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Dan and a group of his friends enjoy a Sunday lunch together on a perfect summer's day. They're pleased to welcome their glamorous new neighbour and novelist, Ellie, who has rented a house in the village to work on her book. She likes to place herself in the centre of her plots, she says, although it's hard to see what she'll find to write about in a quiet country backwater.

As Ellie slots effortlessly into the village social scene, Dan's wife begins to feel increasingly alienated from her friends and isolated from her family, but, for the life of her, she can't fathom why...

Nearest Thing to Crazy Details

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Author : Elizabeth Forbes

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From Reader Review Nearest Thing to Crazy for online ebook

Bill Kupersmith says

When your friends begin to think you're going round the bend, you may start behaving in ways that confirm their suspicions & I was very caught up in (the most appropriately named) Cassandra's predicament. Cassie is a middle-aged homebody whose principal occupations are gardening & breeding hens (perhaps her sole resemblance to the Duchess of Devonshire). She fears husband Dan & daughter Laura are being stolen from her by Ellie, a glamorous sophisticated newcomer to their village, whilst Cassie is accused of slipping into alcoholism & paranoia. But tho' parts of *The Nearest Thing to Crazy* are quite suspenseful, I'm not sure it's really a work of crime fiction or simply a story about family relationships, some of which I found a little squalid, esp. Cassie's with her nasty mother in a care home. But just as you can learn a lot about military tactics by studying lost battles, not-very-good books can help you enjoy the better ones. This one reminded me a lot of Helen Fitzgerald without her artistry & Cassie has all the inadequacies of Fitzgerald's characters without their off-the-wall delicious dottiness. If one of Fitzgerald's characters found a favourite chicken dead, it would have been hilarious. I was pleased that I sussed out (view spoiler) the villain's scheme even before the author gave us a clue impossible to miss. But as we approach the finish Elizabeth Forbes loses concentration & force. The characters end up sitting around sharing things that had they not been hidden all along, there'd been nothing to fear. So tho' I'd really been expecting a four star, this one faltered @ the end. I apologise to my partner E. on the Good Thriller pals read for the choice. It's not a dead loss but we could have done better. (view spoiler)

Anna says

Brilliant read and kept me engrossed right from page 1 to the very end! Great read would thoroughly recommend

Lesley says

I truly struggle to understand how so many people gave this five stars. One reviewer even claims to see an homage to Rebecca. Really ? I'd like to know where exactly.

A bunch of feeble one dimensional unlikeable characters inhabit a plot of such staggering stupidity that I am cross with myself for carrying on to the end.

There are so many areas that require the suspension of disbelief.

For starters Cass had in the past suffered crippling post natal depression but on the strength of this single episode twenty one years earlier! Dan is lead to believe that she has suddenly become delusional and violent.

And what about her so called friends ? Why do they believe a perfect stranger over Cass. Why do none of them talk properly to her ? Not the kind of friends I would want. How come they are all so easily taken in ?

The entire book is populated by weak and shallow ninnies.

The plot is at best ill conceived and messy, the reveal just ridiculous.

I resent the time and money I wasted on this.

Bookread2day says

I have finally found an author that writes the kind of psychological thrillers books that I like to read.

I thought Elizabeth Forbes produced the character of the novelist Ellie so well because Ellie got under my skin and I was like arghh! that woman!.

The story open up Sally and Patrick invite friends to Sunday lunch on a lovely summer's day. They are pleased to welcome their glamorous new neighbour and novelist Ellie who has rented a house in the village to work on her new book. She likes to place herself in the centre of her plots, she says, although it's hard to see what she will find to write about in this quite country backwater.

Ellie becomes friends with Dan and his wife Cassandra, which send the story's atmosphere growing more and more intense as Ellie tries to proves to everyone that Cass is crazy.

Jaidee says

4.5 "scary, clever, chilling" stars !!!

2016 Honorable Mention Read

Ms. Forbes writes towards the end of this novel:

"What can we ever really know about anyone beyond the stories they choose to tell us? And how can we measure the truth within those stories unless we have lived those stories together. And even then, we each have our own lens through which we can distort, reinterpret, pretend. How truly honest are we with ourselves, let alone with anyone else?"

