TIMELINE

24%

David Wailing

Timeline

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Timeline

As she walks through the sliding doors and into the open air, Joanna feels good.

She stands out from all the other office workers leaving the building, and she knows it. Her green dress is figure-hugging enough to be sexy but floral enough to be traditional, and her long beige coat flaps around her bare legs in an almost cinematic manner. She's had time to reapply makeup and dab a little Calvin Klein Infinity around her neck. She's also pinned up her wavy black hair, primed to release it and let it tumble onto her shoulders, whenever she needs an extra boost. Always good to be prepared! Hm, probably the only worthwhile piece of advice Mum ever gave her.

From her handbag, she pulls out her Vades™ and slides them onto her face. They're transparent, almost invisible from a distance. Sleek, narrow and wraparound, they resemble a pair of perspex safety goggles designed by Ray-Ban. Inside the lenses, Joanna's auto is there, overlaying icons and text and images onto her view of the real world.

6.11pm Thursday 7 April 2022
Joanna O'Donnell
Gender: Female
Age range: 26-30
Orientation: Straight
Relationship status: Single/Available
Current location: Global Investigations (UK) Ltd Head Office, Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3JB.
Status update: Working.

Hi Joanna, hope you've had a good afternoon at work! Here's the selected feed since 3.55pm:
17 private messages
2 personal videos
20 referred videos
78 status updates
89 tweets
23 veets
8 bleets
…

She cuts off the full list as it scrolls over her view of

Farringdon Road. It's rush hour, the street is full of traffic and people, and she's in a hurry too. "Less updates," she says softly. Her display changes, as her auto hides all but the most urgent items.

Joanna straightens her Vades™, noticing how most of the people passing by are walking with heads bowed and smartphones in hand. She can't believe that's still the norm. So old-fashioned, having to carry something in your hands all the time! She knows the reason, though. It's a prop. People love their props, especially Londoners. They're much more comfortable focusing their attention on a smartphone than looking awkwardly at strangers. Who wants to do that!

Joanna does. She likes to look at people. She likes to watch. She likes to find out as much as she can.

Hey, it's my job, she often tells herself.

Joanna flicks through genuine private messages from people in her Circle, the generic ones from their autos having been filtered out. She doesn't have to use her hands, unlike the Neanderthal smartphone-luggers. Just her eyes and voice. Staring at an icon opens it, blinking hard closes it, speaking aloud transcribes a reply. Takes about a minute to get through half a dozen PMs and send responses. The last one is from Siobhan, her youngest sister, still living back home in Dublin having only just started her Economics degree at Trinity College.

> *Another date tonight then sis, you tart?! Best of luck! What's this fella*

like then?

"No idea," Joanna says aloud, the words appearing across her vision. "Haven't met him yet. On my way now." Blink. Send.

Siobhan must be online, desperate for a distraction from studying, as her reply pops up within a few seconds:

Good sex though????

Cheeky little cow. Although it's a fair question, and how nice for Joanna to be able to answer with "The best, apparently!"

She blink-shuts her auto's message panel. Time to get on with tonight's date.

Joanna scrolls through her personal calendar and reviews the agreed location for tonight, a trendy pub in Camden that she's never heard of, but apparently has 105 reviews and an average of four stars. She likes that he chose a pub and not some swanky wine bar. Less competition - she'll stand out better in a pub. She deliberately didn't drive to work today, so she can have a drink tonight. How many can she have? Her auto has the answer, monitoring the signals from the microbiosensors inside her clothes and giving her a quick medical summary. Alcohol content in her bloodstream now virtually nil following the night out with the girls from the office two days ago, so she's allowed three glasses of wine tonight. Any more and her private health insurance payments will start to increase,

and there's no way she's making *that* mistake again.

As Joanna follows the crowd of people along the pedestrianised Cowcross Street walkway, she spots the London Underground sign up ahead, outside the huge station. Through her Vades™, the familiar roundel glows warning-red, overlaid with flashing text:

> *Farringdon Station*
> *CLOSED.*
> *TfL update 5.55pm:*
> *Metropolitan,*
> *Hammersmith & City*
> *and Circle line services*
> *suspended following*
> *signal failure at King's*
> *Cross Station.*

She stops in her tracks. Bugger. She should have checked before she left work. Too busy messaging! All these people queuing outside the station elevators must be taking the Crossrail or the Thameslink, neither of which are any good to her.

She says "Alternative routes." Her auto brings up local bus timetables. God, as if Joanna's going to get a *bus!* They're one of the few things she's learned to hate about London: unreliable, uncomfortable, unpleasant.

She says "Local taxi availability." Her auto detects an empty taxi 0.7km away, a miracle for rush hour.

She says "Book taxi and confirm destination." Her auto makes the booking, causing the driver to change course and head her way.

Joanna turns back to the corner of Farringdon Road and waits for a few minutes until the sleek black taxi purrs alongside, door unlocking. The driver, a grey-haired man in his fifties, doesn't look at her as she climbs in and buckles up. His auto has already been given destination details by her auto, and the payment has been debited. They don't say a word to each other.

6.23pm Thursday 7 April 2022
Joanna O'Donnell is on Greville Street, London EC1M 8SU.

As the taxi works its way through the back roads, Joanna faces the window, not seeing any of the streets and buildings passing by. She's reading about the man she's going to meet. The man she hasn't really met at all yet.

It was last Monday when she first spotted him, coming back from lunch with Nell and Sophie through Hatton Garden. He was walking in the opposite direction, alone but clearly having a phone conversation with someone. His mouth stopped moving when he saw her. As they passed each other, they shared a glance. A few seconds later, Joanna risked looking over her shoulder, smiling to see that he was doing the same thing. He smiled back – a nice smile. He was tall, young-ish, thick brown hair, neat goatee, wearing rimless glasses and a good quality navy blue suit. Cute.

A few years ago, that would have been it – a warm

little memory for both of them. But as Joanna looked back, she triple-blinked to display his public profile, which now floated alongside him.

His name was Greg.

Greg Randall
Gender: Male
Age range: 31-35
Orientation: Straight
Relationship status: Single/Available.
Compatibility Index: 85%.

Really? A see-eye of 85%? Her last three boyfriends had all been in the low 70s!

She bookmarked him instantly. Her auto reported that he did the same thing to her. His prescription glasses obviously had the new Spex™ technology built in, which gave him the same constant online access that her Vades™ did.

And they both kept walking.

