



The Good Book Appreciation Society



Beryl Eichenberger · 15 Jun · 🌐

'Flipped' by Tracey Hawthorne offers up a thriller – paced novel that pushes you to look beyond the obvious...to take stock of what might be hidden in plain sight and to question and keep on questioning when things don't seem right.

I know I have driven past clumps of trees or piles of rubble from developers churning their way into new suburbs and wondered what might be hidden behind those entwined trunks and mountains of rubble, but it is a fleeting thought that never develops further.

'Flipped' is Hawthorne's first novel but she is an accomplished and award-winning author of non-fiction books, and I for one, am so glad she has turned her considerable skills to giving us this thoughtful and edgy story that takes you into untapped spaces.

It took me only a couple of evenings to devour and then I sat back feeling very satisfied with how the story surprisingly 'flipped'. Hawthorne keeps us guessing throughout.

As the book opens Hawthorne sets the scene: A small town gripped in a record-breaking wet season. A river in torrent, the ever present danger of flooding, a substantial bridge whose banks are now choked from the debris that the hurtling, destructive waters have thrown against them to create dangerous water levels under the bridge. So acute are the descriptions that I could feel the

rush of water in my ears as I read and the racing currents.

Into this sodden landscape come two single mothers Terry and Nicky whose teenage daughters, Rosanne and Jess, have failed to come home from a party at a nearby farm. A farm where the owner and son are more than a little shady and rough.

Hawthorne has created depth in her characters and her imagery is very real as she sets the scenes to before the girls left. She gives us a clear picture of the women's relationships and the undercurrents that lurk beneath. The reader is immediately irritated by the rebelliousness of Terry's Rosanne and empathetic (to a point) to young widow, Nicky whose daughter Jess is the grounded friend. Terry is a successful divorcee while Nicky was left with little when her young husband died suddenly, but the two are close friends through their daughters. When curfew hour is reached and passed it is to the Police Sergeant Tamara Cupido that they turn. In charge of the under-resourced and overworked small station, it is no surprise that the wheels turn slowly but Cupido is a good cop and determined to do her best. It is a scenario so familiar in our country and one that Hawthorne expresses well. It is a mother's worst nightmare - the girls never come home. Cupido follows leads and speculation as to kidnapping, rape or murder run rife; suspects are eliminated but, with no bodies, the case dwindles to a cold file in the cabinet to

Cupido's distress. What this does to the mothers is devastating, and the reader is taken along on this emotional ride as the unknown overturns their futures.

Hawthorne changes tense for the second part of the book which is a very effective tool bringing us sharply into the present. Six years have passed and Cupido is still in charge but the town is now in the grip of a severe drought. Parched and burnt land, twisted trunks hide the paths of new developments and the river is now but a trickle. The climate has flipped from the scene of six years before – and what might that reveal? Hawthorne keeps us in suspense, her pace ebbs and flows with the seasonal changes - keeping the reader engrossed and desperate to know what the outcome will be. Clever plotting and surprising revelations make this an excellent read. I'm looking forward to her next book!





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Helen Moffett · 20 Jul · 🌐

Just read Tracey Hawthorne's *Flipped* in two sessions, and am seriously impressed. Such a clever balancing of two narratives, an unadorned, bleak (but not too bleak) treatment of that rare thing -- a completely original plot (even though it looks at first as if it will follow a formula).

Two things stood out for me: one, the relentless pacing. (The author makes it look effortless.) The story will grip you. It's the first time in decades I've actually flipped (ha) to the back of the book to see how it ended because I could not BEAR the suspense. (I still went on to read every word, though.) The other thing I appreciated, as someone who lived on a farm as a child, and whose parents lived on a Free State smallholding for 36 years, is how utterly unsentimental the author is about small town and rural life. Set an hour away from Cape Town up the N7, Hawthorne captures the grinding poverty of the rural poor (rendered invisible in this country), the anxious knyping and scraping of those aspiring to middle-class life, the disdain and discrimination with which rural towns are treated by state/govt structures in the big city, the indifference to their needs and dismal resources. The urban-rural divide in this country is almost as festeringly unfair as our racial and class divides (which they closely follow).

Although this is her debut novel, [Tracey](#) is an experienced journalist and non-fiction writer, and it shows. Apart from the lyrical beginning (which makes sense much later), her prose is a wonderful example of how to do more with less.

A very good team worked on this. The editing is 99% flawless, and the design and especially the cover (and that title!) are exceptionally clever and apt. Well done, author and publisher!

Pic is of a handsome mackerel tripod tabby with melting eyes, posing with the book (Flipped by Tracey Hawthorne, published by Modjaji) on my bed.

Additional PS: Meant to say, there is a Very Good Dog in the book. ❤️

