

BOOKCLUB

WITH **NICOLA SMITH**

Do you have a book review or would you like me to review a book you've enjoyed? Please get in touch at DRbookclub@dailyrecord.co.uk or tweet @NicolawordSmith

Heart was in my mouth as I turned every page

Truth Be Told by Kia Abdullah

There are so many taboo topics that few of us feel comfortable to talk about freely.

We all have our own boundaries and our own list of conversation topics that make us feel a bit awkward. However, I'm sure male rape is high on everyone's list.

It's the topic at the centre of author Kia Abdullah's latest novel, *Truth Be Told*.

The book follows Kamran Hadid, a 17-year-old student at Hampton, an elite all boys' boarding school, with the world at his feet.

He's secured a place at Oxford and, thanks to his wealth and upbringing, he's on track to have the kind of highly privileged life that most of us can only dream about.

But one night sets Kamran's life in a spin. It will never be the same again after a fellow student rapes him following a school party.

At first Kamran tries to deal with what's happened to him alone. He could never go to his conservative Pakistani parents. Then he seeks the guidance of assault counsellor Zara Kaleel.

She helps him report the crime, eventually leading to his time in court fighting for the guilty verdict he deserves.

But it's not all plain sailing. Zara has her own troubles to deal with. Recovering from an addiction to diazepam, the therapist has a tense relationship with her family, and with a previous rape case leaving her feeling raw and wondering if more could have been done, she is determined to do everything she can for Kamran.

Meanwhile, Kamran also has a tricky home

life to deal with. He and his younger brother Adam are at the mercy of their successful father, who values all things masculine and demands that his sons be strong young men.

Then there's their mother Sofia. She fiercely loves her children but with so many appearances to keep up, she struggles to follow the rules set by their lifestyle.

And when Kamran's rape case throws them into the limelight, the family must learn to deal with their emotions and the impact they fear it may have on their image.

Mack is staunchly protective of what he's created for their family but Sofia is desperate to be there for her family, even though there are so many issues blocking the way.

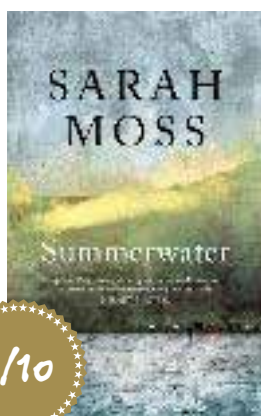
This was my first reading of Abdullah's work and I have to say, her writing style and tense courtroom descriptions are a masterpiece. The way she sets a scene and maps out dialogue is a triumph.

I felt my heart in my mouth as I turned every page. Not once did the pace dip, and there were so many moments that were sublimely woven through the story to back up each character's case.

When you get to the final chapters, buckle up. You won't see it coming but you will definitely be applauding the handling of such a heroic and tragic tale.

This book landed unexpectedly on my desk, and I'm so grateful to have been introduced to Abdullah's work.

She writes with such intelligence, research and compassion that you feel safe in her hands as her words weave the story.



Summerwater by Sarah Moss

Being stuck inside while it rains relentlessly can bring about a reflective frame of mind - *Summerwater* is exactly that.

The story follows 12 characters whose lives converge in a Scottish cabin park on a wet summer's day, with Sarah Moss giving us a glimpse inside each miniature bubble of family life.

Every character is so completely relatable, the novel becomes almost

sentient, with Moss' pensive and eloquent descriptions flowing throughout.

Evocative, with deft touches of humour, sadness and cruelty, *Summerwater* perfectly encapsulates a cross-section of modern British society.

The perfect escapism on a rainy day.

● **Summerwater** by Sarah Moss is published by Picador in hardback, priced £14.99 (ebook £8.99). Available now.

8/10

The Honey And The Sting by EC Fremantle

EC Fremantle's historical novel follows three sisters navigating a maze of twists and turns in 1628 England.

The narrator, Hester, carries much of the weight of the story, as she's left to raise her illegitimate son to the Duke of Buckingham alone.

The pacing of the plot, the tension that oozes and the occasional flirt with the supernatural grabs your attention, and Fremantle highlights

the many issues women faced in the 17th century.

It's an engaging read, however Melis - the most interesting of the sisters, who has eerie and often accurate visions of the future - lacks the development she deserves.

● **The Honey And The Sting** by EC Fremantle is published by Michael Joseph in hardback, priced £14.99 (ebook £9.99). Available now.



7/10

YOUNG ADULT BOOK OF THE WEEK

Midnight Sun by Stephenie Meyer

The latest instalment in the world-famous *Twilight* saga, *Midnight Sun*, is a book 12 years in the making.

For all its hype, Bella and Edward's romance finally re-told from the vampire's perspective is a little uninspiring.

Though filled with nostalgia for avid *Twilight* fans, Edward's length and often repetitive narrative may not be enough to hold the attention of a more casual reader until its gripping, action-packed conclusion.

The book, previously

leaked as an unfinished draft in 2008, shows an insight into Edward's intense, verging-on-obsessive behaviour, that may have been better left to the imagination of its young fans.

The young adult novel will satisfy readers itching for more from the saga but isn't quite filled with enough untold backstory from the 104-year-old protagonist to make Edward's re-telling of the romance a must-read.

● **Midnight Sun** by Stephenie Meyer is published by Atom in hardback, priced £20 (ebook £10.99). Available now.



7/10

NON-FICTION BOOK OF THE WEEK

A Dutiful Boy: A Memoir Of A Gay Muslim's Journey To Acceptance by Mohsin Zaidi

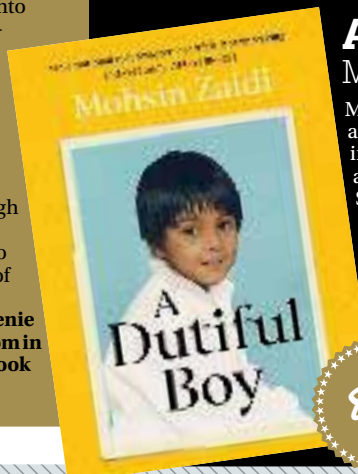
Mohsin Zaidi's autobiography sets a scene where coming out seems inconceivable. It chronicles the author's coming of age in a devout Shia Muslim community in east London: a community where the expression of his sexuality would lead to instant ostracisation from family members and friends.

That Zaidi won the fight is evident in the way he became the first pupil from his school to attend Oxford University, going

on to become a distinguished barrister working at The Hague on a war crimes trial.

A Dutiful Boy details in a delicate and highly engrossing fashion the battles he was forced to wage every step of the way - both with those around him and deep within himself.

● **A Dutiful Boy: A Memoir Of A Gay Muslim's Journey To Acceptance** by Mohsin Zaidi is published by Square Peg in hardback, £14.99 (ebook £9.99). Available now.



8/10