Back at the office, Joanna went through his timeline. Searched his online history. Did a little digging. It's what she's good at.

Gregory James Randall is 32, two years older than she is. He lives in Turnpike Lane (Google Maps show a two-storey house, very well-kept, neat front garden, green front door) in his own property (land registry confirms he has owned the freehold for four years). His family are

from Chelmsford (both parents still alive, one older brother in the Armed Forces), but he moved to London at least six years ago (which is when he was listed on Haringey Council's electoral roll). He works for On Course Consulting Ltd (a long-established management consultancy, doing well, their share prices are up) as manager of their marketing department (promoted in January according to his CV on LinkedIn), and is earning about £45K per year (if his tax records are accurate). He's got a fun side (images and videos at fancy-dress parties, parascending for charity, foreign nightspots on holiday) as well as a professional side (company dinners, conferences, seminars). His public Circle has 615 people in it (about average), a mixture of old college friends, workmates and family members, none of whom ring any warning bells (or have criminal records, according to CRB checks). She reads a few samples of his Amazon product reviews (he points out design flaws but is otherwise quite generous in his praise), his comments on other people's blogs and vlogs (again generally upbeat), his status updates (often quite self-deprecating but amusing), and his forum posts (he's registered to a lot of marketing forums, plus a few discussing music and old TV shows). His favourite city is Dublin (oh yes, good man), his favourite recording artist is Public Property (she downloaded their latest track bundle last week, they're dead good), his favourite film is Avatar 3 (she enjoyed that too, not her fave but probably in her top twenty) and according to the number of flights he's booked, his favourite holiday destination is New Zealand (she's never been but it looks beautiful in his photo albums, perhaps he might

take her?).

It was all there. You didn't even have to know where to look.

After twenty minutes, Joanna understood why her auto had awarded Greg an 85% see-eye. He's a catch! And so she sent a sim request, which he accepted almost instantly.

Ever since Monday, Joanna and Greg's autos have been engaging with each other more and more. Since each auto is not only programmed to mimic its owner, but also has access to every single piece of their data, it can replicate how a conversation with another person might play out. Except a hundred times faster.

Simulated relationships. Joanna has half a dozen of these on the go. She doesn't have time to waste finding out whether she might like someone or not, not these days. So simming is useful for picking and choosing new mates. You can't just add *anyone* to your Circle.

During the week, Joanna received regular reports on how things were going, as her auto chatted, flirted and joked with Greg's auto to determine how compatible they might be. Scanning through highlights of their simulated conversation, she was pleased to see his remarks were both amusing and intelligent, often with that self-deprecating wit. He had strong opinions too, some of which were quite political, but it looked like her auto managed to change his auto's mind on a few things, which was a very good sign. He can expect a fair bit of that if they ever get talking in real time. She's nobody's pushover!

Soon, both authorised their autos to unlock some

privacy settings. They shared more details about their tastes and preferences, leading to some heavily flirtatious banter. Before long they both agreed to swap their sexnet settings. For the past day, the two autos have been simulating sex, using private data logged from years of past encounters, both actual and virtual. The results came in table form.

When Joanna saw the number of orgasms Greg had given her, she knew it was time to meet for a drink.

Sitting in the back of the taxi as it edges through traffic, Joanna checks Greg's timeline again. She wonders if he's revealed any more about himself following their autos' simming, and is mildly surprised to find that he hasn't. Well, that tells her that he's the sensible type and knows how to keep firm control of his own data. She approves – nothing worse than someone who blabs their whole life story at you. A little mystery about a new man is exciting.

Joanna taps her chin. She could, of course, go digging.

Properly digging, not just curating what's already out there. She could pry. Get past security settings and firewalls. Download records about his online behaviour. Find out every tiny little secret.

It's her job. She's very good at it.

But... no. That's taking it too far. Joanna knows when to leave work behind.

For a second, some odd icons flash on and off in the corner of her auto display, too fast and faint for her to take in. She wonders what they mean, but then the taxi accelerates through some traffic lights and it brings the bloodrush back. She's got to admit that Greg's one of the

most appealing men she's ever... well, not met yet, but soon. Boyfriend material, definitely, but possibly more. Possible partners. What was it he said in one of his PMs?

Something tells me we have a lot in common. Not sure how I've got this far without you!

Joanna had flagged that message as a milestone, for easy access. Maybe one day she'd look back at it as the beginning of something? She smiles wryly to herself. Her friends are right, she's still a hopeless romantic at heart.

7.02pm Thursday 7 April 2022
Joanna O'Donnell is on Hampstead Road, London NW1 7JE.

"Here's fine," says Joanna as the taxi passes Mornington Crescent tube station. They're the first words she's spoken to her driver, who grunts and pulls over, unlocking the door so she can step out onto the pavement. Nothing else is said as she slams the door behind her, walking ahead while the taxi drives off. Paid in full.

Her auto displays a map overlaid on the busy street, arrows telling her to cross over to the other side, walk 81

metres in a straight line along Camden High Street, turn right and walk another 32 metres down Plender Street to reach The New Parrs Head pub. Although she could have avoided this additional walk, she didn't want Greg to see her get out of a cab – he might not approve, and besides, she'll make a better impression if he sees her walking up. She knows she looks good when she's walking. She's a few minutes late, but stops herself from increasing her pace. It's not good to be too punctual.

Halfway there, Joanna spots a girl waiting at a bus stop and gives her a second glance. She's wearing one of the new Duckback nanoweave hood-coats that being talked about right now. (Literally, right now: 'Duckback' is trending this hour.) Not only is it stylishly cut and classy, it's totally waterproof. Something to do with silicon fibres that stop water molecules from clinging onto the surface. Rain just streams off, and the coat doesn't even get damp. Made in Britain, made for Britain!

She triple-blinks at it, so all the data that the Duckback coat is constantly transmitting about itself gets displayed on her Vades™. Size. Colour. Price. A video of the TV advert. Her auto remarks that five people in her Circle already own this coat and seven have it on their future purchases list. It also identifies all local retailers currently selling it, and highlights a shop right here in Camden High Street, a mere 48 metres away. In fact she has to walk past it on her way to the pub.

Tempted. But then a private message pops up. Her auto is screening out all PMs unless they're important, and as this is from Greg himself, it's decided that

counts. Joanna dismisses the coat and blinks open the message.

