

## New Releases

I reached for my drink and ferried it through the air towards me. She smiled horribly and I sucked at the acid fizz. I only liked these people to see me have one drink especially if, like then, it was morning. This is why I had sent her over to the table and insisted on ordering the drinks, which is why the drink was so strong it tugged at my teeth.

I intended to finish the drink and the story together in the hope of forcing the end. I'd fling her aside in the wrapping up, leaving her bobbing on self-doubt. Tony had promised me this was a one-shot deal, that she would go away and not come back.

From the clock on the wall behind the barman she'd had forty-two minutes. Forty-two minutes it had taken her to come squirming and stumbling at me with the name. Or the threat of the name and that was worse. But now it was departing and, when it reduced, she was once more an earnest and ageing woman who I had no personal cause against.

"He practically kicked his way back through the bedroom door and came racing down the stairs like a man possessed", I smiled at the memory and she joined in. And look, look at her body - the shoulders up, leaning into me, her hands stopped in anticipation. If a blind hustler had walked in off

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the street right then he'd have fought through the furniture to get to her. But she was *my score*.

"He ran past me and his briefcase fell open and all these forms fell at my feet but he never stopped for a second, just went off screaming down the street". As long as she only had the known facts about the name then there wasn't much that could go wrong. It was the other information, the hidden history between the name and me, which had come for me before and could come for me again. If she had that then she'd have got there by now.

"I reached down and picked up one of the forms and I saw that they were all from the Gas Board. That's when I realised that the man had only come round to (*pause*) read my Uncle's meter". I gave her it slowly, laughing so she'd laugh, and she got there later than most.

"Oh", gasped the journalist, throwing a hand to her mouth, "Oh no!" She landed her palms on the table and snorted and shook her head about with the abandon of those with enviably little pressure, little thought. I sighed to suggest an end, wedged my heels into the floor and pushed clear of the table.

"Well", I stood before her, "It was lovely to meet you".

The laughing halted and she was flung into mild panic, caught between an awkward gathering of her possessions and a hopeless attempt to escape the ambush.

"Oh", she whined, and with fair justification, "It's just that..." she cast one limp hand back to her notes.

"Please feel free to call my manager Tony with anything else". I slid my chair back under the table

and stood square with my hands on it's frame. "Unfortunately I really have to go and check on everything for tonight's show".

She stood in surrender and crammed her belongings into an ugly bag that spoke of financial pressure and train journeys. When they were in, she seemed to pause once more over her papers, but it was only with dismay at what she had lost and soon she was standing and I was pretending to help with her jacket.

We walked through the bar already drifting apart and I explained it was quicker for me to, yes, quicker if I went *that way*. She looked a little unsteady, for a moment I thought angry, and then thanked me for my time and produced a small wave. I wondered, walking back to my hotel, if she had expected a kiss.

And that, the interview with the journalist, is pretty much how everything started.

### Two

"How long have you been asleep?" Asked Tony.

It took me a moment to put together my leaving the journalist, returning to my room, falling asleep and waking with the phone in my hand. The hotel,

unsurprisingly, did not provide clocks.

"What time is it?"

"Six o'clock. You're on at seven thirty".

"Why does it matter how long I was asleep? It would still be six o'clock".

"Yeah but then I wouldn't have known how long you'd been drinking".

"Drinking is a problem now?"

He laughed at that because he was drinking now that it was six o'clock. He drank steadily in the evenings, worked during the day. Worked for me. Well, for us.

"No, but then I'd have known how it had gone with that journalist".

"Tony?"

"Yes".

"You've got to get more direct. I'll be there in ten minutes".

The room was perfectly decent, sitting up a few floors in that hotel that only just existed. There was no restaurant, no real lobby. Just a smoked glass door and a blonde behind a desk who didn't look up while you passed from the street, to the lift, and then those extraordinary corridors. The corridors twisted and turned, lifted up or dropped in carved sweeps round the rooms. There was a snaking belt of them round the hotel, frolicking with space when they rose and fell through floors and it had taken us a long time last night to find what they naughtily called a bar.

My breakfast that morning had been conveyed by silent hands. They had raised it on a tray outside the room, knocked and sprinted away like a nabbed

### Small Wars

Sadie Jones

*Chatto & Windus*



Sadie Jones has done it again. Not only has she sold 400,000 copies of her debut, *The Outcast*, but also created a new story, rich in complex human relationships in that same way that she fascinated us with Lewis Aldridge and Kit Carmichael.

Set in 1950s Cyprus, Hal, a young and dedicated soldier, is transferred to the island and Clara his dutiful wife follows with their twin daughters. It's not a "sunshine posting", as the location would suggest, rather the island is in turmoil with guerrilla fighting and Britain defending its colony. As in war, there are terrifying incidents, and Hal becomes a changed man, in the face of this action, his relationship with his wife begins to crumble.

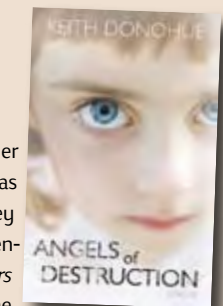
Emotionally thrilling and highly addictive, *Small Wars*, tells the story of this "small war", brilliantly researched, and highly charged, it's a novel that depicts the many faces of war, and the "unknown enemy", being in foreign land, unwanted and unable to communicate. *Small Wars* is a tremendous follow-up to *The Outcast*; Sadie Jones has proved herself to be one of Britain's most enthralling authors.

Shirley Stevenson

### Angels of Destruction

Keith Donohue

*Jonathan Cape*



There is little wonder Donohue's new work has drawn comparisons to Audrey Niffeneggers' publishing sensation, *The Time Travellers Wife*. Donohue has the same mastery of the time-space continuum, with a narrative arc that seamlessly spans three decades in a heart-wrenching exploration of the human condition.

Margaret Quinn is a lonely widow haunted by the loss of her only child Erica, who as a teenage runaway joined the hard-line activist cult, "Angels of Destruction." With only her memories for company, Margaret is awoken one night by an unexpected visitor, a 9-year-old girl who seemingly appears from nowhere, with nothing to identify her except a battered suitcase and a nametag, "Nora". Almost instantly, Margaret decides to try and pass Nora off as her daughter's child - desperately grasping at the comfort her fictitious granddaughter offers.

Demonstrating supernatural manifestations, Nora inspires both devotion and fear in those who encounter her. Donohue's powerful characterisation ensures *Angels of Destruction* remains an infinitely believable, potent investigation into the nature of human faith, hope and love.

Samantha Cracknell