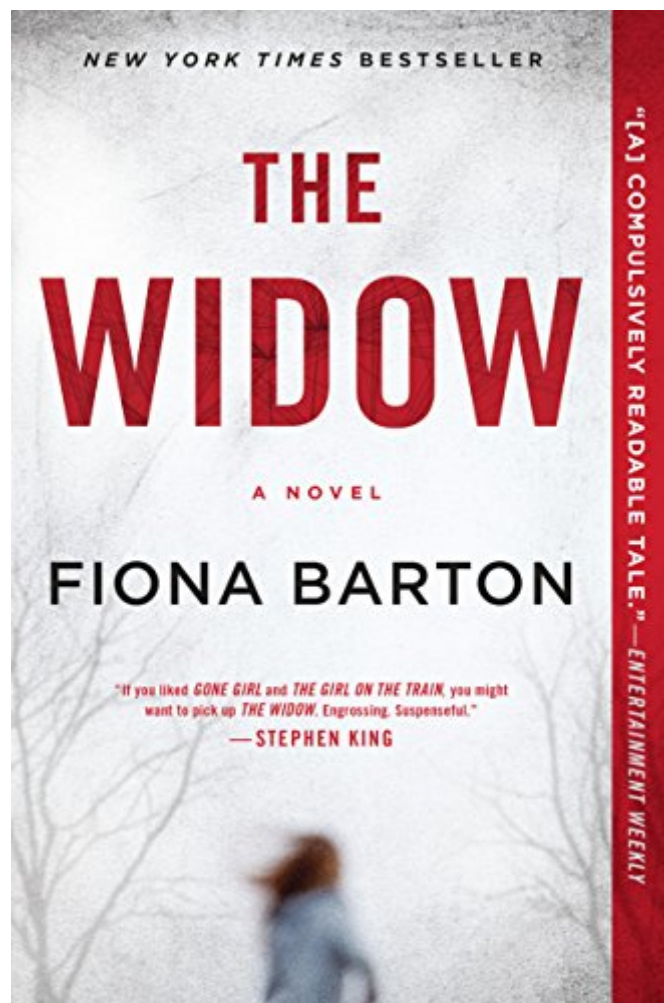


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# The Widow



## Synopsis

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERâ œA twisted psychological thriller youâ™ll have trouble putting down.â œâ "Peopleâ œlf you likedÂ Gone GirlÂ andÂ The Girl on the Train, you might want to pick upÂ The WidowÂ by Fiona Barton. Engrossing. Suspenseful.â œâ "Stephen KingFollowing the twists and turns of an unimaginable crime, The Widow is an electrifying debut thriller that will take you into the dark spaces that exist between a husband and a wife. Thereâ™s a lot Jean hasnâ™t said over the years about the crime her husband was suspected of committing. She was too busy being the perfect wife, standing by her man while living with the accusing glares and the anonymous harassment. Â Now her husband is dead, and thereâ™s no reason to stay quiet. There are people who want to hear her story. They want to know what it was like living with that man. She can tell them that there were secrets. There always are in a marriage. Â The truthâ™thatâ™s all anyone wants. But the one lesson Jean has learned in the last few years is that she can make people believe anything...An NPR Best Book of the YearOne ofÂ TheÂ Wall Street Journalâ™s 5 â œKiller Booksâ œ of the YearÂ Publishers WeeklyÂ Best Book of the YearIncludes a Readers Guide and an excerpt of Fiona Barton's new hardcover, The Child.Â

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I had a difficult time deciding how to rate this debut novel. The writing was more than competent....nothing intrudes upon the good flow of the story which centers around the abduction/killing of a young child and attempts to catch the person everyone knows did it, but can't prove. The novel is told from varying viewpoints, chiefly the wife of the suspect, the detective determined to nail him, and a journalist intent on getting the wife's story in what has turned into a tabloid mess. The problem I have is (and this seems to be recurring for me with some books these days) the media department of the publisher who has hyped and hyped this book as being in the vein of *Gone Girl* or *Girl on the Train*. IT IS NOT. Please don't expect it to be a twisty-turny plot with surprises. There are no surprises. Everyone knows from the get-go who did this. There is no last minute plot twist. It simply is a well-written story (not a mystery, not a "thriller") about the aforementioned three people most involved in the young girl's disappearance. The characters are well-written and pretty fleshed out. But what you read in the first couple chapters *is* the story.....the rest of the novel just takes you through how the characters deal with the fall-out. If you're looking for a psychological thriller (which I wouldn't have been had not the publisher advertised it as such), you'll be disappointed. But if you just want an interesting story that is really just a look at people's lives while they deal with this tragedy, then you might enjoy it. So I knocked off a star for the marketing department....shame on them.

