

## The Thursday Next Chronicles: Books One to Five

### *Who Is She?*

According to accessible SpecOps 27 files, Thursday E. Next was born in January 1950 at St Cerebellum's Hospital, Swindon. Ex-police, ex-Crimean War veteran and latterly at SO-27, the Literary Detectives, she is probably best known for her work in the literary crisis that became known as 'The Eyre Affair' in 1985, but her adventures over the following three years have been chronicled in four books:

#### **Book 1: *The Eyre Affair***

England, 1985 – It's Swindon, but not as we know it. SpecOps is the agency responsible for policing areas considered too specialised to be tackled by the regular force, and Thursday Next is attached to the Literary Detectives at SpecOps 27.

She's going to be busy. It all begins when Acheron Hades, the world's third most evil man, contrives to steal the Prose Portal, a machine for softening the barriers of the imagination and allowing people to enter works of fiction.

After kidnapping a minor character from *Martin Chuzzlewit* and having him murdered, Hades kidnaps Jane Eyre from *Jane Eyre* – but to maximise disruption, he takes her from the original manuscript so everyone's copy is blank from page 109 onwards.

But someone else has their eyes on the Prose Portal: Jack Schitt, heavy hitter for the Goliath Corporation's Advanced Weapons division, who wants to use the device to turn complex and entirely fictional weapons into reality – and prolong the Crimean War, now in its 134th year.

With the help of her partner and with the support of her pet dodo, Thursday chases Hades into the Welsh Socialist Republic where she herself is trapped inside *Jane Eyre*, along with Acheron Hades.

Assisted by Edward Rochester, Thursday is ultimately victorious – but at a heavy price. Thornfield Hall is burned to the ground, Bertha Rochester is dead, and Edward himself badly maimed. Luckily, it makes the ending a lot better, so the Brontë society decide to go with Thursday's version.

Returning to Swindon, she and Landen Parke-Laine, her erstwhile on-again-off-again boyfriend, are finally wed, and Jack Schitt tricked into a copy of *The Raven*, where it is thought he can do no harm. Goliath is vanquished, and the Crimean War brought to a speedy close.

### *What Then For Thursday?*

#### **Book 2: *Lost in a Good Book***

It is eight months later. Following the successful return of Jane Eyre to the novel of the same name, the defeat of master criminal Acheron Hades and peace in the Crimean peninsula, Thursday finds herself a minor celebrity, opening supermarkets, giving talks – and even appearing on the prestigious *Adrian Lush* show.

On the trail of the seemingly miraculous discovery of the lost Shakespeare play *Cardenio*, she crosses swords with Yorrick Kaine, escapee from fiction and neo-fascist politician. No problem, except she also finds herself blackmailed by the vast multinational known as the Goliath Corporation, who want their operative Jack Schitt back out of *The Raven*, the Edgar Allen Poe poem in which he was imprisoned. To engineer this they call on a corrupt member of the time-travelling SpecOps elite, the ChronoGuard, who kills off Thursday's husband thirty-eight years ago when he was only two years old but leaves Thursday's memories of him intact. She finds herself the only person who knows he once lived.

In an attempt to rescue her eradicated husband, Thursday finds a way to enter the BookWorld, and discovers that not only is there a policing agency within fiction known as Jurisdiction, but she is also apprenticed to Miss Havisham of *Great Expectations*.

With her skills at bookjumping growing under Miss Havisham's stern and often unexpected tuition, Thursday rescues Jack Schitt, only to discover she has been duped – Goliath and the Chrono-Guard have no intention of reactualising her husband, and instead want her to open a door into fiction, something Goliath has decided is a 'rich untapped marketplace' for their crummy products and services.

Fearful, pregnant with Landen's child and alone, pursued by Goliath and Acheron's little sister Aornis – an evil genius who likes to stage-manage coincidences, alter memories and go shopping – Thursday decides to retire to the wellspring from where all fiction rises: the Well of Lost Plots. Taking refuge in an unpublished book as part of the Character Exchange Programme, she thinks she will have a quiet time. She is mistaken.

