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The Understudy (English Edition)



Par David Nicholls
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Par David Nicholls : The Understudy (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Understudy (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom the bestselling author of STARTER FOR TEN, ONE DAY and US, THE UNDERSTUDY is a scintillating comedy of ambition, celebrity, jealousy and love.For Josh Harper, being in show-business means everything he ever wanted - money, fame, a beautiful wife, and a lead role on the London stage. For Stephen C. McQueen, it means a disastrous career playing passers-by and dead people.Stephen is stuck with an unfortunate name, a hopeless agent, a daughter he barely knows, and a job as understudy to Josh Harper, the 12th Sexiest Man in the World. And when Stephen falls in love with Josh's clever, funny wife Nora, things get even more difficult.But might there yet be a way for Stephen to get his Big Break?THE UNDERSTUDY is a scintillating comedy of ambition, celebrity, jealousy and

love.ExtraitAct One H Waiting to Go On Thats not real life, lad. Thats just pretending. But real life is how well you pretend, isnt it? You. Me. Everybody in the world . . . Jack RosenthalReady When You Are, Mr. McGill Sunset Boulevard H Summers and Snow ep.3 draft 4 CHIEF INSPECTOR GARRETT (CONT.) . . . or Ill have you back directing traffic faster than you can say disciplinary action. INSPECTOR SUMMERS But hes just toying with us, sir, like a cat with a CHIEF INSPECTOR GARRETT I repeat Dont. Make It. Personal. I want a result, and I want it yesterday, or youre off this case, Summers. (SNOW goes to speak) I mean it. Now get out of herethe both of you. INT. MORTUARY. DAY BOB BONES THOMPSON, the forensic pathologist, sickly complexion, ghoulish sense of humor, stands over the seminaked body of a YOUNG MAN, early thirties, his bloated body lying cold and dead on the mortuary slab, in the early stages of decompositionCONSTABLE SNOW is clutching a handkerchief to her mouth. INSPECTOR SUMMERS Sofill me in, Thompson. How long dyou think hes been dead for? THOMPSON Hard to say. From the stink on him, I think its fair to say hes not the freshest fish on the slab . . . INSPECTOR SUMMERS (not smiling) Clocks ticking, Bones . . . THOMPSON Okay, well, judging from the decay, the bloating and the skin discoloration, Id say . . . hes been in the water a week or so, give or take a day. Initial examination suggests strangulation. By the ligature marks round the neck, Id say the killer used a thick, coarse rope, or a chain maybe . . . DI SUMMERS A chain? Christ, the poor bastard . . . CONSTABLE SNOW Who found the body? (SUMMERS shoots her a lookI ask the questions round here . . .) THOMPSON Some old dear out walking the dog. Nice lady, eighty-two years old. I think its safe to assume you should be looking elsewhere for your serial ki Hang on a second . . . Nopenope, sorry, everyone, were going to have to stop. Why, whats up? snapped Detective Inspector Summers. Weve got flaring. On the lens? Dead guys nostrils. You can see him breathing. Were going to have to go again. Oh, for crying out loud . . . Sorry! Sorry, sorry, everyone, said the DEADYOUNGMAN, sitting up and folding his arms self-consciously across his blue-painted chest. While the crew reset, the director, a long-faced, troubled man with an unconvincing baseball cap pushed far back on a reflective forehead, dragged both hands down his face and sighed. Hauling himself from his canvas chair, he strode over to the DEADYOUNGMAN and knelt matily next to the mortuary slab. Right, so, Lazarus, tell meis there a problem? No, Chris, its all good for me . . . Becausehow can I say thisat present, youre doing a little too much. Yeah, sorry about that. The director peered at his watch, and rubbed the red indentations left by his baseball cap. Because its getting on for two-thirty and . . . whats your name, again? Stephen, Stephen McQueen. With a P-H. No relation? No relation. Well, Stephen with a P-H, its getting on for two-thirty, and we havent even started on the autopsy . . . Yes, of course. Its just, you know, with the lights and nerves and everything . . . Its not as if you have to perform, all you have to do is bloody lie there. I realize that, Chris, its just its tricky, you know, not to visibly breathe, for that long. No ones asking you not to breathe . . . No, I realize that, said Stephen, contriving a chummy laugh. . . . just dont lie there taking bloody great gulps like youve just run the two hundred meters, okay? Okay. And dont grimace. Just give me something . . . neutral. Okay. Neutral. But apart from that . . . ? Apart from that, youre doing terrific work, really. And dyou think well be done by six? Its just Ive got to be Well, thats up to you, isnt it, Steve? said the director, resettling the cap, stalking back to his canvas chair. Oh, and, Steve? he shouted across the set. Please dont hold your belly inyoure meant to be bloated. Bloated. Okay, bloated. Right, places, everyone, shouted the first AD and Stephen settled once again on his marble slab, adjusted the damp underwear, closed his eyes, and did his best to pretend to be dead. The secret of truly great screen acting is to do as little as possible, and this is never more important than when playing an inanimate object. In a professional career lasting eleven years, Stephen C. McQueen had played six corpses now, each of them carefully thought through and subtly delineated, each of them skillfully conveying the pathos of being other than alive. Keen not to get typecast, he had downplayed this on his CV, allocating the various corpses intriguing, charismatic leading-man names like MAX or OLIVER rather than the more accurate, less evocative BODY or VICTIM. But word had obviously got round the industryno one did nothing at all quite like Stephen C. McQueen. If you wanted someone to be pulled from the Grand Union Canal at dawn, or lie slack, broken and uncomplaining across the bonnet of a car, or slump prone at the bottom of a muddy First World War trench, then this was the man. His very first job after leaving drama school had been RENT BOY 2 in Vice City, a hard-hitting prime-time crime show. One line RENT BOY 2 (Geordie accent) Why-ay, ya lookin fah a good time, mista? then a long, hot afternoon spent with his arm dangling out of a black trash bag. Of course, at thirty-two, his Rent Boy days were some way behind him now, but Stephen C. McQueen could still usually pass muster as most other remains. But for some reason, today his technique was letting him down. This was a shame, because Summers and Snow was a TV institution, and in a few months