THE WIDOW is a creepy tale, exquisitely told. Jean Taylor is a perfect London housewife, a little untidy. Her husband, Glen, is controlling. He married her young and convinced her of his importance in the world. Most of it was a lie, but Jean doesn't seem particularly upset by that. In fact she's not particularly upset about much of anything, including the fact that Glen was just run over by a bus. What does upset her is the ever-present horde of reporters wanting to get her story. It seems that Glen just may have kidnapped beautiful little Bella, who was out playing in her yard one minute and, the next minute, was gone. Despite Bella's mother's tearful pleas on the media, and the dedicated detecting of Bob Sparks, no trace of Bella is ever found. Glen is the prime suspect. His truck was seen in the area the day Bella was snatched. And there are other clues, as well. But nothing can be proved. And so Jean and Glen continue to live their "normal" life, Bob Sparks continues to obsessively pursue the case, and crack reporter Kate Waters continues to pursue Jean for the real heretofore untold story. How much does Jean really know? What did Glen really do? Was he the

monster others thought him to be? What happened to little Bella? What can Bob Sparks discover from the midst of his own obsessions? FIONA BARTON's carefully written tale explores the tale from three points of view: Jean's, Kate Waters', and Bob Sparks'. For the record, contrary to the blurbs, THE WIDOW is not THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN. In fact, I wish reviewers would stop plastering that on the covers of books. It is, however, a compellingly eerie story. What's great about it? Lots. Here are the Top Ten Things That Are Great About THE WIDOW:

10. Fiona Barton can really write. Her sentences flow, the moods emerge from the pages, the story tracks well.
9. Mysteriously creepy. You'll be wondering until the very end. What did happen to Bella?
8. The many disguises of a monster. You've seen the little internet quizzes where you have to pick out the serial killer and you invariably pick the investment banker or the scout leader. The point is correct: it is not always easy to spot a monster.
7. Look in the dictionary under co-dependent and you will find pictures of Glen and Jean. He has his way things need to be done and she adapts. They stick together while they are not really together. The description of the dynamic is fascinating.
6. Something to ponder. Can you really live with someone day in and day out and not know who or what they really are?
5. Ever deal with someone who has excuses for every behavior? Nothing is ever his fault? Meet Glen. Be glad you didn't marry him.
4. Three story-lines are told in perfect balance with each other.
3. Character, character, character. Barton has come up with four wildly diverse characters: Jean, Glen, Kate Waters, and Bob Sparks. They are delicately drawn and understood.
2. A nice time capsule from 2006 - 2010.
1. The surprise. Wait for it. No fair skipping ahead.

Wow! This book hooked me with the first chapter and never let go. It is a mystery that keeps you guessing. The story slowly unfolds with multiple narrators, each with their own agenda. The widow herself is downright creepy. Her portions are especially well written. This book is well deserving of its Best of 2016 status. The book is compared to *Gone Girl* and *Girl on the Train*. In my opinion, it is better than both. Jean Taylor's husband Glen is accused of horrible crimes. She stands by him and covers for him, though she is also naive about some of his actions. When he is killed by a bus, she no longer has to protect him or put up with his "nonsense." The book moves between the present (2010) and the time of the crime (2006). It is narrated predominately by Jean, the widow; Bob Sparks, the detective; and Kate Waters, the reporter who is trying to get Jean's exclusive story. Glen narrates a few chapters as does Dawn Elliott, a single mother who is one of the victims. Any more details will spoil the fun. While not great literature, I think this book is perfectly written. The writing style is spare and taut. The plot is twisty and disturbing, but not scary or grisly. I just love the way that the widow herself unravels along with the story. This is also a story about an emotionally

abusive/controlling marriage and the psychology of that is nicely done. Fiona Barton has another book coming out at the end of June and I am looking forward to that. Clear the decks and read The Widow--you won't be getting much else accomplished that day!

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