This is brilliant and wise and frightening and this is the crux of this psychological suspenseful drama!

I do not want to give anything away and so this review will be short.

A beautiful glamorous author moves into a small English village and the life of one woman begins to fall apart. Manipulations, paranoia, violence, depression, lies, alcoholism creep up to the sunny surface of upper middle class people and break at the seemingly perfect veneer of the lives they lead.

The dialogue, flow of the story and slowly building terror rise in a believable but claustrophobic way. I did not want to stop reading.

How many twisted women are in the story? One, two perhaps, three? Are the men innocent bystanders or malignant in their own ways? Is this about mental illness, evil or the two intertwined? Does love exist?

I was hooked from chapter one and down the garden path I was led into a dark, gloomy and dangerous forest.

Kudos Ms. Forbes. This book is fan-fucking-tastic!!

Ms. Forbes writes:

" And aren't we all just locked boxes stuffed full of secrets, and the only way we can ever really know each other is through the stories we choose to tell. But we'll never really know the truth....will we?"

Read this and prepare to be amazed, chilled and frightened. Are any of us truly safe from the other?

Anna says

Cass and Dan have been married for thirty years. They've had their ups and downs, but it's a happy marriage. They live in a pretty country village, have a close circle of friends, and their only child Laura is at a nearby university.

And then Ellie moves into the neighbourhood. Bright and bubbly, she charms everyone with her helpfulness and hospitality. Cass soon notices that her friends are spending less time with her and more with Ellie. Then Dan starts popping over to Ellie's house more and more often, and an excited Laura laps up Ellie's offer of help with her career. Cass suspects the effervescent Ellie is deliberately usurping all aspects of her life, but as her paranoia grows and her accusations become increasingly wild, her family and friends believe her to be on the edge of a breakdown, causing her to question her own sanity.

A clever, chilling, riveting read. Ellie's clearly up to something....isn't she?

Liz Barnsley says

So this book had been on my wishlist, it finally got put into my latest book budget batch – and before I start the review I have to say I chose to go for the print copy rather than the Kindle copy because it's got a terrific eye catching cover. Looks great in real life! Kudos to the designer. Sometimes I think that it is becoming a lost art what with technology allowing instant gratification of ebook downloads these days so I'm always on the look out for good ones for my shelf! Anyway apologies to Ms Forbes as I digress....

Cass and her Husband Dan live a quiet life in the country...One day they gain a new neighbour, the glamorous Ellie, arriving to write her new novel in the peace of the rural setting. At first Cass is pleased to welcome Ellie into their midst but a series of events leads her to start feeling disconnected from her life...and a little scared...but she can't pinpoint exactly why....

Very much a character driven novel, mostly seen through the eyes of Cass herself, this is a beautiful and brilliantly written example of a psychological thriller, a terrific twisty tale and a completely captivating look at village life to boot. Cass is both amazingly complex and deceptively simple – the author has given her a true voice...and it almost casts a spell over you as you read. Never quite sure whether she is reading too much into things or whether something really is afoot, it will keep you deliciously off balance throughout the story....

A snapshot of village life, the setting is almost a character in itself. Village gossip abounds...the supporting cast can almost be imagined as being in the midst of a rather long running game of chinese whispers...but who is saying what and why? More to the point who is HEARING what and why...cleverly achieved. Despite the fact that the majority of the novel is seen through the eyes of a single character it doesn't read that way...it appears as if they are all talking. And therein lies the magic of the story and the charm of the reading experience for me.

Very enjoyable, a high standard of writing and lovely prose make this a must read for fans of this type of tale and indeed fans of intriguing storytelling in any genre.

You can follow Elizabeth Forbes on Twitter here. <https://twitter.com/lizzieforbes>

You will be able to hear from the author in an article I am putting together for the blog coming soon. Don't miss that!

Happy Reading Folks!

