

THE BODECIA BOOK CLUB REVIEW

The Poison Tree by Erin Kelly

The story starts with Karen, the single mother of Alice, a precocious child, as they drive home after picking up Rex from prison. Rex has spent the last ten years serving a sentence for manslaughter. Karen is determined that they will learn to be a family and put everything behind them, but secrets have a way of coming back and have to be faced.

The story is mainly told in flashback, ten years into the future, as Karen is remembering the summer of 1997 as a very different person - now nervy, neurotic and traumatised. This led to some confusion when reading although other felt this led to some great build up of tension with the book.

The main events of The Poison Tree are set in a rambling old house in Highgate during the summer of 1997, when Tony Blair became Prime Minister of Britain for the first time, and, at summer's end, when Princess Diana died.

Back in 1997 Karen regards herself as having a boring life, her boyfriend Simon, a fellow-student and rugby player whom she doesn't really like, ends their relationship, leaving Karen at loose ends for the summer as her flatmates decamp for a long holiday after Finals. The shy, sheltered Karen is befriended by glamorous, passionate Biba. Biba and her shy, enigmatic brother Rex live in seclusion in Highgate, and welcome Karen into their home and their lives.

Although slow to start, we very much enjoyed The Poison Tree, being pulled into the life of the central three characters over their intimate summer in 1997. From the start of the book we were aware that disastrous events are to happen at the end of the summer, as these are heavily signalled throughout the book, these kept us gripped and interested to read further. We gradually find out some of the reasons why, but don't see the full picture until the end of the book. However, the ending let us down big time; it shocked us just how abruptly it did end.

Again we found the first chapter hard to get into so make sure you carry on reading and you will be pleased you have. The story is well written highly descriptive and definitely a page turner. The characters are so different and their described in depth which creates the perfect image.

The King of contemporary horror, suspense, science fiction and fantasy fiction, Steven King reviewed this book by saying "A terrific suspense debut, reminiscent of another British woman's auspicious bow: Daphne DuMaurier's Rebecca. The shadows gather until the ending looms like a threatening figure. This one gets the writer's ultimate bit of praise: I wish I had written it."

We have found out that Erin Kelly has recently sold the copyrights to make a movie, so watch this space!

We gave The Poison Tree **7 ½ / 10**

The book we are now reading is **Every Last One by Anna Quindlen**