

Books, mystery and more in 'The Lions of Fifth Avenue'

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

I'm not the best book club member.

It's not the books that are the issue — it's more to do with my ability to commit to an actual meeting. I blame COVID (what else?) for affecting my attendance because we switched to Zoom meetings over the past year. While it was nice to have this option, it's just not the same as being in the same space with people and discussing a book in real-time — without worrying about why my computer is sluggish or how to adjust lighting so others can actually see my face.

I'm still reading the books, though. And I have the December meeting on my calendar — in person, at Betty's Books! I even finished the selection early so I don't have to worry about spoilers during the discussion.

This month's pick was "The Lions of Fifth Avenue" by Fiona Davis.

I really enjoyed this book.

It's about books and libraries — both topics that I love — but also about a woman who pursues a journalism degree in 1913.

The story goes back and forth between 1913 and 1993. The earlier storyline follows Laura Lyons, a mother and wife who scrapes together enough money to attend the new Columbia Journalism School while her husband writes a novel and works as superintendent of the New York Public Library.

The story in 1993 is about Sadie Donovan, who is a librarian at the same library and curator of an exhibit that will display items and writings by Laura Lyons (who happens to be Sadie's grandmother she never met).

While I enjoyed both storylines, I connected the most with Laura because she is trying to balance her family with a career — the same career that I have chosen. I found it fascinating to read about her struggles in journalism school when the professor sent the men to cover trials

and government meetings while assigning the women to cover "softer" stories about fashion or why a local hotel stopped serving butter.

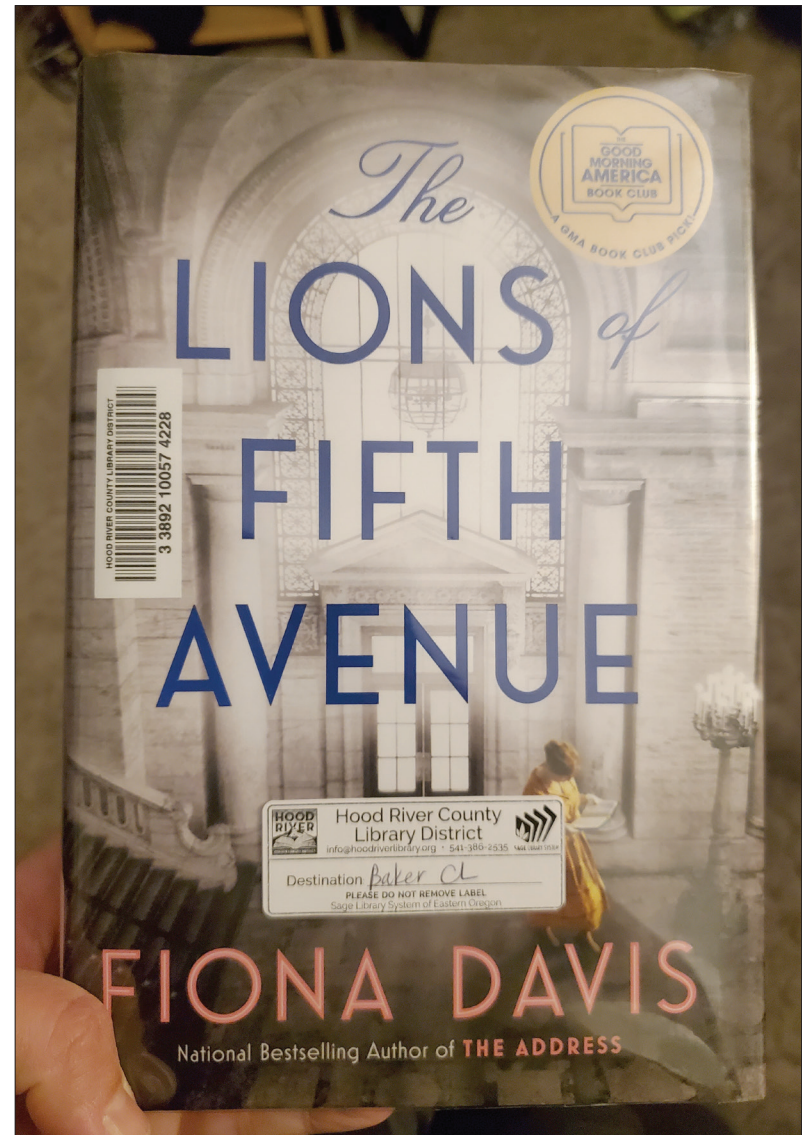
(Fun fact: The author of the book attended Columbia Journalism School.)

I'm fortunate to live in a time when stories are not deemed inappropriate for a woman to cover. I could feel Laura's frustration when she really wanted to tell a story but the cultural constraints made it unladylike to pursue.

Without spoiling too much ... she does go on to become an essayist and write her opinions about the societal roles assigned to men and women.

The book also has a bit of mystery — rare books start disappearing in 1913 and some are never recovered. As Sadie works on her exhibit 80 years later, irreplaceable books are again stolen. It is the connection between past and present that will help solve the thefts.

Bottom line: I would recom-



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mend this book. The story moves quickly, and each chapter ends with a bit of a cliffhanger.

Now I'm off to find other

books by Fiona Davis — I do love discovering an author who has other works already finished. I'm not good at waiting.

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