



## The Trouble with Goats and Sheep

*Joanna Cannon*

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Part coming-of-age story, part mystery, *The Trouble with Goats and Sheep* is a quirky and utterly charming debut about a community in need of absolution and two girls learning what it means to belong.

England, 1976. Mrs. Creasy is missing and the Avenue is alive with whispers. The neighbors blame her sudden disappearance on the heat wave, but ten-year-olds Grace and Tilly aren't convinced. As the summer shimmers endlessly on, the girls decide to take matters into their own hands. Inspired by the local vicar, they go looking for God—they believe that if they find Him they might also find Mrs. Creasy and bring her home.

Spunky, spirited Grace and quiet, thoughtful Tilly go door to door in search of clues. The cul-de-sac starts to give up its secrets, and the amateur detectives uncover much more than ever imagined. As they try to make sense of what they've seen and heard, a complicated history of deception begins to emerge. Everyone on the Avenue has something to hide, a reason for not fitting in.

In the suffocating heat of the summer, the ability to guard these differences becomes impossible. Along with the parched lawns and the melting pavement, the lives of all the neighbors begin to unravel. What the girls don't realize is that the lies told to conceal what happened one fateful day about a decade ago are the same ones Mrs. Creasy was beginning to peel back just before she disappeared.

## The Trouble with Goats and Sheep Details

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Author : Joanna Cannon

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## From Reader Review The Trouble with Goats and Sheep for online ebook

### Jennie Campbell says

The Curious Incident of the Wife in the Nighttime + Boo Radley + lashings of Angel Delight = The Trouble With Goats and Sheep.

It's narrated by a little girl who sounds more like Alan Bennett than a little girl. Grace manages to simultaneously be clever enough to make constant wry observations, and stupid enough to think that you can find God as if it's a game of hide and seek.

Grace's narration is interrupted by chapters in which we visit various, largely indistinguishable neighbours, who provide enough exposition for us to lose all interest in her childish detective work.

Set in the heat of a seventies heatwave the whole thing feels overcooked. The goats and sheep metaphor isn't brilliant to begin with and gets mentioned again and again and again. The period details are charming but even they begin to grate after the umpteenth mention of Angel Delight.

The whole thing is about as fresh as a forty two year old Jackie magazine.

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### Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says

I felt very British in the reading of this book.

Yes, I am an idiot. If it has taken this long to figure that out you might can sit next to me.

Anyways it's England in 1976. It's hot. Very hot.

Did me telling you that a couple of times get on your nerves? Suck it up buttercup because this book tells you that fact a whole lotta times.

I threw in another one just to get you good and broke in! \*cackles\*

The story takes place on the Avenue where all the neighbors know everyone's business. But then Mrs. Creasy goes missing.

The gossiping begins.

Then we meet my two saving graces for this book. Ten year old Grace: **My mother said I was especially at an awkward age. I didn't feel especially awkward, so I presumed she meant it was awkward for them.** and her best friend Tilly.

The two girls over hear the whispers and end up (after hearing the vicars sermon) decide that they can find God and that will also lead them to Mrs. Creasy. God is everywhere after all.

They begin their sleuthing.

They figure out the secrets of listening in.

**I had worked out, through a series of experiments, that this was the most useful step. Any higher and you couldn't hear the words; any lower and you risked being discovered and sent to your room, and repeatedly told proverbs about people who listen in doorways.**

I was disappointed that I didn't love this book more. For crying out loud it has some spunky little girls and Jesus's image on a drainpipe.

**"No, Dorothy. Jesus Christ wasn't crucified just so you could get to choose your own deck chair." May Roper's voice lifted itself higher into the air. "He was crucified so we can all make our own bloody decisions about where we want to bloody sit."**

There was just so much with the boring parts. The girls weren't featured enough for me and the adults (many adults) were just boring clods. I got beat over the head with "Angel Delight" until I will never, ever try the stuff even if it was served here.

Then when the wrap up of where 'Mrs. Creasy was' came about I was mad at myself for finishing the book. This could have been a great book. Dammit.

*Booksource: Netgalley in exchange for review.*

This might be the review in which Sandra hunts me down and smacks me upside the head with a book review.

