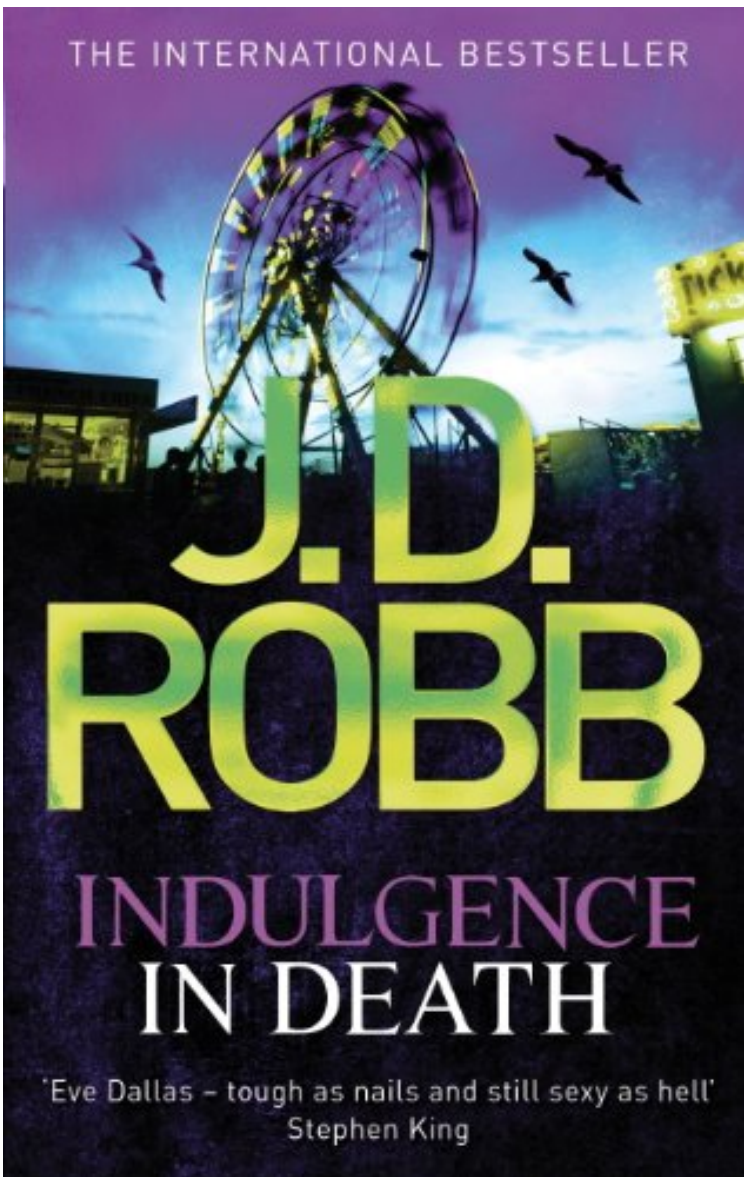


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# Indulgence In Death: 31



*Par J. D. Robb*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIt's playing more and more like it was for the thrill. Just for the rush. And if that's the way it is, he's already looking for the next thrill.'First it was a limo driver shot through the neck with a crossbow. Then it was a high-priced escort found stabbed through the heart with a bayonet. Random hits, thrill kills, and murderers with a taste for the finer things in life - and death - are making NYPSD Lieutenant Eve Dallas angry. And an angry Eve can be just as an efficient and dangerous predator as the killer. As time runs out on another innocent victim's life, Eve's investigation will take her into the rarefied circle that her lover Roarke travels in - and into the perverted heart of madness . . .ExtraitOne The road was a killer, hardly wider than a decent stream of spit and snaking like a cobra between giant bushes loaded with strange flowers

that resembled drops of blood. She had to remind herself that the trip had been her ideal love was another killer but how could she have known driving in western Ireland meant risking life and limb at every curve? Rural Ireland, she thought, holding her breath as they zipped around the next turn on the Journey of Death.

Where the towns were barely a hiccup on the landscape, and where she was pretty damn sure the cows outnumbered the people. And the sheep outnumbered the cows. And why didn't that cause anyone concern? she wondered. Didn't people consider what could happen if armies of farm animals united in revolt? When Murder Road finally carved its way out of the blood-drop bushes, the world opened up into fields and hills, green, green, eerily green against a sky stacked with clouds that couldn't decide if they wanted to rain or just sit there ominously. And she knew those dots all over the green were sheep and cows. Probably discussing war strategy. She'd actually seen them hanging around those weird and okay, a little bit fascinating stone ruins. Towering, tumbling places that had maybe been castles or forts. A good place for armies of farm animals to plot their revolt. Maybe it was beautiful in a hang-the-painting-on-your-wall kind of way, but it just wasn't natural. No, it was too natural, she corrected. That was the deal, too much nature, too much open.

Even the houses scattered over the endless landscape insisted on decking themselves out with flowers. Everything blooming, colors smashed against colors, shapes against shapes. She'd even seen clothes hanging on lines like executed prisoners. It was 2060, for God's sake. Didn't people out here own drying units? And speaking of that yeah, speaking of that where was all the air traffic? She'd barely spotted a handful of airtrams, and not a single ad blimp lumbered overhead blasting out its hype on sales. No subway, no glide carts, no tourists blissfully providing marks for street thieves, no maxibuses farting, no Rapid Cab drivers cursing. God, she missed New York. She couldn't even risk driving to take her mind off it, as for some cruel, inexplicable reason people over here insisted on driving on the wrong side of the road. Why? She was a cop, sworn to protect and serve, so she could hardly get behind the wheel on these death-trap roads where she'd probably end up mowing down innocent civilians. And maybe some farm animals while she was at it. She wondered if they'd ever get where they were going, and what the odds were of getting there in one piece.

