

## December 2021 – LAST FLING – SUE GEE

This book was a breath of fresh air for most of us after the previous book's grim stories. A book of short stories about humanity in all its forms tenderly handled without sentimentality.



The characters were well-drawn, the stories immediately engaging (a must for a short story) and came to life as real people with relatable issues.

Some featured fatal illnesses, sad, lonely, only children, single women and unfulfilled love. Others evoked memories of walking along the South bank in London "Outside the house" and one which was great fun, "Mother Duck".

The first story "In Bratislava" is of a man on a business trip, still in love with his wife who had left him a letter saying she was leaving him for another. In his aimless wanderings in the city, he goes to a restaurant and meets a waitress who offers to go back to the hotel with him where they make love. There is tenderness and despair in this random meeting and the girl is portrayed as an empathetic ear offering temporary solace from his pain. She refuses his endeavours to continue the relationship as she has plans for her future study and career path and he is left stranded in his sea of grief.

Other stories are also handled with dexterity and the author always creates an atmosphere of life crises without cloying sentiment. "For life" was another story of Persephone who, after her friend Jenny's death, was outraged to discover that Jenny had had a "secret life" with friends that she had known nothing about. The final story, "Last Fling" is a poignant tale of someone facing death with acceptance and a peaceful end. Memorable are the themes of loneliness, response to fresh discovery, and the values of different people striving to lead decent lives often with sad overtones. The characters reveal themselves through their thoughts or conversations presenting a clear picture very quickly.

Most of us read the stories in one go because they were so easy to read and immediately engaging – a mistake, we agreed, as they blurred into one another, so taking them one at a time was recommended for maximum effect!

Two of our group were not as keen as the rest of us, categorising them as "magazine short stories" which were not their favourite genre, (only to find out that, in fact, this was the origin of some of them!) but for the rest of us this was a truly very readable collection of stories