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Because she liked it and I'm a hateful booger and didn't. She is probably the right one in this equation.

### **Sara says**

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear this had such promise and for such a long stretch I truly thought I'd found one of those lovely little gems that perfectly blends the coming of age of a couple of plucky English Scout Finch's with a traditional Agatha Christie romp through the evil hiding in a lovely English country village.

Alas, what starts off as a promising story about a missing woman who may have known a few too many secrets about her fellow villagers suddenly and very randomly descends into total lunacy.

Joanna Cannon knows how to turn a phrase and her primary narrator, precocious ten year old Grace is pretty charming as smarter than their years heroines are wont to be. Cannon smartly doesn't stick us permanently in Grace's head (precocious English school girls are charming up to a point let's not kid ourselves) so chapter's alternate between Grace and her sickly friend Tilly somewhat paradoxically "looking for god" who they believe with help them locate the missing woman and various community members on their street who they visit to see if god is hanging out with them.

Cannon puts together a solid supporting cast of the usual suspects one tends to encounter in "evil in your backyard" mysteries. It's summer in the late 70's and we meet a pathetic middle aged homebody stuck living

with his wretched mother who equates being a horrid busy body with concern for the well being of her community, a sweet, gentle OCD ridden germaphobe (and the husband of the missing woman), the local bully and his much abused wife, Grace's loving but clearly distracted parents, and the odd ball at the end of the street who everyone hates because he was accused of kidnapping a baby that he didn't actual kidnap and he's probably gay and he likes to take photographs.

As we spend time with each of these people and begin to see them through Grace and Tilly's naive but intuitive eyes it becomes apparent that they're all hiding something. We move back and forth between the disappearance of the baby ten years ago and the subsequent "accident" that killed the oddball's mother and the present day. Clearly the community knows something about the "accident" and it appears the missing woman may have found out exactly what happened.

The problem is each and every person involved in this story is also hiding a totally unbelievable barrage of other secrets that have more or less nothing to do with anything. Rather then stick with a really solid story that could have exploded marvelously when Grace and Tilly randomly stumble on the truth Cannon does a totally bizarre u-turn at the 3/4 mark. Suddenly the community isn't just covering up a possible murder they're also embezzling money, framing people for kidnapping, breaking and entering other people's houses and then there's an absolutely bonkers side story where the entire street simultaneously and apropos of absolutely NOTHING decides Jesus is appearing in a water stain.

Yup, we go from really well written mystery to everyone on the block seeing Jesus in like .6 seconds.

The worst problem with *The Trouble with Goats and Sheep* is the total lack of resolution. Once it becomes apparent that the missing woman knows everything that the people on the avenue have done its all about where she's gone and if/when she comes back what will happen.

So what happens?

Nothing.

We never find out who's behind anything or where missing lady went or why or with who or frickin' anything and I literally threw this book across the room, seriously, I actually legit chucked it across the room, I swear, I should have taken pictures, but I really truly did it. I. Threw. This. Book. Across. The. Room.

Maybe it was the heat? I don't know...

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### Annet says

*A quirky, moving and beautifully written tale of life in 1970s Britain... a delight from start to finish* (Review Paula Hawkins)

Wonderful, magical story, exceptional read! The story centers around a street in an unnamed town or village in England somewhere. Grace and Tilly, two cute 10-year olds, play major parts in the story. It is the summer of 1976, a scorching hot summer and Mrs. Creasy has gone missing in the street. She disappeared. All neighbours are in turmoil and the avenue is alive with whispers, gossip and conclusions. As the summer

shimmers endlessly on, Grace and the vulnerable, wise Tilly, decide to take matters into their own hands. But as doors and mouths begin to open and the cul-de-sac starts giving up its secrets, Grace and Tilly find more than they could have imagined.

A colourful set of characters, a weird and amazing story....a brooding atmosphere....tragedy and fun moments combined.... deliciously written. Bit by bit, piece by piece we are given fragments of the story, to complete the puzzle, alternating between 1967 and 1976. A coming of age story, how people stick together and how a story grows out of control... to a surprising climax ending.... and above all the 'grownup wisdoms' of Grace and Tilly and their pointy observations, makes you chuckle, in between moments of drama and tragedy too. Real good read, great debut, charming and fascinating & recommended! *Highlight in my reading year 2017!*

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### **Jaline says**

For two months in the extremely hot summer of 1976, the mystery of Mrs. Creasy's disappearance from the Avenue occupies all the residents' thoughts and energies. Not completely, though, because nine years before, a suspicious fire in the neighbourhood occurred and its embers still smolder beneath everyone's thoughts and actions.

