

# The rag and bore shop



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Jason Dorrant is 12 years old and something of a misfit. Quiet and shy, he is more comfortable around younger children than around his peers. For this reason, he is considered "slow" by people in his town. Jason has some friends, but they tend to be little kids like his 7-year-old pal Alicia Bartlett. THE RAG AND BONE SHOP reveals what happens after Alicia is discovered dead. It turns out that Jason had visited Alicia the day of her death.

Jason wants to do all he can to help the police catch her killer. He agrees to tell them everything he knows. The police, meanwhile, suspect that Jason is the killer. They turn to a man named Mr. Trent who specializes in interrogation. Trent has never failed to get a criminal to confess. He is especially motivated in this case --- a senator with an interest in Alicia's murder has promised to help his career if he gets a confession.

A good portion of the book takes place in a small, hot, windowless room --- the interrogation room. Cormier describes it in enough detail to make the reader as uncomfortable as Jason is while he is being questioned. The way Trent works is also detailed --- first he does everything he can to gain Jason's trust, then Trent tries to persuade him to confess to killing his young friend. At the same time, Jason struggles to understand both what Trent wants from him and what he remembers about Alicia's last day alive. Cormier moved smoothly between the two characters' points of view, building suspense and driving the story to its powerful conclusion. Although the book is very nearly flawless, it may be one chapter too long. The final chapter concerns the aftermath of Jason's experience with Trent.

It wraps up the book with a shocking surprise, but it also seems a bit unrealistic, taking a believable story and stretching our ability to believe it a little too far. The chapter is unnecessary due to the excellent job Cormier did describing Jason late in the book.