



Amy Lane has a “Hard Return” to the wild Welsh countryside

CARDIFF, UK - Novelist and consultant psychiatrist Rosie Claverton has brought the “country house” mystery to a secret prison compound in rural Wales in *Hard Return*, the fifth thrilling instalment in her Welsh crime series *The Amy Lane Mysteries*.

Released on St David’s Day 2021, the second edition of this exciting thriller sees ex-con Jason return to live among convicts, trapped inside this experimental facility with a murderer. Reformed hacker Amy Lane won’t let him go in alone, especially with his best friend’s life on the line. Hiding their intentions from both the convicts and their watchers, they work together to find justice for the murdered man.

Previous novels in the series have involved a serial killer (*Binary Witness*), drug trafficking (*Code Runner*), art theft (*Captcha Thief*), and a sudden death at a mental health unit (*Terror 404*).

Rosie juggles a career in psychiatry with writing crime novels, which offers her a unique perspective on people. She says “I see a lot of people under stress, when their emotions are at the fore, and that emotional honesty is vital to my work.” This insight also enabled Rosie to create Amy, a woman in recovery from her agoraphobia and depression, travelling the world through her beloved technology and daring to step outside her front door.

Rosie Claverton’s other work includes short film *Dragon Chasers*, which aired on BBC Wales in Autumn 2012 and starred Alex Reid. *Hard Return* is available in paperback and ebook.

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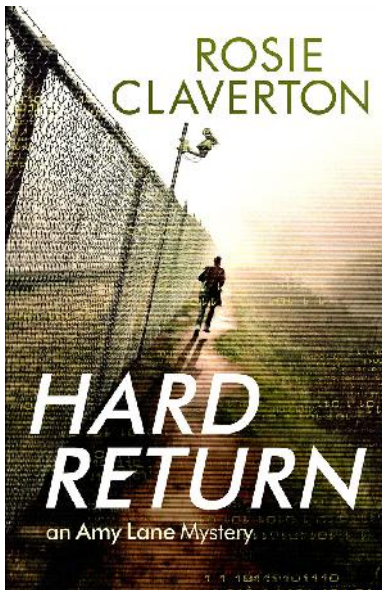
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Full media press kit, including high-resolution images and latest updates, available on [Rosie Claverton’s website](#).



About *Hard Return*



12 men locked in a compound
12 men watching their every move
1 man murdered

When Jason's friend Lewis is trapped in a secret prison compound with a murderer, Jason must go back behind bars – but Amy won't let him go in alone. Hiding their intentions from both the convicts and their watchers, they work together to find justice for the murdered man while keeping their cover. As the danger mounts, Jason, Amy, and Lewis find there might be no escape for any of them – except in death.

Praise for *The Amy Lane Mysteries*

"A refreshing and enthralling read"

Yrsa Sigurðardóttir, award-winning queen of Nordic noir

"Rosie Claverton has produced a highly original heroine with truly authentic strengths and flaws, in this stunning addition to the psychological crime thriller genre. Definitely recommended." Zoë Sharp, creator of the bestselling *Charlie Fox* thriller series

"This slickly crafted thriller gifts the reader with well-drawn characters and the exhilarating swoop of cross and double-cross, all played out against an authentically portrayed contemporary Welsh landscape."

Cathy Ace, award-winning author of the *Cait Morgan Mysteries*

"Rosie Claverton has played the alchemist here, and created literary gold from very base metals." – Crime Fiction Lover, 5* review for *New Talent* November 2014.



About the Author



Rosie Claverton grew up in Devon, daughter to a Sri Lankan father and a Norfolk mother, surrounded by folk mythology and surly sheep. She moved to Cardiff to study Medicine and adopted Wales as her home. She then moved to London to specialise in psychiatry

Her Cardiff-based crime series ***The Amy Lane Mysteries*** debuted in 2014. Her first short film ***Dragon Chasers*** aired on BBC Wales in Autumn 2012. She co-created the ground-breaking series of short films ***The Underwater Realm***.

Rosie is the co-founder of [Crime Cymru](#), a collective of Welsh crime writers. Across the genre sea, she was a judge for Best Newcomer at the British Fantasy Awards 2019.