Grace Bennet, the main narrator of this story has a best friend named Tilly, and Grace says: "*I have known Tilly Albert for a fifth of my life. She arrived two summers ago in the back of a large, white van . . .*" Grace and Tilly's insights and concerns are a breath of fresh air wafting through the heavy heat and belaboured consciences of all the adults on the Avenue.

*"My mother said I was at an **awkward age**. I didn't feel especially awkward, so I presumed she meant that it was awkward for them."*

Grace and Tilly do not know what is going on in the neighbourhood, but when Mrs. Creasy disappeared, they sensed the undercurrents all around them and decided that Mrs. Creasy **had** to return soon so everything could go back to normal. They also decide to go on a search for God.

The narrative of this story is exquisite and I loved seeing the neighbourhood through Grace's and Tilly's eyes. The plot also shifts from the current time (1976) to the last few years of the 1960's and we have glimpses of what people will do under duress, and how the more people that are involved, the more intense and out-of-hand things can become. We are shown both sides of 'belonging' and 'being part of the neighbourhood'.

Although there are mysteries involved that drive the plot, it is also about many other issues that can be found anywhere people are found. As different as their personalities are, it is the connections between these neighbours in the Avenue that draws them together. Although it sounds idyllic and is an ideal worth striving for, it also has its dark side.

I highly recommend this novel that succeeds on every level it addresses.

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### **PorshaJo says**

Yeah! My first Buddy Read...with Dana and it was a wonderful way to kick off a new experience of Buddy Reads. The title is what initially caught my eye, then the story had me adding it to my TBR where it probably would have remained forever if not for Dana suggesting a Buddy Read. I'm so glad she picked this one.

Told in alternating timelines, The Trouble with Goats and Sheep is the story of one little town in England and the people who live there. Frankly, they are all nuts. It's part mystery. One of the towns residents, Mrs. Creasy, has disappeared and no one knows what happened to her. Naturally, everyone and I mean everyone has their own ideas of what happened. But there are two special, wonderful girls who take it upon themselves to find her. Well, find God who they believe will find Mrs. Creasy and bring her home. It tells the story of friendship too between these girls and coming of age during that one fateful summer. But the lesson in this one is.....mind your own dang business! Really! I don't want to give anymore away to this story to give away any clues.

It was a great story to read. I would read so much as I wanted to know what happened. Why were the townsfolk like they were. What happened to Mrs. Creasy. And why did the entire town conspire against one Walter Bishop. Yes, I don't want to give anything away. It's a wonderful, light summertime read and is perfect if you just want a relaxing, fun read. Thanks Dana for suggesting this one!

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### **Sandy \*The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice\* says**

EXCERPT: Mrs Creasy disappeared on a Monday.

I know it was a Monday, because it was the day the dustbin men came, and the Avenue was filled with a smell of scraped plates.

'What's he up to?' My father nodded at the lace in the kitchen window. Mr Creasy was wandering the pavement in his shirt sleeves. Every few minutes he stopped wandering and stood quite still, peering around his Hillman Hunter and leaning into the air as though he were listening for something.

'He's lost his wife.' I took another slice of toast, because everyone was distracted. 'Although she's probably finally just buggered off.'

'Grace Elizabeth!' My mother turned from the stove so quickly that flecks of porridge turned with her and escaped onto the floor.

'I'm only quoting Mr Forbes,' I said. 'Margaret Creasy never came home last night. Perhaps she's finally buggered off.'

ABOUT THIS BOOK: England, 1976.

Mrs. Creasy is missing and The Avenue is alive with whispers. As the summer shimmers endlessly on, ten-year-olds Grace and Tilly decide to take matters into their own hands.

And as the cul-de-sac starts giving up its secrets, the amateur detectives will find much more than they imagined...

