

Television

Catching a Killer: The Wind in the Willows Murder, C4 – nerve-shredding and deeply sad

This programme is an antidote to the kind of crime drama in which the victim is merely a plot point, cipher or McGuffin



On the case: DC Natalie Howard, DSI Kevin Brown, DC Jacqui Redgrave © Rory Mulvey

JULY 7, 2017 by: Suzi Feay

It was inevitable that someone would say, “it’s like an episode of *Morse*, isn’t it?” of the stabbing of an antiquarian book dealer in Oxford in April 2016. It’s the only mildly flippant note in **Catching a Killer: The Wind in the Willows Murder** (Monday, C4 9pm). In fact, this programme is an antidote to the kind of crime drama in which the victim is merely a plot point, cipher or McGuffin, only there so that the protagonists can demonstrate their

ingenuity over a brace of pints.

Adrian Greenwood was found slumped in the hallway of his four-storey terraced home, walls smeared in blood, wallet, phone and a valuable first edition of Kenneth Grahame's children's classic missing. Film crews follow the investigating team over the next crucial days, with no reconstructions or dramatisations to set us at one remove from the devastation.

We enter a world of “victimology”, PMs (post-mortems) and ROs (registered owners) as detectives working 18-20 hours a day quickly reduce 5,300 suspect vehicles to just one. The victim's home is scoured; it's a comfortable, gentlemanly pad, furnished in donnish fashion and worthy of Mole himself. To the team, the victim remains a person and a real presence even after his post-mortem, still called Adrian and touchingly referred to in the present tense. His bright, clever face hovers before us. “So much energy and fun — I can't believe it was all taken away,” a girlfriend laments. The chief detective on the case is unflappable

and calm but never hardened to the grim task.

An unlikely suspect looks shattered and utterly pitiable when cornered. If he really is their man, he violates some big assumptions about perpetrators. As the details of the crime grow ever more grotesque, professional composure is shaken; a young crime scene technician admits that working in the victim's home is spooky: "It messes your mind up."

I've never felt the force of the platitude "nothing will bring him back" more than in the closing scenes. That other platitude about "the banality of evil" is also fully appropriate. A quiet satisfaction can be felt at the closing of a case such as this, but nothing more. The team knows there will be another Adrian, and so on. Nerve-shredding and deeply sad.



*Photograph:
Rory Mulvey*

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