

BOTH OF YOU

A CRIME-THRILLER FOR OUR TIME

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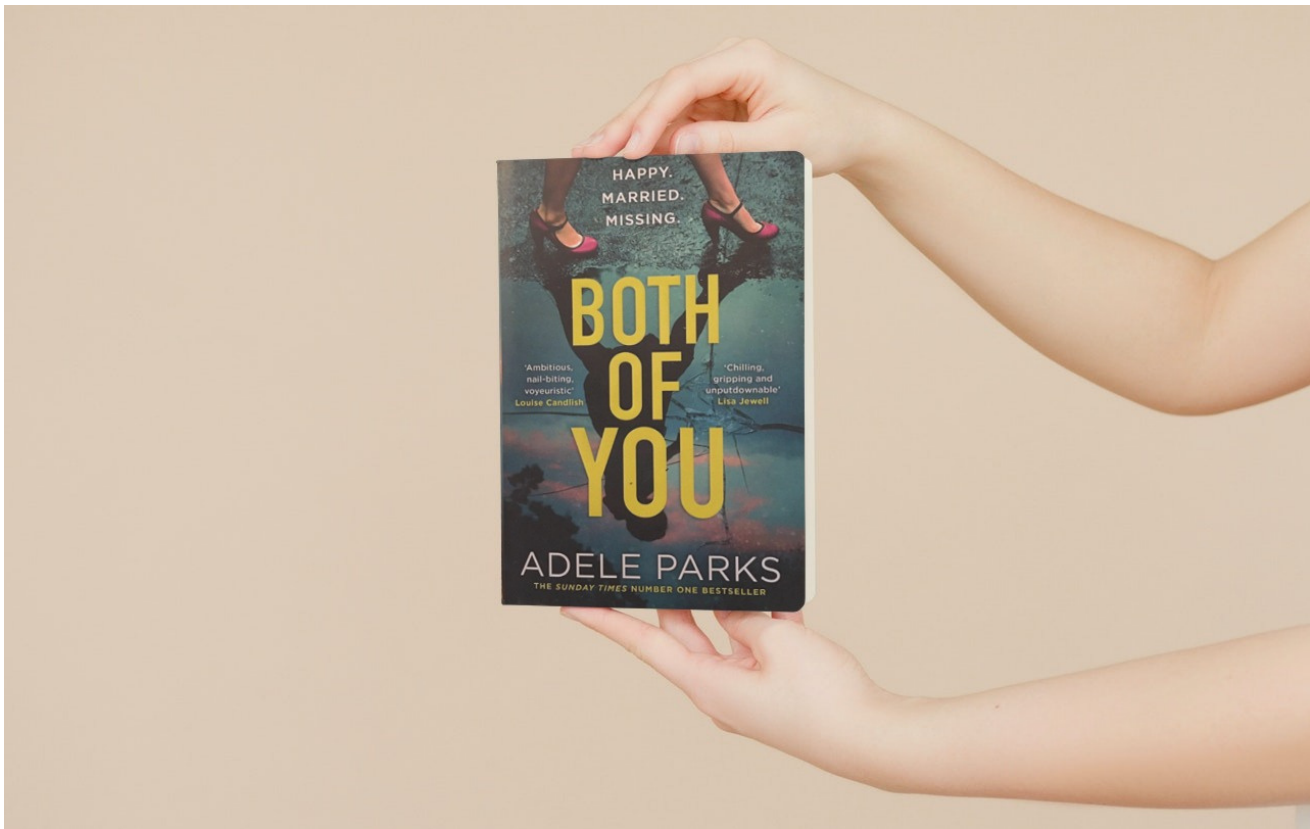


Adele Park's *Both of You* is an ambitious, thrillingly-conceived crime novel for our time. Detailing the lives, relationships and sudden disappearances of its dual protagonists, Kai Janssen and Leigh Fletcher, the novel, upon first reading, appears to deal in many of the familiar themes, tropes and narrative structures that have thus far helped to define the modern crime-thriller genre. The brilliance of *Both of You* is, however, lies its deliberate and jarring moments of departure from the archetypes and cliches of which fans of the genre have come to expect as a matter of course.

Despite the fact that Adele Parks chooses to introduce us to Leigh Fletcher, the first of her dual protagonists, as a woman struggling to recall the events which have lead to her abduction, *Both of You* is anything but yet another voyeuristic 'captured woman' novel. Spanning the adult lives of its central characters as they meet, fall in love and attempt to adapt in the aftermath of a crime which has left each one of their lives cruelly upturned, the novel's potent depictions of characters that are struggling against events out with their immediate control raise themes which are profoundly relevant to the current day.

Set against the imposition of the first coronavirus lockdown, *Both of You* is a novel about love, alienation and the loss of agency. Though its careful, sensitive focus upon the lives, choices and desires of its central female protagonists, it's also a novel about women who refuse to have their

lives and choices defined by their respective ages, societal convention, or even morality. Composed of an unusual, non-chronological structure that leaps between different times, settings and perspectives, *Both of You*, is an excellent, meticulous work of fiction. Unmatched in her ability to wring the internal drama out of seemingly everyday events, Park's greatest achievements in *Both of You* are owed to her capacity to make ordinary relationships and actions seem strange, unfamiliar and potentially sinister. Starved of an immediate explanation as to who has taken Leigh and Kai, Park's reader is subtly invited to suspect each of the novel's supporting characters. Forcing its readership to reevaluate what normal marriages, families or friendships looks like, *Both of You* is as much a work of domestic-horror as it is a crime-thriller novel. The novel raises its stakes to the point of life or death or Leigh and Kai, their tumultuous paternal relationships, frayed marriages and uneven friendships take on levels of dramatic significance that are rarely achieved in more conventional novelistic forms. Inviting its reader to cast suspicion upon the near entirety of the novel's diverse cast of characters, *Both of You* is a riveting masterpiece for the paranoid, polarised contemporary world. Through her masterful deployment of sinister innuendo, dramatic irony, and toe-curling suspense, Adele Parks has created the most impressive work of her career to date. With its rich cast of real, emotionally plausible characters, and sensitive interrogations of love, sex and contemporary morality, *Both of You*, is a complex, heartbreaking novel. Drawing its reader in with the immediate drama of its central mystery, *Both of You* derives its real strength from the questions it forces us to ask about our own lives and the people we share them with. Almost certain to build upon the already considerable success of her previous works, Park's most recent offering is undoubtedly a classic of the genre in the making, and deservedly so.





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