MY THOUGHTS: The summer of 1976 is hot, and a lot of things are blamed on the heat. No one is acting

normally, and the disappearance of Margaret Creasy only serves to exacerbate the strangeness.

It was the title that attracted me, 'The Trouble With Goats and Sheep'. It is a very clever title, just as this is a very clever book. Cannon is an author who can take the ordinary, the mundane, and transform them into something more than a little magical.

Whoever would have thought that the story of two little girls, taking something that the Vicar says quite literally and spending their summer looking for God (because God is everywhere), would turn into such a charming book? If you are looking for something light, heartwarming and charming, this will more than fit the bill.

Don't expect everything to be tied up, nice and neatly, at the end, because it isn't. The author left me with just as many questions as she answered, but she also left me smiling, satisfied and wanting to read more of her books.

4.5 very smiley stars for The Trouble with Goats and Sheep by Joanna Cannon, narrated by Paula Wilcox, published by Simon and Schuster Audio, which I listened to via OverDrive. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page or the 'about' page on [sandysbookaday.wordpress.com](http://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com) for an explanation of my rating system.

This review and others are also published on my blog [sandysbookaday.wordpress.com](http://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/)  
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### **Angela M says**

There's something that appeals to me in a story told from a child's perspective. Maybe it's the innocent perceptions that are full of wisdom that the adults around them just don't always have or maybe it's their honesty and self awareness.

Mrs . Creasy has disappeared and ten year old Grace and her nearly ten year old delicate friend Tilly , decide they will find out what happened to her . They can do that and keep everyone in the neighborhood safe they believe , if they can find God. Instead they find Jesus on a drainpipe. So yes , this is funny at times , especially in the chapters from Grace's perspective, but while there are lighter moments, there are some things going on here that will give the reader pause .

While this small British community is experiencing a heat wave , these precocious, girls who stole my heart , go from house to house under the guise of working on a Brownie badge to see what they can find out about Mrs. Creasy's disappearance. While it's clear to the reader, but not to these mini sleuths something terrible happened 9 years ago that the people in this neighborhood have been hiding . It is through the narratives of the neighbors that we get clues, but Grace's alternating narrative was my favorite and I always couldn't wait to get back to it . The time frame alternates back and forth between the present of 1976 and back to 1967 when there was a fire , a death and a baby that may have been kidnapped.

I loved Grace and how she decides that she needs to watch over Tilly and the story is definitely about friendship and learning what it really means. It's also about belonging, about misconceptions of those that are

different , and about chilling things that people do to take matters into their own hands ,and about a different time when everyone in the neighborhood seemed to know everything about everyone or do they ?

An excellent debut novel which will keep me looking for what Cannon may write in the future.

Thanks to Scribner and Edelweiss.

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### Iris P says

The Trouble with Goats and Sheep

★★★★ 4 charming stars!

*"A child can ask questions that a wise man cannot answer"*

**Author Unknown**

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Grace and Tilly, the astute and inquisitive 10 year-old protagonists of *The Trouble With Goats And Sheep*, charmed me from the very beginning of this quirky story.

While I grew up thousands of miles away from England, the novel's nostalgic take of the 1970's was a big part of the allure for me as its narrative took me back to the carefree days of my childhood.

The story starts during the summer of 1976 as a sweltering heat wave is sweeping across England, including *The Avenue*, a picturesque housing estate located in a rural part of the country.

Margaret Creasey has gone missing, but most residents appear to be more concerned about the secrets she might have taken with her than her well-being or the details of her mysterious disappearance.

As the school year comes to an end, Grace and Tilly need to find a worthy project to fill their long summer days, investigating what happened to Mrs. Creasey sounds like the perfect mission for them.

One day, while listening to the Vicar deliver a sermon about how God distinguishes between those who deserve eternal punishment and those who deserve eternal life like *"a shepherd who separates the goats from the sheep"*, the girls decide that before they can hope for Mrs. Creasy's safe return they will have to find God.

And so Grace, along with her somehow reluctant sidekick Tilly, embark on a mission to find the Almighty among the residents of *The Avenue* by asking questions that are at times poignant, frequently funny and occasionally impertinent. Or at least they sound that way to some of the people they talk to.

