

The Disappearance of Adele Bedeau by Graeme Macrae Burnet

4 stars

Life in a sleepy town of Saint-Louis and the interconnection of the people who live there

Adele Bedeau, a waitress at the Restaurant de la Cloche in Saint-Louis goes missing. But without a body there could be no murder investigation. Saint-Louis is a small, nondescript border town in the Alsace region - a place where few visitors wish to linger. Its inhabitants are creatures of habit, following routines on a daily basis. Daily lunches at the Restaurant de la Cloche and weekly card games. Life slowly passes them by.

Manfred Baumann inherited his father's graceless demeanour and his mother's sickly constitution making him an ill-at-ease outsider, an observer of life rather than a participant. Throughout his life he found it impossible to form the kind of relationships, either passing or profound, which come naturally to most people. Inspector Gorski of the Saint-Louis police is a man who accepts his lot in life but is haunted by an unsolved case from his youth. When Adele disappears Inspector Gorski questions Manfred in connection with her disappearance as the restaurant where she worked was one that Manfred frequents daily for lunch and supper.

In France this novel has been in print since 1982 and it is only now that it has been translated into English. In France it achieved the status of cult classic after the screen version in 1989. I really think the translator did an admirable job as I never thought that the book was not originally written in English. The author was from Saint-Louis originally and there are many parallels between the novel and the life of the author, Raymond Brunet, although it is a work of fiction. However, the Restaurant de la Cloche and Saint-Louis are exactly as they are described in the book. The novel brought home to me how mundane many people's lives are, how we never really know our acquaintances - what are their home lives like? How do they really feel? Most people never really say what they are feeling; some can't as they do not have the social skills to mingle in everyday society, like Georges Simenon wrote "Everything is true while nothing is accurate".

Saphira

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.