### *What Thursday Did Next*

#### **Book 3: *The Well of Lost Plots***

We begin the moment Book 2 ends, with Thursday's self-imposed exile within the BookWorld, choosing for her home an unfinished detective work of dubious quality entitled *Caversham Heights*. The book is hidden away in the basements far below the Great Library (the depository of every book ever published), where novels are actually created by a team of artisans, plotsmiths, characters-in-training known as Generics, and a lot of time, effort and words carefully trawled from the Text Sea.

Continuing her apprenticeship at Jurisdiction under the watchful tutelage of Miss Havisham, who when not sewing up plotoles in *The Mill on the Floss* is attempting to break the land-speed record in her Liberty-engined Higham Special, Thursday ponders her next move while also attempting to get to grips with her new and entirely fictional environment.

The big news in the BookWorld is that the Book Operating System by which all books are actually read in the Real World is

about to be updated. With all-new thirty-two-plot architecture and enhanced reading capabilities such as Page Glow™, WordClot™ and even a music track, UltraWord™ looks set to be a winner.

But something is rotten in the state of the BookWorld. Jurisfiction Agent Perkins is ‘accidentally’ eaten by his pet minotaur, Snell succumbs to the Mispeling Vyrus, then Miss Havisham dies attempting a land speed record on Pendine Sands. All three had been against the upgrade to BOOK Version 9. But it seems so perfect. Or is it?

With two blank-faced Generics named ibb and obb needing education on how to be real characters and the cast of *Caversham Heights* trying to think up narrative-improving strategies to stop them being demolished as ‘unreadable’ by the book inspectorate, Thursday must not only discover just what is going on, but also who she can trust to tell about it.

With corrupt publisher/politician Yorrick Kaine lurking in the background, things may turn out to be very strange indeed. In addition to that, just how much would you pay for a scrap of the Last Original Idea, what is it like *inside* an Enid Blyton book, and who will win the ‘Best Dead Person in Fiction’ category at the Bookie Awards?

*And There's More . . .*

#### **Book 4: *Something Rotten***

It has been two years since the end of the last book, and Thursday Next, now head of Jurisfiction, returns to her native Swindon accompanied by a child of two, a pair of dodos and Hamlet, who is worried he might have been misrepresented as someone who talks a lot and does very little, rather than the poet-philosopher, dynamic man-of-action he believes himself to be.

Thursday has been dispatched by Jurisfiction to capture escaped fictionaut Yorrick Kaine, who has now risen to the height of Prime Minister of England with only President-for-life George Formby standing between him and supreme executive power. When the President goes missing, things don't look too good. Even so, now

seems as good a time as any for Thursday to retrieve her husband Landen from his state of eradication at the hands of the Goliath Corporation, who are planning to switch to a legally untouchable faith-based corporate management system. They agree to reactualise Landen when Thursday visits the Goliath Apologarium™.

At the same time, Thursday's former colleagues at the Literary Detectives want her to investigate a spate of cloned Shakespeares turning up all over the place, the fifteenth-century seer St Zvlkx has returned to Earth with a mysterious 'revelment' that could change history, and while Hamlet was pondering on who plays him better – Branagh or Gibson – his play has been hopelessly compromised by that troublesome Polonius family and if Thursday doesn't find a real Shakespeare to rewrite *Hamlet*, it will be lost for ever.

Then it gets complicated. Thursday's time-travelling knight-errant father tells her the future of the world rests on Swindon winning the 1988 Croquet SuperHoop. Trouble is, the Swindon Mallets are the worst side in England, and Thursday must get the unbeatable Neanderthals on-side to have even a hope of victory. But the Thals need something in return: species self-determination, and only a trip to the abandoned Goliath Genetic Research Laboratories in the Welsh Socialist Republic will provide it.

With Yorrick Kaine's power on the rise and Landen flicking in and out of existence like a faulty light-bulb, the future looks grim.

But with a tactically brilliant handling of the SuperHoop final and with St Zvlks's final revelment fulfilled before the saint's untimely death beneath a number 23 bus, Thursday is able to rescue President Formby, unmask the assassin who has been trying to kill her throughout the book, find a Shakespeare and vanquish Yorrick Kaine once and for all.

