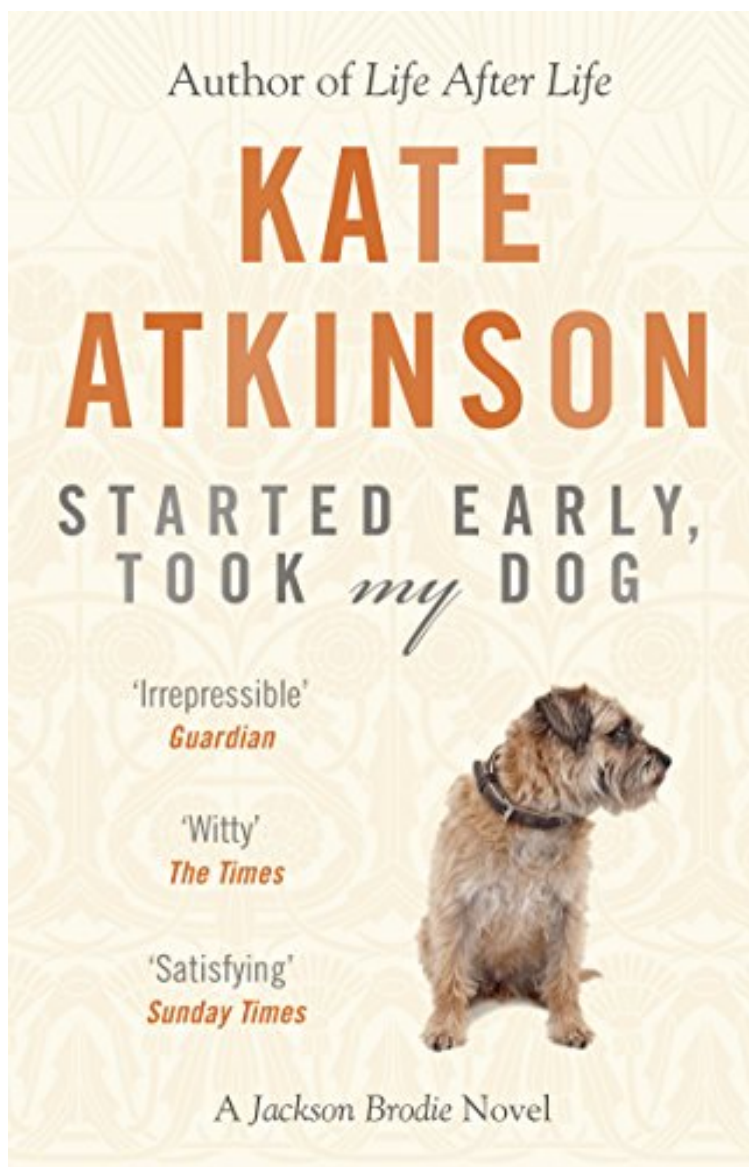


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## Started Early, Took My Dog: (Jackson Brodie)



*Par Kate Atkinson*  
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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA day like any other for security chief Tracy Waterhouse, until she makes a shocking impulse purchase. That one moment of madness is all it takes for Tracy's humdrum world to be turned upside down, the tedium of everyday life replaced by fear and danger at every turn. Witnesses to Tracy's outrageous exchange in the Merrion Centre in Leeds are Tilly, an elderly actress teetering on the brink of her own disaster, and Jackson Brodie, who has returned to his home county in search of someone else's roots. All three characters learn that the past is never history and that no good deed goes unpunished.Extrait1975: 9 AprilLeeds: Motorway City of the Seventies. A proud slogan. No irony intended. Gaslight still flickering on some streets. Life in a northern town.The Bay City Rollers at number one. IRA bombs all over the country.