> *I'm here, managed to be*
> *on time for once in my*
> *life! Glass of Pinot Blanc*
> *for you?*

Looks like she isn't the only one who's done her research. Pinot Blanc is Joanna's favourite wine. Usually there's a glass waiting at the bar by the time she walks in, her auto having ordered and paid for it in advance. It feels gentlemanly to have someone order a drink for her. Nice touch. Greg's sweet.

"Yes please! I'm on my way, almost there!" she says, and then changes her mind. That will sound like she's dying to meet him. "Wait. Redact. New message: How thoughtful. Thank you."

Joanna nods as she blink-sends her reply. She's surprised that she originally said something so bubbly and eager, so... so bloody *Irish*. Hasn't eight years in London taught her anything? That's not how it works here. She can be as cool as anyone. She's a native now.

Another PM comes in:

> *I'm such an idiot, just*
> *spilled Guinness on my*
> *trousers and it looks like*
> *I've peed myself, please*
> *come and rescue me!*

Joanna's startled by her own laughter, at how much it sounds like Siobhan's teenage giggles. What's happened to her! Something about Greg makes her forget her big-city demeanour. She can tell that her face is flushing red. She actually feels a little vulnerable, but in a nice way, a tingly way.

She's excited. This is going to be a good night.

7.10pm Thursday 7 April
2022
Joanna O'Donnell is on
Plender Street, London
NW1 0JN.

Joanna has turned off the busy high street and can see The New Parrs Head on the corner. It's a modern building designed to look like an old pub, so it will probably have working toilets, something of a rarity in Camden. People are passing in and out which means it's busy, good. Time to make her entrance.

There's a smile on her face as she straightens her back and walks towards the door, reaching out for the handle.

Homicide Index: 24%

She stops, frowning at the new line of text displayed inside her Vades™. What's this?

She says "Clarify update."

There is a 24% chance

*that <u>Greg Randall</u> will
be the killer of <u>Joanna
O'Donnell</u>.*

Joanna turns away from the door and just stands there on the pavement, seemingly staring into space. But actually she's staring at the words digitally outlined across her view of the ordinary London street.

She says "What's going on?"

There's no response. Her auto won't understand such a generic question, not even if she puts it into interface mode. She knows that. Not thinking straight.

What on earth is this? *Homicide* Index?

There are a number of social indices that automatically calculate suitability between people, comparing a million different things and working out how close a match they might be based on what they have in common, but she hasn't seen anything like this before, and never mind all that because her auto is telling her that the man waiting inside this pub, right at this very moment, is going to...

Going to kill her.

No, that's stupid, ridiculous, that can't actually mean he...

...will be the killer of Joanna O'Donnell.

She can hear her own pulse, thudding in her ears, and there's a funny taste in her mouth. She feels weird. Confused. What's her auto playing at? What's changed?

She says "Greg Randall profile."

Greg Randall

Gender: Male
Age range: 31-35
Orientation: Straight
Relationship status:
Single/Available.
Homicide Index: 24%
Compatibility Index:
65%.

For a second, Joanna could almost laugh. Her auto has adjusted their see-eye downwards as a result of the possibility that he might kill her, but it's still 65%. She's dated far worse.

But she doesn't feel like laughing.

She says "Display data for... Jesus... Homicide Index result."

Multiple windows spew across her vision, almost totally obscuring the real world. Joanna stands still and tries to take it all in. Right up front is a profile of someone she's never seen before: a pretty young woman with long silky black hair, big brown eyes and a happy smile. Her picture is partially faded with a faint X over it. Joanna knows what that means. Her heart beats faster.

Roxanna Alden
Gender: Female
Age range: 26-30
Orientation: Straight
Relationship status:

Dead/Unavailable.
Date of death:
Wednesday 17 February
2021

Joanna and Roxanna have one friend in common. Greg.

Feeling fractionally uneasy – the sort of feeling she used to get as a kid dragged along to family funerals, walking through Dublin Cemetery and reading the inscriptions on the mouldy gravestones – Joanna scrolls backwards through the profile history. She knows, better than anyone, that a person's timeline doesn't stop with death. They can continue making an impression on the world, their online profile serving as a focal point for those left behind. Just like gravestones, in a way. Digital gravestones that answer back.

Roxanna's timeline is no different. Over the past year, it's full of messages from the people she knows... knew, Joanna reminds herself. Family members, friends, colleagues, workmates, acquaintances, even a few complete strangers. All honouring Roxanna's memory.

Telling her they miss her. Telling her they will never forget her. Telling her a girl as beautiful and full of life as her should never have been taken from us so soon.

And Roxanna's auto has replied to them all.

Thank you, <u>Ron Wagner</u>, you were such a true friend. Love you always.

*Cheers <u>Janine Sorenson</u>,
our <u>Holiday in Crete
2019</u> was the most fun I
ever had in my life! And
yes I think you should
ask out the guy with the
bike! Stay gorgeous,
chick!*

*<u>Mum</u>, you were the best,
but please carry on with
your life. <u>Dad</u> needs you
now. Remember me, but
let me go. XXX*

Just the usual stuff. Joanna's auto is pre-set with similar response templates, which will kick in after she's gone. In the last couple of years, people have got used to communicating with the autos of dead people. And of course, there's plenty of nasty types who always think they're being funny, saying they get on with them much better now they're dead.

But there are no messages from Greg on her profile, not in the past year. What was their connection? Joanna scrolls further back through Roxanna's timeline, crossing over Wednesday 17th February 2021 into the part when she was alive, and discovers that she used to be his... oh God...

Ex.

Now the timeline tells the story. Roxanna was in a

relationship with Greg for about 18 months, captured online in a thousand ways, like extinct butterflies frozen in amber. Messages between each other, photos of them together, slushily romantic status updates. Both of their statuses were set to Couple/Monogamous the whole time. Must have been serious.

Joanna can't help but notice that he took her to New Zealand. Twice.

And yet, she hadn't come across any sign of this when she'd looked through Greg's timeline. Which means he redacted it. Removed all trace of her from his own personal history. Like he didn't want to be reminded of what they once had, perhaps... Joanna's done the same with ex-boyfriends she'd rather pretend she never met. But Greg couldn't erase the memories from Roxanna's timeline. Here, the butterflies were as colourful and lively as ever.

Neither of them gave anything away publically as to why their relationship ended, but their statuses went back to Single/Available on the same day. It looks like they came to an agreement without discussing it openly amongst their Circles. Unusual.

Then Roxanna died. A month later.

