

PRIZE CATCH

ALAN CARTER

ABOUT THE BOOK

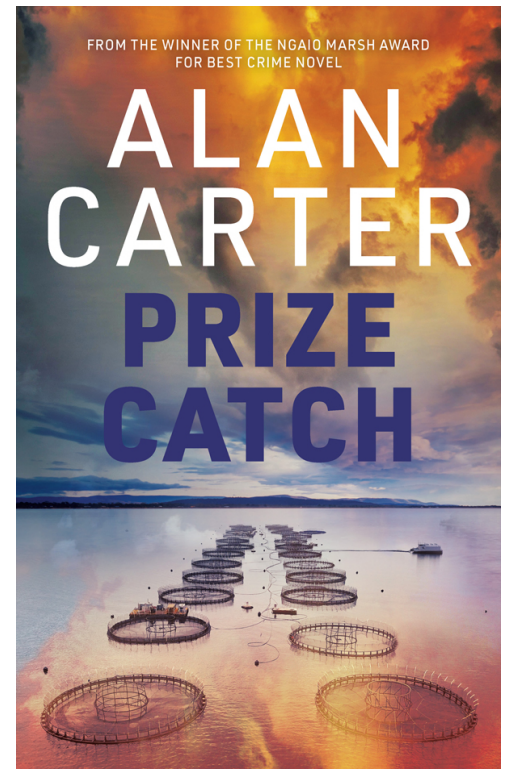
When Roz Chen's wife Niamh is killed in a hit-and-run, Roz is left to deal with her grief, and to wonder if her partner's death was an accident after all. Meanwhile, former soldier Sam Willard begins work at a salmon farm in Tasmania, hoping to be distracted from the ghosts of his past. As allegations of old war crimes surface and Sam is 'promoted' to a special operative against an anti-salmon farm activist, he and Roz form an inadvertent alliance in a race for survival that becomes a quest to find out the dirty secrets of Big Salmon and the country's military elite.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Carter was born in Sunderland, UK. He immigrated to Australia in 1991 and now lives in splendid semi-rural semi-isolation south of Hobart in Tasmania. In his spare time, he follows the black line up and down the local swimming pool, or drags on his wetsuit and braves the icy waters of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. He is the author of seven previous novels: the Fremantle-set DS Cato Kwong series *Prime Cut* (winner of the Ned Kelly Award for Best First Fiction), *Getting Warmer*, *Bad Seed*, *Heaven Sent* and *Crocodile Tears*; and the New Zealand-set *Marlborough Man* and *Doom Creek*, featuring Sergeant Nick Chester, which won the Ngaio Marsh Award for Best Crime Novel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is this novel called *Prize Catch*?
2. What skills does Roz bring to her investigative role?
3. What past is Sam trying to leave behind? What does the phrase *pop the fucker* mean to him?
4. How would you describe his moral compass?
5. What kind of brothers-in-arms code becomes apparent in the returned SAS soldiers that we meet?
6. What is Big Salmon and what does it have to hide?
7. Who are the bad guys in this novel?
8. How would you describe the character of Cav? Who do you think he takes his orders from?
9. What are the qualities of Jill Wilkie? Do you think her outlook shifts over the course of the novel?
10. Why do you think that Niamh and her friend Zeb Meyer lost their lives?
11. Do you think that Grant and Simon from OSI are there to help or hinder Sam?
12. Do you think that Sam or Roz could have made different choices along the way?
13. Who do you think it is that holds power in this island state?
14. In what ways does this novel resonate with current affairs?



INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

How much does the place where you live inspire you when coming up with crime ideas?

From the very first book, it has been central to my inspiration. *Prime Cut* came about when I was living in Hopetoun during the mining boom and the themes of boomtime and spectacular landscape loom large. The subsequent Fremantle-set Cato Kwong books were written once we'd moved back to Freo from Hopetoun. Likewise *Marlborough Man* was written while I was living in a house in the Wakamarina Valley in New Zealand watching the loggers log and hearing the hunters hunt. Now here I am in southern Tasmania and guess what? Yes, I do tend to be inspired by where I live (lucky me), but I also sometimes wonder whether it is just simpler for me to write what I know and see. Is that a sign of a lack of imagination? I know I'm in awe of those writers able to conjure up other times and places and imaginary worlds.

What sparked the idea for Prize Catch, and what did you learn while writing it?

You can't live in Southern Tasmania's Channel country and fail to notice all the salmon farms along the coastline. Nor swim in the ocean and notice the lack of marine life close to shore (in comparison with Fremantle or Hopetoun). Then when Richard Flanagan's book *Toxic: The Rotting Underbelly of the Tasmanian Fishing Industry* came out, it was a must-read for those who care about the environment. At the same time, Mark Willacy's *Rogue Forces* came out and Afghanistan war crimes allegations were in the news a lot, as was the chaotic and speedy withdrawal from the country. So I began wondering, *Hmmm, what if ...?*

In what ways does this novel compare or differ from your previous work?

Starting up with new characters in a new setting is always scary. Cato and Nick have attracted their own (albeit niche) following, but will readers warm to these new people, this different place? I also pushed my own envelope a bit with the higher-octane action elements of this novel. Coming from a TV documentary background, I still have a tendency to rein myself in a little in a social realism sense. This time I let rip some more and enjoyed myself. I might have unleashed a monster!

What is next for Alan Carter? Will we meet Jill Wilkie and Hughsey again?

I'm neck-deep in the third Nick Chester novel set in Franz Josef, New Zealand. And if there's a tsunami of love for Jill Wilkie and Hughsey, then why not?