BOOK BREAK

'Final Account' surprises even this jaded reader



ESTHER LITTMANN

day evening, I settled into my favorite armchair to read a mystery thriller: Peter mystery thritter: Feter Robinson's "Final Ac-count" (Berkley Prime Crime, 1995). Critica on the book jacket call the author an "expert plotter" and "one of the most underrated writers of British mys-

teries today." Sure enough, after the first chapter, I rose to make sure all the doors and windows were locked.

Set in Yorkshire, on a farm turned Yuppie estate, "Final Account" begins with the investigation of a brutal mur-der. A headless body, crouched in a pos-ture of supplication, has been found on the floor of an old stone barn. Spots of flesh, blood and brain form expression-

item, blood and brain form expressions ist patterns on the whitewashed walls. A robbery? Not likely. A thorough examination of home and property reveal no missing valuables. The macabre scene looks more like an execution. But

Monogrammed cufflinks on the vic-

tim's shirt sleeves identify him as Keith Rothwell, successful accountant and devoted family man. Known for his qui-et, unassuming manner, Rothwell hard-ly seemed a candidate for murder and Markhum Milhes his mil hard-

ly seemed a candidate for murder and mayhem. Neither his well-bred, somewhat overbearing wife nor his bookworm of a daughter can explain the reason for their personal tragedy.

Enter Chief Detective Alan Banks, the intrepid protagonist of Robinson's seven-book mystery acries. Banks grew up in a working class neighborhood. As a police officer, he's tough and unrelenting, yet as a man he's far from two-dimensional. Passionate in the pursuit dimensional. Passionate in the pursuit dimensional. Passionate in the polishing of justice, he also needs a gentler outlet for his emotions. Unfortunately, a floundering marriage with Sandra, who spends more time organizing exhibits at the local art gallery than at home, fails to fulfill his needs. Banks soon finds resulting the marchine. to fulfill his needs. Sanks soon finds re-lief in music, listening to everything from New Orleans jazz to Khachaturi-an, and the attentions of a beautiful, young Pakistani violinist. Human na-ture, Inspector Banks learns, is more complex than it appears complex than it appears.

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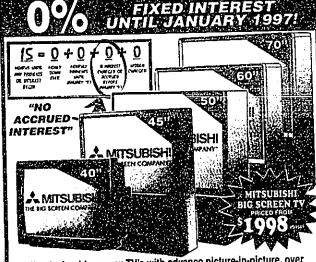
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