Amongst the slew of information across her Vades™ is a Metropolitan Police crime report, which Joanna skims through. The summary states that she was a murder victim, apparently resulting from an attempted mugging in her own street, since all valuables were missing from the body. There was no conviction. The case is closed, but remains unsolved.

So... does her auto think that Greg is the one who

killed Roxanna? Is that why it now claims –

> *Homicide Index: 24%*
> *There is a 24% chance*
> *that Greg Randall will*
> *be the killer of Joanna*
> *O'Donnell.*
> *More details soon...*

More details soon? "What does that mean?" She's surprised to hear her own voice. "How come you know all this!"

Unless...

"...Shit."

Suddenly she realises why this might be happening. What her auto could be doing.

Joanna takes off her Vades™ and rubs her eyes. She looks around at the unfiltered world as if she's been underground for days. She backs away from the pub door, half-expecting Greg to emerge, and finds herself walking back up Plender Street towards the main road. Walking quickly. Striding. Breaking into a sprint over a zebra crossing.

She tries not to look back over her shoulder. Fails. There's no sign of Greg. He's probably sitting in the pub right now, looking expectantly towards the door, a large glass of Pinot Blanc next to his pint of Guinness. All ready for their date.

She runs away.

Feeling better for being surrounded by people, Joanna slows as she walks towards the Camden branch of Fit, a popular clothes store. She folds up her Vades™ and stuffs them into her handbag. She needs something bigger for what she's got in mind.

As with most modern shops, there's a lot of open space and clean white walls inside Fit. Only a handful of mannequins and actual clothes on display. But one wall is made up of ultra-high definition monitors displaying shoes, underwear, blouses, t-shirts, skirts, dresses and jeans. The UDTV screens are such crystal-sharp resolution, it feels like the customers could reach out and touch whatever's on them. Which, since the monitors are interactive, is precisely what they do.

The shop is full of women doing a little after-work shopping, flicking through Fit's catalogues for something to try on or buy. There are a few shop assistants offering help and advice, but no queues for the payment desk. No payment desk at all, since the shop knows precisely who each customer is, and debits their account the moment they walk out of the shop with whatever they want to buy. They're playing Public Property's new single in the background, the one with the post-dubporch beat. Fast music encourages customers to make fast choices.

Joanna needs privacy. She walks further into the shop towards a row of cubicles at the back, steps into one and shuts the door. Instantly a full-length mirror lights up. Overlaid onto her reflection are clothes from the Fit catalogue that are not only her size, but also similar to previous purchases. The store has read her timeline – it knows what she likes. She only has to select one and an assistant will bring it to her cubicle to physically try on. First in the list of suggestions is a Duckback hood-coat, identical to the one the girl at the bus stop was wearing, offered with a personal 10% discount if Joanna buys it today.

She's startled at the sight of her own face in the mirrorscreen. Eyes wide, mouth tight, skin pale. She looks frightened.

Don't be such a stupid little girl, she tells herself, shaking her head. Get to work.

Connected to the two-metre mirrorscreen is a narrower sidescreen, just like the ones on TVs. A modern shop like Fit knows its customers won't want to be denied access to their online lives while trying on virtual clothes. Joanna's auto appears on the sidescreen, displaying her profile. And...

> *There is a 45% chance that _Greg Randall_ will be the killer of _Joanna O'Donnell_.*
> *More details soon...*

Her breath locks in her chest. It's gone up! 45%!

The cubicle suddenly feels tiny, boxing her in. Her reflection looks frightened. *Oh sweet Jesus, was I about to meet my own murderer...?*

No, she thinks, *stop it you silly bitch! You know what's going on here, don't you?*

She needs space to work. Normally she would just drag her auto from sidescreen to mainscreen, but you can't do that in a store. Unless you know the tricks that Joanna knows. She taps a few icons and disables the cameras inside the mirrorscreen, causing her 'reflection' to vanish. Then she goes into her auto's settings and enables the direct interface. Some ancient piece of code insists that auto interfaces always default to the largest available monitor, so suddenly the top half of the mirrorscreen is filled with something simple, outlined in electric blue.

Joanna O'Donnell auto
interface ready.

The bottom half shows the information that had filled her Vades™. Police reports, blogs, newsfeeds. Every scrap of data about Roxanna Alden's death.

Joanna opens her mouth to ask her auto a direct question, quickly realising that people in neighbouring cubicles might hear it. With a two-handed beckoning gesture, she activates the screen's airboard. Her fingers tap silently onto empty space, causing digital text to type across the interface.

Do you think Greg will

*kill me because he may
have killed Roxanna?*

There's a five second pause before her auto replies:

Yes.

Joanna swallows with a dry mouth and continues typing. She can feel her forearms quivering slightly. Nervous.

*Greg was not charged
with her murder. Why
do you think he is guilty?*

This time it's only one second before pages from the National Statistics website stream across the lower half of the screen, while the top half states:

*In 77.6% of recorded
murder cases, the killer
was known by the
victim.
In cases where females
were murdered by
males, this rises to
88.4%.
Of these cases, 74% of
convicted murderers
were the current or*

previous relationship partners of the victim.
Only 9% of <u>Roxanna Alden</u>'s Circle were in London on Wednesday 17 February 2021.
<u>Greg Randall</u> was in London on Wednesday 17 February 2021.
A conviction has not been successfully obtained for the <u>Roxanna Alden</u> murder case.
Currently listed as Closed and Unsolved on the <u>Metropolitan Police Homicide Task Force database</u>.
More details soon…

Joanna reads the stats, following the line of logic, and realises with a queasy feeling that she was right.

Her auto is being a detective. Like her.

It's doing my job!

Although Global Investigations (UK) Ltd is one of the largest and oldest of its kind in the country, it no longer employs field agents. Spies lurking in the shadows, sneaking around with tiny cameras and binoculars… those days are long gone. Instead they employ people like Joanna: data analysts, who sit in offices where they

investigate in comfort. People who are trained to sift through huge amounts of data, looking for patterns. People who use specialised research apps to inspect people's timelines, trace their movements, and extrapolate their behaviour patterns.

It's a lot easier than the old days, now that everyone broadcasts every detail of their lives. Whether they choose to or not.

Even the term 'app' is quaint and rarely-used. The use of autos has streamlined the way people do things. You don't need to know about apps or programs any more, your auto takes care of that. All you have to do is be clear about what you want, and your auto will locate, purchase and install whatever software is available to achieve it. Unless you're a serious techie geek, nobody cares about which app does the job, as long as it does.

