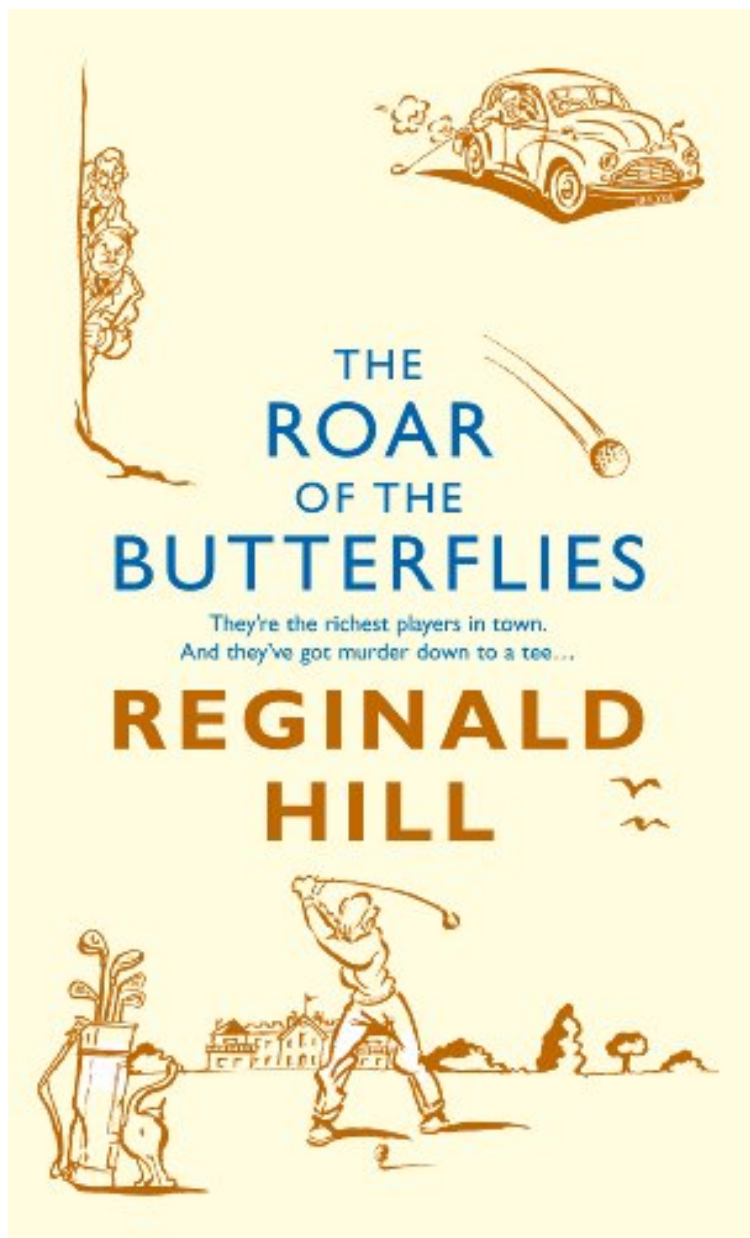


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The Roar of the Butterflies (Joe Sixsmith, Book 5)



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Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #210944 dans eBooksPubli le: 2008-09-04Sorti le: 2008-09-04Format: Ebook Kindle

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA special gift for Reginald Hill fans on Fathers Day the return of Joe Sixsmith in a beautifully packaged, witty new crime novelA sweltering summer spells bad news for the private detective business. Thieves and philanderers take the month off and the only swingers in town are those on the 19th hole of the Royal Hoo Golf Course. But now the reputation of the Hoo is in jeopardy.Shocking allegations of