Between writing and medicine, she created a reference series about psychiatry and psychology for writers called [Freudian Script](#), advocating for accurate and sensitive portrayals of people with mental health problems in fiction.

Returned to her beloved Cardiff, she lives with her journalist husband and young daughters.



Sample Q&A for *Hard Return* by Rosie Claverton

Why did you choose to write The Amy Lane Mysteries?

At the start of the series, Amy is a technological genius, who travels the world through her homemade supercomputer, but can't leave her apartment due to severe agoraphobia. Jason is an ex-con who ran with the wrong crowd and is trying to turn his life around. Amy and Jason took up residence in my head and wouldn't get out!

I had to tell their story in Cardiff, and then in the wider environment of Wales. The country has a murder rate of three per year—so, my amateur detectives are often out of their depth and attract national media attention.

As the series progressed, I wanted to tell the story of someone in recovery from mental health problems. I wanted to show possibilities, but also the effort involved in maintaining good mental health with a demanding job.

Where did you get the idea for Hard Return?

I wanted to play with the classic "country house" mystery from the Golden Age of Crime and give it a modern twist. Taking twelve convicts and locking them in a secret prison compound is bound to lead to violence, but how do you get away with murder when you're being watched 24/7? I really enjoyed the challenge of working that out!

Putting Jason back into a criminal environment and pushing Amy out of her comfort zone to follow him placed both characters under immense stress—which is where all the interesting stuff comes out! They're also working through the beginnings of a new relationship, which adds an extra thread of tension.



How do you juggle writing novels with a medical career and family life?

It's difficult to write after a day's work whatever job you do, but psychiatry can be emotionally draining too. However, I find my work a great source of inspiration too, particularly for three-dimensional characters.

Since becoming a parent, keeping to a rigid schedule is a luxury! I'm very grateful to my husband for enabling me to keep writing when we both have such high demands on our time. My side of the housework is often the first thing to go out of the window!

What experience do you bring into this novel?

My knowledge of mental health had been key to the series—particularly as Amy's journey has changed throughout the series. I also feel that psychological insight has helped build convincing characters, and motives that are embedded in human experience but not resorting to harmful stereotypes of mental illness.

I've lived in Wales for twelve years, and in Cardiff for over a decade. I have intimate knowledge of the city and its atmosphere. I've met a number of Jasons – and a fair few Amys in my online haunts.



Excerpts from *Hard Return* by Rosie Claverton

Except #1 – Behind Bars

The two men shoved Alby down on the ground in front of the officer. He didn't move, didn't speak, didn't even look at Alby.

One of the new uniforms broke the silence. "He's a thief."

The other nodded, the movement of his dreadlocked head casting strange shadows on the ground. "Second offence, sir."

The officer nodded.

They dragged Alby to his feet again and gave him a push. "Round the block with you then!"

His breath was misting in front of him and Alby was covered in goosepimples, like a turkey ready for the oven. He stood stock still, as if holding his body rigidly might somehow protect him from the wind stinging his dripping, naked body.

Alby looked up then, eyes searching for someone to help him. Lewis resisted the urge to duck his head, waiting for Alby to meet his eye. He wouldn't play the coward and deny his friend. Yet a small part of him didn't want to fuck this up after only a couple of minutes, especially not for Alby Bloody Collins.

Alby probably had nicked something. Lewis was the one who had trained him to thief after all, and he was bloody good at it. What he wasn't good at was discretion. If he'd stolen something of value, he wouldn't have been able to keep himself from flaunting it. He deserved whatever punishment was coming to him.

Even death?



It was hard to judge the temperature when Lewis was just out of a metal box, cocooned in sensible layers against the chill. It wasn't freezing, but it wasn't a balmy summer's evening either. Would Alby get hypothermia from jogging round the block? Was Lewis leaving him to die out here?

Were these men prepared to take that chance? What rules were there in this place anyway? What happened if a man died out here? Would anyone care?

Alby saw him. "Lewis! Lewis, you wouldn't let them do this, would you?"