But Joanna *is* a techie geek, of sorts. The research apps she uses at work aren't available in the public marketplace. They're too expensive, too powerful, licensed only to legal agencies like Global Investigations.

Somehow... somehow her auto has got hold of the apps she uses at work. Installed them without her authorisation. Upgraded itself.

And is using them to investigate Greg Randall.

Joanna turns this over in her head, looking for ways in which she might have unintentionally allowed access to her work tools. But she can't work out how. Her auto is a Microsoft Curator 7 (although she's keen to upgrade to Curator 8 when it's released in October). It's sophisticated, yet bog-standard. It shouldn't be capable of using Global Investigation's research apps, which are

designed for analysts like her.

This is crazy, she thinks. Autos don't do things by themselves! But mine must have, because *I* sure didn't tell it to... go digging...

Joanna covers her mouth with her hand, remembering the passing thought she had in the taxi: that she could dig deep into Greg's timeline if she wanted. She remembers the odd icons her auto flashed up, almost too quick to register.

Like it had the same passing thought she did.

How could that be? Can it somehow read her mind?

No, that's nonsense. Joanna vaguely recalls a newsfeed article about the development of the future 6G network. It mentioned neuroscanning lasers built into optical devices like Vades™, which might lead to thought-transmitted commands, so you don't even have to tell your auto what to do – it just knows. But that's at least ten years away, the current 5G network certainly doesn't have that.

So how has this happened? Is her auto copying her behaviour so thoroughly? Does it know what she wants to do, not just what she chooses to do?

She starts typing on the airboard – *How did you know what I was thinking?* – and then changes her mind and redacts it. Partly because it looks so stupid written down. And partly because she realises she has more important things to worry about.

> *There is a 45% chance that <u>Greg Randall</u> will be the killer of <u>Joanna</u>*

O'Donnell.

With a deep breath, Joanna gestures at the screen, rotating her fingers and flicking them sideways, scrolling through all the data her auto has curated about Roxanna Alden's death.

She reads SOCO incident reports filed in the police database. Cause of death: blunt trauma damage to skull, resulting from impact on pavement. No signs of a struggle, the victim was apparently caught by surprise. No witnesses, it was nearly midnight. She discovers why the police didn't immediately identify the killer: Roxanna's street is one of only 8% left in London without CCTV coverage.

Her heart leaps with hope when she reads that police forensics did actually come up with a suspect. Finding strands of hair in the vicinity, they did a DNA search using the UK Genome Database and found a match with a local resident: Raymond McKenzie, 37 years old, single, and 'leisure class' - the new term for someone on long-term benefit. He lived three streets away from Roxanna, so could have seen her often, learned her movements. Him being leisure class provided motivation for a mugging, since state benefits have been severely cut back in the last few years. All of which made him a prime suspect. The police brought him in for questioning and got a warrant to search his property.

But – no conviction. Why?

Joanna skim-reads transcripts of the CID interview and instantly finds McKenzie's alibi. According to his timeline, he was elsewhere at the time of the murder.

She runs both hands down the sides of her face, thinking. Checking in at locations is as automatic as everything else an auto does, and disabling this always looks dodgy. Your Circle start asking questions. *"Why did you vanish for a few hours yesterday, who were you with, what were you doing?"*

It's possible to 'lock' your location to one specific place, and many people do this when they get home. But of course, if someone calls or visits and discovers you're actually somewhere else, that also looks suspicious. Nobody wants that. Not these days. It doesn't take much to end up on a register somewhere. Her sister Catriona's fiancé used to walk past a primary school on his way to work for years, then discovered he was on the potential sex offender list. It turned up on his public profile. Paedophile Index: 12%. Ridiculous! Catriona still dumped him though.

But McKenzie *hadn't* locked his location. His timeline reported him travelling to Elephant & Castle, going to a pub, buying drinks, going home again. And since auto data is admissible in court, usually as Exhibit A, the police knew that this would overturn any conviction if they arrested him. So McKenzie was released.

Okay... so if it wasn't him who killed Roxanna... could it have been Greg? She brings up his timeline again, flicks back to the evening of Wednesday 17 February 2021. The night his ex-girlfriend was murdered. Where was he?

Answer: at home. All night.

Location locked.

She jumps when there's a gentle tap at her cubicle

door.

"Can I help you, madam?" calls one of the shop assistants. "I've got the Duckback here in both red and green, your size, if you – "

"Fuck off!" Joanna shouts.

All right, come on, concentrate, she tells herself, staring back at the screen. She can tell she's onto something... she can understand her auto's deductions now. Greg is clearly more than he seems.

Okay, there's no actual evidence that he might have killed Roxanna a month after they broke up. But there's too many blank spaces. No reason why they ended their relationship. No proof he was at home on that night. No sad goodbyes posted onto her profile after her death. Joanna's training and experience have taught her that what's not there is often more important than what is.

So what was his motive? Jealousy that she was seeing someone else? An emotional plea to get her back,which got out of control? A sociopathic decision that if he can't have her, nobody can? In her line of work, Joanna's seen all of these before.

And she can't help but notice the similarities between herself and Roxanna: age, height, long black hair, all close enough to make them a 'type'. Greg's type, obviously. Was he looking for a replacement, or did he –

> *Are you buying a new outfit just for our date? I'm flattered! I think the green coat would suit you.*

Joanna's back slams against the cubicle wall. She stares at the private message on the screen, heart lodged in her throat.

He knows. He knows where I am! He's found me! How? *How?*

With a trembling hand, Joanna brings up her own profile, and realises the stupid, blindingly obvious reason.

7.31pm Thursday 7 April 2022
<u>*Joanna O'Donnell*</u> *is in* <u>*Fit - Camden Branch,*</u> <u>*London NW1 7JH*</u>*.*

Her timeline told him. It told everyone.

Joanna spins round, bumping against the cubicle like a fly trapped in double-glazing, legs quivering with the urge to run… but stops herself. Wherever she goes, he'll know. He's part of her Circle, their autos are telling each other everything. She has to defriend him, and, yes, lock her location. God that'll look so weird, all her friends and family will start demanding to know what she's up to, but it's the only way, she has to throw him off the scent. Do it now!

She turns back to the screen and notices something in her recent timeline:

<u>*Joanna O'Donnell*</u> *is now*

*friends with <u>Roxanna
Alden</u>.*

"What? What!"

She stares with disbelief. Her auto sent a friend request to Roxanna's auto of it's own accord... and it was accepted. That's an automatic response, since they both share a mutual friend: Greg Randall. But Joanna's auto has also initiated a simulated relationship!