Maybe she should run some probabilities. The road narrowed again, boxed in again, and Lieutenant Eve Dallas, veteran murder cop, pursuer of psychopaths, serial killers, homicidal deviants, fought to hold back a squeal as her side of the car lightly kissed the hedges. Her husband of two years and the reason she'd suggested this leg of their vacation took his hand off the wheel to pat her thigh. "Relax, Lieutenant." "Watch the road! Don't look at me, look at the road. Except it's not really a road. It's a track. What are these damn bushes, and why are they here?" "It's fuchsia. Lovely, aren't they?" They made her think of blood spatter, possibly resulting from a massacre by a battalion of farm animals. "They ought to move them away from the stupid road." "I imagine they were here first." Ireland wound through his voice a lot more appealingly than the road wound through the countryside. She risked a glance in his direction. He looked happy, she realized. Relaxed, happy, at ease in a thin leather jacket and T-shirt, his black hair swept back from that amazing face (another killer), his eyes so rich a blue it made the heart ache. She remembered they'd nearly died together a few weeks before, and he'd been badly wounded. She'd thought she could still remember that breathless instant when she'd thought she'd lost him. And here he was, alive and whole. So maybe she'd forgive him for being amused at her expense. Maybe. Besides, it was her own fault. She'd suggested they take part of their vacation, their anniversary celebration, here so he could visit the family he'd only recently discovered. She'd been here before, after all. Of course, that trip she'd taken in a jet-copter. When he slowed as they entered what could very loosely be called a town, she breathed a little easier. "Nearly there now," he told her. "This is Tulla. Sinead's farm is a few kilometers from the village." Okay, they'd made it this far. Ordering herself to settle down, she scooped a hand through her choppy cap of brown hair. "Look there. The sun's breaking through." She studied the miserly opening in the gray, and the watery beam that struggled through. "Wow, the light. It's blinding." He laughed, reached out to smooth a hand over the hair she'd just ruffled. "We're out of our element, Lieutenant. Maybe it's good for us to be out of the norm now and again." She knew her norm. Death, investigation, the insanity of a city that ran instead of walked, the smells of a cop shop, the rush and the burden of command. Some of that had become Roarke's norm in the last couple years, she mused. He juggled that with his own world, which was buying, selling, owning, creating pretty much every freaking thing in the known universe. His beginnings had been as dark and ugly as hers. Dublin street rat, she thought, thief, conniver, survivor of a brutal, murderous father. The mother he'd never known hadn't been so lucky. From that, he'd built an empire not always on the sunny side of the law. And she, cop to the bone, had fallen for him despite the shadows or maybe because of them. But there was more to him than either of them had known, and the more lived on a farm outside of the little village of Tulla in County Clare.

"We could've taken a copter from the hotel," she said to him. "I like the drive." "I know you mean that, so it makes me wonder about you, pal." "We'll take a shuttle when we leave for Florence." "No argument." "And we'll have a candlelight dinner in our suite." He glanced toward her with that relaxed, happy smile. "The best pizza in the city." "Now you're talking." "It means a lot to them that we'd come like this together for a couple of days." "I like them," she said of his mother's family. "Sinead, the rest. Vacations are good. I just have to work myself into the mode and stop thinking about what's going on back at Central. What do people do here, anyway?" "They work, farm, run shops, tend homes and families, go to the pub for a pint and community. Simple doesn't mean unfulfilled." She let out a little snort. "You'd go crazy here." "Oh, within a week. We're urban creatures, you and I, but I can appreciate those who make this way their own, who value and support community. Comhar," he added, "that's the Irish word for it. It's particular to the west counties." There were woods now, sort of looming back from the road, and pretty if you went for that kind of thing stretches of fields divided by low walls of rock she imagined had been mined from the pretty fields. She recognized the house when Roarke turned. It managed to be sprawling and tidy at the same time, fronted with flowers in what Roarke had told her they called a dooryard. If buildings sent off an aura, she supposed this one would be content. Roarke's mother had grown up here before she'd run off to the bright lights of Dublin. There, young, naive, trusting, she'd fallen in love with Patrick Roarke, had borne his child. And had died trying to save that child. Now her twin sister ran the house, helped run the farm with the man she'd married, with their children and siblings, parents the whole brood seemed to root here, in the green. Sinead stepped out of the house, telling Eve she'd been watching for them. Her gilded red hair framed her pretty face where green eyes warmed in welcome. It wasn't the connection of blood kin that put that affection on her face, or in the arms she stretched out. It was family. Blood, Eve knew, didn't always mean warmth and welcome. Sinead caught Roarke in a solid, swaying hug, and as her murmured greeting was in Irish, Eve couldn't understand the words. But the emotion translated. This was love, open and accepting. When she turned, Eve found herself caught in the same full-on embrace. It widened her eyes, shifted her balance. "Filte abhaile. Welcome home." "Thanks. Ah;" "Come in, come in. We're all in the kitchen or out the back. We've enough food to feed the army we are, and thought we'd have a picnic, as you've brought such nice weather." Eve cast a glance up at the sky, and supposed there were degrees of nice weather, depending where you stood on the planet. "I'll have one of the boys fetch your bags and take them up to your room. Oh, it's good to see your faces. We're all here now. We're all home." They were fed and feted, surrounded and questioned. Eve managed the names and faces by imagining them all as suspects on a murder board even the ones who todd...