The girls have been told to stay away from Walter Bishop, an odd man who lives by himself in Number 11. A few years earlier another traumatic event, this time the kidnapping of a baby, made Walter a pariah in the community, even though nobody found any proof of his involvement in the incident.

Although the story is mostly told from Grace's perspective, the narration frequently switches among the

different characters. There are also flashbacks to the winter of 1967 describing a tragic house fire in which a few of the residents played a role, although we don't know a lot about what exactly took place.

The girls quest for answers hits several snags when they discover that some residents have been keeping quite a few secrets and that no one is particularly anxious to share them.

By the time Tilly discovers *Drainpipe Jesus*, an apparition that at least for a while brings the people of *The Avenue* together, we are certain that their elusive behavior have something to do with Mrs. Creasy's strange departure. The stories behind each one of the characters are cleverly intertwine until an unexpected episode is revealed and we finally begin to understand what happened.

For me, the most memorable aspect of this novel is how accurately (and humorously) Cannon depicts the way children filter what they hear. At this young age they are still making sense of the world and so they pick on adult expressions and behaviors, but frequently lack the context to fully interpret their meaning. On the other hand, it is precisely that sense of innocence that allows Grace and Tilly to ignore the prejudices that have become so prevalent among those that surround them.

I specially cherished the way Grace and Tilly's friendship was portrayed. There's a moment when Grace, motivated by her need to be accepted by her peers, hurts her friend deeply.

This passage, in which she reflects how her insensitive words brought so much pain on Tilly, illustrates Cannon's thoughtful writing:

"I still hadn't learned the power of words. How, once they have left your mouth, they have a breath and a life of their own. I had yet to realize that you no longer own them. I hadn't learned that, once you have let them go, the words can then, in fact, become the owners of you."

Among other things, *The Trouble With Goats And Sheep* reminds us that indeed words can be powerful but also very damaging. It is also a cautionary tale about the extremes people can go to when adopting a herd-m mentality and by blindly accepting the beliefs of their tribes.

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A big thank you to Barbara not only for recommending this story but also for so kindly furnishing a copy of the book as well!

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### **Dana says**

5 beautiful, insightful stars!

This is probably the longest review I have ever written, but the moral of this story is so powerful, yet written in a light, fun way, it has stayed with me weeks after finishing it!! Also, it was a wonderful buddy read with my GR friend PorshaJo!! Thank you for reading it with me. It had sat on my shelves forever and I might not have ever gotten to it had we not decided to read it together - and what a beautiful story I would have missed out on!! This will definitely go on my favorites shelf!

*The Trouble with Goats and Sheep* is a charming story set in two different decades - 1967 and 1976. In 1967 a baby goes missing - in 1976 an older woman, Mrs. Creasy disappears, both from the neighborhood estate (Avenue). The backdrop of the story is set in the summer heat wave of 1976 and everyone is blaming the weather, as well as each other for all going wrong on the Avenue. The heat not only reveals secrets from the 1967 storyline, but is bringing out the worst in everyone. One Sunday, Grace, spunky ten year-old and narrative, and her fragile ten year-old friend, Tilly, decide to go to church to ask God to help them find Mrs. Creasy. When they ask the vicar how to stop people from disappearing, he tells them "You have to help them find God." After more questioning they are told that God is everywhere and will keep everyone safe. The adorable little girls, taking everything literally, decide to spend their summer holiday making everyone safe by finding God, and Mrs. Creasy, by becoming amateur detectives. They go door to door disguising themselves as Scouts. Their bored, and sweltering, neighbors are all too eager to talk about anything they will listen to. One house the girls are warned not to go near is No. 11, home of neighbor, Walter Bishop. He has been judged and set apart from the rest by the Avenue residents. The neighbors have taken matters into their own hands, as we will learn in the 1967 timeline story, and have judged him based on appearances.

In the girls' search for God, Tilly finds Jesus, on the most unimaginable surfaces (possibly due to the heat) - a rusty drainpipe. Headline reads "The Second Plumbing." The neighbors argue and judge who should sit closest to Jesus and guard Him, based on their worthiness. Not all the neighbors are convinced it looks like Jesus, but as Tilly says, "...it doesn't really matter if it's Jesus or a stain on a garage wall. ...it brought us all together, didn't it. ....and after all, Jesus is definitely in the drainpipe. He always has been. God is everywhere. Everybody knows that."

