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FICTION REVIEW

The Whole Day Through. Patrick Gale. London, UK: Harper Collins, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0-00-730601-5. Price: £7.99. Pages: 237 (paperback)

This is a love story that is narrated as if it takes place spanning a day from morning till nightfall. Yet the actual story is spread out over months. The narrative gives the reader glimpses into the lives of the characters, starting with a scene in the morning and ending with nightfall.

The main characters, Laura and Ben, meet after a long time apart in a chance meeting at the hospital where Ben works. He is a genitourinary medicine (GUM) doctor while Laura has returned home to care for her ailing mother, Professor Jellico, an erstwhile expert virologist. Ben's brother, Bobby, is a young gay man with Down's syndrome. Ben's wife, Chloe, hovers on the

fringe of the story yet seems to affect Ben, Bobby and Laura in different ways.

The story flows well and is an easy, light read. The passage of time from morning to nightfall wasn't obvious to me till I read the interview with the author at the end of the book, which is very interesting indeed. The story covers important themes relating to sexual and reproductive health care. Some of the more important are the attitudes to sex and sexuality in people with learning disabilities and their right to sexual expression. At the other end of the spectrum the book looks at the ageing Professor Jellico and the impact of the physical effects of ageing on her quality of life – this in turn affects Laura who cares for her – thus illustrating children who care for their parents and how it can affect their lives, privacy, sexuality and

relationships. Seemingly they are free to do as they please but cannot because of the position they find themselves in.

I found the book easy to read with simple themes and a believable story line. The author gave Ben the profession of a GUM doctor but I felt disappointed that this aspect of his role did not receive the weighting it could have. Perhaps the themes of homosexuality, HIV and GUM are intertwined in the story for the purpose of setting the platform for Ben's and Bobby's characters. In all, an enjoyable read!

Reviewed by **Neelima Deshpande**, MRCOG, MFSRH Staff Grade Doctor in Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust, Birmingham, UK

We hope that journal readers enjoyed reading *The Whole Day Through*, and also discovering whether their opinion of the book matched that of our guest reviewer. In the April 2010 issue, we there will be a trilogy of Swedish crime fiction books under scrutiny, namely *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (538 pages, Maclehorse Press/Quercus, 2008, ISBN-13: 978-1-84724-545-8, £7.99), *The Girl Who Played With Fire* (608 pages, Maclehorse Press/Quercus, 2009, ISBN-13: 978-1906694180, £7.99) and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest* (602 pages, Maclehorse Press/Quercus, 2009, ISBN-13: 978-1906694166, £18.99) by Stieg Larsson. Keen readers out there had better make an early start on reading these books!

We want to remind journal readers that if they would like to offer to review an appropriate fiction title of their own choosing then they should contact the Journal Editorial Office by e-mail (journal@fsrh.org) in the first instance with details of their nominated title.