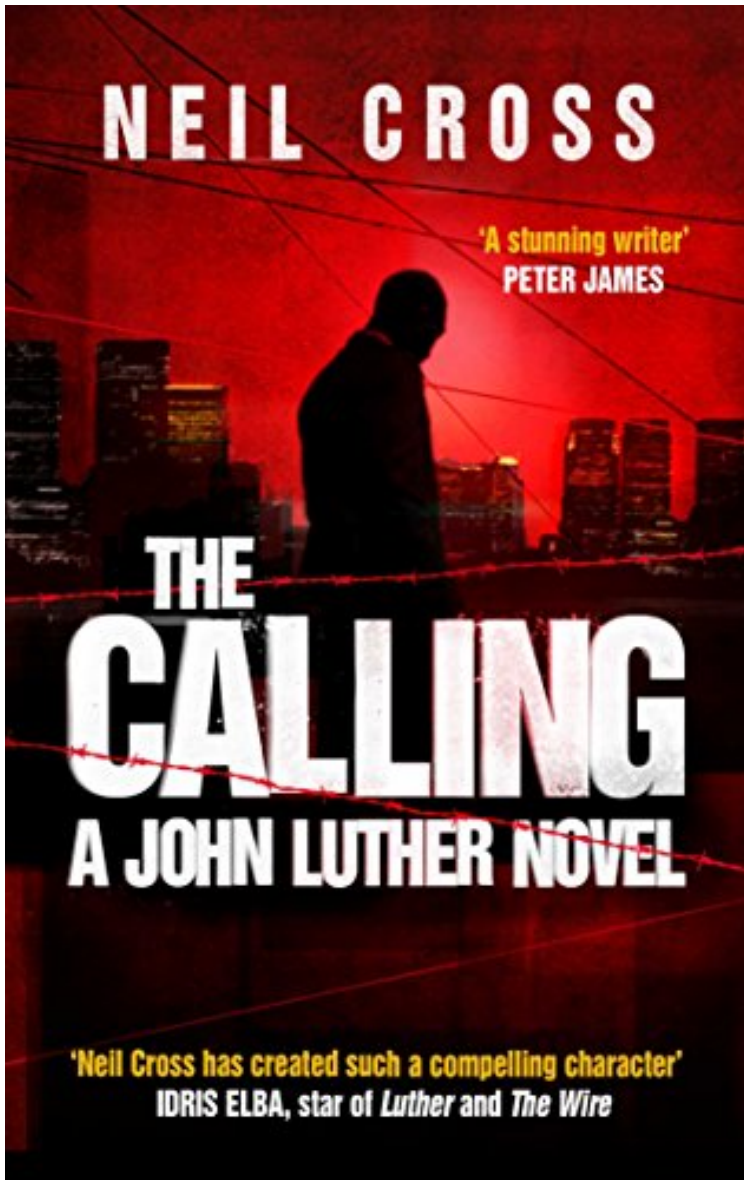


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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurMeet DCI John Luther in the prequel to the BBC's epic series LUTHER, starring Golden Globe winner Idris Elba. He's a murder detective. A near-genius. He's brilliant; he's intense; he's instinctive. He's obsessional. He's dangerous. DCI John Luther has an extraordinary clearance rate. He commands outstanding loyalty from friends and colleagues. Nobody who ever stood at his side has a bad word to say about him. And yet there are rumours that DCI Luther is bad - not corrupt, not on the take, but

tormented. Luther seethes with a hidden fury that at times he can barely control. Sometimes it sends him to the brink of madness, making him do things he shouldn't; things way beyond the limits of the law. Luther: The Calling, the first in a new series of novels featuring DCI John Luther, takes us into Luther's past and into his mind. It is the story of the case that tore his personal and professional relationships apart and propelled him over the precipice. Beyond fury, beyond vengeance. All the way to murder.

