



Atlas of Men

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Dr. Robert Thames, an infectious disease specialist who travels the world in search of new antibiotics, has just learned that his government job is about to be cut when three boxes are unexpectedly delivered to his home in Washington, D.C. Inside them are files of a long lost secret research study conducted at his prestigious prep school when he was a student there. Robert has repressed all memories of this degrading “study,” particularly the naked photos. He learns that the research intended to explore the relationship between body type and leadership qualities--and it shocks and infuriates him. He decides to track down his four closest friends from Danvers Academy, and together they uncover the terrible truth of what was buried by the faculty, the school, and the boys themselves.

Atlas of Men Details

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From Reader Review **Atlas of Men** for online ebook

Claire Matturro says

David Sklar's new book, "Atlas of Men" (Volcano Cannon Press), with a release date of October 16, 2018, should delight readers of medical thrillers, mysteries, and boarding school/coming of age tales—as well as all lovers of well-written fiction. "Atlas of Men" raises important ethical questions about research with live human subjects and science's relationship to race and identity. But beyond that, it is simply a well-written, compelling story about scandal and secrecy at a prestigious private school and of the boys who, as men, transcend what happened to them while students there.

It's a great read, with compelling characters, page-turning pacing balanced with contemplative passages, and an often gut-wrenching, always riveting plot about what happened to students at an upscale boarding school in the 1960s. There's also a lovely second-chance-at-romance storyline in the novel. Inspired by true events that happened to the author, the narratives and dialogues ring with authenticity. With his crisp, on-point and well-worded sentences, Sklar takes readers right smack into the heart of the story—and into the heart and mind of the protagonist, the enigmatic, brilliant, and compassionate Dr. Robert Thames.

Robert Thames is a medical doctor specializing in infectious disease research. Born in the Philippines of a Filipino mother, Robert was adopted by American medical missionaries who lived there. As a teen, he was sent to the USA to a mostly-white, upper crust all-boys boarding school (modeled after the author's own alma mater). While there, he was subjected to humiliating and unethical so-called scientific research that left him and his classmates traumatized for years.

As the story opens, Robert, as a never-married and somewhat lonely adult several decades past his boarding school days, works in a government research job and learns his position is to be cut due to funding issues. Soon after that, he mysteriously receives three boxes of old records pertaining to the unethical research conducted on him and his classmates at the boarding school. Painful memories resurface, and he decides to pursue the matter further. As part of his own investigation, Robert tracks down his four closest friends from the school. Together, he hopes they can uncover the truth of the so-called scientific research, long buried by the faculty, the school, and many of the boys themselves.

Robert locates the man who was his closest friend at the school and who is now married to the girl Robert had fallen in love with while they were all teens. To Robert's dismay, he learns that this former best friend is dying. As a last request, his dying friend asks Robert to bring together for one last time their group of close friends from the school days. Robert agrees, though he is unsure how to locate one of them.

Robert is not only driven to reunite the friends for one final time, but also to bring some peace to himself and his dying friend. But he encounters threats and discouragement from the school's officials once they learn he has the boxes of research. The school has much to lose if Robert publicizes the materials and the knowledge he has gained since reviewing the boxes.

Told in a combination of contemporary times and flashbacks to the boarding school days, "Atlas of Men," moves at an energetic pace, building suspense and compassion for the boys who were humiliated in the name of science. The flashbacks to the time when the boys were required to strip completely naked in front of classmates while they were individually photographed is heartbreakingly told with candor and empathy. What becomes of the naked photographs in the wrong hands provokes anger, and Robert struggles with a desire for retribution and revenge. But he also understands much harm—including embarrassment and injury

to innocent persons—could result if he goes public with what he has learned. Robert's internal conflict over whether to expose the school for its past sins creates a compelling element of the book. The woman who was his first love offers to help him with whatever he decides to do. A new bond begins to develop between them, though much stands in their way.

The author, who is drawing upon personal experiences, knows exactly how to frame the plot and put the reader right there in the action. Readers will care, and care deeply, for Dr. Robert Thames, his classmates, and his lost love.

Part medical thriller, part boarding school drama, and part second-chance romance, *Atlas of Men* is an engaging, gripping novel, well-written and insightful, which deserves a wide audience of readers. I received an Advanced Readers Copy of the book through an online review magazine (not through the author or the publisher), but the opinions here are strictly my own.

Hannah says

Atlas of Men is an incredibly riveting literary drama. I was blown away by medical aspects of this book and how well they intertwined with the story, a perfect balance of secrecy and science. A wonderful choice if you enjoy thrilling mysteries that keep you guessing!

