



The Woman in the Window
Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, June 2018

At first glance, A. J. Finn's blockbuster thriller *The Woman in the Window* would seem to be a knockoff of *Rear Window*, Hitchcock's classic *noir* film. Both storylines center on isolated voyeurs, spying on neighbors through their Manhattan windows. But the similarities end there. The Hitchcock character (memorably played by Jimmy Stewart) is a wheelchair-bound photographer. Anna Fox, the "woman in the window," suffers from agoraphobia; she's too fearful to go outside.

The Woman in the Window features clever plot turns, doppelgangers, and a great deal of merlot. Anna, once a successful child psychologist, hasn't left her five-story townhouse in nearly a year. She had experienced an event so traumatic that she is confined indoors. Her husband Ed and eight-year-old daughter Olivia no longer live with Anna, but she speaks to them regularly. Her sole companion is Punch, her irascible cat.

To pass the time, Anna plays chess and takes virtual French lessons. She orders takeout, buys wine by the case, and watches old movies through the night. On leave from her psychology practice, Anna counsels other agoraphobic sufferers online. Bina, her physical therapist, visits weekly. Her psychiatrist Dr. Fielding makes regular house calls. Dr. Fielding suggested that Anna get a tenant for her basement apartment, to help run errands in exchange for reduced rent. Anna settled on David, the first to answer her Craigslist ad. Just relocated from Boston, David is handsome, "with his eyes like trapdoors, dark and deep. Gregory Peck after a late evening."

However, Anna's main interest is watching her neighbors through the zoom lens of her Nikon D5500 camera. From her upstairs window, she observes the comings and goings of the people who live around the neighborhood's small park. There's the cranky old Wassermans, the newly wedded Motts, and the adulterous Mrs. Miller. But it's the Russell family who just moved into #207 that captures Anna's attention. Teenage Ethan Russell comes over for a visit, and Anna is drawn to the sensitive

boy. And when Anna thinks she witnesses a murder, she fears for Ethan's safety and for her own sanity.

The Woman in the Window is told from Anna's perspective; she may or may not be the most reliable witness. Some novels are meant to be edifying; others are pure entertainment. Indeed, *The Woman in the Window* is an enjoyable read. Settle into a comfortable chair and have a good time. Just don't tell others what happens.