CHAPTER 1

John Luther, a big man with a big walk, crosses the hospital car park, glistening with night rain. He strides through sliding doors into Accident and Emergency, approaches the desk, and badges the Filipino triage nurse. Im looking for Ian Reed? Thats the police officer? She glances at her monitor. Hes in cubicle eighteen. Over on the far side. Luther marches through the waiting area, weaves through nurses in rubber clogs. He ignores the moans of the binge drinkers, the beaten women, the self-mutilators, the overdosers. He sweeps aside the heavy curtain to cubicle 18, and theres Ian Reed, sitting tieless on the edge of the bed. Reed is blond and lean, tense by nature. The blood on his white shirt has dried in patches. Hes wearing a soft surgical collar. Blimey, Luther says, shutting the curtains. Yeah. Its not as bad as it looks. Reeds got a couple of stitches in his scalp, a torn ligament, bruised ribs. Bruised kidneys, too; hell be pissing blood for a week or two. Luther pulls up a plastic chair. What about the neck? Sprained. They had me in a headlock. Dragged me out the car. Who did? Lee Kidman. Barry Tonga. Luther knows Lee Kidman; hes a bodybuilder, a doorman, a debt collector. Does a bit of porn. Hes not familiar with the second name. Barry Tonga, Reed says. Samoan bloke. Shaved head, tattoos everywhere. Size of a truck. Does a bit of cage fighting. Luther lowers his voice to a murmur. So whyd they do it? You know Julian Crouch? Property developer. Used to run a few club nights House of Vinyl, Betamax, Intersect. And a recording studio down in Camden. But hes on the downslide. Arent they all? Reed explains that Crouch owns half a terrace in Shoreditch: six houses. Hes got a buyer lined up, some Russian who wants to develop the site, turn it into a gym in time for the Olympics. Crouch is servicing massive debts. And hes divorcing. He needs a buyer, but only five of the six terraced houses are available to sell. So, says Luther. Who lives in house number six? Bloke called Bill Tanner. Old sailor. Luther groans because Reed is sentimental about old servicemen. Its landed him in grief before. And what? Luther says. This bloke Crouch is trying to force him out? Yeah. So why doesnt he just move? Because its his home, mate. Hes rented it since 1972. His wife died in that house, for fucks sake. Luther holds up his hands. Okay, okay. Reed outlines a campaign of intimidation: threatening phone calls, hoodies shoving dog shit through the old mans letter box, smashing his windows. Breaking in, covering the living room in graffiti. He call the police? Thing about Bill Tanner, Reed says, hes a game old bastard. Hes got heart. This is Reeds highest compliment. He takes photos of these hoodies, hands them in as evidence. Hes shit scared; hes an old man living by himself, being harassed every night. So uniform goes round, picks up the hoodies. They dont mention Crouch. And theyre out before the suns up. Next day, maybe the day after that, Bill gets a proper visit. Two heavies. Thisll be Kidman and Tonga? Reed nods. Luther crosses his arms and stares up at the strip light, dotted inside with the desiccated carcasses of dead flies. So what did you do? What do you think? I went to see Crouch. Told him to lay off Bill Tanner. Luther closes his eyes. Oh, come on, says Reed. Its not like we havent done it before. Luther concedes with a shrug. When was this? A couple of days ago. Then tonight Im coming home, Im about to park, when this Mondeo rear-ends me. Before I can get it together, two blokes get out, run round, drag me out my car, and give me a right kicking. Luther glances at the neck brace. And this is at your place? Your flat? On my own doorstep. It was definitely Kidman and Tonga? I know it was Tonga because hes the biggest fucker I ever set eyes on. Plus the tattoos. And I know its Kidman because, well, I know Kidman. Weve had dealings. What kind of dealings? Hes just around. On the edge of things. You reporting this? Nope. Why not? Cant prove it was them. And even if I couldso what? Crouch rolls out another bunch of cunts to lean on poor old Bill Tanner. Bill wont move. Theyll end up killing him, one way or another. Hell have a heart attack. A stroke. Whatever. Poor old sod. But there are better ways to do this stuff, Luther says. That old man served his country. Reed is clenching and unclenching his jaw. He was there at D-Day. Hes eighty-five fucking years old and he tried to do things the right way and his country let him down. All right, Luther says. Keep your hair on. What are you asking me to do? Just pop in on him. Make sure hes all right. Take him some milk and a loaf of bread. A few tins of dog food. Not the cheap stuff. Meaty chunks in jelly. He loves his little dog. What is this thing with old people? Luther asks. Theyd rather freeze to death than feed cheap food to their pets. Reed would shrug, if he could. The killer walks the empty nocturnal streets: avenues lined with plane trees, Victorian terraces, concrete local authority buildings, belts of local shops with darkened windows. Stone churches with faded, desperately jaunty signage: LIFE IS FRAGILE. HANDLE WITH PRAYER! The killer is a compact

