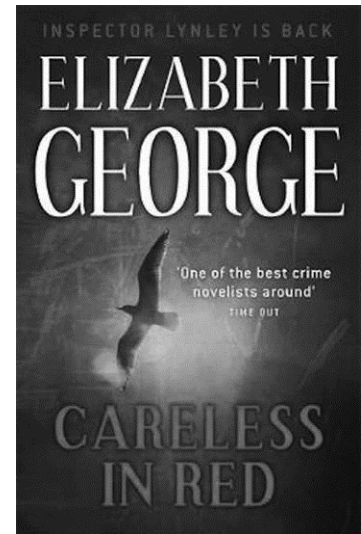


## Tekst 8

*The following text is a part of the first chapter of Careless in Red, by Elizabeth George.*

- 1 A light rain was falling when Daidre Trahair made the final turn down the lane that led to Polcare Cove. She switched on the windscreen wipers and created a mental note that they would have to be replaced, sooner rather than later. It wasn't enough to tell herself that spring led to summer and windscreen wipers wouldn't actually be necessary at that point. April had been notoriously unpredictable as usual and while May was generally pleasant in Cornwall, June could be a weather nightmare. So she decided then and there that she had to get new wipers, and she considered where she might purchase them. She was grateful for this mental diversion. It allowed her to push from her mind all consideration of the fact that, at the end of this journey south, she was feeling nothing. No dismay, confusion, anger, resentment, or compassion, and not an ounce of grief.
- 2 The grief part didn't worry her. Who honestly could have expected her to feel it? But the rest of it... to have been bled of every possible emotion in a situation where at least marginal feeling was called for ... That concerned her. In part it reminded her of what she'd heard too many times from too many lovers. In part it indicated a regression to a self she thought she'd put behind her. So the nugatory movement of the windscreen wipers and the resulting smear they left in their wake distracted her. She cast about for potential purveyors of car parts: in Casvelyn? Possibly. Alsperyl? Hardly. Perhaps she'd have to go all the way to Launceston.
- 3 She made a cautious approach to the cottage. The lane was narrow, and while she didn't expect to meet another car, there was always the possibility that a visitor to the cove and its thin strip of beach might barrel along, departing in a rush and assuming no one else would be out here in this kind of weather.
- 4 To her right rose a hillside where gorse and yellow wort made a tangled coverlet. To her left the Polcare valley spread out, an enormous green thumbprint of meadow bisected by a stream that flowed down from Stowe Wood, on higher ground. This place was different from traditional combes in Cornwall, which was why she'd chosen it. A twist of geology made the valley wide as if glacially formed — although she knew this could not be the case — instead of canyon-like and constrained by river water wearing away aeons of unyielding stone. Thus, she never felt hemmed in



in Polcare Cove. Her cottage was small, but the environment was large, and open space was crucial to her peace of mind.

5 Her first warning that things were not as they should have been occurred as she pulled off the lane onto the patch of gravel and grass that served as her drive. The gate was open. It had no lock, but she knew that she'd left it securely closed for that very reason the last time she'd been here. Now it gaped the width of a body.

6 Daidre stared at this opening for a moment before she swore at herself for being timid. She got out of the car, swung the gate wide, then drove inside.

7 When she'd parked and went to shut the gate behind her, she saw the footprint. It pressed down the soft earth where she'd planted her primroses along the drive. A mansized print, it looked like something made by a boot. A hiking boot. That put her situation in an entirely new light.

8 She looked from the print to the cottage. The blue front door seemed unmolested, but when she quietly circled the building to check for other signs of intrusion, she found a window pane broken. This was on a window next to the door that led outside to the stream, and the door itself was off the latch. Fresh mud formed a clump on the step.

9 Although she knew she should have been frightened, or at least cautious, Daidre was, instead, infuriated by that broken window. She pushed the door open in a state of high dudgeon and stalked through the kitchen to the sitting room. There she stopped. In the dim light of the tenebrous day outside, a form was coming out of her bedroom. He was tall, he was bearded, and he was so filthy that she could smell him from across the room.

10 She said, 'I don't know who the hell you are or what you're doing here, but you *are* going to leave directly. If you don't leave, I shall become violent with you, and I assure you, you do *not* want that to happen.'

11 Then she reached behind her for the switch to the lights in the kitchen. She flipped it and illumination fell broadly across the sitting room to the man's feet. He took a step towards her, which brought him fully into the light, and she saw his face.

12 She said, 'My God. You're injured. I'm a doctor. May I help?' He gestured towards the sea. From this distance, she could hear the waves as always, but they seemed closer now, the sound of them driven inland by the wind. 'There's a body on the beach, he said. 'It's up on the rocks. At the bottom of the cliff. It's ... he's dead. I broke in. I'm sorry. I'll pay for the damage. I was looking for a phone to ring the police. What is this place?'

'A body? Take me to him.'

'He's dead. There's nothing—'

'Are you a doctor? No? I am. Take me to him. We're losing time when we could otherwise be saving a life.'