

# Earlsdon Literary Magazine 181

*The newsletter of the AVID Readers Group, based at Earlsdon Library*

**Next meeting:** Thursday 5 November 8pm

**Venue:** Earlsdon Library

**Book for discussion:** *Last Man Standing*—David Baldacci

## Beware of Spoilers

### Our October Book

#### *Under your Skin* — Sabine Durrant

While on her morning run, TV presenter Gaby almost literally stumbles across a body in the woods. She helps the police, of course, as a good citizen should, but is stunned when they arrest her. Instead of getting the support she expects from the studio she is effectively fired and somehow she never quite manages to get in touch with her husband while he is in the Far East on a business trip. Having been released, she sends her daughter to stay with the ex-nanny in order to keep her from the hordes of journalists staking out the house. However she enlists the help of the most sympathetic of them to carry out her own investigations hoping to clear her name.

So far so standard, but it's difficult to describe people's reactions to this book without at least heavily hinting at a major twist so, if you think you might want to read/finish the book I suggest you skip to the next column.

*\*This is a filler paragraph to help you avoid reading on.\**

Gaby soon finds that the evidence incriminating her actually links the victim to the house, rather than any one person in it, and further details suggest that her absent husband may be, in fact, to blame because the victim had applied to be their nanny, had been interviewed by him alone and became his mistress. But there is a dogged policeman who continues to suspect Gaby and, when her husband returns, she goes a step further to throw the troublesome forces of the law off her scent for good.

Several of us worked out that we were dealing with an unreliable narrator before the denouement but at different stages and for various reasons: 'something smells fishy here', 'surely such an experienced cop can't be getting it so wrong', 'there's no other feasible murderer' and so on.

Revelations and explanations ('all the cleverness' as someone put it) came right at the end and the relatively slow start put many people off. We ended up thinking

**Next month we will be reading:**

*Lone Wolf*—Jodi Piccoult

The date for discussion of this book is 10 December.

about how it might have been made better—knowing the truth earlier on and being privy to Gaby’s machinations, or having the story told from the point of view of the police, or the journalist, perhaps

The unsympathetic characters didn’t help. Gaby remains a little too smug in her middle-class certainties and what we find out about the victim makes you feel sorer for her friend and boyfriend than for her herself. However, at least we managed to work out an underlying motivation: it

seemed that Gaby’s real fear was of not being needed any more, even though, paradoxically, she seems to have spent her life at best keeping people at arm’s length and at worst actively repulsing them. We were also impressed by her ability to dissemble.

Overall then, not a success as far as AVID Readers were concerned. Another thriller to follow ... maybe we’ll get on better with that one.

**Catherine Fitzsimons**

## What to read next ...

It was only when exploring [Goodreads](#) to find out what else Sabine Durrant had written that I realised there was something by her sitting on my shelf. I was fooled because *Having it and Eating it*, published well over ten years ago, is the type of book that would be chick lit were it not that the protagonist is actually married already. However, the world and the problems are much the same, even if Maggie has more responsibilities than Bridget Jones and takes less drastic action than Gaby. While I don’t remember much about it, it was obviously good enough to survive one of my periodic culls—but then again, the jaunty stripes by which I recognised the cover of the first paperback edition (now replaced with a more generic Carole Matthews meets *The Edible Woman* image) may have influenced that decision.

*The Great Indoors*, ‘a novel about a single woman who owns an antique shop in the suburbs of London, and how she deals with changing relationships with her family and the men in her life’ from 2005 seems to fall into the same category and was followed by two YA novels of the *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging* variety featuring a heroine known as Connie Pickles. The move to psychological thriller is relatively recent and *Remember Me This Way* has, on the whole, got better ratings than *Under Your Skin*. However, that’s two books in the genre: if Sabine follows her usual pattern the next could well be sci-fi.

## What’s on

Quite a few events this month, but all at city libraries, so, rather than go onto another page then leave it mostly empty, I shall refer you to <https://www.facebook.com/coventrylibraries> which, remember, you can view without joining Facebook!

If you have any other reviews or recommendations, tales of literary events, or anything else you think other AVID readers would find interesting, please send them to:

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