

Let the Right One In

By John Ajvide Lindqvist

(Thomas Dunne Books)

In time for the Dublin International Film Festival – where the film adaptation was due to be screened last weekend – I thought it appropriate to review *Let the Right One In*, a weird and wonderful debut novel by a relatively new Swedish author, John Ajvide Lindqvist.

If you are like me, a book which deals with vampires in suburbia is likely not at the top of your must-read list. However, I have to proclaim my gratitude to the friend who suggested this novel to me, as it is not your run-of-the-mill vampire/thriller/murder-mystery/horror, not by a long shot.

The book introduces Oscar, a young boy on the verge of adolescence who is suffering serious bullying at school. But his life begins to change dramatically when he encounters a mysterious girl who has recently become his neighbour. Finally, Oscar has found someone that he can identify with. However, the particular temperament and appetites of his newfound friend are peculiar and worrying to say the least.

Coinciding with Oscar's new alliance comes news of strange killings in the new suburban area in which he lives. The murders are



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possibly ritualistic, or the acts of a serial killer. The community turns into a bubbling cauldron of gossip and death.

The story follows a group of dispersed and diverse people in the area over three weeks – which the author, by the way, proclaims to be more-or-less true to reality. Each character is well drawn and intriguing, and the language is fitting.

The tight story and character interplay also have a cinematic quality. Indeed, this is a very visual work, almost begging for a filmmaker to take the project on – which, of course, is what happened.

At the same time, some of the scenes seem like they would be unfilmable without recourse to digital animation or something of that ilk, which, as far as I understand it, the actual film does not employ (saying much about the film's quality, too).

Fascinatingly, the book in many ways serves as a sociological commentary on Sweden at the start of the 1980s, which perhaps may alienate some readers. But there are also larger themes on the origins of evil, love, sin, illness and belonging which ensures that the story carries a weight that perhaps could have been expected from a book of this kind.

And although there were one or two moments when I started to question the story and lose my suspension of disbelief, I soon returned to be completely enveloped and definitely smitten.



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