

**Book Manuscript: Full Master**

THE LOCKED ROOM

*A collection of strange and unconventional short stories*

by

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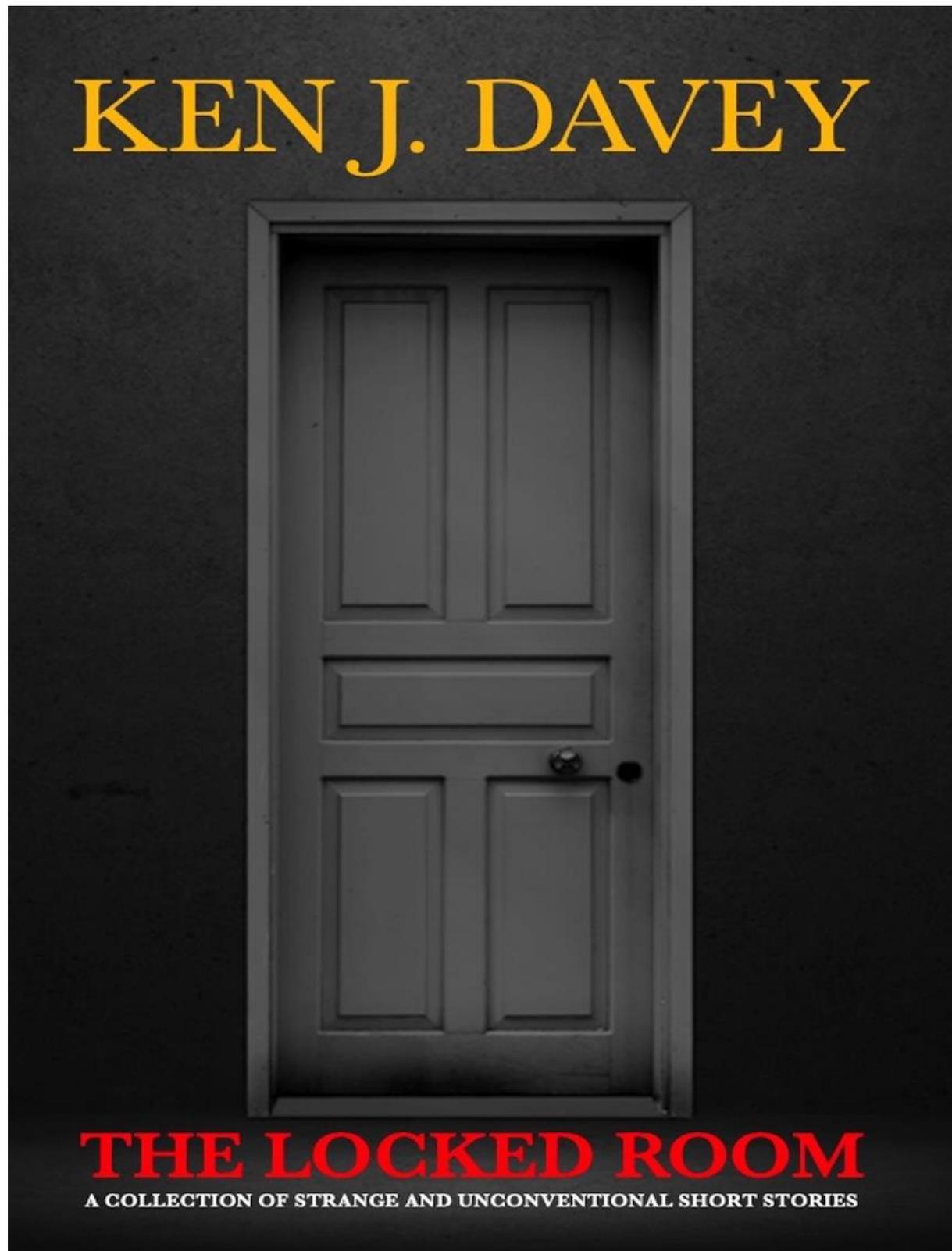
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**Book Layout**

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**Front Cover**



**Epigraph**

*“In a short story, suspense is the characteristic that makes you want to keep reading to find out what happens next.”*

–Alfred Hitchcock, English filmmaker.

**Author's Note**

Each story is self-contained and written to include a central theme or message that should hopefully evoke a specific mood in the reader's mind.

## The Locked Room

Five people are in a locked room. There are no windows and no means of escape. In the room is a round table with six chairs. On the table is a telephone. There is nothing else in the room.

‘Well, I suppose we should introduce ourselves. I’m Ned. I’m a salesman, and I have no idea how I came to be in this locked room.’