Shelan says

I can tell you exactly how long it takes to read 'NEAREST THING TO CRAZY' by Elizabeth Forbes. The length of a flight from London to Boston. I read it quite literally in one sitting – and got off the plane feeling slightly dazed, slightly mistrustful of anyone who did not look me in the eye, and vaguely bewildered to discover a 'real' parallel universe to the one I'd just been in.

Nearest Thing to Crazy is a powerfully written psychological suspense drama, which propels you (sometimes almost kicking and screaming) to the final twist. At one level, it taps into an area of peculiar horror: the notion of someone sane trapped in a sentence of insanity. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, the women down the ages who have been locked up in institutions to get them out of sight of society... What Elizabeth does so amazingly is to make this seem utterly possible, here and now, today, in middle England. There is more, much more, but I don't want to give the plot away.

Elizabeth Forbes does what the best writers do – she makes us look around us with eyes that question. What better place to read a novel about a woman trapped in a label beyond her control than a tin bird in the sky?

Janette Fleming says

Dan and a group of his friends enjoy a Sunday lunch together on a perfect summer's day. They're pleased to welcome their glamorous new neighbour and novelist, Ellie, who has rented a house in the village to work on her book. She likes to place herself in the centre of her plots, she says, although it's hard to see what she'll find to write about in a quiet country backwater.

As Ellie slots effortlessly into the village social scene, Dan's wife begins to feel increasingly alienated from her friends and isolated from her family, but, for the life of her, she can't fathom why..

I stood for a moment, feeling alone and isolated, and yet here I was amongst my closest friends. Everyone was chatting, laughing, relaxing, having a happy time together without a care

in the world, and then there was me. It was all so subtle, almost subliminal.'

Can't really say too much without giving away plot details...best to read this without knowing much about it.

A solid psychological thriller, twisty, tense read told by contrasting voices, which, effectively gives two unreliable narrators. For me the destination didn't live up to the journey, I found the explanation somewhat unconvincing. But even so an enjoyable and very anxious read!

Allison says

First off, let me say that I actually enjoyed reading this and was eagerly looking forward to how it ended.

However, by the time I had finished reading I was just so frustrated with all the characters. There were so many opportunities for the main character to get 'proof' of what was happening to her, and so many better ways for her to explain things to her friends. Also, once the big reveal happened, I looked back and thought about the behaviour and actions of certain characters throughout the book and it just didn't fit well with the 'reveal' - it all just seemed a bit of a stretch...like the author wrote 90% of the book not knowing how she would end it, and then when she decided on the big ending she tried to explain and justify everything she had previously written just to fit with it. :/

Anne says

Sometimes a book comes along that totally blows the mind. Nearest Thing To Crazy by Elizabeth Forbes has done just that, my head is spinning, my heart has been beating so fast that I thought it was going to burst out of my chest. I've been so angry with the characters that I've actually shouted at them - out loud.

Published by Cutting Edge Press on 27 June 2013, there is no doubt that this is going to be one of my Top Ten Books of the year. There were times when I was actually a little bit scared of turning over the page, this is a mind-bending psychological head-fuck of the highest order. I loved it!

Set in a small Worcestershire village - a group of middle-class families are happy to welcome novelist Ellie into their tight-knit group. Glamorous Ellie fits nicely into their glossy lives, with their fancy houses, smart cars and perfect gardens. She tells them that she is here to write her next book, she's rented a cottage for a few months and is looking forward to getting some inspiration for her story.

Cass and Dan have been married for years, their only child Laura has gone off to university and Cass is happy to potter around the garden, growing vegetables, collecting eggs and making chutney. Everyone seems to love Ellie - except Cass, she is the only one who feels uncomfortable around her. And for very good reason. Slowly and gradually, Cass sees her life unravel - her past insecurities come back to haunt her, but nobody else can see that this is all because of Ellie. First her husband, then her friends and finally her daughter - all of them - beginning to doubt her, believing in Ellie, slowly driving her mad.

Elizabeth Forbes is an excellent author who has written a story that has twists and turns on every page, not once did I guess how this was going to end. The suspense builds until at times, it is almost unbearable. Cleverly weaved into the main story of Cass is Ellie's point of view - who do you believe?