All eyes were suddenly on him. He felt the officer watching him particularly, as Alby took one staggering step towards him. The man who'd shoved Alby hauled him back and tried again to propel him away from them, away from the bright light and into the darkness.

"Wait!"

He hadn't meant to speak. Yet the focus was back on him, as Lewis stumbled forward and unzipped his fleece jacket. He chucked it at Alby's chest, furious with his friend, and at himself for losing front so quickly. But his fucking conscience wouldn't let them send Alby out into the night like that.

"Run fucking fast," he said, voice harsh even to his ears.

Years of instinctive obedience kicked in and Alby ran, not even stopping to put on the jacket, swiftly disappearing into the inky blackness beyond the floodlights.

Someone grabbed at his T-shirt, but Lewis stuck his palm flat against the man's chest, holding him away. The dreadlocked man held him fast.

"You ain't been here five minutes and you're already interfering. It won't go well for you."

Lewis didn't move, didn't speak, just stared down the bloke until he released his shirt.



“I don’t make the rules here.” The officer spoke with an accent from deep within the heart of England. “You make them, you play by them.”

He fixed Lewis with his dark eyes, the rest of his face completely in shadow.

“You live by them. You die by them.”

Excerpt #2 – Know Thy Enemy

Amy traipsed through the woods, Cerys a few steps in front of her, flanked on either side by silent armed men. They had taken her backpack but neither of them had been searched. Amy was almost afraid of what Jason’s sister might be carrying.#

Cerys had tried to introduce herself, to show her badge, but she was silenced with a gun against her chest. These men weren’t interested in explanations. Amy had watched Cerys barely control her temper, her panic. It made her deeply afraid to see that Cerys was as helpless as she was.

The sliver of moon had disappeared behind a cloud, and the woods were eerily quiet. Had the wildlife all fled before them or had there never been any? Had this bizarre experiment wiped them out somehow? Was Amy growing more hysterical with every step deeper into darkness?

A mist was rising, coiling around her body like a sinister snake. With mounting horror, Amy watched the fog swallow Cerys whole, the guards’ torches useless within this shroud.

It could’ve been ten minutes or it could’ve been a decade before Amy ran into the back of Cerys, almost sending them both to the ground.

“Sorry!”

Her voice was too loud, almost a shout. Idiot.



“Don’t panic on me,” Cerys hissed.

A heavy hand fell on Amy’s shoulder, pushing her forward, until her foot nudged at a raised edge. Something whistled past her face, before landing with a soft thud—somewhere below her.

“Climb down.”

Trembling, Amy lowered her body into a crouch and reached out. The metal was burning with cold as she leaned forward, noticing the presence of dim lights like cats’ eyes on a midnight motorway. Leading her down a bare metal ladder into a hole in the ground.

She couldn’t back down now. Jason was committed, probably already inside, and he needed her to be present. This hadn’t been what they’d planned for, but if she could somehow get this team to accept her, she could keep him safe.

If she just climbed down into the bowels of the earth with a gun at her back.

She climbed in. The light gave everything a red-tinted glow, like the mouth to Hell, and she wanted to close her eyes against it. She counted thirty-nine steps before her foot hit solid ground, then the second.

Two men were waiting for her, in the same black uniforms, but the low lighting continued down the tunnel so she couldn’t see their faces. A co-incidence, or a deliberate strategy?

They were silent as they preceded her down the tunnel, their footsteps echoing in the close space. She suddenly looked behind her, but there was no one else there. No guards, no Cerys.

“Where is—”

“Your driver made her delivery, didn’t she?”



The guards didn't stop walking and Amy trotted to keep up. She noticed that one of them seemed to be holding her backpack in his hand. Was that the object that had been dropped past her face before she'd entered the manhole? Is that what he thought Cerys' delivery was?

Had they mistaken Amy for someone else? If they had, how long could she maintain the charade? With preparation and the separation of a computer screen, she could lie like a pro, but here, like this? She wasn't sure she even knew how.

The familiar sick feeling was rolling in her stomach and her lungs felt compressed, unable to coexist with her frantically-beating heart. She wanted to run, to get out. She had to get out.