



The First Casualty

Ben Elton

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Flanders, June 1917: a British officer and celebrated poet, is shot dead, killed not by German fire, but while recuperating from shell shock well behind the lines. A young English soldier is arrested and, although he protests his innocence, charged with his murder.

Douglas Kingsley is a conscientious objector, previously a detective with the London police, now imprisoned for his beliefs. He is released and sent to France in order to secure a conviction. Forced to conduct his investigations amidst the hell of The Third Battle of Ypres, Kingsley soon discovers that both the evidence and the witnesses he needs are quite literally disappearing into the mud that surrounds him.

Ben Elton's tenth novel is a gut-wrenching historical drama which explores some fundamental questions. What is murder? What is justice in the face of unimaginable daily slaughter? And where is the honour in saving a man from the gallows if he is only to be returned to die in a suicidal battle?

As the gap between legally-sanctioned and illegal murder becomes evermore blurred, Kingsley quickly learns that the first casualty when war comes is truth.

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