



Do No Harm

Carol Topolski

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Everyone knows about Virginia: about her stellar reputation as a gynaecologist; about her commitment to her women patients. But does anyone know about the knives? Everyone knows about Faisal too: about his gentle charm and his delight in his family. But does anyone know he's a traitor?

Do No Harm Details

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From Reader Review Do No Harm for online ebook

Kyla says

I find this author's ability to explore the complexities of human nature fascinating. Unlike some other reviewers, I found very little of the forays into the characters histories irrelevant. This is a book about the co-existing "good" & "evil" that exists in all of us, it looks at how extreme those two forces can effect behaviour and the greater consequences of a person's actions temporally, for a community & individuals. I think it's also a book about the impact of parental dedication, a book about the changing needs of growing human beings, about self indulgence and about the human need for being a part of something whether it be family, a community, a work force or even rituals.

Heather says

Well, kept thinking that 'this isn't my kind of book' but persisted to the end. Found it to be very disjointed and I had to keep going back to check what year we were in and concentrate on who I thought the current person was. I did work out how this book was going to end but this definitely isn't my kind of book at all - not something I'd follow up with.

Rita Moura de Oliveira says

Do no harm, de Carol Topolski, é um dos livros mais estranhos que tenho lido nos últimos tempos. Comprei-o pela capa (again...) mas também porque teria algo a ver com We need to talk about Kevin.

Todo o livro se desenrola em torno de Virginia, uma ginecologista obstetra brilhante, admirada pela sociedade médica e com quem qualquer aspirante deseja trabalhar. Virginia é uma mulher solitária, que vive para o trabalho e que psicologicamente não é assim tão estável, a julgar pelos ataques de apetite voraz, por ser antissocial e por ter uma amiga imaginária desde a infância, Ruby. Uma daquelas amigas que nenhum pai desejaria para uma filha, porque só a leva por mais caminhos.

Acompanhamos a vida de Virginia alternadamente nos anos 40, durante a sua infância solitária apenas preenchida por Ruby, e nos 70, onde se dedica à prática médica. Pelo meio, conhecemos Gilda, uma paciente cujo bebé salva e de quem se torna madrinha, e Faisal, um colega admirador do seu profissionalismo.

E assim andei durante umas 200 páginas (de um inglês um pouco mais difícil do aquele a que estou habituada), sem saber muito bem no que o livro ia dar. Até que algo acontece na vida de Virginia. E até que o seu comportamento profissional perde a ética uma ou duas vezes. E mais não posso contar. Mas gostava de ter mais opiniões acerca deste livro, de que estive para desistir e de que agora me congratulo por não o ter feito.

Sal Noel says

Carol Topolski is a fabulous writer. A clear 5 stars early on- almost didn't matter where the story went. In fact, it didn't matter. Her style makes me hungry for more.

Nothing is overdone. It's stated. She gives us time to mull over but doesn't bombard us. Characters are complex, well developed and linked intelligently. If this were on audio and your mind drifted you could miss a vital point. Read it leisurely. Wallow in the language. Escape the dumbed down era and be grateful Carol Topolski is writing damn fine books.

Annabel Kantaria says

Creepy, dark and clever.

Tori S says

Plodding and was quite a chore to get through as it didn't really hold my attention. I'm glad I read *Monster Love* first because I don't think I would have read it after this one.

Simon Tesler says

A compelling and intriguing story, but a little too leisurely in its execution. (A common fault in most modern literary fiction I feel). Readers attracted by the blurb, as I was, may be disappointed to find that the narrative drive only really gets going well beyond the halfway point, after pages and pages of very well-written but ultimately superfluous character background and scene-setting. We are introduced, often in considerable detail, to characters or events which serve no real purpose within the story, and while this allows us to admire Topolski's undoubted skill and imagination, I found it immensely distracting as a reader. Also I kept tripping over multiple anachronisms in the period setting. Perhaps I'm being pedantic but I found this evocation of the 1940s and the 1970s, the two eras in which the book is set, far from convincing. Perhaps the most significant stumbling point is the fact that surgical laparoscopy - a key element in the book's denouement - was almost unheard of in ordinary British hospitals until well into the 1980s. But there are many other such niggling inconsistencies, each one a comparatively minor detail, but with an annoying habit of getting in the way of suspension of disbelief in the story.

Jane says

Carol Topolski's first novel was called *Monster Love*. It was extraordinary. Dark. Disturbing. Flawed. But still extraordinary.

And so when I saw *Do No Harm*, her second novel I was torn. I was intrigued, but I was also a little scared.

In the end, of course, I had to pick it up. I found a very different book, but those four words still applied.

Dark. Disturbing. Flawed. Extraordinary.

Do No Harm is the story of a doctor.

Virginia Denham is a doctor at the very top of her profession: she is a consultant in obstetrics and

gynaecology in a big London hospital.

Her patients were reassured by her interest and understanding, and by her professionalism.

Her colleagues and her staff were equally impressed by her professionalism, and by her intelligence and skill.

But she had a secret life, and she guarded her privacy ferociously.

A stunning opening chapter revealed a model professional, and a deeply flawed and disturbed woman. An accident waiting to happen.

The chapters that followed moved backwards and forwards through time to build a detailed picture of Virginia's difficult life.

She was an extraordinary character: complex and frighteningly real.

I wanted to understand that character, to know what made her, and the suspense was palpable.

In the end something did go wrong. And it was devastating.