cheating have been directed at leading member, Chris Porphyry. When Chris turns to Joe Sixsmith, PI, he's more than willing to help only Joe hadn't counted on being French-kissed then dangled out of a window on the same day. Before long, though, Joes on the trail of a conspiracy that starts with missing balls, and ends with murder. Extrat1 Fonlies Joe Sixsmith was adrift in space. Light years beneath him gleamed the tiny orb he was supposed to make contact with, but he knew it was an impossible dream. His muscles had melted, his lungs were starved of oxygen, and the only part of his mind not paralysed by terror was the bit that dealt with fonlies. fonly Id done this . . . fonly Id done that . . . No use messing with fonlies, Aunt Mirabelle used to say. fonlies dont get your homework done, Joseph. You miss your football Saturday morning, youve got no one to blame cept yourself. How right she was! No one to blame cept himself . . . except maybe Willie Woodbine for being such a social climber . . . and Beryl Boddington maybe for standing him up . . . and definitely Merv Golightly for having a mouth like the Channel Tunnel . . . but first and last and as usual, himself, Joseph Gaylord (even Mirabelle kept quiet about that) Sixsmith for always going boldly half-assed where nobody had ever come back from before! 2 Enter a YFG Way it started was this. Monday afternoon, day before yesterday, though it seemed a lot longer ago, hed been sitting in his office, minding his own business, which didnt take much minding this time of year. Summer had parked its anticyclone firmly over Luton and fused the days and nights of July together with a heat too enervating to start a race riot in, let alone perpetrate any of the crimes that might send the distressed citizenry in search of a PI. Ice creams melted before they could reach your mouth, birds huddled beneath cats for shade, and flies buzzed with relief into spiders webs whose owners felt the tremor along the line and thought that maybe next Friday theyd stroll down there to take a look. The plus side was that Joe too felt as energetic as a poached egg and couldnt whip up much concern at the lack of client incentive to head off down the mean streets. So clad in an off-white singlet and Bermuda shorts patterned with scarlet parrots sinking their beaks into rainbow-striped pumpkins, Joe sat at his desk and relaxed with his favourite book, Not So Private Eye, the reminiscences of Endo Venera, the famous Mafia soldier turned gumshoe. This was Joes bible. Everything you needed to know about being a PI was here, except maybe how to stay awake. His head nodded, and he slipped into a dream in which he and Beryl Boddington were sliding naked down an iceberg, and he wasnt at all pleased to have his descent interrupted by a voice saying, Mr Sixsmith? Would you be Mr Sixsmith? He opened his eyes and found he was being addressed by a Young Fair God. He was thirty at most, tall, boyishly handsome, with hair that shone pale gold against the darker gold of skin glowing with a proper expensive Mediterranean yacht kind of tan, not the russet-and-red skin-peeling version which made any large gathering of Lutonians look like Vermont in the Fall. His lean athletic frame was clad in a linen jacket, cream slacks and an open-necked shirt white enough to signal surrender at half a mile. He looked, thought Joe, just like one of those hunks you see in up-market mail-order catalogues where, despite the alleged cutting out of the middle man, the gear still costs three times what youd expect to pay down Luton market. But it wasnt this that caught and held Joes attention. It was the fact that the guy looked cool. Not cool in the laid-back hey-man-how-you-doin? kind of way, though that too. No, this guy looked like he was standing in some nice and easy air-conditioned zone of his own rather than the sauna of Joes office. Perhaps this was a special deal available only to Young Fair Gods. Hope you dont mind. I just came in. The door was open, said the YFG. He had a quails-eggs-easy-over-on-cinnamon-toast kind of voice. Yeah, thats OK. Trying to get a through draught, said Joe. Then repeated trying in ironic acknowledgement that not so much air was moving between the open window and door as would have fluttered a maidenhair fern. All right if I sit down? said the YFG, sinking on to an old dining chair with the confidence of one whose creamy slacks have been treated with a dust-repellent potion unobtainable by the common herd. My name is Porphyry. Christian Porphyry. U-huh, said Joe, unsurprised. Creature like this wasnt going to be called Fred Jones, not if (as he firmly believed) there was an underlying order to things. Also the name wasnt totally unfamiliar, at least the Porphyry bit. Hed seen it in the paper recently, but even memory found it hard to move back through this heat haze. He could check it out later if he had the energy, because hed certainly not had the energy to dump any newspapers for the past week or so. In fact, come to think of it, he doubted if hed had the energy to open one, so the Porphyry reference must have been front page or back page, i.e. headline news or sport. He realized that these thoughts had occupied rather more time than they would have done normally, and since his u-huh the sort of companionable silence had developed between them which was OK between a pair of buddies fishing off a river bank but didnt promise to move the PI/client relationship forward very far. He said, Sixsmith. Joe Sixsmith. Yes. I thought you must be, said Porphyry with a pleasant smile. Joe found himself smiling back. There was something very attractive about this guy. He felt really easy with him, which was not a good way to feel with someone whod

