



Others of My Kind

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At age eight, Jenny Rowan was abducted and kept for two years in a box beneath her captor's bed. Eventually she escaped and, after living for eighteen months on cast-offs at the local mall, was put into the foster care system. Suing for emancipation at age sixteen she became a legal adult. Now she works as a production editor for the local public TV station, and is one of the world's good people.

One evening she returns home to find a detective waiting for her. Though her records are sealed, he somehow knows her story. He asks if she can help with a young woman who, like her many years before, has been abducted and traumatized.

Initially hesitant, Jenny decides to get involved, reviving buried memories and setting in motion an unexpected interchange with the president herself. As brilliantly spare and compact as are all of James Sallis's novels, *Others of My Kind* stands apart for its female protagonist. Set in a near future of political turmoil, full of surprising twists, it is a story of how we overcome, how we shape ourselves by what happens to us, and how the human spirit, whatever horrors it undergoes, will not be put down.

Others of My Kind Details

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Author : James Sallis

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From Reader Review Others of My Kind for online ebook

Sarah Smith says

I didn't get on with this book at all. I found the characters totally unbelievable and I got no connection with them at all. I had been looking forward to reading this but was left disappointed. I found the story jumped about too much and the characters didn't behave in believable way. Sorry but this one left me cold and even though it was quite a short book I picked it up and put it down so many times that I thought I would never finish it.

Chris Volion says

Not so much a story as a shared experience with the protagonist. Describing why I liked it would be as difficult as telling you why I've enjoyed the company of a particular friend over the last few years. As promised in the tout, it is brilliantly spare and compact.

Bandit says

My only experience with Sallis' work to date was the cinematic adaptation of *Driver*, which I didn't like. But this book was just slender enough of a noncommitment to give the author another try and I'm so glad I did. If Sallis' writing is noir, then maybe I like noir more than I thought I did. It is bleak, very bleak, and a drama not a mystery as most noirs seem to be, but the quality of narrative is so good, so comfortably (if that's the right word) paced, sparse yet very moving and compelling study of human condition. In no small way this is all because of Jenny Rowan, the book's heroine, the ultimate survivor, the ultimate observer. This was a great read, very quick, very impressive, excellent introduction to a potentially excellent (pending further reading) author. Recommended.

Steve says

When I received a review copy of this book as part of the "RealReaders" programme, I was quite intrigued by the blurb on the back - I had heard of James Sallis, and have had "Drive" on my "to-read" pile for quite a while. I should have taken more notice of the word "experimental" in the blurb, though, as that was quite significant.

I was expecting to encounter something along the lines of an Elmore Leonard, with a complex and unfolding plot, with twists and turns along the way, finishing with a surprising and satisfying twist at the end. If that is what you are looking for, this is not the book for you. It is more along the lines of a written example of using negative space, as it is what is not talked about that is important.

It's very difficult to discuss the book without giving spoilers, as so much of the book is dependent on context and filling in the spaces that are left blank. If you don't want to read any spoilers, skip to the next review!

The subject matter of this novella is rather timely coming so soon after the release of the victims in Cleveland, and it seems to be the authors attempt at looking at the effect of abduction on the victims. We are told that the protagonist, Jenny Rowan, is one of the "good people" but we soon learn that she is also a very

damaged person. There is an elephant in the room throughout this book, in that we are told very little of what she actually went through, apart from being kept in a box under her abductors bed - it was only after reading the book, and sitting down and thinking about it that I realised that Jenny has only moved through a succession of boxes. She is essentially a very closed off person, trying to please those around her, but keeping herself boxed up to avoid any hurt or damage. She makes a huge effort to trace her parents, but then makes no effort to re-establish any relationship with them. She never digs deeper than the surface with anyone, and never allows them to get too close to her - and much the same happens to the reader. There are also some very strange divergences within the plot - she manages to strike up a friendship with the (Female, black) President... and walks away from it - but the grounds for that friendship are never really established, nor her reasons for walking away. The whole book seems to be a collection of loose ends and divergences, loosely structured around a series of reminiscences that taken as a whole seem not to make much sense. However... despite the drawbacks, along with the lack of depth and overall superficiality of the book, it's real genius lies in the attempt to show us that the "others of my kind" are all of us, in that we all suffer damage and hurt, yet we all show a face to the world that can be controlled by others.

