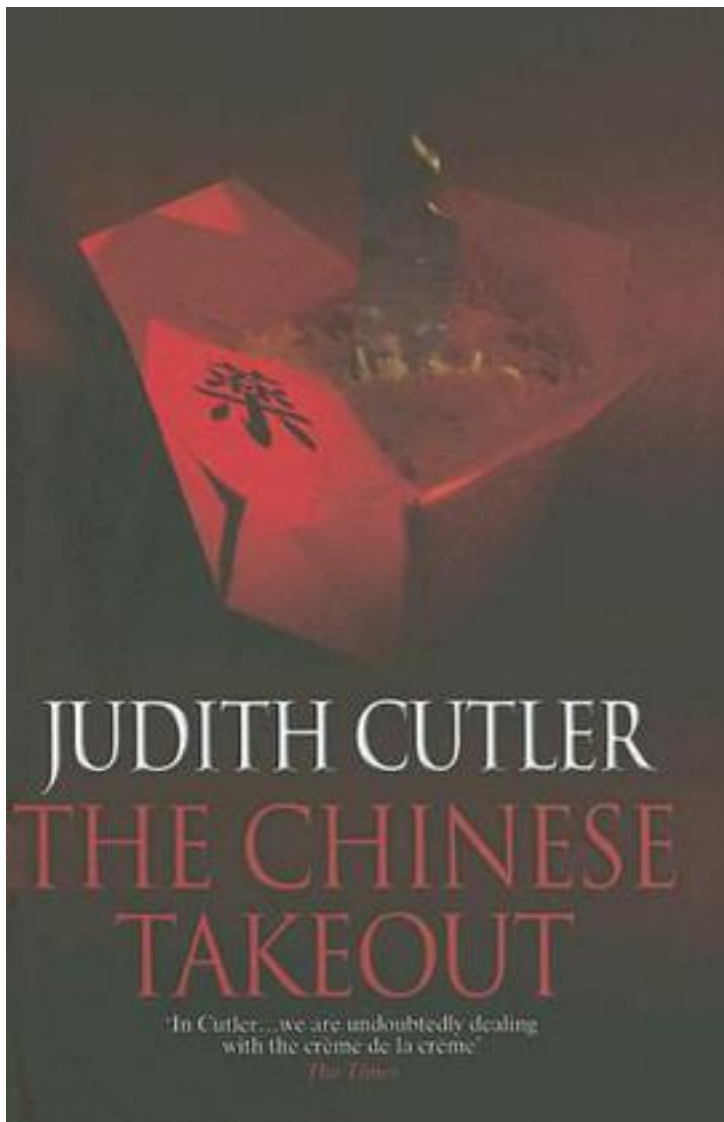


The Chinese Takeout



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It's morning service in a quiet village church. Josie Welford, wealthy widow of one of the country's most wanted criminals and now licensee of the White Hart gastro-pub, is day-dreaming during Father Tim Martin's sermon. Suddenly, the peace is shattered when a filthy Chinese youth flings himself into the church and demands sanctuary. Should the Church accede to the request for protection that no longer has legal standing? Or should it hand Tang over to the authorities? Josie supports Tim's decision to protect Tang, but not all the congregation agree, taking their grievances to the Church hierarchy. But, Josie's friend and long-term lodger, the Food Standards Agency inspector Nick Thomas, fears for the boy's life. Tang is almost certainly an illegal immigrant whose gang-masters would rather have dead than able to betray them. It's not long before the media are involved, the subsequent publicity bringing fatal results, not just to the priest and the refugee, but to St. Jude's itself. At last the police are interested, but their investigations are strangely slow. Mysteriously, Nick is called away to work in London. So, the indomitable Josie takes the investigation into her own hands, assisted by no less a personage than the rural dean, Andy Braithwaite, who is alternately entranced and repelled by Josie's methods. In a breath-taking climax, Josie summons long forgotten skills to run the master criminals to earth and prevent a hideous execution.

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