Heady stuff . . . but what then does the 'Ovinator' actually do? Were Emma Hamilton and Hamlet just 'good friends'? Where does Hamlet stand on the whole Schleswig-Holstein question, and will it cause any trouble with Otto von Bismarck, currently Thursday's mum's house-guest?

*But It's Not Over By A Long Way*

**Book 5: *First Among Sequels***

It is fourteen years since Thursday Next pegged out at the 1988 SuperHoop, and the Special Operations Network has been disbanded. Using Swindon's Acme Carpets as a front, Thursday and her colleagues Bowden, Stig and Spike continue their original professions, illegally.

Of course, this front is *itself* a front for Thursday's continued work at Jurisdiction, the policing agency within the BookWorld, and she is soon grappling with a recalcitrant new apprentice, an inter-genre war or two, the murder of Sherlock Holmes and the inexplicable departure of comedy from the once-hilarious Thomas Hardy novels.

As the Council of Genres decrees that making books interactive will boost flagging readership levels and that Reality Book Shows are the way forward; the Goliath Corporation attempt to perfect a trans-fictional tourist coach. Thursday finds herself in the onerous position of having to side with the enemy to head off a greater evil that threatens the very fabric of the reading experience itself.

With Aornis Hades once again on the prowl, an idle sixteen-year-old son who would rather sleep in than save the world from the end of time, a government with a dangerously high stupidity surplus and the Swindon Stiltonistas trying to muscle in on her cheese-smuggling business, Thursday must once again travel to the very outer limits of acceptable narrative possibilities to triumph against increasing odds.

## **SpecOps**

### **Who We Are & What We Do**

The Special Operations Network was instigated in 1928 to handle policing duties considered either too unusual or too specialised to be tackled by the regular force. Over the years SpecOps power was increased to look after governmental departments, an opportunity to serve that we found fulfilling and challenging.

There were thirty-two divisions in total, not all of which were covered by the Parliamentary 'Freespeech' Ordinance 392810-hg25.

See the list below for the divisions that feature most regularly in the Thursday Next series:

#### *SpecOps 1*

##### **Special Operations Network Management**

At SO-1 we run the entire network. Every SpecOps division is answerable to us. Official complaints procedure has been modified to an endless and infuriating loop of automated telephone services.

#### *SpecOps 12*

##### **Office for Special Temporal Stability (The ChronoGuard)**

Recruitment drive now on, due to industrial action expected fifteen years ago.

#### *SpecOps 17*

DISBANDED

##### **Werewolf and Vampire Disposal Operations**

SO-17 was the first privatised SpecOps division. See Yellow Pages for rates card and reporting procedures.

*SpecOps 27*

DISBANDED

**Literary Detectives**

Feel your new original copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a bit weak in alliteration? It could be a bootleg copy. Contact us for all literary problems. Beware of forged Jonsonia and take heed when purchasing 'original' manuscripts. If the price is too good to be true, it probably is. Shakespeareana is now looked after by its own division, SO-29.

*SpecOps 31*

**Cheese Enforcement Agency (CEA)  
(Formerly Good Taste Re-education Authority)**

The Cheese Enforcement Agency was formed as a result of the growing illegal cheese-smuggling industry that arose as a result of the Cheese Duty. The department was formed not only to oversee the licensing of cheese but also to collect the tax levied on it by the government.

## Initial Thoughts of Jasper Fforde

*A taster from The Making of . . . wordamentary of  
First Among Sequels:*

**Initial Thoughts the First:** I was keen to start looking at the Council of Genres as a palette for all kinds of political shenanigans with satirical overtones to global politics. I'd written the basic machinations of the Council in past books but had luckily been quite vague. I had – fortunately – already postulated the notion of the various genres having their own representatives with their own self-serving narrow agendas that kind of works in a wheezy kind of way (as you can see, no similarity to the UN there), and from here the idea of potential 'genre wars' was born, mostly about border disputes and the licensing of various ideas from one genre to be exported to another. Clearly, it didn't take long to formulate the idea of a rogue genre making all sorts of threats but essentially being pretty harmless. To this I added the extra fun of having genres actually parked next to each other, with conflicting ideologies causing all kinds of friction along their borders. It was a small step from there to the so-called 'Axis of Unreadable'.

