

## Tekst 10

*The following text is the beginning of Darke, a novel written by Rick Gekoski and first published in 2017.*

I wasn't sure of the right word. Builder? Odd-job man? Repairman? Or perhaps I needed to see a specialist? Carpenter? Joiner? Woodworker?

5 I looked at the keyboard intently, as if the letters could Ouija themselves up, and reveal the answer.

Handyman? I typed it into Google and added my postcode, hope congealing in my  
10 heart. Most builders, handy or otherwise, are incompetent, indolent and venal.

I will not pay unless the job is done perfectly, on time and within estimate. I do not provide endless cups of PG Tips with  
15 three sugars, ta, nor do I engage in talk, small or large. Preferably no visits to my WC, though a builder who does not pee is rare.

Tea makes pee. But if that is necessary, only in the downstairs cloakroom. Afterwards there will be piss under the loo.

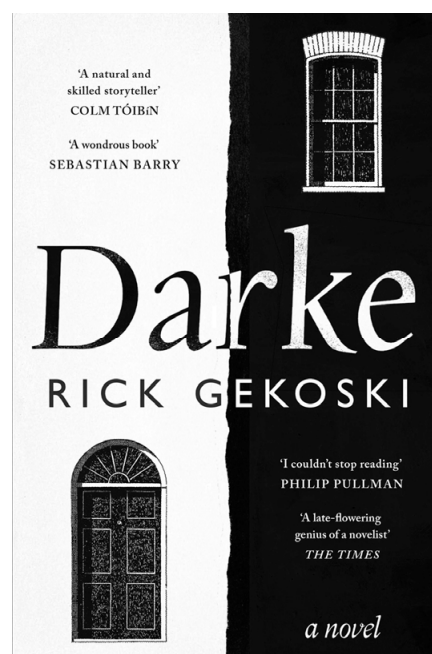
20 I also wanted one who is taciturn. I loathe the inane chatter of workmen hoping to ingratiate themselves while simultaneously padding their bills. A handyman who cannot talk? Bliss. Somebody should set up a company that supplies them. Tear out their tongues or sew up their lips, that'd do it.

25 I added taciturn to my search options, but unsurprisingly nothing turned up, though one chap described himself as 'tactile' which gave me the creeps. I tried various alternatives: Quiet? Nothing. Unobtrusive? Chance would be a fine thing. I eventually opted for Thoughtful, which provided two alternatives: one pictured in a string vest, who I suspect  
30 offers a variety of distinctly odd jobs, the other with a few recommendations affixed to his entry, which lauded reliable service.

Mr Cooper, he is called, but I did not ring him, as that would provide evidence that I can hear, whereas I intended to feign almost total deafness. I emailed him, enquiring if he might be available next week. He  
35 responded immediately, which is a bad sign: shouldn't he be out handy-manning his way around town?

Yes, he replied, he was free next Wednesday and Thursday. What can he do for me?

My requirements for Mr Cooper concern the entry to my house, which  
40 has a handsome Georgian door, which will need to be removed and 'amended' — I believe this might be the right term — in five ways:



- (1) Remove the brass letter box, then fill in the resultant hole, prep and paint in Farrow and Ball Pitch Black gloss. (There are a variety of blacks, some of them greatly preferable to others, and black is one of the few  
45 colours (or absence of colours) in which doors should properly be painted. One of our neighbours, a recently arrived Indian family, decorated theirs in a Hindu orange so offensive, so out of keeping with the tone of the rest of the street that a petition was discreetly and anonymously raised by 'Your Neighbours' (guilty as charged) asking him and his wife to  
50 reconsider. They did, and repainted it bright turquoise.)
- (2) Install a doorbell that rings once only, no matter how many times you press it, and which issues a melodious, inoffensive tone which can be heard clearly inside the house, but not outside the door.
- (3) Install a Dia16mm-x-200-Degree-Brass-Door-Viewer-Peephole-with-  
55 Cover-and-Glass-Lens, which I will provide.
- (4) Install a new keyhole and change lock.
- (5) Remove the brass door-knocker, and make good.

The jobs I have outlined will take a day and a half, according to Mr Cooper, 'unless something goes wrong', plus an extra visit to put on  
60 a second coat of gloss. Mr Cooper's hourly charge is £35, plus materials, which, when I compare it to others offering similar services (though without the extra thoughtfulness), is pretty much standard.