Toby says

A sparse and poetic novella that seems to have confused many a reader who expected a novel about a girl who escapes from living in a box under a kidnappers bed - you know the type, readers who get off on the true stories of abused children - when actually it's a work of literature designed to encourage analysis of the world around the reader. It's not a Sallis noir but it retains his usual existential poetics and societal observations that make the Lew Griffin books such a stand out series in the genre.

Anne says

James Sallis is an American author, best known for his Lew Griffin novels and *Drive*; his 2005 novel that was adapted for the cinema. *Others Of My Kind* is his latest novel, published in the UK by No Exit Press on 27 October 2013. Sallis is an author that I've not come across before, his novels are best described as noir crime - or 'hardboiled' fiction which would never be my first choice when selecting my next read.

Others Of My Kind should probably be described as a novella, rather than a novel - the paperback copy has just 157 pages and can easily be read in one sitting.

The writing is spare, not a word is wasted, but despite this, the story is well defined, expertly executed and features a cast of characters who are very ably led by the protagonist Jenny Rowan. Jenny is a successful TV editor, her work is well-known and well-respected. She lives simply and sees the good in people. Her neighbours, friends and colleagues do not know that Jenny was once the Mall Girl - an eleven-year-old who was found living in a shopping mall after escaping from a man who had abducted her and kept her in a box under his bed. When Detective Jack Collins calls on Jenny and asks her to speak to a young woman who is traumatised after a similar experience, Jenny's memories begin to haunt her again.

The story is set sometime in the near future, although the actual year is not disclosed. America is at war, the White House is on full security and the news is full of scandals. Jenny does her best to help people wherever she can, she seems to bear no resentment towards the man who robbed her of her childhood, preferring instead to use the experience in a positive way - to see the best in others and to offer hope to those who are

suffering.

Others Of My Kind is really not my usual sort of read, but I enjoyed it very much. Part of the beauty in this book is its length and the eloquence of the writing. It doesn't have a fast paced plot, it's more of a discovery of human kind and how horrific experiences don't always mean the destruction of character.

Diane S ? says

Jenny Rowan, changed her name after a horrendous experience, and is now after a prolonged recovery, working at a news station as a video editor. This novel, fortunately does not dwell on the details of her captivity, but on her resilience to move forward and to make a life for herself. The kidnapping in fact is not the message of this story, but just the means to introduce a very interesting character.

The world is in chaos, the government unreliable, fashions are changing and things are moving on whether she is ready for them or not. Go figure, just like real life for us all now. So we really have control over one thing, that is how we react to things. We can dwell on our mistakes, our misfortunes or we can move forward. Regardless off what happens to us, the world goes on, things change. That I believe is the message of this novella, not as gritty as Sallis usually is, but delivering an important message through a pretty great character.

Cateline says

Others of My Kind by James Sallis

Last night I read a James Sallis novel, in one sitting, *Others of My Kind*, I cannot say enough good things about it, or his writing. Poetic, spare, eloquent and hard hitting. It will break your heart, then revive your faith in humanity.

His characters are complex, and straight forward at the same time. The more I think about the story, the more I love it.

I've read several of Sallis's Lew Griffin series, a PI based in New Orleans a few decades ago. Good stuff, accurate portrayal of Non-touristy New Orleans.

Dan Downing says

We can find many authors who would take James Sallis' 116 page meditation and transform it into a 400 page novel. Such a metamorphosis would not be an improvement; indeed, it would be criminal.

What we are shown here transcends headlines and psychology texts and self-help How-tos. Here we find a woman with an unusual history with whom we may identify, as we are of her kind. Discovering how and

why, and to what depth, brings great satisfaction to the reading; once we see ourselves and those others, we realize why the imaginary extra 300 pages are not needed. Nor wanted.
Highly Recommended.

Teena says

Finishing at 116 pages, this novella packs in a lot. I've been complaining a lot lately about the extraordinary length of most modern fiction - life is busy and I want a quick fix from my reading. This book certainly provided that. I haven't read any of Sallis' work before, though I gather he is always succinct, and I admire his ability to not over-explain. That said, I probably would have liked the book to go into more detail (yes, I'm contradicting myself).