Gripping, clever, tense and thrilling. This really is a fantastic read that I could hardly bear to put down and the story is going to haunt me for quite a while.

Denise says

I love a good psychological suspense novel and this was a well written disturbing story which I enjoyed immensely. A compelling read that held my interest from start to finish, I was eager to get to the end to discover the truth. The story left me thinking about it for ages after. I had never heard of the term 'Gaslighting' before.

A fantastic debut and I look forward to reading Elizabeth Forbes' next book.

Gaslighting is a form of mental abuse in which false information is presented with the intent of making a victim doubt his or her own memory, perception and sanity. Instances may range simply from the denial by an abuser that previous abusive incidents ever occurred, up to the staging of bizarre events by the abuser with the intention of disorienting the victim.

Amanda says

4.5 stars! Terrific, tightly plotted domestic thriller. Can't wait to read more from this author.

Moodycat says

I enjoyed this book because I have dealt with a person like Ellie (sociopaths) in my life previously. He was a charming liar and manipulator and once chosen a target would meticulously campaign to turn everyone against them, making his target question themselves and feel isolated and alone. I found this book a little irritating because Cass could of used her intuition a little earlier and put a stop to it very quickly, instead she continued to put herself in vulnerable situations. The best way to deal with a sociopath is avoid, avoid, avoid. Do not engage, walk away! The more you get sucked in the more they learn, the more they use the knowledge against you. I also found her timid acceptance towards her husbands disbelief and betrayal to be incredibly infuriating. If my husband said ' you probably imagined it' I'd kick him in the b@lls. It was so infuriatingly passive! Overall though I enjoyed the plot. I think in the end she should of left Dan, he had her committed to a mental hospital on account of his other floozy. The guy is evil ... Forget the pathetic pleading he does about how much he loves her. So, overall a great subject, a good book but the lead character needed to have more confidence. I've been in a situation like this with a work colleague .It's exhausting battling against someone with no morals who lies constantly but she just gave up far too easily, she needed to get smart and get smart quick for this novel to really shine and for Ellie and Cass to really clash and become adversaries trying to out smart each other. Cass just let things spiral and didn't quite become the person I wanted her to be. The book was a good eye opener as to how many people will and want to take people at

face value, it's easier, it feels safer and means they don't have to do anything or think too much. Subsequently practiced, charming manipulators get away with unpicking their targets bit by bit until there's nothing left. They pick targets who are a threat to them (those of a higher intelligence, competence, integrity and/or moral standing) and take pleasure in bashing them down. All the easily led, insecure people usually end up as their recruits and supporters. They believe the caring, charming facade and sham of a personality. I think this book could have touched more on the sociopathic element and their motives, agendas and what drives them. Overall an interesting read but not quite hitting the mark for me.

Anne says

I love a good psychological thriller. Tina Seskis' *One Step Too Far, Into The Darkest Corner* by Elizabeth Haynes, *Before I Go To Sleep* by SJ Watson, Lottie Moggach's *Kiss Me First...* and now I have a new favourite, a quite wonderful read that I found thoroughly gripping and so wonderfully written that you really have no idea at all where the story is going.

Ex-journalist Ellie turns up at a gathering in her open topped sports car – but with the roof in place in case the wind spoils her perfect appearance – having recently moved into a house in the village to write her novel. Cassie – married to Dan, daughter Laura away at university, passionate about her garden and her comfortable life – doesn't take to her as quickly as everyone else, but despite her discomfort makes every effort to befriend her, even sharing some of her secrets. We see the story from Ellie's point of view too – leaving you unable to decide who to believe.

This is such a cleverly written book – Cassie is a very likeable character, easy to identify with, but you can't help doubting her view of the world at times. The story twists and turns, unbearably tense at times, and keeps you turning the pages: and I have to say that I never saw the ending coming, although it was totally appropriate and satisfying. Difficult to believe that this is a first novel, it's so very accomplished – very highly recommended.
