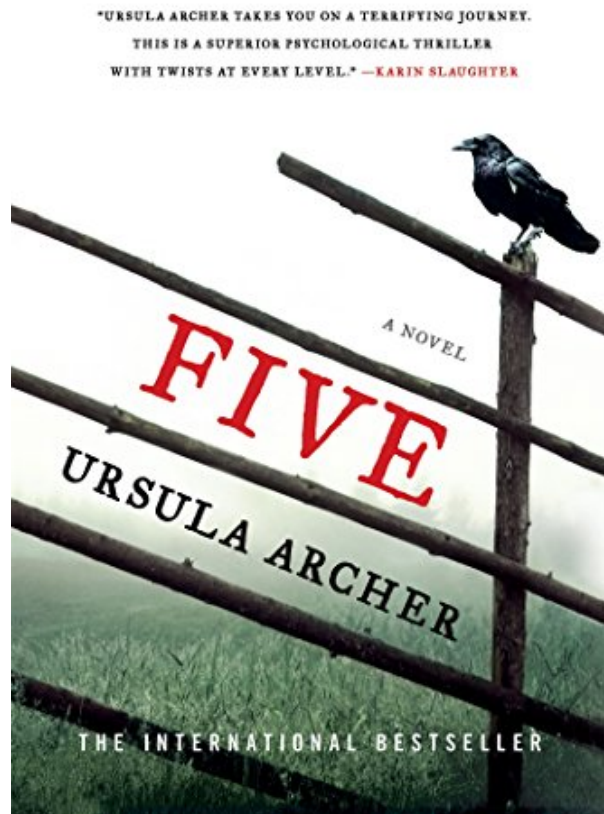


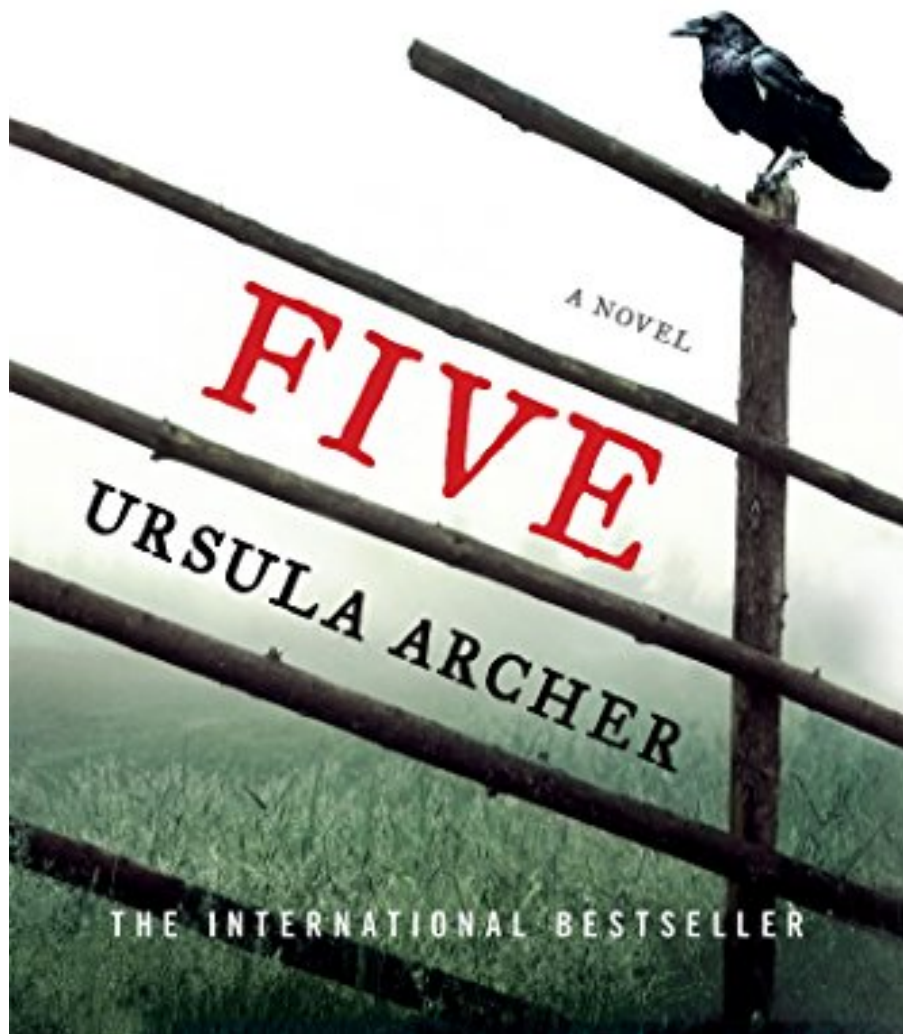
FIVE: A NOVEL BY URSULA ARCHER



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A woman's corpse is discovered in a meadow. A strange combination of letters and numbers has been tattooed on the soles of her feet. Detective inspector Beatrice Kaspary from the local murder squad quickly identifies the digits as map coordinates. These lead to a series of gruesome discoveries as she and her colleague Florin Wenninger embark on a bloody trail – a modern-day scavenger hunt using GPS navigation devices to locate hidden caches. The "owner" of these unofficial, unpublished geocaches is a highly calculating and elusive fiend who leaves his victims' body-parts sealed in plastic bags, complete with riddles that culminate in a five-stage plot. Kaspary herself becomes an unwilling pawn in the perpetrator's game of cat and mouse as she risks all to uncover the motives behind the murderer's actions. Five is definitely not a book for the faint-hearted, but it delivers great suspense, unexpected plot twists, and multi-dimensional characters.

