

**A Book Review of *Closets and Skeletons and Other Crime Stories***

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Author: Kaivalya Ramnath

*Title: Of Closets and Skeletons and Other Crime Stories*

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**Abstract**

Mumbai-based writer Kaivalya Ramnath's *Of Closets and Skeletons and Other Crime Stories* offers eight stories of crime from criminal's point of view. They are an enticing peek into criminal's sinister psychology. In this aspect, it's in line with works like Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926).

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## **Review**

All the stories are good because there are a lot of social commentaries that ploughs through the head for a while. The Author's note tells the readers that,

This book is a collection of eighty quirky stories. They are misfit in genre and form. . .are these crime stories that just happen to be short or are they short stories with a cringe angle? This is a matter best left to the more pedantic reader. Irrespective of their classification, these are stories that, in my view, do what all good crime fiction is supposed to do: present truthful reflection of contemporary society, warts and all. . .This book contains material on the following themes: Nudity, Death, Domestic Violence, Mental health, homosexuality, Suicide, and Violence against children (4).

The first story 'Perfect Crime' is about a man who "supply impeccable alibis" (6) gets a dose of his own medicine and learns what a perfect crime is, albeit, the hard way. 'Demons' explores the demons of the mind and delves into the issue of mental health. The story at times funny with humorous authorial intervention. 'Whose Life is it Anyways?' lets us inside the mind of a lawyer who is on her way to find who's poisoning her. As she's torn between her husband and her sister the story ends with a twist. Interspersed with literary allusions to Agatha Christie T. S. Eliot one will surely enjoy reading it. 'Of Closets and Skeletons' is about how life can take a sudden turn for the young narrator. It is one of my favourites in this anthology. In 'Rockabye' a father finds himself poised between love for his daughter and a crime at hand. With a pun on the word *star* 'Starry Night' explores the death of a star, a celebrity. 'Poison Pill' is about the mystery of poisonous pills. In 'How to Get Away with Murder?' we find how some individuals trapped in criminal acts are trying to get away with murder, with a twist, of course.

The book has an intriguing title and beautiful cover design. At times it seemed that the narratives are rushed and sketchy. Stories could have been fleshed out more. None of the stories is grotesque, cringe-worthy and blood-curdling. They are rather gentle. The

strength of the book is its distinctive casualness in tone and preoccupation with the inner world of complex sensibility

Also, there's no denouncing the crime or the criminal. There are no heroes or villains in Kaivalya's world. They are stories about curiosity, confusion, deception, suspicion, fear and anger, filial love and deceit. Compelling, yet deeply disturbing and dark, this is a book that will delve into and haunt your thoughts as you're reading it.