and muscular man. Short hair, neatly parted. Dark peacoat. Jeans. A laptop backpack. The backpack does not contain a laptop. On Clayhill Street, a Smart car reverses into a small parking space. The driver, a young Asian woman, gets out and hurries to her door clutching her handbag. She looks at the killer in passing but doesn't really see him. The killer walks on. He turns onto Bridgeman Road with a sense of magnitude. He marches along the frost-buckled pavement until he comes to number 23. Behind the rusty gate and the overgrown hedge, number 23 is a handsome, double-fronted Victorian house. The killer opens the gate. It squeaks, but he doesn't mind: it must squeak every night and every day. He stands in the front garden, which is a small paved area sheltered by high hedges. A green wheelie bin in one corner. He lingers in the shadow of the house. It seems churchlike, pregnant with the future. He thinks of standing underneath a great railway bridge as a locomotive shrieks overhead, the shocking power of it. That's what the killer feels inside him, now: the shriek and rattle and thunder of a great engine. He snaps on the latex gloves he's kept rolled in one pocket of his peacoat. Then, from the other pocket, he removes a pair of needle-nosed pliers. He walks to the side of the house. His legs are trembling. He follows the vertical line of the drainpipe until it meets the small, square drain around which grows sparse London grass. He kneels to snip the telephone wire close to the ground. Then he pockets the pliers and returns to the front door. From his pocket, he removes a set of house keys. He grits his teeth. With great care, he inserts the Yale key into the lock and slowly turns it. The door snicks open as he leans a shoulder into it. Quietly, so quietly. When the gap is wide enough, he slips through like smoke. Into the wall near the door is set a plastic keypad. A small red light flashes. The killer ignores it and sharks through a haze of the Lamberts' scent: their clothes, their deodorants, their perfumes, their cleaning products, their bodies, their sex. He enters the dark living room and sets down his backpack. He shrugs off his peacoat, folds it, and lays it on the sofa. He unzips the backpack and removes a pair of painters' boots. He slips them over his shoes. Then he wriggles into a pair of paper overalls. He pulls up the elasticated hood. He stands there in the white paper jumpsuit and the thin rubber gloves. He reaches into the backpack and removes his tools: a Taser, a silvery roll of duct tape (one corner folded over for easy access), a scalpel, a carpet knife. At the bottom of the rucksack, rolled into a sausage, is a small polar fleece blanket with satinette edging. He lays the blanket on the sofa. Looks down at it, a pallid rectangle. The killer's spirit balloons and seems to leave his body. He hovers above himself. He watches himself head upstairs: gently now, gently. He avoids the fifth step, slips back into his body, and proceeds into darkness. Luther kills time in the waiting area by flicking through a tatty old Heat magazine. In the far corner, a tramp with ash-gray dreadlocks bellows at God, or perhaps that he is God. It's difficult to tell. Reed limps out around 3:15 a.m. Luther takes his coat and helps him through the doors, through the main entrance, blazing bright. They cross the wet car park to Luther's decayed old Volvo. Luther drives Reed home to a top-floor, one-bedroom rented apartment in Kentish Town. The flat is bare and disorderly, as if it were temporary accommodation, which it is. All Reed's flats are temporary accommodation. Reed yearns for a big house, a big garden with a trampoline in it, a horde of kids to bounce on with his own kids, their friends, their cousins, their neighbors. Reed dreams of community, of pub lunches on Sunday, of street parties, of wearing comedy aprons as he cooks sausages at well-attended barbecues. He dreams of being adored by his children, adoring them in return. At thirty-eight, he's been married four times and is childless. He hands Luther a buff folder. Luther leans against the wall and flicks through the file. Sees arrest sheets, mug shots, surveillance reports. The top sheets detail the kids who were arrested, remanded, and released for harassing Bill Tanner: dead-eyed rat boys, English white trash. Beneath the arrest sheets are more detailed reports on Lee Kidman, Barry Tonga, and their boss Julian Crouch. Luther slips the folder into a carrier bag and checks his watch. It's late. He thinks about going home. But what would be the point? He thinks about the dead and can't sleep. He lies there boiling like a star about to explode. So he drives to Crouch's place, a town house overlooking Highbury Fields. He parks and sits at the wheel. He wonders what he's going to do to Julian Crouch and how he's going to get away with it. At length, he pops the boot, walks round the Volvo, and pulls out a hickory wood pickaxe handle. He feels its satisfying weight. He marches across Highbury Fields and waits in darkness, the pickaxe handle clenched in his fist. Shortly after 4:30 a.m., an immaculate, vintage Jaguar pulls up. Julian Crouch gets out. He's got riotously curly hair, thinning on top. Suede coat, paisley shirt. White Adidas. He opens his front door and hits the lights but lingers on the threshold, backlit by the chandelier. He sniffs the air like prey at a waterhole. He knows someone's out there, watching him. He frowns and shuts the door, squeaks across marble tiles. Luther stares at the house, breathing. Lights come on. Crouch comes to his bedroom window. He looks down like a troubled king from his high castle, peering into blackness. Then he draws the curtains and turns off the light. Luther stands sentinel. His heart is a furnace. At length, a fox scurries down the

center of the empty road. Luther can hear the quick, prim click of its claws on tarmac. He watches the fox until it disappears, and he heads back to his car. He waits until the winter sun begins to rise and the first joggers pass by. Then he drives home.

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