



All That Follows

Jim Crace

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The prodigiously talented Jim Crace has returned with a new novel that explores the complexities of love and violence with a scenario that juxtaposes humor and human aspiration.

British jazzman Leonard Lessing spent a memorable yet unsuccessful few days in Austin, Texas, trying to seduce a woman he fancied. During his stay, he became caught up in her messy life, which included a new lover, a charismatic but carelessly violent man named Maxie.

Eighteen years later, Maxie enters Leonard's life again, but this time in England, where he is armed and holding hostages. Leonard must decide whether to sit silently by as the standoff unfolds or find the courage to go to the crime scene where he could potentially save lives. The lives of two mothers and two daughters—all strikingly independent and spirited—hang in the balance.

Set in Texas and the suburbs of England, *All That Follows* is a novel in which tender, unheroic moments triumph over the more strident and aggressive facets of our age.

It also provides moving and surprising insights into the conflict between our private and public lives and redefines heroism in this new century. It is a masterful work from one of Britain's brightest literary lights.

All That Follows Details

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Author : Jim Crace

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From Reader Review All That Follows for online ebook

Darryl says

Lennie Less is an accomplished British jazz saxophonist who is about to turn 50 in October 2024, and is reasonably happy, as he is in a comfortable marriage and his music has provided him with personal satisfaction and material comfort.

One day he watches a hostage drama taking place in a nearby town, and recognizes the intruder as Maxie Lerman, an American activist that he met years ago, as he was the lover of a Nadia Emerson, a woman he also loved. He wants to be of some assistance, knowing that the man has a violent streak and might kill his hostages. He meets up with the teenage daughter of Maxie and Nadia; she concocts a risky plan to bring the hostage drama to an end. Lennie, who is cautious to a fault, has reservations about the plan, yet cannot completely distance himself from the woman he once loved, and the young girl he has become enamored with.

Despite an interesting story line I found this book to be quite disappointing, as I could not empathize with any of the characters, and I found Lennie, the main character, to be selfish, wishy washy and thoroughly annoying. Fortunately this was a short novel, but it's one I would not recommend.

Rick says

I will follow Jim,
follow Jim wherever he may go...

Aaron says

As a writer, I found Crace's work to be awfully compelling. There doesn't seem to be a wasted word or a word out of place. The symbols he uses to exemplify his themes are well-chosen and repeated wisely. This man, this Jim Crace, is, without a doubt, a damn fine writer.

However, as a storyteller, Crace leaves a lot to be desired.

I enjoyed this book, but I didn't feel, when it was all over, that much had happened. The characters didn't seem to have learned much. The story didn't seem to have resolved itself. Everyone was pretty much right back where they started. Including me.

Charlene Roberson says

After about 15 minutes my husband and I both said "NAH" and stopped listening. Just wasn't making any

sense and who cares?

Doug Beatty says

I am not sure what to say about this one. It was a short novel (223 pages), but to me, it seemed really long. Leonard Lessing is the main character. He is a jazz musician, and seems to suffer from inactivity and ineffectiveness. He seems to long to become an activist, but doesn't have the guts to actually take any steps toward the goal. There is a hostage situation close to his home, and he recognizes one of the hostage takers as someone he once knew. He goes to the site, and meets the hostage takers daughter. Then, there is a lot of exposition and not very much happening. I think this is one of the points the novel is trying to make but it made the novel seem long and drawn out to me, and not very enjoyable. He does have a strong literary style, and the character descriptions are very well done and you do get a great sense for the personalities of Leonard and a lot of the characters involved, so if you are into a more character driven novel, this might be for you. But if you are looking for a good page turning plot, this might leave you cold.

Paige Nick says

Jim Crace, never ever disappoints.

Conrad says

Leonard Lessing, a jazz saxophonist, is something of a Walter Mitty character. He's not a man of courage but he likes to imagine that he could be. The story is set in England in the not too distant future (2024) where the surveillance state has progressed - not quite to Orwell's vision of 1984 - to the point when it is hard to fly under the radar. Lessing's past draws him back in inexorably when he recognizes an all too familiar figure on the nightly news. He keeps dipping his toe in the murky waters of a hostage situation until, finally, it draws him in. Ironically, he comes out on top.

Jim Crace must be a saxophone player since he goes into great detail about the instrument and the emotion of playing it.

Derek Smith says

I enjoyed this book, although it has a slow start, almost too slow – and I was growing impatient, and was near putting it down forever, when the plot picked up – and I became involved with the main character and his situation.

Leonard Lessing is a jazz musician in a failing marriage, who cannot bear to pick up his sax, and is feeling useless. He's a bit of a coward, impetuous, but essentially decent – he gets involved with a hostage situation, a house surrounded by cops, and the man inside with the gun is a man he knew from 20 years ago, when he was active in far left politics. Not violent himself, but he rubbed shoulders with those keen to overthrow the government by any means.

Leonard meets the hostage takers' daughter, and she concocts a crazy plan which he dopily agrees to, and he's caught up with his wife in the events around the house with all its dangers and media frenzy.

I became thoroughly engaged in this thoughtful book. Leonard, his wife, the hostage taker and his daughter are all interesting characters who drew me and held me, once the book took off from its pedestrian beginning.

