

## Commentary on Dr Power's Casebook

**Dr Power's Case Book** grew as a concept as I answered the various questions sent to me from readers of the first three Dr Power novels. Readers wanted to know what happened in the world of Dr Power between the novels; about his life, his patients and his friends. What happened to his girlfriend Eve who was in the first novel? What happened in the case of Mr Hammadi? Whatever happened to the children of Sir Ian McWilliam? This collection aims to answer some of these questions, and also provides some links and hidden clues to the rest of the mysteries in the series.

The book was never intended to have a thriller format although three of the stories do have some mystery elements (Magpies, The Artist, and The Farm). The book is meant to flesh out the world of Dr Power and Superintendent Lynch for real fans.

Any story might feature a detail of Dr Power's medical career, or a short-story sized mystery, but each story features a medical diagnosis, which tallies with the theme of this being a doctor's casebook, and each diagnosis might form either a major or a minor element of the story.

The stories are designed to be read singly and stand alone, but they also build up a narrative over time.

### **Timeline: The sequence of Dr Power stories**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Story</b>
Summer 1993	The Darkening Sky (novel)
December	Christmas 1993

1993	
13 <sup>th</sup> March 1994	Delirium
June 1994	The Dark
Summer 1994	The Fire of Love (novel)
September 1994	The Soldier
September 1994	The Scissors
October 1994	The Porsche
December 1994	The Shooting Range
February 1995	The Artist
May 1996	The Farm
June 16/17 1996	The Fallen Man
March 1997	Magpies (Eliza)
April 1997	The Unmother
Summer 1997	The Good Shepherd (novel)
December 1997	Christmas 1997
March 1998	Journey's End
1998	Schrödinger's God (novel)

Notes on the stories:

**Christmas 1993** – This first story takes up Power’s life a few months after the events of **The Darkening Sky**. The story explains what happened to Power and his artist girlfriend, Eve.

**Delirium** – Dr Power stories are generally set in the North West of England. Power trained around Liverpool, but in the first three books practices as a Consultant Psychiatrist in Cheshire, living in the well-to-do area of Alderley Edge. For this story he returns to his training hospital, The Royal Liverpool University Hospital as a locum consultant.

**The Dark** – is set in Power’s own home in Alderley Edge. In the books the house is Alderley House, a Victorian home in Alderley Edge supposedly designed by Waterhouse – who was a famous North Western architect who designed Manchester Town hall and the Natural History Museum in London – his work is featured elsewhere in the Dr Power novels – his fictional designs include Heaton Hall in **The Fire of Love**.

**The Soldier** is set soon after **The Fire of Love** and details the kind of upsetting clash that doctors can have over diagnoses and management. These are unpleasant events in a doctor’s life, but can be devastating for a patient.

**The Scissors** details the anxieties that a doctor like Dr Power can have about a patient, their safety and the safety of others and about how it can sometimes be a battle just to do the right thing.

**The Porsche** – is set in Wilmslow, near Power’s home and hospital practice. Power is called to a crisis where a patient of his has caused devastation to a garage. The story features the larger than life, Rubici Hammadi, a patient of Dr Power’s colleague, who previously appeared in **The Darkening Sky**.

**The Shooting Range** – features Superintendent Lynch and Sergeant Beresford and documents Lynch’s attempt to have Power trained to defend himself if necessary with firearms.

**The Artist** – when I set to writing the stories I thought Eve only would manifest once in the first story, but she clearly wanted to be in another. This is a sort of mystery story, although more of a psychological puzzle about the nature of art and forgery, and what might drive an artist to forge other people’s work. Dr Power is joined by Superintendent Lynch to resolve the issue.

**The Farm** – This describes what happened to Power’s would-be girlfriend Lucinda McWilliam and her errant brother after the events in **The Fire of Love**. Both Lucinda and her brother are effectively transformed by the virtually simultaneous deaths of their mother and father.

**The Fallen Man** – The time setting of this story is also significant as it falls on a specific day in Dublin’s literary calendar and is itself played out in the span of 24 hours. Power’s work as a medicolegal expert is a recurrent feature in the novels. He sometimes spars with his apparent nemesis, consultant psychiatrist Professor Anastasi who opposed Power in Court in **The Fire of Love**. In this story Power is asked to give evidence in a personal injury case and flies in to a relaxed city in permanent party mode.

**Magpies (Eliza)** – I should emphasise that this story is fictional or conjectural in nature. There is a counting theme to the story – with reference to the ancient, superstition-riddled rhyme about magpies. This is often quoted as:

*One for sorrow,  
Two for joy,  
Three for a girl,  
Four for a boy,  
Five for silver,  
Six for gold,  
Seven for a secret,  
Never to be told.*

**The Unmother** – Severe mental illness such as profound depression or delusional schizophrenia can lead to neglect or even direct harm of a child. This

is, of course, a tragedy for all concerned. Psychiatrists, such as Dr Power, can understand such maternal behaviour in the context of mental illness, and seek to prevent harm. In this story however Dr Power struggles to find a mental illness that can explain the neglect of a child by a mother, and the mood of the professionals concerned seems to be one of deep frustration or even anger with the mother.

**Christmas 1997** – Dr Power takes the opportunity to teach a potential medical student, Sam, Lynch’s niece, who first appeared in **The Good Shepherd**. The piece features a patient whom Power treats with electroconvulsive treatment or ECT. ECT is an effective treatment for severe depression, but it has fallen out of favour in recent times, and is increasingly difficult to source. ECT was invented by Ugo Cerletti and team in the 1930s, and was the first effective treatment for depression. Power explains the treatment and attempts to correct any misperceptions that Sam has. Psychological treatment for depression is perceived as more acceptable by the public and some mental health professionals. Unfortunately psychotherapy is not effective in moderate to severe depression and in milder depression only works slightly better than placebo. Effective treatment for moderate to severe depression, an eminently treatable disorder, is frustratingly becoming less easy to find. This is a shame as our society should be becoming more enlightened and effective treatment for more severe depression should be easily available.

**Journey’s End** – prefigures the fourth novel, **Schrödinger’s God** and is intended to set the scene. The two Christmas stories were meant to be like bookends for the Casebook – depicting contrasting Christmases for Power – the early one being a sad and lonely affair and the later one filled with optimism and the promise of good friends and their company. However the story **The Soldier** demanded some just resolution.

If the reader has any questions then please do pose these on Goodreads.com. Alternatively please email Hugh about your favourite story on [hughgreene51@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hughgreene51@yahoo.co.uk)