I love the symbolism of Jesus portrayed as a goat. One of the neighbors explains to the girls that He was crucified because He was an outsider, an "unbelonger", "because He had different views and beliefs...and others were very hard on anyone who didn't think they way they did." Tilly replied, saying, "He was probably the biggest goat of them all." A very good point of how quick we are to judge anyone who is not like us, as Jesus was judged the same way.

The character development in *The Trouble with Goats and Sheep* is exceptional and it is not surprising after reading that the author, Joanna Cannon, is a psychiatrist. She was inspired to write the book after meeting a lot of people and observing they share a common feeling of "unbelonging." She met lots of people who stood at the 'edge of the dancefloor, where they try to copy what everyone else is doing, but never quite get it right." She saw the sheep as respectful, ordinarily appearing people and the goats as different and didn't quite fit in - the ones who stood out. Cannon saw lots of people, not just in mental health facilities as a 'silent herd of unbelongers...the goat.' "It is only when something goes wrong, and society needs someone to blame, that the sheep turn into the goats and say we knew they were strange all along, and of course they must be guilty, because they just look the type, don't they?" The trouble is, behind most sheep you will find a goat.

The book is so insightful and a powerful lesson in how we should live our lives. The story is about judging others, belonging and 'unbelonging' and how those we judge as different are mistreated. Cannon said that she hoped the story would help us be kinder to one another - to those "standing at the edge of the dancefloor....and realise that unbelonging is actually a belonging all of its own."

#### **My favorite quotes from the book::**

*I still hadn't learned the power of words. How, once they have left your mouth, they have a breath and a life of their own. I had yet to realize that you no longer own them. I hadn't learned that, once you have let them go, the words can then, in fact, become the owners of you.*

*You only really need two people to believe in the same thing, to feel as though you just might belong.*

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### **Esil says**

The Trouble With Goats and Sheep was lots of fun -- a good light read with some tangible emotions thrown in. It is really the story of a stretch of road in a town in England -- a few neighbours and their secrets. Set in 1976, the story is told primarily from the point of view of 10 year old Grace, who with her friend Tilly sets out to find God and why one of the neighbours has disappeared. From time to time, the story shifts points of view and we see things from the perspective of the various adult neighbours, giving us insight into their various secrets -- including a big collective one that dates back to 1967. The tone is light, and there is much humour. But there's an undercurrent of serious emotions -- the price of buried lies, the effects of prejudice against difference and the cost of wanting to belong. It's somewhat predictable and verging on saccharine, but I found myself gobbling it up and really enjoying the ride. It's hard not to fall for Grace -- she is perceptive, but still gets things wrong as one would expect of a 10 year old. Thanks you to the publisher and Netgalley for an advance copy.

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### **Emma says**

Beautifully written, with real humour, and exquisite characterisation.

This book is hugely enjoyable and genuinely different from most whodunnits. The very English period details and aphorisms were so familiar, with some real gems:

*They assumed I didn't understand the conversation, and it was much easier to let them think that. My mother said I was at an awkward age. I didn't feel especially awkward, so I presumed she meant it was awkward for them.'*

So much of the dialogue and narrative could have come straight out of my childhood, though I was born later. Joanna Cannon has written the 60s/70s with nostalgia, but without letting her characters get away with bad behaviour and narrow minded attitudes. She captures so well the types of people who profess their faith and decency, whilst hiding the kinds of secrets that need police involvement to resolve, not just confession.

All in all, a brilliant debut, and an author I'll be reading again.

Many thanks to Joanna Cannon, Scribner, and Netgalley for this copy in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Diane S ? says**

4+ When Mrs. Creasey disappears, 10 year old Grace and her slightly younger friend Tilly decide to investigate. After learning from the vicar that God is everywhere they decide that while they are looking that they will also look for God.