Opening up that window shows a blur of text, an exchange of dialogue between their autos, scrolling past almost too quick to read. They're simming. By themselves. She spots Greg's name in there several times.

Joanna gapes at the sight of her auto pumping the dead woman's auto for information.

Like a detective interviewing a witness.

*There is a 61% chance
that <u>Greg Randall</u> will
be the killer of <u>Joanna
O'Donnell</u>.*

It's gone up again! 61% now!

She barely has time to swallow down the urge to be sick before another PM from Greg flashes onscreen.

*Why are you friends
with Roxanna?*

BAM BAM BAM. A fist against the other side of the door. Joanna chokes on her own breath.

"Miss? I'm sorry but I have to ask you to leave the store, please."

She unlocks the cubicle and stares at the scowling security guard. There's a nervous shop assistant behind him, her arms folded around a pair of Duckback hood-coats. Joanna pushes past both of them, hurrying across the shop floor towards the exit.

7.33pm Thursday 7 April
2022
<u>Joanna O'Donnell</u> is on
<u>Camden High Street</u>,
<u>London NW1 7JH</u>.

Stumbling out of Fit, Joanna looks around at the buildings and people and cars and sky, none of which feel real. She stares down Plender Street, at the distant shape of the pub on the corner. Like it's wired with explosives and might go off any second. Greg's in there, right now. He knows exactly where she is. All he has to do is come out of the pub and look up the road to see her...

Help, thinks Joanna. I need help!

The faintest notion to grab one of the dozens of people passing by flits through her head, too quick to form properly. She's been in London too long for that. Instead she fishes through her handbag and jams her Vades™ back onto her face. Licking dry lips, she prepares to tell her auto to contact the police.

<u>Joanna O'Donnell</u>
timeline decryption in
progress.

For a second this doesn't register with Joanna, because it's a familiar phrase. It's one of many messages the research apps she uses at work display, when she's –
Digging.
It hits her. Her auto is warning her that someone is gaining access to her online profile. Her history, her records, everything. Every message, forum post, blog, vlog, tweet, image, update, purchase, location, bank details, everything! Now that it's installed Global Investigations' apps, her auto can detect unauthorised access to itself – seeing digital fingerprints that are usually invisible. It knows that it's being exposed, although it can't tell who's doing it.

Source: unverified.

But she knows damn well who it is.
Greg's doing to her what she did to him.
Joanna's hands press against her mouth, holding in – a sob, a cry, a scream? She stands there staring at the pub, half of her wanting to run into it and bellow in Greg's face to stop it, *stop it, please just leave me alone!*, and the other half wanting to shrivel up into a tiny ball right there on the pavement and hide herself away from the whole world.

She feels naked in the street. Like he's looking at her with X-ray vision.

She thinks, he can see Mum and Dad back home, Siobhan and Catriona, he knows where they live, he knows where I grew up, where I went to school and college and Uni, what I studied, what my grades were...

She thinks, he can see everything I've ever bought, clothes and music and furniture, every shop I've ever been to, he can work out what the inside of my home looks like...

She thinks, he can read my private conversations, my secrets, my chats with Louise and Hank about the guys I've been with, the time I spent using the sexnets when I first came to London, the one-night stands, the medical checks, the STD treatments, the things I do that my family never hear about...

She thinks, he can access my server records, everything I've ever looked at online, every movie I've pirated, every hardcore porn vlog I've browsed through when I was alone, every false chatroom name I've ever registered, oh Jesus I'm...

Naked. Like he's got right inside her.

"Block him!" she yells, loud enough that passers-by glance her way. But only momentarily, of course. The London code. "Defriend Greg Randall, block all access. Shut down his timeline decryption!"

But she has no way of knowing if her auto can do that. No way of knowing what he's already found out about her.

Joanna has to lift up her Vades™ to wipe her eyes, as she turns and walks quickly back towards Mornington

Crescent tube station. She needs to put some distance between them. Even though he can see her closer than ever. From all angles. At all times of her life.

It crosses her mind to shut down her auto completely. But she can't. It would be like clawing her own eyes out. Without her auto, she'd never have known anything about this. She'd have walked straight into the lion's den. It's her only chance of staying alive.

Sucking in cool evening air, Joanna feels the rational side of her brain kick in. How is Greg doing this to her? There's only one answer: he's using the same research apps.

Except... they can't be the same. She knows Greg's auto is an Apple Hydra, and that he upgraded recently from the Apple Cyclops. So if he's using professional research apps, they'll be different from the ones Global Investigations – a Microsoft house – uses. He must have already had them installed, before he met her.

But they're illegal for private citizens. Why does he have them? What is this man up to?

Joanna is furious with herself for being fooled by his timeline. It seemed perfectly innocent, perfectly ordinary. Assuming...

"If it *is* his timeline," she breathes to herself.

Joanna remembers the training courses that her analytical team went on back in February. There was a session on artificial timelines that they all agreed was interesting. This was a service that an anonymous black marketeer was selling to criminals, apparently from some island in the Pacific, outside the jurisdiction of the International Internet Regulations. With this illegal

code, rather than locking down their auto before committing a crime – and thus raising suspicion – they could somehow falsify part of their timeline entirely. Change the history of their autos to pretend they went somewhere they didn't. Digital alibis.

Very tricky to do, especially in a big city. They'd have to make sure they weren't caught on CCTV while their autos claimed they were elsewhere. But it was apparently possible. And since the courts considered auto evidence to be unassailable, it meant that criminals could get off scot-free.

Is that why Greg seemed so perfect for her? Is his timeline fake? Is *he* fake?

Has she fallen into same trap Roxanna did?

> *7.35pm Thursday 7 April 2022*
> *Greg Randall is 110 metres away on Plender Street, London NW1 0JN.*

Shit. Shit shit shit, he's come out of the pub, he's looking for her!

> *There is a 77% chance that Greg Randall will be the killer of Joanna O'Donnell.*

She should call the police – she only has to say the words '999 emergency' and her auto will broadcast her distress instantly. But... then she'd have to explain how she knows Greg is going to kill her. Why her auto is illegally using Global Investigations' products.

Can't think. She runs, hating the way her stupid heels make her feet wobble on the pavement, hating the way her long beige coat flaps around her bare legs in an almost cinematic manner.

> *7.36pm Thursday 7 April*
> *2022*
> *Greg Randall is 68*
> *metres away on Camden*
> *High Street, London*
> *NW1 7JH*

He's running too. Running after her. Catching up!