Tuck says

i wanted this to be better, and then the flashback to 2006 austin tx helped a lot, then things started looking up in 2026 for lennie/leon/leornard and his timidness actually was filmed and broadcast and it SEEMED like he wasn't a timorous nambybamby asshole but a real tough dude. i learned two things: life isn't what it appears on film, and i am possibly a sofa socialist too :(

Leslie says

Let it be known: I love Jim Crace's work. However, this wasn't my favorite novel of his, and I'm still trying to figure out why. Even though it dealt with some appropriately topical and turgid issues - terrorism, missing children, militancy, mortality - it seemed a bit... I don't know... sleepy. The protagonist, Leonard Lessing, is a jazz musician, and because of this, I expected the prose to be-bop its way across the page. I was waiting for some literary riffs, playfulness, a shot of adrenaline. But instead the writing hit the same contemplative, lugubrious pitch throughout. This worked well when the scenes zeroed in on Lessing's melancholic middle-age retrospection, but it didn't quite deliver when the front-story (a hostage/terrorist situation) required a heightened sense of urgency/panic/action. Still a thoughtful read, and despite my quibbles, his sentences are truly gorgeous.

A good companion piece to James Hynes' "Next."

Anni says

Reviewed on www.whichbook.net

Sheenagh Pugh says

Leonard Lessing is a man most people - certainly most middle-aged people - will find convincing and likeable, a jazz musician, nearing 50, whose daring and talent for improvisation are confined to the stage; in real life he's a hesitant character who dreams of heroic deeds but thinks twice about everything before opting for the safest course. When, therefore, he gets caught up on the fringes of a hostage drama he is well out of his depth and bumbles from calamity to crisis. I rather resent, incidentally, the explanation of his physical clumsiness - "he is a slightly lumbering left-hander". The belief that left-handers are clumsy and uncoordinated was old-fashioned, and somewhat offensive, decades ago and I'm surprised to see Crace

repeating it.

The writing is mostly good, never more so than when it is describing Leonard's feelings about his music; it managed to communicate his passion to me, despite the fact that I don't like jazz. My biggest problem with the book is that I found its end very predictable. There was little tension here, despite the subject matter. I just knew, from early on, more or less exactly how things were going to end up. Calling your main characters Lesser and Max is an unnecessarily clunky signal too.

It's an amiable if not especially memorable book, with a light touch and some wry humour.

Felicity says

This probably deserves 3.5 stars, as Jim Crace is clearly a more compelling writer than many others. Nonetheless, I think I preferred "Pesthouse" to this novel, although it's like comparing apples to oranges. They are very different books...a sign of Crace's skill as a writer. What I did find particularly intriguing about this book was Crace's ability to write about present events (what's happening now in our lives) as past events. The book is set in some future time, eerily similar to our own, yet also strangely different. At the novel's centre is the jazz saxophonist Leonard Lessing...in his descriptions of music, Crace is particularly compelling. The plot itself unfolds slowly, but it is once again a hallmark of Crace's genius that he can convey a mother's grief at the loss of her child so exquisitely that even those of us without children can feel her anguish.

Bookmarks Magazine says

Reaction to *All That Follows* was decidedly mixed, with most critics agreeing that it is not Crace's best work. While several reviewers described his writing as "elegant," others found it overwritten and self-conscious: the *Boston Globe* cited too much "writerly riffing." While some enjoyed the in-depth passages on jazz music, others found them a bit tedious. Jim Crace is one of England's most beloved and award-winning contemporary novelists, but readers new to his work may want to seek out earlier titles. This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Alan says

*...a man breathes into a saxophone,
And through the walls we hear the city moan
[...]
Outside it's America...
—U2, "Bullet the Blue Sky"*

Leonard Lessing is a jazz saxophone player, a good one, with a solid career and artistic integrity to boot. He's currently residing in England, with his wife Francine. As *All That Follows* opens, Lennie is almost fifty years old, and while his life could be (and has been) a whole lot better, it could be worse, too. Sure, that

shoulder pain won't go away; he hasn't had his instrument case open in a month or two; Francine keeps waking up in the middle of the night thinking there's a phone call from their absent daughter Celandine... but on the plus side, he and Francine have their own home, they're financially secure, and above all their existence is devoid of any poisonous... drama.

At least, to start with.

That happy situation doesn't last very long, though. Leon is trolling the web, as he is all too often wont to do these days, when he catches sight of someone he knows on the news... Maxie Lermontov, an old acquaintance from his time in Austin, Texas. Hasn't heard from Maxie in years. But now Maxie's just down the road and he's involved in... a hostage situation?

Uh-oh. Drama...

All That Follows is actually science fiction, of a sort—it's set in the future, anyway, by a decade or two—but it doesn't seem to *need* to be. Nothing happens in the novel that couldn't have happened now, or even earlier, and the central themes—of love and husbandry, how one treats one's wife and daughter, how one reacts to a challenge to an existence that's been too comfortable for too long—are timeless.

Jim Crace absolutely nails it where it counts, though. I'm at the half-century mark myself, like Leonard Lessing, with my own aches and pains both physical and metaphysical, and there are many uncomfortable similarities between Leon and me. For example: when Lennie wants to give himself a treat, he heads for a *bookshop*—now, how could I not see a lot of myself in someone like that?

Which makes it all the more discomfiting to discover that Leonard's so... hapless, when drama finally does intrude on his bourgeois existence.

All That Follows is an enormously satisfying book, all in all. Crace manages to develop Leonard's character smoothly and realistically, while still surprising the reader at almost every turn with what happens to him—and how, eventually, Lennie exercises some agency of his own. Leon's steady life gets shaken up, no doubt about it... but doesn't it make sense that this could be a *good* thing?

Even if things don't work out for Leonard, though, this novel is definitely a good thing.