A heat wave, a cul-de-sac, a man who doesn't fit in, God in a drainpipe and secrets many, many secrets and two very entertaining young protagonists. The girls find out many things, not necessarily things that will

solve the case, because in truth they do not have the ability to understand everything they hear nor able to put it in the proper context. They also do not have all the pieces, but individual people do. The dangers of judgment and banding together to deliver their own justice. Throughout the novel we hear a great deal about shame, because though everyone talks about everyone else here, their are those who are keeping something back, things they don't want known because it will shame them.

This is a marvelous novel, written in a lighter toe but dealing with some very important and weighty subjects. The part when the girls are in church and the vicar is talking about sheep and goats was laugh out loud funny. I read some of that to my husband. Ultimately this is a novel about friendship and a heat laden summer when two young girls learn a far more valuable lesson than they ever expected.

ARC from Netgalley.

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### **Karen says**

I really enjoyed this book! So many laughs!

This was a coming of age story along with a whodunit story line.

This story takes us behind closed doors into the various homes and lives of the residents on one block in a town in England during a heatwave in the summer of 1976.

I think all will enjoy this one!

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### **Margritte says**

*Mrs Creasy disappeared on a Monday. I know it was a Monday, because it was the day the dustbin men came, and the avenue was filled with a smell of scraped plates.*

"Why do people disappear?"

The pastor looked over his shoulder ...

The voice came from the graveyard.

His expression...

Oh neverminnnnnndddddd, it was only Grace sitting behind a gravestone talking to him. He just did not see her!

Her parents said she was awkward, but she disagreed. She was more likely awkward to them. Yes, that's what it was.

The Avenue was a place where:

- *the vicar smelled the same as the church. Faith had been trapped within the folds of his clothes;*
- God separated the sheep from the goats and loved sheep only;

- the ground beneath one's feet were safe and experienced - wisdom grow in the soil when people are buried;
- foxgloves, daisies and hydrangeas all argued loudly with each others as patterns on the teacups;
- artificial flowers were not welcomed - there were too much fakery in the world as it is;
- *each house holds its contents with a poker face, giving nothing away;*
- the word 'lunch' was dangerous, acting posh like that would lead to rejection in the community of dinner-eaters;
- *God supervised one's misery in swirling gold letters, because when God speaks, he appears to speak only in a decorated font;*
- memories are only forgotten when someone dies. But only *then!*
- toes can do a little dance in a sandal like piano notes;
- Margaret Creasy knew everyone's secrets and now she vanished with them. Where did she go? Most importantly, what if she comes back!?

The police were all over the place. Everyone was nervous.

Circa *Wisteria lane* television series: the same mystery, suspense, intrigue, juicy gossip, dark secrets. It was all there on the estate where The Avenue of neighbors shared their lives for many years. The Avenue was always a *parade of people, joined together by tedium and curiosity, passing other people's misery around themselves like a parcel.*

With picturesque prose and a sharp sense of humor, the life of two ten-year-old girls, Grace and Tilla, are colored in when they discover the deeper intrigue behind adult life and the disappearance of Mrs. Creasy. The pastor said God was everywhere and looked after His flock. Well, they simply would find Mrs. Creasy then if they can find God. They had to try at least.

All the inhabitants of the houses from number One to number Fourteen had a role to play in the mystery of The Avenue.

Paranoia, misconceptions, pride, prejudice, secrets and guilty consciences spilled into the melting streets during a simmering hot summer on this English Estate.

Anger and fear pushed them to form a flock of sheep ... or... goats, depending on who's definition of a sheep and goat was accepted, and also, if God could be proven to be more than just two creosote eyes looking at you where you sat on the chippings in front of a silent Jesus. What else can God do but keep his mouth shut when the guilty might proof to be innocent, and the innocent not so holier-than-thou after all? The dividing line between a scapegoat and a sheep was not so clearly defined as it should have been. *But it seemed, along with everybody else, Jesus would quite like to disappear as well ...*

An absolute joy to read! A superb debut novel. A neighborhood drama at its finest! Lighter and darker moments. Tears and laughter. A shocking, surprising ending. All things packaged as goats and sheep somewhere in the psyche of The Avenue. And ourselves.

Just one little hitch for me. Confusion. The story jumps between different time periods as well as addresses. It was difficult to catch up each time. And the ending... it felt like throwing the baby out with the bath water for no apparent reason whatsoever. Otherwise it was great.

RECOMMENDED!

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