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Most helpful customer reviews

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

An intriguing mystery/thriller

By Majanka

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Five is an interesting crime novel combining geocaching with a mystery and murder. For those who don't know geocaching, you enter GPS coordinates into your cell phone, and then go searching for “treasure” hidden by others. The item could've been there for years. Usually it's something small, but in the case of “Five”, things are a little more gruesome. Think along the line of body parts. Yep, that gruesome.

The writing is excellent. I started this one at eleven thirty at night, hoping to read about half an hour before heading to bed. Yeah...that didn't work. I had to read this book in one sitting, even if it was two o'clock by the time I was finished. Main character, detective Beatrice Kaspary, is an intriguing protagonist. She's a bit of a cliché character – the angry ex-husband, living for the job – but she makes it work. She's so genuine, she could be a real person. Florin was a great sidekick, and the underlying attraction between both of them made for an interesting turn of events.

But it's the murdering itself, the killing, and the killer, that really make the book shine. The geocaching elements screams originality (heck, at least to me, it's the first I'd heard of it) and the killer himself is elusive. This isn't a madman, which makes it all the more exciting. I kept on reading, even though my eyes

were half-closed and I could barely reach the end of a page without yawning, because I simply had to find out who the killer was. In the dead of night, that's quite a feat.

All in all, an intriguing mystery / thriller, and I'm confident we'll see much more from this author. She has a great talent for describing characters and scenery.

P.S. Yes, I did go geocaching afterward. It was a blast! And no, I didn't find any body parts. Thank God.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Not bad, slow in parts

By Gordon

Review of Five by Ursula Archer 3.5 stars

I do not recall ever having read a mystery with Salzburg, Austria as the primary setting. That was the first attraction. Then came the characters, some principle, some accessory; but they all were fully developed personalities, love them or hate them. The story kept on getting darker from the initial discovery of the first victim- a murdered the tattoo footed woman who was found dead at the base of a cliff over hang, with both hands tied tightly from behind. The tattoos on the bottoms of both feet were actually GPS coordinates that used in conjunction with geocaching, provided ongoing clues.

There is a serial killer who the police are referring to as "the Owner". He/she is also hiding clues in small plastic containers of body parts from his victims, but also sometimes written notes or text messages. These containers are found by using GPS coordinates and the Internet by way of geocache.com. The Owner, for some yet unknown reason, is also keeping in contact primarily with the lead detective, Beatrice Kaspary, from the State Office of Criminal Investigations via text messaging which reveals he knows a lot of private information about Beatrice, which is extremely confounding to her.

One by one, discovery of one victim leads police to the next victim, almost like a kind of signpost. Once the clues actually reveal persons of interest, and police contact is made, those persons ultimately become victims who all suffer death by some sort or other by brutal mutilation. At midpoint in this story the Owner's identity and motives remain mysterious and cunning. The resourcefulness of the Owner is causing the police fits as the investigation proceeds and then just as quickly recedes.

A police psychological profiler believed the Owners main motive for these mounting murders is the desire to gain more and more attention while at the same time frustrating the police. There was also the possibility that the Owner had an accomplice; a lot of possibilities existed, but none were probable, yet. A bit of focus breaks through when Beatrice's past is revealed and perhaps the geocache murders are somehow related but there is still little to no evidence of anything substantial which links all of the murders.

This all comes together nicely at the end. The story is well written, thought out and presented. It was somewhat too long and even seemed to drag toward the ending, but all and all I did like it. At one point I felt it was becoming too creepy (even for the likes of me!), but in the end logic prevail over the supernatural.

I would rate this with 3.5 stars and will keep this author in mind for future reference.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Good psychological thriller...

By Cynthia K. Robertson

As one of 6 million active geocachers, I was surprised to see a new mystery on the Amazon Vine list that

used a geocaching-theme. Ursula Archer has written other books, but *Five: A Novel* is her first adult mystery and very good first effort. I especially liked that it took place in Austria, where geocaching protocol is slightly different than in the United States.

Beatrice Kaspary and Florin Wenninger are called to the scene when a farmer discovers a dead woman in his cow pasture. Kaspary and Wenninger are homicide detectives who work for the Salzburg State Office of Criminal Investigation. With hands tied behind her back, the one strange find on the body is that numbers were tattooed to the soles of her feet. It takes a little figuring before the detectives realize that the numbers are GPS coordinates. One of their colleagues is a geocacher, and he gets assigned to help with the case because of his hobby. Soon, they're involved in a geocaching chase, but instead of looking for treasures, they're finding body parts and dead bodies. The entire time, the killer is toying with them and taunting them for being incompetent. But Kaspary and Wenninger also figure out that in playing the killer's game, they are also lending him assistance. This psychological thriller had me guessing until the end.

Archer is a good writer and I enjoyed her descriptions of things. At one point, Kaspary “had never described to the belief that dead people looked like they were sleeping. They looked like a foreign species. Shockingly different, even if they had died peacefully.” But I did get more than tired of the drama with her ex-husband and also, the description of every cup of coffee she ever made or drank. I don't think that these things added to the story. But overall, *Five* is a fine read and you don't have to be a geocacher to enjoy this book. In fact, it might be a good introduction to geocaching, although geocachers tend to be kind, gentle people—unlike in the book.

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