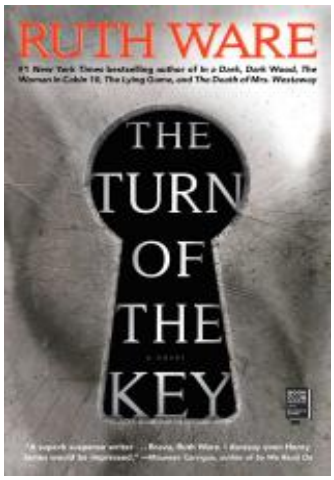
The Turn of the Key

by Ruth Ware



About the Book

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of IN A DARK, DARK WOOD, THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10, THE LYING GAME and THE DEATH OF MRS. WESTAWAY comes Ruth Ware?s highly anticipated fifth novel.

When she stumbles across the ad, she?s looking for something else completely. But it seems like too good an opportunity to miss --- a live-in nannying post, with a staggeringly generous salary. And when Rowan Caine arrives at Heatherbrae House, she is smitten --- by the luxurious ?smart? home fitted out with all modern conveniences, by the beautiful Scottish Highlands, and by this picture-perfect family.

What she doesn?t know is that she?s stepping into a nightmare --- one that will end with a child dead and herself in prison awaiting trial for murder.

Writing to her lawyer from prison, she struggles to explain the unraveling events that led to her incarceration. It wasn?t just the constant surveillance from the cameras installed around the house, or the malfunctioning technology that woke the household with booming music, or turned the lights off at the worst possible time. It wasn?t just the girls, who turned out to be a far cry from the immaculately behaved model children she met at her interview. It wasn?t even the way she was left alone for weeks at a time, with no adults around apart from the enigmatic handyman, Jack Grant.

It was everything.

She knows she?s made mistakes. She admits that she lied to obtain the post, and that her behavior toward the children wasn?t always ideal. She?s not innocent, by any means. But, she maintains, she?s not guilty --- at least not of murder. Which means someone else is.

Full of spellbinding menace and told in Ruth Ware?s signature suspenseful style, THE TURN OF THE KEY is an

unputdownable thriller from the Agatha Christie of our time.

Discussion Guide

1. The book opens with Rowan Caine?s desperate plea for help from prison. If you received this letter as Mr. Wrexham, would you keep reading? Is there anything she could say that would persuade you to represent her?

2. Rowan describes the Elincourt estate in detail when she visits for her interview. What is your first impression of the house? What aspects were appealing or unappealing to you?

3. The interview with Sandra is standard but revealing. What do we learn about Rowan as she tries to come up with the perfect answers? Would you say Rowan is trustworthy? What do you learn about Sandra during this initial interaction?

4. Maddie, the second oldest girl, has an unexpected reaction to Rowan?s departure and makes a terrifying proclamation: ?Don?t come here. It?s not safe? (p. 74). After everything Rowan saw and learned in the previous 24 hours, should she have heeded Maddie?s warning? Would you have listened to Maddie?

5. Rowan has a very negative first impression of Bill Elincourt and their relationship only gets worse from there. Why is her initial reaction so strong? How would you handle the ensuing harassment by an employer?

6. Sandra and Bill leave Rowan on her first day with the kids and she struggles to reign them all in. Discuss the kids? behavior and how Sandra?s constant check-ins affect Rowan?s authority in the house. Look specifically at the interactions on page 131 and 158.

7. Rowan believes she is finally building a relationship with Maddie and Ellie when they show her their secret garden. But when their malicious intent is exposed, Rowan, Maddie and Ellie all react intensely. Describe each of their reactions and the emotions behind them.

8. After the house goes haywire in the middle of the night, Rowan is sleep-deprived, on edge and paranoid, and she jumps to several rash conclusions. Are these thoughts reasonable possibilities or delusions based in fear? Imagine how you might respond in her situation.

9. The Elincourts? housekeeper, Jean McKenzie, immediately dislikes Rowan, but it seems to run deeper than their negative first encounter. Why? Could Jean be the one tormenting Rowan at night, as she suspects?

10. Rowan is deeply disturbed by the girl in Maddie?s drawing. ?Tears were streaming down her face, her mouth was open in a despairing wail, and there were red scribbles of blood on her face and on her dress? (p. 228). What do you think it represents? Do you think Rowan should have addressed this directly?

11. When Jack and Rowan break into the attic, it is much worse than they expected. Discuss their ensuing conversation. What answers does Rowan have now and what questions remain? How do you think the doll head came to be in Rowan?s lap?

12. Rowan?s opinion of Jack changes repeatedly in her short time at Heatherbrae. He began as her confidant, became her

lead suspect, and finally seemed to earn her trust. Do you think he is trustworthy? Why or why not?

13. We finally learn who Rachel Gerhardt is and of her personal connection to the family. Were there any clues that led you to suspect this before the big reveal? Do you believe Rachel?s version of events as she explains them to Mr. Wrexham?

14. In the last chapter, the truth of what happened to Maddie is finally revealed. How does Ellie?s letter align with Rachel?s retelling of that night? What, if any, questions remain?

Author Bio

Ruth Ware worked as a waitress, a bookseller, a teacher of English as a foreign language, and a press officer before settling down as a full-time writer. She now lives with her family in Sussex, on the south coast of England. She is the #1 *New York Times* and *Globe and Mail* bestselling author of IN A DARK, DARK WOOD; THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10; THE LYING GAME; THE DEATH OF MRS. WESTAWAY; THE TURN OF THE KEY; ONE BY ONE; THE IT GIRL; ZERO DAYS; ONE PERFECT COUPLE; and THE WOMAN IN SUITE 11.

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