CuteBadger says

Jenny has had a difficult life. When she was eight she was abducted and kept in a box for two years. She then lived alone in a shopping mall, before eventually starting to work and make friends who take the place of her family. As the novel starts, she is working at a TV channel as an editor and her life seems to be on as even a keel as can be expected. However, when a cop asks her for help with another young girl abducted in similar circumstances, Jenny must decide whether she wants to get involved and consider how it will affect her life.

This is a short book which I read in one sitting and which gripped me throughout. It's a strange kind of novel as, although events occur during it, the reader isn't left with much impression of the actual events, but rather with the imprint of the effect these events have on the characters. As James Sallis is predominantly a writer in the crime genre, I suppose this book is classed as a crime novel. It's a very different kind of crime novel though as it's not concerned with whodunit or even whydunit. We see everything through Jenny's eyes and hear about it in her written version of events. For someone who has gone through so much she is very calm and presents events in a non-sensational way and often surprises us with her attitudes to things. The book's focus is on how she, and some of the other characters, are impacted by events in their lives. In Jenny's case these impacts aren't always what you would expect, leaving you with a strong impression of a complex and real person who has chosen to turn outwards to a great extent rather than turning inwards and isolating herself. But she does everything on her own terms, taking control of her own life rather than continuing to be a victim.

The language of the book is very simple and real – you can really hear Jenny's voice. She is an ordinary person to whom extraordinary things have happened, so she would naturally express herself like this. There is a charisma to her, of which she seems unaware, but which draws others to her. Sallis is very clever in portraying her not only via what she says, but also through what she does. An example would be in the very first scene of the book, in which she feeds the detective who has come to her for help.

I enjoyed this book hugely and would recommend it to fans of the crime genre who may be looking for something a bit different. I was sorry to say good-bye to Jenny and would love to be able to read about her again and hear about how her life moves on.

Carol says

Review to come .

Charles says

Fascinating character study of a woman who was kidnapped as a child and kept mostly in a box for two years. It's a short novel, a quick read, beautifully written. I would have loved to know more about her time as "mall girl."

Maxine Wetherall says

“At age eight, Jenny Rowan was abducted and kept for two years in a box beneath her captor's bed. Eventually she escaped and, after living for eighteen months on cast-offs at the local mall, was put into the child-care system. Suing for emancipation, at age sixteen she became a legal adult. Nowadays she works as a production editor for the local public TV station, and is one of the world's good people.”

Having never read or even heard of James Sallis before and always keen to try new authors I was very pleased to receive this book to review. After finishing the book I was rather disappointed with the read. It is a short book and with that said there was really not enough time for the characters to develop and I really did not form any attachments or care what really happened to them.

Some of the plot seemed really strange and I was not altogether sure what relevance they had like Jenny striking up a friendship with the president (really!). I will not be seeking out any other books by this author and was quite relieved that it was only a short book and did not take long to read.

Lia says

This novella starts out pacy, with a solid narrative voice.

The story's landscape felt strangely pertinent while being disjointed from the present reality I'm familiar with: I later learnt that the novella is set in the near future. Which is an interesting take on the noir fiction. I have recently read a science fiction novel which featured noir element. (The Door Into Summer by Robert A. Heinlein.)

This novella reads like literary noir. It is as I imagine Kate Atkinson wanted her novel 'Case Histories' to read. This book is quietly intense, tugging at you, pulling you in. This crime novella isn't torture porn dressed up, it isn't crowded with vacant one-note characters going through the motions as a serial killer slash rapist slash child molester commits one outlandish crime after another, outwitting the one good cop until the mega blowout at the end between the criminal genius mastermind serial killer with almost supernatural survival skills against the one good cop who wouldn't give up, no matter what - If that your bag, check out any number of paint by serial killer novels/series.

There is one false note, and that's Jenny. She reads as too well adjusted for someone who went through such a traumatising experience. And yet, this is not a story about Jenny's or even Cheryl's survival or seeking resolution, it seems to be a mediation on the modern world, and people living with pain. This quite unassuming story becomes stranger still with the introduction of a US Vice-president's missing child. This story felt both visceral and remote - a peculiar combination than in spite of the description, works.

The ending, what can I say. It felt strangely anti-climactic, with its open ended-ness. (view spoiler) Yet, it felt fitting, while somehow falling short. A real conundrum!