just strolled into your office. For all Joe knew, Porphyry could be a cop interested in the provenance of the six-pack of Guinness cooling in his washroom hand basin, which hed got (plus another nineteen) from his taxi-driving friend Merv Golightly on the assurance that the fifty per cent discount Merv was offering derived from their being bankrupt stock. (You mean, Joe had enquired for the avoidance of doubt, that the guy these came from was bankrupt? to which after a little thought Merv had replied, Well, yeah, Id guess he is now.) Or could be the YFG was a solicitor about to serve a writ for non-payment of any of the things Joe had non-paid recently. Or could even be he was a hit man on a contract taken out by one of the top criminals Joe had crossed in his unrelenting crusade for justice . . . No, scrub that one. This guy didnt look like hed slap your wrist for less than a grand, and in pay-back terms Joes recent toe-treading didnt rate much more than a ten-quid kicking up an alley. He realized another companionable silence was developing. He said, How can I help you, Mr Porphyry? I do hope so, said Porphyry with such touching vulnerability of tone and expression that Joe hadnt the heart to point out this wasnt a helpful or even a possible reply to his question. But the YFG hadnt finished. Maybe divine revelation was on its way. Willie spoke very highly of you, he said with the stress on very and a slight but emphatic nod of his beautiful head as if this testimonial from this source was confirmation absolute of Joes competence. He did, huh? said Joe, trying to identify his unexpected fan. Trouble was most of the Willies he could bring to mind failed on both counts speaking highly of him or being on friendly terms with YFGs. He gave up and added, That would be Willie . . . ? Woodbine, said Porphyry. As in Detective Superintendent Woodbine? said Joe disbelievingly. Thats the chap. Done awfully well for himself, old Willie. Naturally I turned to him first. Not his line of country really, he said. But if I wanted to try the private sector, theres this chap, Joe Sixsmith. Cutting edge of investigation. Hes your man. He smiled as he spoke, the happy smile of a voyager arrived at last in safe haven. Another silence began. This time Joe didnt even disturb it with an U-huh. If the guy had been paying him, he might have felt different, but it was too hot for a man to exert himself with no certainty of reward, and besides he was wrestling with the problem of how come Willie Woodbine was pushing clients his way, particularly clients like this. A phone rang. It wasnt Joes. His desk phone had the harsh shriek of a crow just landed on an electrified fence and his mobile played the Hallelujah chorus. This one let out a soft yet firm double note, like the deferential cough of a butler wanting to catch masters attention. Sorry, said Porphyry, producing the neatest mobile Joe had ever seen cased in what looked like old gold. He put it to his ear and listened. Then he switched off, stood up and said, Im afraid I have to go. Look, Im tied up today, but can you do tomorrow morning? Lets meet at the club, how does that sound? I think it would be good for you to get a feel of the place. I can show you round. Scene of the crime, that sort of thing. What crime? wondered Joe. And which club? Time to get some sense into this interchange. Look, Mr Porphyry . . . he began. Chris, said the man. And I shall call you Joe. It will authenticate our cover, isnt that what you chaps say? Youre interested in applying for membership, if anyone asks. Half ten all right for you? That gives us time for a look around, and we can have a spot of lunch after. OK? I#8...Revue de presse Reginald Hill is quite simply one of the best at work today. Boston Globe Delightful. . . . Highly entertaining. Literary (UK) Told with humour and a light touch. . . Ideal summer reading. Sunday Telegraph (UK) Praise for the Joe Sixsmith series: Entertaining, sly, jokey . . . cynical, well written, and teems with sparkly dialogue all the virtues we expect from Hill. The Times (UK)