

Alibi by Joseph Kanon. Little, Brown 2005.

Alibi is a deeply atmospheric novel set in Venice immediately after the ending of the Second World War. It is a story of love and murder, particularly of the morality of murder when the victim is someone proven to be bad.

The major protagonists are a young American, Adam Miller, his Jewish lover Claudia Grassini who is a survivor of the concentration camp at Fossoli, his mother and her Venetian fiancé Gianni Maglione, and a dogged detective called Cavallini.

As in all such stories it is challenging to say more without revealing the plot, suffice it to say that Kanon is an excellent writer who engages his reader instantly and doesn't let go till the final page.

Alibi has moments of real tension, and crescendi of breathless excitement; it is also a story that lingers in the mind, not least because the moral issues it raises are so profound.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh