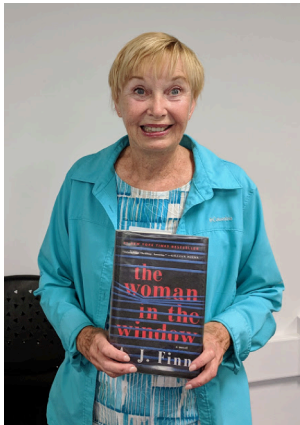




FRIENDS

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BOOK CLUB



In April, Mary Barlow presented A.J. Finn's *Woman in the Window*. Finn, who's real name is Dan Mallory, achieved phenomenal success with this debut thriller as it entered the *Times* best-seller list at No. 1 and will be released as a movie starring Amy Adams and Julianne Moore (here's a link to the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yq4e-LJgR0>).

To the dismay of several book club members who were charmed by Finn/Mallory when he appeared in person at a book festival in Rancho Mirage, the *New Yorker* magazine disrupted his literary image in a February 4, 2019 exposé titled, *A Suspense Novelist's Trail of Deceptions*. Later that month, Finn/Mallory's publisher HarperCollins said it intends to publish a second novel by him despite revelations he had lied about having cancer, including in an Oxford University application and to colleagues while working at publishing houses in both London and New York. Read the article to learn more incredible fabrications (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/02/11/a-suspense-novelists-trail-of-deceptions>).

In any case, the club members generally liked the novel. Here was another instance where someone of one sex writes in the first person as the opposite sex with remarkable results. Given the twists and turns in the authors' personal narrative it is not surprising he is able to carry off such a rollercoaster ride in his novel. Most agreed it was a "page-turner" and caught the author's gift for describing details—in some cases giving inanimate objects life like in the example below:

My "secret weapon," as Dr. Fielding calls it, is my umbrella—Ed's umbrella, really, a rickety London Fog contraption. Dr. Fielding, a rickety contraption himself, will stand like a scarecrow in the garden as I push the door open, the umbrella brandished before me. A flick of the spring and it blooms; I stare intently at the bowl of its body, at its ribs and skin. Dark tartan, four squares of black arranged across each fold of canopy, four lines of white in every warp and weft. Four squares, four lines. Four blacks, four whites. Breathe in, count to four. Breathe out, count to four. Four. The magic number. The umbrella projects straight ahead of me, like a saber, like a shield. And then I step outside. Out, two, three, four. In, two, three, four.

The discussion noted the numerous film references. The author publicly stated his affection for Hitchcock films. And the book falls into a familiar genre that includes *Girl on the Train* and *Gone Girl*. Inevitably, experiences with agoraphobia and substance abuse came up. Was the ending satisfying? I

suppose we will all have to see the movie, because the novel seemed to have the perfect movie ending. Moment by moment the author led us through each wrenching second that ultimately led to a resolution of the plot.