> *There is a 81% chance*
> *that Greg Randall will*
> *be the killer of Joanna*
> *O'Donnell.*

And her auto increases the odds of her death accordingly.

> *7.36pm Thursday 7 April*
> *2022*
> *Joanna O'Donnell is at*

*Mornington Crescent
Underground Station
[Northern Line –
Charing Cross Branch],
London NW1 7JE*

There are people streaming in and out of the old terracotta-tiled tube station. Joanna hesitates, nervous about going on the Underground, at being trapped down below with nowhere to run. Her auto brings up her medical monitor, which is flaring amber, responding to increased adrenalin levels and heart rate. It's almost enough to trigger an automatic 999 call by itself, oh God what if that happens and she keels over with a heart attack...

*7.36pm Thursday 7 April
2022
Greg Randall is 38
metres away on Camden
High Street, London
NW1 7JH*

There's a bus stop up ahead. She glimpses the familiar, cherry-red shape of a London double-decker bus sitting there, its front and middle doors folding shut, and doesn't think twice as she hares towards it.

*7.37pm Thursday 7 April
2022*

*Greg Randall is 29
metres away on Camden
High Street, London
NW1 7JH*

The bus starts up its engine before Joanna reaches it. She jumps onto the open rear platform just as it begins moving, grabbing the pole and hauling herself on board, thanking sweet Jesus that it's a Routemaster and not one of the old models. She stamps her way up the curved staircase to the upper deck, which is empty of passengers. Nobody to see her gasping and bedraggled, thank God.

As she sways with the motion of the bus accelerating, Joanna peers out through a window, back towards Mornington Crescent... but there's no sign of Greg.

She's escaped.

*7.37pm Thursday 7 April
2022
Joanna O'Donnell is on
the 88 Bus [to Clapham
Common Old Town], at
Harrington Square
Gardens, London NW1
2JU.*

Joanna collapses into the nearest seat. Thank the Lord, she's made it, she's safe now. She sits there for a minute, catching her breath. She looks down at pedestrians as the bus glides along the road, rocking her

gently from side to side. So many people out there, but right now she's never felt so alone.

What the hell is Greg's problem?! Some weird serial killer? Was he grooming her to look like his ex-girlfriend, to replace her, until he kills her too? There's so many freaks out there, so many perverts, so many sickos on registers, you can't trust anybody! No bloody wonder she's been single for so long, she's never going on a date in *this* city again.

Joanna straightens her Vades™ and tells her auto to open up her messages. She needs to get in touch with her Circle, maybe the police, and definitely contact her colleagues at Global Investigations to tell them what's happened, before they assume she's illegally stolen their apps. No way is she risking her career over this.

She's not surprised to see four PMs from Greg in her queue, all sent in the last five minutes, all blocked. The freak. She feels like replying and telling the sick little man what she thinks of him. In her head she's already semi-composing her message, warning him to back off, he doesn't know who he's dealing with, she works for the agency that built the research apps he's stolen, Global Investigations are going to make his life hell. They'll find him, no matter where he goes. Hunting people down is what they do. It's her job. Mess with me and you're signing your own death warrant!

Joanna tells her auto to bring up details for Gordon, her senior manager. He's the expert, her guru in many ways, the one who headhunted her from Londonwide Associates four years ago. There's nothing that amazing man doesn't know about timeline security, so he'll certainly know how to deal with this.

She has the same twinge of guilt she always gets when she thinks of Gordon. He's done a lot for her, given her a lot of projects and opportunities at Global Investigations. But she can't forget the time she went behind his back.

He doesn't know about this – nobody does, she's an expert at covering her tracks. But she just couldn't let Catriona's ex-fiancé suffer for something he didn't do. Her sister might have washed her hands of him, but Joanna always liked Connor, and couldn't bear to see him with a Paedophile Index of 12% just because he walked past a primary school so many times. So she'd used her resources at work to curate enough evidence and background checks to prove that it was a mistake, and it was soon redacted from his profile. Connor had wept down the phone as he thanked her. Bless. But if Global Investigations ever find out she did that, Joanna can kiss her career goodbye.

Anyway, Gordon's her best bet for sorting this whole mess out. According to his personal calendar he's in Fiji right now, but she can ask his auto to –

7.38pm Thursday 7 April 2022
<u>Greg Randall</u> is 9 metres away on <u>Hampstead Rd</u>, <u>London NW1 3ED</u>

Joanna's medical monitor flares amber once again.

She twists round in her seat, staring down at the street below... and sees Greg running after the bus as

hard as he can. Arms pumping. Tie flapping. Teeth bared.

Oh God, oh God, what the hell is he doing! Why won't he go away, why is he doing this, please bus go faster, don't slow down for the next stop, oh please please just bloody go faster!

7.39pm Thursday 7 April 2022
<u>Greg Randall</u> is on the <u>88 Bus [to Clapham Common Old Town]</u>, at <u>Hampstead Rd</u>, <u>London NW1 3ED</u>

He's on the bus, Christ, he's jumped on the bus!

There is a 88% chance that <u>Greg Randall</u> will be the killer of <u>Joanna O'Donnell</u>.

"NO!" screams Joanna, standing up and backing away from the stairwell, expecting to see Greg emerge from below, with a knife, a gun, his bare hands. She runs between two rows of empty seats towards the second stairwell at the front of the bus, stops dead, wonders if that's the one he'll come up from, or will he double-back, oh Jesus he's down there waiting for her, *she's trapped!*

Another PM pops up. From him.

Joanna forces her panic-wide eyes to blink long enough to open it, she's going to reply, she has to beg with him to stop, to let her go...

Please Joanna, we need to talk, I need your help!

...but where will she go, how can she escape from someone who knows her entire timeline, knows her every secret, knows what she's capable of...

Joanna reads his message again. He needs her help. Surely that's bullshit, freaky-serial-killer-girlfriend-butchering-bullshit. Why would a man like Greg ever need her help for anything?

She recalls the message she considered sending him. Reminding him that she works for the same detective agency that made the research apps he's using.

Hunting people down is what they do. It's her job.

And with the rush of insight that a professional data analyst learns to trust, Joanna realises the big gap in the pattern that she's missed.

She forces herself to take deep breaths, still keeping an eye on both stairwells, and says "Run... run deep-search, Greg Randall's timeline... all activity relating to... Raymond McKenzie."