I'm deliberately holding back details.

Because this is a novel driven by characters rather than plot. And to tell any more than I have would, I think, be telling too much.

A disturbing story of a consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology is not for everyone, and I half wished that I hadn't picked it up.

The writing, the characterisation, the suspense – so much in this book was brilliant. I had to keep reading; I had to know.

I just felt that the balance was a little off: the balance of plot and character.

A flaw, but not a fatal flaw.

Because I really can't think of another author who deals with such difficult subject matter with such insight and intelligence.

And now I am torn between pushing such dark books away and wondering what Carol Topolski will write next ...

Sam Still Reading says

I spotted this book in Kinokuniya one Saturday morning, complete with a sticker that said, 'If you like Sophie Hannah' (I do – a lot), 'you'll love Carol Topolski'. Generally I am somewhat suspicious of these stickers, but my holiday must have relaxed me so I turned to the back cover to read what it was about. It appeared to be about three doctors – Virginia, who has a secret about knives; Faisal, who has been a traitor to

someone else and Gilda, who sounds fun-loving but has a secret involving rubber. (Particularly intrigued about this last one, as even Fifty Shades of Grey didn't get kinky and secretive with rubber).

Again, maybe it was the lazy mood of vacationing, but this book is quite different to what I thought. Virginia is a highly renowned surgeon and Faisal has managed to get a job in her 'firm' (or 'team' as we call it down here) as a senior registrar (more senior doctor). Gilda is a beautician who becomes a friend of Virginia's after collapsing on the street. The last two characters are more minor in comparison to Virginia. We travel back and forth between time periods relating to Virginia's youth (World War II, her mother having an affair) before returning to the present day. We also meet Ruby, Virginia's companion.

I don't credit myself as being a sleuth, but I worked out very quickly who Ruby was and what her role was. It made the finale less shocking for me as I'd guessed that Ruby would start expressing her opinions more. I would have liked more about Faisal and his guilt at leaving his country in addition to how he 'dobbed in' the guilty person. I'm not entirely sure why Gilda was mentioned on the back cover, as she's a much more minor character. She does have a small role in trying to bring Virginia out and accept herself and an interesting back story.

The narrative also jumps around between past and present and different characters. Occasionally it can be difficult to remember where each person was at when we met them last and I think some of the tension is lost. Towards the end, the book does become more of a thriller as the pieces are joined together but it's somewhat slow going at the start. Each piece is interesting (a whole book could be written on Virginia's mother!) and well written but occasionally I was left unsatisfied.

I believe that Topolski's first novel, Monster Love, is very highly regarded. I know that I can be sometimes critical of medical stories (although I didn't find any fault with the medicine in this book – well done on great researcher) so I think I'll try this novel before saying this author is not for me.

<http://samstillreading.wordpress.com>

Muriel says

At first the book is very confusing in the very way it's written. One chapter for each character. The book mixes up the years and travels from past to present back to past. After the dizziness of traveling in time, I found myself completely addicted to the story and with a terrible hunger for knowing where the author wanted to bring me. The reading took me a while though. I had to stop several times, finding myself sick and disgusted by what I was reading. The ending was worth putting myself through this.

I'm gonna wait for a little while but I most certainly will read the other novel she wrote: Monsters Love.

Julie says

This book has a great story line with solid, engaging character development. An unusual beginning but everything slots in to place quite quickly. The idea behind the story was original and led to a gripping plot. The ending was paced well and the style and language were that of an accomplished writer. Would definitely read more by this author. Very enjoyable.

Kim says

Virginia is an excellent gynaecologist but has a dark past which affects her interrelationships. Her past comes back to haunt her when she discovers her mother's secret, a discovery that tips her over the edge. Thrilling read with lots of elements, including medical harm, S&M and self-harming.

Cleo Bannister says

This book is written over three time periods and involves many characters including Faisal, Virginia and Gilda. It isn't an easy read and I found the first few chapters very confusing as it isn't until later that the bonds between the present day people become clear.

Essentially the book is about a mad woman but you get some insight along the way into her early life and the reason why she feels compelled to do what she does.

It isn't an easy read and this wasn't helped that I wasn't able to like the main character, she did carry out some kind acts but she wasn't likable.

Worth a read but I did prefer[[ASIN:014103338X Monster Love]]

Liesbeth says

Having not read Topolski's first novel *Monster Love*, I had no expectations.

I like a good page turner though, and that's what the blurb on the back promised.

No such luck unfortunately.

I had to wade through the long, drawn out first half of the book.

A very, very slow build up to the actual story.

It gathers up some speed towards the end, but the end is predictable and disappointing.

A few medical mistakes, a woman heavily in labour in the third stage springs to mind, think she means first stage!

And were we really that heavily into food from the delicatessen shop and real coffee in the 70's??

It tried to draw me in, and I really tried cause I like the concepts she used, but it failed, which is a real shame.

Jenny says

Darkly funny, incredibly detailed portrayal of insanity. The character Virginia is a literary triumph. My only gripe(s) with this book are firstly the way the story kept jumping back and forth in time and between various characters who are drawn into Virginia's orbit. Early on this was quite confusing. And then there's the implied reason for Virginia's madness: I don't feel her emotionally vacant mother is just cause. However, it's

possible a person can be born with madness rather than made, so I can ignore this. Despite these qualms, the story and stories within stories, are so gripping I read every word. Highly recommended.