Margaret Thatcher is the new leader of the Conservative Party. At the beginning of the month, in Albuquerque, Bill Gates founds what will become Microsoft. At the end of the month Saigon falls to the North Vietnamese army. The Black and White Minstrel Show is still on television, John Poulson is still in jail. Bye Bye Baby, Baby Goodbye. In the middle of it all, Tracy Waterhouse was only concerned with the hole in one of the toes of her tights. It was growing bigger with every step she took. They were new on this morning as well. They had been told that it was on the fifteenth floor of the flats in Lovell Park and - of course - the lifts were broken. The two PCs huffed and puffed their way up the stairs. By the time they neared the top they were resting at every turn of the stair. WPC Tracy Waterhouse, a big, graceless girl only just off probation, and PC Ken Arkwright, a stout white Yorkshireman with a heart of lard. Climbing Everest. They would both see the beginning of the Rippers killing spree but Arkwright would be retired long before the end of it. Donald Neilson, the Black Panther from Bradford, hadn't been captured yet and Harold Shipman had probably already started killing patients unlucky enough to be under his care in Pontefract General Infirmary. West Yorkshire in 1975, awash with serial killers. Tracy Waterhouse was still wet behind the ears, although she wouldn't admit to it. Ken Arkwright had seen more than most but remained avuncular and sanguine, a good copper for a green girl to be beneath the wing of. There were bad apples in the barrel the dark cloud of David Oluwales death still cast a long shadow on police in the West Riding, but Arkwright wasn't under it. He could be violent when necessary, sometimes when not, but he didn't discriminate on the grounds of colour when it came to reward and punishment. And women were often slappers and scrubbers but he'd helped out a few street girls with fags and cash, and he loved his wife and daughters. Despite pleas from her teachers to stay on and make something of herself, Tracy had left school at fifteen to do a shorthand and typing course and went straight into Montague Burtons offices as a junior, eager to get on with her adult life. You're a bright girl, the man in personnel said, offering her a cigarette. You could go far. You never know, PA to the MD one day. She didn't know what MD meant. Wasn't too sure about PA either. The man's eyes were all over her. Sixteen, never been kissed by a boy, never drunk wine, not even Blue Nun. Never eaten an avocado or seen an aubergine, never been on an aeroplane. It was different in those days. She bought a tweed maxi coat from Etam and a new umbrella. Ready for anything. Or as ready as she would ever be. Two years later she was in the police. Nothing could have prepared her for that. Bye Bye, Baby. Tracy was worried that she might never leave home. She spent her nights in front of the television with her mother while her father drank modestly in the local Conservative club. Together, Tracy and her mother, Dorothy, watched The Dick Emery Show or Steptoe and Son or Mike Yarwood doing an impression of Steptoe and his son. Or Edward Heath, his shoulders heaving up and down. Must have been a sad day for Mike Yarwood when Margaret Thatcher took over the leadership. Sad day for everyone. Tracy had never understood the attraction of impressionists. Her stomach rumbled like a train. She'd been on the cottage cheese and grapefruit diet for a week. Wondered if you could starve to death while you were still overweight. Jesus H. Christ, Arkwright gasped, bending over and resting his hands on his knees when they finally achieved the fifteenth floor. I used to be a rugby wing forward, believe it or not. Ay, well, you're just an old, fat bloke now, Tracy said. What number? Twenty-five. It's at the end. A neighbour had phoned in anonymously about a bad smell (a right stink) coming from the flat. Dead rats, probably, Arkwright said. Or a cat. Remember those two dogs in that house in Chapeltown? Oh no, before your time, lass. I heard about it. Bloke went off and left them without any food. They ate each other in the end. They didn't eat each other, Arkwright said. One of them ate the other one. You're a bloody pedant, Arkwright. A what? Cheeky so-and-so. Ey up, here we go. Fuck a duck, Trace, you can smell it from here. Tracy Waterhouse pressed her thumb on the doorbell and kept it there. Glanced down at her ugly police-issue regulation black laceups and wiggled her toes inside her ugly police-issue regulation black tights. Her big toe had gone right through the hole in the tights now and a ladder was climbing up towards one of her big footballers knees. It'll be some old bloke whos been lying here for weeks, she said. I bloody hate them. I hate train jumpers. Dead kiddies. Yeah. They're the worst, Arkwright agreed. Dead children were trumps, every time. Tracy took her thumb off the doorbell and tried turning the door handle. Locked. Ah, Jesus, Arkwright, it's humming in there. Something that's not about to get up and walk away, that's for sure. Arkwright banged on the door and shouted, Hello, it's the police here, is anyone in there? Shit, Tracy, can you hear that? Flies? Ken Arkwright bent down and looked through the letterbox. Oh, Christ He recoiled from the letterbox so quickly that Tracys first thought was that someone had squirted something into his eyes. It had happened to a sergeant a few weeks ago, a nutter with a Squeezy washing-up bottle full of bleach. It had put everyone off looking through letterboxes. Arkwright, however, immediately squatted down and pushed open the letterbox again and started talking soothingly, the way you would to a

nervy dog. Its OK, its OK, everythings OK now. Is Mummy there? Or your daddy? Were going to help you. Its OK. He stood and got ready to shoulder the door. Pawed the ground, blew air out of his mouth and said to Tracy, Prepare yourself, lass, its not going to be pretty. Revue de presse "Crime has given Atkinson the freedom to write an ambitious, panoramic work, full of excitement, colour and compassion." (Sunday Times) "Atkinson's finest novel to date. Indeed, it's one of the finest British novels, in any genre, to have emerged for years...sharp and dexterous, subtle and stylish, very funny and at time extraordinarily cutting...This is very much a state of the nation novel - far sharper and more observant and satirically understanding than anything else out there at the moment. And yet Atkinson also gives us humanity, insight and entertainment...a story that deserves to be read for decades to come." (Henry Sutton Mirror) "The wonder of Atkinson's novels has been their joie de vivre, extraordinary given the high incidence of violent death. An irrepressible exuberance shines throughout..folds past and present together with Atkinson's customary flair...extraordinary combination of wit, plain-speaking, tenderness and control." (Guardian) "As ever, Atkinson's prose is diamond-cut to twinkle and slice by turns. Her playful sense of humour dances round the darkness of her themes. She skips through the difficult steps required to balance the reader's need for satisfying (and surprising) resolution with a realist's view of human nature and the messiness of real-life criminality." (Daily Telegraph) "Some authors inspire mild interest; others complete devotion. Kate is definitely one of the latter.... a dazzlingly plotted, un-put-downable read." (Grazia)