**Initial Thoughts the Second:** I wanted to think up something pretty spectacularly silly to do with time travel. I theorised that time is ostensibly riddled with paradoxes over existence and non-existence in a quantum manner – how things can be possible and impossible at the same time. It seemed a short hop from there to John Travolta and the Schrödinger Night Fever principle, and the idea that time travel working at all is due solely to something called 'Retro-deficit-engineering': the somewhat cockeyed principle that you can use technology without having to invent it first. Strange, I know, but it seemed absolutely right for technology within the Nextian Universe. Like the Gravitube: truly impossible, but enjoyable nonetheless.

**Initial Thoughts the Third:** I had this notion that I wanted Friday to be a grunty teenager who has to save the world . . . Something of a tricky concept, but one that I liked a great deal. Half the fun of writing TN books is to take a totally off-kilter notion and then somehow finagle it into the narrative. The knock-on effect of this was that Thursday is now almost 52 and no longer a spring chicken. Although she still maintains a strong sense of right and wrong, I felt she should just be slowing down a bit – she has seen so much and done so much, that there isn't a huge amount she can get excited about. Of course, setting the books fourteen years after the last one generated a whole wealth of new possibilities: two new children for one thing, a semi-dead Mycroft, and a disbanded SpecOps.

**Initial Thoughts the Fourth:** I wanted to include Goliath back at full strength again, this time in the role of the good guy. Perhaps.

**Initial Thoughts the Fifth:** I wanted to feature *Pride and Prejudice*, especially having Lady Catherine de Bourgh trying to twist Thursday's arm to get her pathetic daughter to be a Jurisdiction agent.

**Initial Thoughts the Sixth:** I think cheese that is so strong it has to be chained up is like, *really* funny.

Go to [www.jasperfforde.com/tn5\\_special](http://www.jasperfforde.com/tn5_special) features to find out more . . .

## +++Fforde News Flash+++

*New series on the cards from Jasper Fforde in 2009.*

Following on from his Thursday Next and Nursery Crime series, Fforde has bravely branched out into new territory: books that are not metafiction. In a shocking statement to the world's media, British author and former teenager Jasper Fforde announced that he would be 'making up all his own characters' for a three-part saga, the first of which is due to be published in July 2009. 'I'll be using all my own characters in this next book,' he said, 'and not appropriating them from popular fiction.' This radical departure for the famed non-winner of any notable literary prize was decided on the unprecedented urge to 'stretch himself' and 'try something new'. The new series which goes by the name of 'Shades of Grey' is still heavily under wraps but will feature a bizarre dystopic view of the future that mixes Stalinism, British public schools, Linoleum factories and limited colour vision. 'But don't worry,' said Fforde at his rambling seventeen-bedroom Welsh mansionette yesterday, 'it will still be pretty silly.'

*New Thursday Book planned for 2010.*

The sixth in the Thursday Next series will be out in July 2010 and is tentatively titled: *One of Our Thursdays is Missing*. Continuing the story from soon after *First Among Sequels* left off, Jurisdiction has serious problems: with a serial killer on the loose, Speedy Muffler declaring all-out genre war and aggressive book-pulpers threatening to turn entire libraries into MDF self-assembly furniture, only ace bookjumper Thursday Next can save the day. But where the hell is she? Last seen investigating the theoretical Dark Reading Matter, the place – where it is conjectured – erased and forgotten books end up, Thursday is nowhere to be found. With time running out, Jurisdiction decides that you need a Thursday to find a Thursday, so they persuade Thursday5, comfortably getting to grips with the hastily rewritten TN series, to look for the real Thursday in the one region she fears more than anything else: a place of chaos, unpredictability and unresolved plot lines . . . the Real World.



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