

TAKEN FOR DEAD has just been published in the USA by Trafalgar House and this is a very pleasing review from examiner.com.

I have long been a fan of [Graham Masterton](#)'s horror books and was immediately drawn into his crime/thriller series when I picked up the first [Katie Maguire](#) book. Masterton brings a hard edge to the genre that has been watered down by formulaic stories that only deal with the familiar rather than trying to tell the best story possible. I was hoping that the momentum the series had built up would continue when I picked up the fourth installment in the series, *Taken for Dead*.

Weddings are a time for celebration. They are meticulously planned so that everyone can enjoy themselves. Surprises are not welcome at the celebration even though most surprises can often be brushed aside with little inconvenience. That was not the case with the wedding one sunny day in County Cork. Just as the band was getting into the swing of things and everyone was getting ready to cut loose, the cutting of the wedding cake was the final formality before the party was unleashed. When the head of a local baker was found inside the cake, the wedding party came to a quick end and Katie Maguire found herself in the middle of another seemingly unsolvable mystery.

As more local businessmen begin to disappear, a group that calls itself The Kings of Erin anonymously claim credit for the disappearances and demand a ransom for the safe return of its kidnapped victims by sending grisly proof to the victim's loved ones. After a planned trap fails to net the group and even leads to tragedy, Katie finds herself frantic to solve the case before more life is lost. Complicating matters further is the personal turmoil she is going through due to a new neighbor and a boss who is determined to have her job.

Masterton kicks off *Taken for Dead* with a bang as the head is found baked inside of the wedding cake. This is just the type of thing that I have come to expect from the series and was handled deftly by giving the story a harder edge to it from the beginning that drew it close to horror but never quite crossed over the line. This is carried throughout the book as Masterton proves to be the master of blending genres and inserting horror elements in a way that never becomes gratuitous. This novel is further proof that Masterton is a superb storyteller that deserves much more acclaim that he receives. He is always in full control of the story and the reader is never left to wonder which direction he plans to go in (other than the intentional ambiguity about the crimes, of course). While many mysteries tend to drag a little in the middle of the story, Masterton never allows this to happen and keeps the story intriguing and fast moving throughout