

'Beautifully brutal and devastating'
Brian Conaghan

A boy. A girl. A death.

Lives have been

WRECKED

But who's to blame?

**LOUISA
REID**

WRECKED

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GUPPY
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*“You said a bad driver was only safe
until she met another bad driver? Well,
I met another bad driver, didn’t I?”*

The Great Gatsby, F Scott Fitzgerald

PART ONE

NOW

BOXED

Court room,

Caught room.

I'm in the dock.

There's no way out.

All exits blocked.

ALL RISE

Jury,
then judge.

There's a hush.

I want to burst it,
take a pin to its weight,
explode the silence –

escape.

Head down,
arms out,
I'll speed through these walls,
like I'm made of steel –
like I can't fall.

I'll
spread my wings wide,
taste air, breathe
sky.

But facts are – I'm trapped –
stiff shirt like a noose,
new suit, buttoned up;
strait-jacketed truth.

CHARGES

“Joseph Goodenough.

In the early hours of
The first
Of January
Two thousand and nineteen,

You are accused of causing the
Death
Of **Stephanie White**.

To the charge of
Death
By **Dangerous Driving**.

How do you plead?"

STOP

I'm winded,
almost doubled over –

That's all it takes to put me
there – again,
in that black, dark night,
on that black, dark road,
with Imogen, just Imogen,
by my side.

And I shut my eyes
to hide from the scene,

but

there's light
coming at us

from around a dark corner
it's tunnelling forwards
it's upon us,
almost,

it's
bright,
it's
full beam
it's
up
in our faces –
and
we're driving
straight
at
it

can't stop –
are we braking?

But

there's no
way
out
because

these seconds are small,
and this car is so huge,
and the wheel won't turn

it's heavy and slow

we're out of control

it's still coming at us
so fast,
horn blaring
lights flashing
Jesus,
please

STOP –

IMOGEN –

NO.

DEAD

Not Imogen, not me,
but
the woman in the other car.

I staggered up the road
towards the wreck
and saw

a body,

(or something like)

and a jagged
where the side of the car

hole
should have been.

I stared at
white bones.

Saw
red skin stretched

into a silent **scream**.

Torso twisted,
face glassed
into

p e e
i c s

I howled.

She didn't twitch.

Her blonde hair in a plait.
Scalped.

Finished.

DAWN

When I'm lying in bed
crawling up, out of whatever sleep
I've caught that night
it's almost not there,
I've almost forgotten to remember;
and then
before I can open my eyes on the day
that dead body slaps me awake.

She's always wearing white,

her blood pulses and glows
dripping, staining, seeping
over her clothes.

And I'm running to the bathroom
throwing up in the sink
spewing nothing –
empty belly
twisting with
guilt.

WHAT DO YOU PLEAD?

They're waiting.

Why can't I say it?
I need to respond,
and I open my mouth like I practised this morning
in front of the mirror, in front of my mum.

Not guilty, I said then,
pulling the words up and out from inside,
like fish

flapping and flailing,
caught on a line.

I try once again –
open my mouth, and breathe

but the sounds are stuck
in my throat
I can't squeeze them free,

“N-”
the first sound comes
and then the rest in a rush,
“*Not guilty,*” I say
convincing no one,
not even myself.

Because I'm still at the scene –
stuck
in the past, in the frame,
here in the dock,
frozen with shame.

TRUTH (i)

It shouldn't be this hard to tell the truth –
to spit it right out,
(like the teachers used to tell me,
when I couldn't make a sound).

Small Joe stuttered and big Joe's no better,
not now he's trying to makes sense of the senseless.

Because – and don't ask me why – the truth is
elusive, it swerves and it slides –
like the car did that night –
now it's greasy with lies.

The truth is shattered, like the glass on the road
that I find in my hair; in my dreams and
my clothes. It's a mouth ripped open, it's a tongue
that
lolls.

The truth is in hiding, it's scared, it's weak.

You see, I've been waiting so long
for my chance to speak.