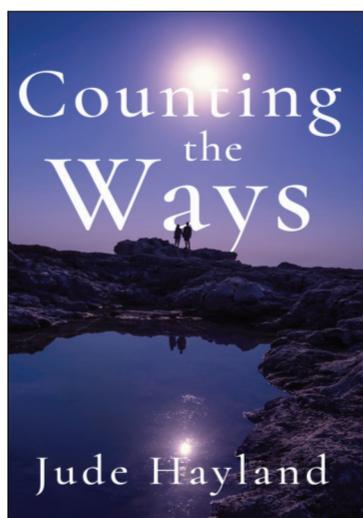




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COUNTING THE WAYS

Jude Hayland

Grace Barnes, living in her subterranean one-room flat at the nether end of Earl's Court, feels out of tune with striving, self-seeking 1980's London. Meeting Archie Copeland, she is gratified to have found a man who shares her obsession for reading and seems more fascinated by Shelley than shifting share prices.

In Oxford, Hester, Grace's mother, considers her estranged marriage to Fergus, who left her thirty years before to go and live on a remote Welsh hillside in pursuit of self-sufficiency. His subsequent appearance at Grace and Archie's quiet wedding is a surprise and she finds it hard to quantify her feelings about him.

Soon, Grace is troubled by a distance in Archie, and a tendency to covert actions even though his faithfulness appears absolute. Moving to the countryside seems to offer relief, but the recession of the late 1980s impacts upon them both professionally and Grace is aware of a growing inadequacy in communication between the two of them as they struggle to talk openly. A spontaneous holiday on the Mediterranean island of Kronos provides a respite for them both and they begin to consider a permanent move away, but then Archie suddenly disappears. In the wake of this, Grace uncovers a trail of debts and increasing evidence of his duplicity. Remaining on Kronos, finding a job and friendship, Grace determines to find Archie. Hester is anxious to help, while Fergus is unexpectedly forthright in his attempts to assist. Archie, meanwhile, is forced to confront years of self-delusion.

In the shadow of Archie's absence, Grace, Fergus and Hester find themselves facing the truth of their fractured relationships and considering how, so often, it has been the unspoken words rather than those uttered that have contributed towards conflict and separation. *Counting the Ways* explores the fears that shadow our lives – failure, loss, regret and mortality – and will appeal to fans of contemporary fiction. It also makes an ideal book group read.

A teacher of English and Drama, **JUDE HAYLAND** has additionally written commercial short fiction for women's magazines since 1984 and has been widely published in the UK, Scandinavia, Australia and S.Africa. Gaining an M.A. with Distinction in 2007, she has been a runner-up in the Bridport Short Story competition.

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