upwards of nine million people would settle down in front of the telly on a Sunday night, to see him swiftly strangled, then lying here, inert, in a strangers underwear. You'd be hard-pushed to call it a break as such, but if the director liked what he did, or didn't do, if he got on with his costars, they might use him again, to play someone who walked about, moved his face, spoke aloud. First Rule of Showbiz it's not what you know, it's who you know. Stay professional. Be positive. Be committed. Always have a motivation. The trick is to impress. Always ensure that people like you, at least until you're famous enough for it not to matter anymore. Waiting for the next take, Stephen sat up straight on the cold slab, and stretched his arms behind his back till he felt his shoulders crack important not to stiffen up, important to keep limber. He glanced round the set, in the hope of striking up a conversation with his fellow actors. Craggy, Stern, Ex-Alcoholic Loner Detective Inspector Tony Summers and Perky, Independent-Minded Constable Sally Snow were in a tight little huddle some way off, sipping tea from plastic cups and confidently eating all the best biscuits. Stephen had always nursed a bit of a crush on Abigail Edwards, the actress playing Constable Snow, and had even worked out a throwaway little joke he could use in conversation, about his role. It's a living, Abi! he would quip self-deprecatingly out of the side of his mouth in between takes, then raise a moldy eyebrow, and shed laugh, eyes sparkling, and perhaps they'd swap numbers at the end of filming, go for a drink or something. But the opportunity had never arisen. In between takes she'd barely acknowledged him, and clearly in Abigail Edwards's eyes, he might as well be, well . . . dead. A cheery makeup artist appeared by Stephen's side, spritzed him with water and dabbed his face and lips with Vaseline. Was her name Deborah? Another Rule of Showbiz always, always call everyone by their name . . . So how do I look, Deborah? he asked. It's Janet. You look gorgeous! Funny old job this, isn't it? Still it's a living! he quipped, but Janet was already back in her canvas chair. Quick as you can, please, people, barked the first AD, and Stephen lay back down on the mortuary slab, like a large, wet fish. Keep still. Don't let them see you breathe. Remember you are dead. My motivation is not to be alive. Acting is not re-acting. The C in Stephen C. McQueen, incidentally, was there at the insistence of his agent, to prevent any confusion with the international movie star. It was not a mistake that anyone had yet made. From the Hardcover edition. From Publishers Weekly Nicholls's second novel (after *A Question of Attraction*) focuses on Stephen C. McQueen, a 32-year-old actor forlornly hoping for his big break. With an 11-year career whose sole highlight has been playing a corpse, Stephen's latest gig, understudying Josh Harper (one of London's hottest stars) in a West End play, actually has promise. If only Josh would miss a performance (say, break a leg, literally), Stephen would secure the lead, and in turn, the approval of his critical ex-wife, Alison, and his precocious seven-year-old daughter, Sophie. But while Josh is many things (self-absorbed, cruel), he's never sick, and just as Stephen's abhorrence for the haughty superstar reaches its crescendo (he's asked to wait at Josh's birthday bash) Stephen meets Nora, Josh's acerbic and neglected bride, and later stumbles upon Josh mid-tryst with a costar. Suddenly Stephen's able to make a deal his silence in exchange for the starring role. Of course, the rules of light romantic comedy prevail: Stephen falls in love with Nora and realizes that he can't lie to make his own career. Nicholls's background as a screenwriter is evident, and while clever, his latest novel is still saccharinely predictable, best paired with sand and surf. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.