

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRES

Immigration removal centres (IRCs) are holding places for foreign nationals awaiting decisions on their asylum claims or awaiting deportation following a failed appeal. They were introduced by the Immigration Act 1971 when 'detention centres' – as they were then called – were introduced to impose restrictions on the movement of immigrants while their claims were being processed. No time limit was placed on their use, and they were often like prison facilities. In 2002 the government tightened up its immigration policy as a response to public concern about the rising numbers of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants arriving in Britain in the late 1990s. Today there are ten immigration removal centres in England and Wales. Detainees have frequently complained about the conditions inside detention centres and the treatment of detainees by staff. In February 2002, violence broke out at the Yarl's Wood facility, Group 4, allegedly refused medical treatment to a detainee who died. Disturbances, hunger strikes and suicides are common occurrences in all of Britain's immigration removal centres.

### FURTHER READING

- Mr Pip* by Lloyd Jones
- Small Island* by Andrea Levy
- Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe
- The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- What is the What* by Dave Eggers
- A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah
- Human Cargo* by Caroline Moorhead

[www.chriscleave.com](http://www.chriscleave.com)

Chris Cleave is a barman, a long-distance sailor, a teacher of marine navigation, an internet pioneer and a journalist, although he currently works as a writer of novels and a regular family column for the *Guardian*.



SCPTRE

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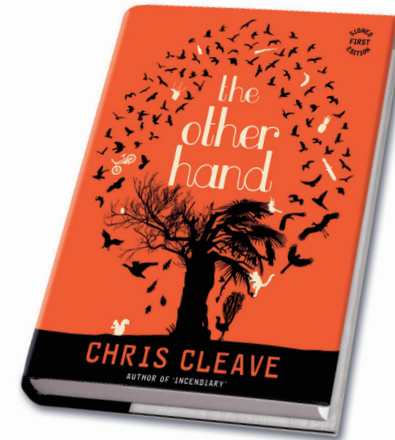
CHRIS CLEAVE Photograph © Niall McDermid

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Cleave has been a barman, a long-distance sailor, a teacher of marine navigation, an internet pioneer and a journalist, although he currently works as a writer of novels and a regular family column for the *Guardian*. His debut, *Incendiary*, a controversial open letter to Osama bin Laden, gained notoriety for the macabre coincidence of its UK publication on 7th July 2005, the day of the London terrorist bombings. It went on to become an international bestseller published in 20 countries to awards and critical acclaim. His second novel, *The Other Hand*, was inspired by his early childhood in West Africa and by an accidental visit to a British concentration camp. Chris lives in London with his French wife and two mischievous Anglo-French children.

## READING GROUP GUIDE

### THE OTHER HAND Chris Cleave



**'A very funny book about brave, funny people . . . Just read it'** Anna Carey, *The Gloss*

It is a warm morning in May 2007, and a Nigerian refugee calling herself Little Bee has just emerged, not entirely legitimately, from an immigration detention centre in London. She is also intrigued by Britain with its Queen's English and its high suburbia of Kingston-upon-Thames, past the rows of shiny cars and straight to the front door of high-powered magazine editor Sarah O'Rourke and her Batman-obsessed son Charlie. Little Bee has nowhere else to turn and Sarah, on the day of her husband's funeral, has her reasons for letting the girl stay. Something has happened that has not only left its mark on Little Bee but has shaken the O'Rourke family to its foundations, and it has something to do with Sarah's left hand.

Continued on reverse . . .

