

Shrap Nelson

An Unlikely Saviour

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Discussion Topics

Choose your book below to download the accompanying discussion guide.

Be warned! There are spoilers in the guides, so make sure you've finished reading the book first.

Book 2: *An Unlikely Saviour*

1. **Rehabilitation, Community, and Recovery** Discuss Shrap's transition from living rough to residing at **Phoenix House hostel** and tending its garden following her PTSD treatment programme. How does the hostel community—including Alicia, Jadon, and Zogu—provide a stabilizing environment for her ongoing recovery?
2. **Systemic Neglect and Public Pressure in Missing Person Cases** Compare the response of **Specialist Crime Command** with that of Southwark CID regarding the disappearance of 14-year-old Malik Ajayi. How do social class, racial dynamics, and media attention dictate the priority given to missing children from South London housing estates?
3. **Comradeship, Secrets, and the Shadows of War** Unpack the complex network of military loyalties involving **Harry Moore**, **Troy Holt**, **MP Michael Hargreaves**, and **Trevor Campbell**.

How do past events at a Helmand black site continue to shape these veterans' choices and vulnerabilities on Civvy Street?

4. **Political Cover-Ups versus Personal Motives** Analyze the narrative tension between the high-level political scandal involving MP Hargreaves and the true domestic motive behind Harry Moore's murder. What does **Ronald Fitzpatrick's** violent jealousy reveal about how personal motives can obscure broader criminal investigations?
5. **Agency, Purpose, and the Future of Moore Investigations** Examine the conclusion of the novel where **Nova Everly** proposes that she, Shrap, and Troy keep **Moore Investigations** operating together. How does taking charge of a private detective agency mark a crucial turning point in Shrap's journey toward rebuilding a purposeful life?

Discussion Guide

1. Rehabilitation, Community, and Recovery

- **The Move to Phoenix House:** Following her intensive PTSD treatment programme, Shrap moves into a room at Phoenix House hostel and tends its small garden to anchor herself in the present.
- **A Stabilizing Community:** Hostel manager Alicia Douglas provides structured care and firm guidance.
- **Interpersonal Healing:** Relationships with residents—such as Alicia's teenage son Jadon and Zogu, a wheelchair-bound Albanian veteran—give Shrap a protective role [80–81, 203, 483]. Tending plants and defending Jadon help quiet her nightmares and ground her recovery.

2. Systemic Neglect and Public Pressure in Missing Person Cases

- **Initial Neglect:** Specialist Crime Command treats 14-year-old Malik Ajayi's disappearance as a routine runaway case, neglecting to search thoroughly or even collect key evidence like his laptop.
- **Media & Race Dynamics:** A *Guardian* report highlighting statements from Malik's Aunt Layla sparks intense public outrage. Police management acknowledges that if Malik were a white teenage girl, the case would have received immediate helicopters, press conferences, and massive resources.
- **Reassignment:** Southwark CID (Devi Patel and Gareth Trevelyan) is handed the case amid media pressure, eventually uncovering Malik's body at a landfill site.

3. Comradeship, Secrets, and the Shadows of War

- **The Helmand Cover-Up:** In 2009, CO Michael Hargreaves ordered a detainee taken to an off-the-books black site in Helmand, where the detainee died under harsh interrogation (torture); Hargreaves coerced his unit—including Troy Holt and Harry Moore—into covering it up.
- **Harry and Troy's Debt:** Guilt over the incident caused Troy to drive drunk and kill a soldier on base. Harry Moore offered to take the fall due to his clean record and debt to Troy for saving his life in combat, though Troy ultimately confessed.
- **Political Fallout:** Politician Belinda Lawson hired Harry Moore (who brought in Troy) to dig up dirt on MP Hargreaves using details provided by her ex-husband David Haines. When Shrap uses military intelligence contact Trevor Campbell to verify the files, Hargreaves' protectors retaliate violently by assaulting Trevor's pregnant wife.

4. Political Cover-Ups versus Personal Motives

- **The Red Herring:** Much of the investigation focuses on high-level political assassination (MP Hargreaves) or corporate espionage (Paradox Solutions).
- **The Real Killer:** The true perpetrator behind Harry Moore's murder and Malik's death is **Ronald Fitzpatrick**, a construction project manager.
- **A Crime of Jealousy:** Fitzpatrick hired Harry to investigate his wife Elizabeth. Harry discovered Elizabeth was simply working extra bar shifts, but the two fell in love during the investigation. Upon learning of the affair, Fitzpatrick murdered Harry, dumped his body at St Saviour's Dock, chased off the witnessing teenagers, and tortured and killed Malik to locate Jadon and eliminate witnesses.

5. Agency, Purpose, and the Future of Moore Investigations

- **An Unexpected Offer:** After Harry's murder, office temp Nova Everly points out that the detective agency's rent is pre-paid for another year and proposes that she, Shrap, and Troy keep the business running together.
- **Troy's Condition:** Troy Holt agrees to join the team only if Shrap takes charge of the operations.
- **The "Third Turning Point":** Though initially terrified of responsibility and relapse, Shrap realizes this opportunity marks her third major turning point—moving past trauma and homeless survival into building a purposeful career on Civvy Street.