

**BOOK BREAK**

**'Final Account' surprises even this jaded reader**



ESTHER LITTMANN

Home alone one Friday evening, I settled into my favorite armchair to read a mystery thriller: Peter Robinson's "Final Account" (Berkeley Prime Crime, 1995). Critics on the book jacket call the author an "expert plotter" and "one of the most underrated writers of British mysteries 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 murder. A headless body, crouched in a posture of supplication, has been found on the floor of an old stone barn. Spots of flesh, blood and brain form expressionist 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 why?

tim's shirt sleeves identify him as Keith Rothwell, successful accountant and devoted family man. Known for his quiet, unassuming manner, Rothwell hardly 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 series. 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 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 relief in music, listening to everything from New Orleans jazz to Khachaturian, and the attentions of a beautiful, young Pakistani violinist. Human nature, Inspector Banks learns, is more complex than it appears.

Monogrammed cufflinks on the vic-

See LITTMANN, 13D

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