Angelle Barbazon says

Atlas of Men has earned a well-deserved, permanent spot in my personal library. David Sklar mixes a coming of age tale with elements of a thriller, all set to the backdrop of a New England boarding school. Sklar writes with the poetic intensity that readers crave, making you step back and wonder what you would do or how you would react in a certain situation. And that's a true sign of a great novel!

JKS Communications says

Who doesn't love a good mystery? This book is psychological, scientific, and thrilling! It's got complex characters who are so closely intertwined through their school days that their dark adolescent secrets follow them well into their adult lives.

Amanda says

When I received this book and decided to look it up before I read it, the book is described as a medical thriller or mystery that is based on a true story. To me, this book is a coming-of-age, fictitious memoir. *Atlas of Men* by David Sklar is about a man named Dr. Robert Thames. He receives a shipment of files on his

doorstep. When he goes through the files, he realizes that they are photos and information about a research study that he was in during college. The only issue is, he was not aware that he was a part of the research study, and the events of that day still haunt him. The book jumps back and forth between Robert's college days and the present. He has tried to put the past behind him, but there is also something more sinister about the research photos. As Robert contacts his old schoolmates, they must decide what to do about these files.

Like I said above, to me, this is a coming-of-age story based on true events. The events that take place to this group of men is despicable and makes you wonder how this is allowed to happen. This book is filled with emotions. This group of men was scarred for life and these events had a distinct effect on the rest of their lives. The book also discusses friendship and second chances at love.

However, the pacing of the book is extremely slow. There is no thriller or mystery aspect of this novel, in my opinion. This is clearly a book about the emotional and mental anguish of someone who was hurt and deceived. There is also a lot of medical jargon that can be a little confusing for those who are not used to those terms. The book does bounce back and forth between time periods and it does affect the pacing. Overall, this is poignant read. I rate this book 3 out of 5 stars.

Susan Swiderski says

Although a number of characters in this book are doctors, I don't agree with its classification as a medical thriller. To me, it's more of a memoir-like book, which includes the discovery of some rather questionable and clandestine "research" conducted on some unwitting subjects when they were prep school students.

Revelations about shocking medical studies are nothing new. Most of us are aware of some of the shameful "studies" that have been conducted over the years, in which the subjects are completely in the dark as to how their lives and well-being are being manipulated in the name of "science." These teenage boys certainly had no idea. They thought the mandatory nude photos taken of them at the school were for some kind of posture study. Sure, they thought it was weird, but they had no idea how weird. And they certainly didn't know their lives were still being studied some forty years later.

The study is based on body type as a prediction of performance. Ergo, the photos. But, it turns out the photos were used for some more nefarious pursuits, as well, which contributed to psychological problems for some of the subjects.

The writing is good, albeit a bit slow-moving at times, but the characters steal the show. The author does an excellent job depicting the uncertainty and anxiety of boys trying to "make the grade" and conform to school-prescribed ideals so they can "fit in." And it shows how, as adults, their experiences at that school and the friendships they made there forged their characters, for better or worse. For lack of a better term, it's an interesting "study" in human behavior.

Sarah McElwain says

ATLAS OF MEN couldn't be more timely. Based on the true story of somatotype studies done by Dr. William H. Sheldon, which involved taking nude photographs of adolescent boys at elite New England prep

schools in the 1950s, David Sklar's book imagines the devastating and shameful effect this abuse had on four boys. Dr. Robert Thames receives a surprise carton of files from the past that fill him with the cold chill of recognition, sending him on a suspenseful journey around the world to reconcile these recovered memories and to understand the effects of this experience on three old friends, now middle-aged men living in very different circumstances.

Vanessa Keiper says

I enjoy immersing my imagination in a good scandal! *Atlas of Men* had a very complex love triangle that was far more than two men liking the same woman. This book was like a medical drama, with elements similar to *Grey's Anatomy*.

Marissa DeCuir says

Every chapter is full of twists and turns, and problems related to sexual abuse, child experimentation, and racial discrimination that is very relevant today. I was on edge from the drama that unfolded from the protagonist Robert's travels and each new thing he discovered in the files. This is a book of confusion and betrayal, while still remaining true to reality with an open ending.

Daniela says

Just got this book in the mail! Can't wait to read it! Will get back with a review.

Christine says

I won a copy of this book from Goodreads Giveaways.

This book was absolutely riveting. I really couldn't wait to finish the story of what happened to the boys at Danvers. The way this is written is very much stream-of-consciousness for our narrator, Robert Thames, and there is a very dreamlike quality to both his thoughts and the action of the story. There was enough in it to make it feel real and rooted, but also plenty to make it seem as if it was fate (barang, maybe) or something else. It wraps up, but not neatly, much like life, and the "mystery" isn't really so mysterious at all once you get to the heart of it. Highly recommend.