‘Hi, Ned. I’m Joe, and like you, I don’t know how I got here either. Oh, yes, I’m a car mechanic.’

‘As we seem to be going around the table in an anti-clockwise manner, I guess I’m next. I’m Bob, long-term unemployed but a carpenter by trade. And I guess no one is going to be surprised if I also say that I have not the foggiest idea of how I have come to be here.’

‘Er, I’m Janis. I work in a bottle factory, operating the machines that clean the bottles. Maybe this is a dream because I am really confused about why I am here. I’m frightened too.’

‘Well, as I’m last to speak, I have to say, I agree with Janis. This is a frightening experience as, like everyone else, I have no memory or understanding of how I have come to be in this room with four strangers. Oh sorry. I’m Ian, and I own a sweet shop.’

‘I assume then, from the introductions, that none of us knows each other, then?’

Bob was the first to respond.

‘I think that’s right, Ned, plus none of us seem to know how we got here or, indeed, why we are here.’

‘Bob.’

‘Yes, Janis.’

‘Can I ask what you were doing yesterday?’

‘Sure. I was... I was... actually, I can’t remember.’

‘Nor can I, Bob. I don’t remember operating the bottle washing machine at all. In fact, I can’t recall ever working the machines... but I know that’s my job.’

‘Actually, Janis, now you mention it, I have no recollection of selling any sweets in my sweet shop. In fact, I can’t even tell you what it looks like.’

‘I tell you, this is fucking weird. I know I fix cars, but I don’t remember fixing a car at all.’

Just then, the telephone rang. Ned picked up the receiver.

‘Hello...No, it’s Ned speaking...Sure. Janis, it’s for you.’

‘Hello...Yes, this is Janis...Oh, I see...Yes, of course...Right away.’

Janis returned the receiver.

‘Well? Who was that?’ Ned asked.

‘This is really strange, but the factory where I work has reported me as missing.’

‘What?’

‘I know that sounds daft, Bob, but that’s what they said.’

Joe was getting agitated.

‘Who the fuck are they, Janis? Who?’

‘I don’t know, Joe. It was just a voice on the phone. A woman, I think.’

‘You think. For fuck's sake. Surely you know the difference between a male and female voice?’

Before Janis could answer, the phone rang again. Without hesitation, Joe picked up the receiver.

‘Yep... that’s me. Who are...what...when...Oh, I see...Immediately...Yes, of course.’

Joe slowly replaced the receiver.

‘Well, Joe? Male or female?’ Ned asked.

‘Male, I think. I’m not sure.’

‘And what did they say, Joe? Have you been reported missing like me?’

‘No, Janis. Apparently, there was a big fire in the garage. The whole fucking lot went up in flames.’

‘Looks like you’re going to be unemployed like me then. It always seems to be the tradespeople that suffer first in these circumstances.’

‘What circumstances, Bob?’

‘Actually, I’m not sure, Ian. Just circumstances, I suppose.’

Ned knocked loudly on the table.

‘Look, everyone. As I see it, we are all here because of something that happened yesterday. Janis was reported missing, and now Joe’s garage has gone up in smoke. I’m guessing, but that phone is going to ring at least three more times. In the meantime, should we try to work out how to get out of here?’

‘A great idea, Ned, but apart from the locked door, there doesn’t seem to be many options.’

‘That’s a bit defeatist, Ian.’

‘Maybe, Bob, but do you have any alternative suggestions?’

‘I do, actually.’

Bob leaned forward and picked up the receiver.

‘There’s a dialling tone!’ he exclaimed.

He raised his right hand and then stopped.

‘Oh, my God! It’s a dumb phone. No dial and no digits.’

Bob put the receiver back. As he did, the phone rang. Bob picked it up.

‘Now look here. I don’t know what game you’re playing, but I can tell you...Yes, this is Bob. Oh, I see. Well, I don’t usually...Right...Okay...I understand.’

‘Come on, Bob. Spill the beans,’ Ned said.

‘Well, it’s a little unusual. Apparently, I didn’t get the job at the large construction company.’

‘So you went for an interview with them?’

‘Apparently, Ned. Apparently.’

Janis stood up.

‘What is going on here? We don’t know how we got here or why, and it seems we have no memory of our past beyond the job we did. And then each time the phone rings, we are told something that affects us and happened yesterday.’

‘Look. The next phone call will most likely be for Ned or me. So, whoever it is that calls, I will want answers.’

‘You won’t get any.’

Everyone turned and looked at the person sitting in the sixth chair.

‘Where the fuck did you come from?’ cried Joe.