The unusual symbols she glimpsed, back when she first considered digging into Greg's timeline, now flash across the top of her Vades™. Her auto is using the research apps at full power. Excavating through digital topsoil to the layers of history buried beneath. Unearthing skeletons.

It takes ages. Seconds. But then it appears, right before Joanna's eyes: a list of all the times Greg tried to do to McKenzie's timeline what she's now doing to his.

And failing.

Failing!

She says "Run deep-search on Raymond McKenzie!"

The symbols flash, rotate, vanish.

Unable to complete
deep-search.
Raymond McKenzie
timeline unavailable.

In all her time at Global Investigations, Joanna has never, ever failed. With the software at her disposal, the technology and techniques, she can access any person's timeline, living or dead, anywhere in the world. But she's failed now. Somehow, McKenzie's timeline has been sealed off, preventing her from finding out anything except the most basic profile information.

This is something new. Like the artificial timelines being sold to criminals, that she learned about on that training course. Something new and secret and cutting-edge.

7.40pm Thursday 7
April 2022
Greg Randall is 2 metres
away on the 88 Bus [to
Clapham Common Old

*Town], at Hampstead
Rd, London NW1 3ED*

Joanna turns round as Greg appears in the rear stairwell, slowly coming up to the top deck. He's flushed and sweating, panting for breath, hair plastered to his brow. Holding both palms towards her in a mean-no-harm gesture, eyes huge behind rimless glasses. Big, pleading eyes aimed right at her. She knows what those eyes are saying.

*Please Joanna, we need
to talk, I need your help!*

Yes, you do, she thinks, imagining what it must have been like: knowing who murdered the girl you once loved.

Knowing who had killed her, probably by accident, but still, he had her blood on his hands. Knowing but not being able to prove it, not being able to contradict the fact that McKenzie's auto placed him elsewhere at the time of Roxanna's death. Knowing that you had to do something, that you would do *anything*, to get to the truth and prove that he was guilty.

Even if it meant illegally installing research apps into your own auto. Like she has.

Something else slots into place inside Joanna's head. Greg has dug deeper into her own timeline than anyone else – he knows her secrets. Which means he knows about the time she used Global Investigations' resources to help her sister's ex-fiancé, get him off the sex

offenders register. An injustice she just couldn't stomach. Not when she knew there was something she could do to help Connor get his life back, even if the only way was illegal.

Greg could ruin her with that information. But instead it's just made him more desperate to talk to her. Because it proves that they're two of a kind.

And now one of his earlier PMs makes so much more sense:

Something tells me we have a lot in common. Not sure how I've got this far without you!

How on earth did he manage to carry on with his life after Roxanna's death? God, how hard must this have been for him? With Roxanna's auto still online, replying to everyone as if she was still alive, talking the way she used to talk, while he keeps on trying to prove who murdered her, failing and failing and failing…

Joanna blinks rapidly, accidentally triggering his profile display.

Greg Randall
Gender: Male
Age range: 31-35
Orientation: Straight
Relationship status: Single/Available.

Homicide Index: 0%.
Compatibility Index:
90%.

Seeing that her auto has simultaneously worked out that Greg isn't a killer makes Joanna relax. Her medical monitor turns from amber to green, then fades.

And look at that – an even higher see-eye now, more compatible than ever. Both of their autos have realised that Greg really does need someone like Joanna: a professional data analyst with access to the resources of a detective agency. Someone prepared to put her skills to good use, prepared to break the law to do the right thing. He needs her.

She needs him, too. This could be the greatest opportunity that's ever landed in her lap. As they combine their efforts to crack the newest criminal development in timeline security, giving Joanna something to really impress Gordon with: a solution. Something to put a stop to that Pacific island mastermind who's making a fortune while his criminal clients get away with murder. Something to help make Global Investigations even more of a market leader, and help her star rise even higher.

Boyfriend material, definitely, but possibly more. Possible partners.

Obviously seeing the same thing via his Spex™, Greg breathes out with a sort of half-smile, then sinks down onto one of the bus seats. She can see how drained he is. But also the relief.

Joanna walks up the aisle and sits down on the seat in

front of his. As he looks at her, she reaches back and unpins her hair, allowing the long black curls to tumble onto her shoulders. She takes off her Vades™, and he takes off his glasses, so they're looking at each other bare-faced.

They say it at the same time.

"Hello."

Auto series

The Auto series is a collection of stories set in the year 2022, looking at how social media and other internet technology will evolve in the next ten years.

Each Auto story focuses on a different aspect of future life, and is a blend of technology thriller, suspense, science fiction and drama.

The stories are all stand-alone tales that can be read in any order.

There are currently five Auto stories, available as Kindle ebooks. In 2013, these will be collected into a full-length novel, including some exclusive new stories.

Find out more at www.auto-series.net

Relationship Status

Like everyone in the year 2022, Amy Pearce relies on her auto to organise her life. Even her lovelife.

Amy's auto knows who should be her partner. Whether she likes it or not…

Timeline

Joanna O'Donnell's auto has checked her date's timeline and reports he is 85% compatible with her. She's found her match!

And then, moments before they meet, Joanna's auto reports there is a 24% chance this man will kill her.

Friend Request

Nick Brady gets a dozen friend requests a day. But this friend request is from an anonymous stranger who is dating Larissa Brady. Nick's wife.

How well does Nick know his online friends? And how many have dirty secrets, that only their autos could expose?

Backup

Being dead has moved with the times. In 2022, everyone has an auto. But what if your auto doesn't get switched off after you die?

When Janine Kinglake visits her parents' graves, she doesn't expect her father's auto to have such frightening plans for its own future...

Copy

Bestselling author AB Foster's comeback is big news in 2022. But Derek Thorpe plans to expose her as a fraud, a copy of the original author.

Derek knows for a fact that this can't be the real AB Foster. Because he killed her, four years ago.

About the Author

David Wailing writes contemporary fiction, a blend of mystery, thriller and humour.

The key theme of David's novels is 'identity' - people pretending to be something they're not. All his work is focused around characters that fake being someone else or take on others' characteristics.

At present David has two novels available as paperbacks and Kindle ebooks: **Fake Kate** and **Bang: Memoirs of a Relationship Assassin**.

The first five stories in the Auto series are available as Kindle ebooks: **Relationship Status, Timeline, Friend Request, Backup** and **Copy**.

He is currently producing new short stories in the Auto series, leading to a full-length book to be released in 2013.

David lives in North London and could really, really do with an auto.

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