‘Excuse me. I’ve been sitting here all along, but nobody seemed to want to talk to me.’

‘That chair was empty. Wasn’t it?’ Joe added.

‘Well, I’m not sure, Joe. I think so. When we did the round of introductions, I remember saying I was last to speak. But thinking about it now, I didn’t say I was last.’

‘Exactly. I was last, but no one asked me to introduce myself.’

Ned stood up.

‘Look, everyone. Whatever is happening here is weird enough, so why don’t we let our stranger introduce themselves, whether or not they were here at the beginning?’

‘Thank you, Ned. My name is Sheila, and I’m a hairdresser. Actually, although I am last to be introduced, I was first to get a phone call, and I was told my professional scissors have been stolen.’

‘I think I was the first. Ned answered the telephone and handed it to me. But everything is so strange here; I’m not really sure what I do remember.’

Just then, the telephone rang.

Ian picked up the receiver.

‘Yes, this is He...Oh, I see...Yesterday was it.... No, I don’t have any questions, except...’

Ian put back the receiver.

‘The line went dead.’

Ned picked up the receiver and listened.

‘It is dead, for sure. What did they say, Ian?’

‘There’s a smashed sweet jar on the floor of my sweet shop.’

Ned was about to speak when they all heard the door being unlocked. The door opened slightly, and a cold draft blew into the room. Beyond the door was a dazzling light.

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Edward opened his eyes.

‘Ah, Mister Little, you are back with us.’

‘Where am I?’

‘You are in the Deadington hospital and have been in a coma for three weeks. We thought we had lost you at one point, but your body kept fighting.’

‘Can I sit up?’

‘Of course, if you feel up to it. Let me help you.’

‘I’m a bit tired, but I feel fine. That’s good, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, indeed, Mister Little. Let me just check your pulse. That’s good...Excellent... I’ll be back shortly.’

‘What happened to me?’

‘As soon as I come back, I’ll explain everything. Here. You might want to read the last three weekly newspapers and catch up on things.’

Edward scanned the latest local newspaper first but was not really taking much in until he got to the obituaries page, which was headed, 'Yesterday Was A Tragic Day In Deadington'. Below were five obituaries:

Janis Moffatt, 24, tragically drowned after falling into the fast-flowing river next to the factory where she worked. Everyone at the factory misses her.

Joe Peters, 54, who was burnt to death in the fire at the garage where he worked, is missed by his loyal customers.

Bob Harding, 59, who sadly took his own life when jumping from the fifteenth floor of the AJK Constructors building, is deeply missed by his wife, Lucie.

Shelia Brown, 22, who unfortunately fell on the professional scissors she had stolen from her employer, died peacefully and is missed by her boyfriend, Terry.

Ian Shadforth, 47, is very much missed by his brother, Henry, after choking to death on one of his famous hard-boiled lemon drops.

Edward closed the paper and started to cry. He was about to throw the newspapers aside when a story at the bottom of the newspaper's front page from three weeks ago caught his eye.

Furniture salesman, Edward (Ned) Little, is believed to be in a coma at the Deadington Hospital after being hit by a furniture van at his place of work. His friends Janis, Joe, Bob, Sheila, and Ian all send their best wishes.

### About the Author



**Ken J. Davey, MBA, FCMA, CGMA**, is a new author. Drawing on his experience and meticulous research, Ken offers readers compelling stories that can expand a reader's knowledge and awareness.

His career has been with Big Four professional services firms, Blue-Chip companies, and several owner-managed SMEs. He has held sales, commercial, and financial roles and has over twenty years of international sales and delivery experience, twelve of which were with KPMG.

As an author of several fiction and non-fiction books, Ken lives in London, where he has regularly worked as a mentor with the British Library and University College London.

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*Where hopes are dashed and fears are realised.*

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The Locked Room

*A collection of strange and unconventional stories.*

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Back Cover

**The Locked Room is a collection of twelve gripping, enigmatic short stories that will leave readers captivated and hungry for more. The first story in The Locked Room, where the reader is transported into a perplexing scenario in which five individuals are confined to a room devoid of windows or any possible means of escape. The only items in this room are a round table surrounded by six chairs and a solitary telephone. As the anthology progresses, a ruthless criminal's uncharacteristic demeanour will send shivers down your spine, and an eerie tale of love and helplessness on the haunting landscapes of Dartmoor will leave you with bone-chilling anxiety.**

Ken J. Davey is a new author. Drawing on his experience and meticulous research, Ken offers readers compelling stories that can expand a reader's knowledge and awareness. Ken lives in London where he has regularly worked as a mentor with the British Library and University College London.

