



You Can't Do Both

Kingsley Amis

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Robin Davies knows how to look after number one. Raised in a bland suburb of South London in the 1930s, Robin longs for the freedom to do what he wants. When he escapes to study in Oxford, he meets Nancy Bennett, a young woman even less worldly than himself. As Robin stumbles through his rites of passage to adulthood, involving rebellion, self-discovery, sex, war, seduction and the threat of commitment, we come to realise just how far he will go to have his cake and eat it.

You Can't Do Both Details

Date : Published July 1st 2004 by Vintage Classics (first published 1994)

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Author : Kingsley Amis

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From Reader Review You Can't Do Both for online ebook

Clara says

This novel combines a few of my favorite elements of communication: an autobiographical leaning, hill-airious prose, and male chauvinistic bantering that's ultimately trounced... sort of. Very satisfying!

Haxby says

Interesting character development. A very good read.

M.k. Yost says

Robin Davies is seriously an insufferable git. So hard to get through this one.

Orchestre says

People go on about old Kingers as if he was Donald Trump or Mussolini. But in this late work one of the characters, a lefty pacifist homosexual (who tries to seduce a 14 year old) gets quite a sympathetic portrayal.

Beth says

I found this a bit of a tedious read because of the unsympathetic protagonist, Robin Davies, who grows up in the thirties in a London suburb.

It's a coming of age novel about someone who never really engages properly with anyone and always looks after himself.

2.5 stars

Andrew says

Top & tail with the classic 1950s 'Lucky Jim' territory of young whippersnappers on the scramble for whatever is going free!...but 50 years apart!...(though this tale of a South London lad on the academic & sexual make, echoes the author's own giddy ascent to literary notoriety in the years before & after the Second World War)...is entertaining if rather predictable, & the title gives a heads-up to the dilemma at the novel's rotten heart. The characterisations are a bit lazy & very hard on the Welsh! - but the dialogues sound chronologically authentic...with Amis's trademark sardonic flavour much in evidence with the main protagonist, Robin Davies, who clearly reflects something of the author's fluid morality.

I wouldn't recommend this to anyone seeking a good read unless already acquainted with the Kingsley Amis

voice, which tends to jar with the almost suffocatingly-liberal consensus in the wider literary world we find so prevalent in the 'tolerant' 21st century. I doubt whether Sir Kingsley - with whom I had a brief but vivid exchange about poetry publishing policies while working in a Covent Garden bookshop not far from his club...& clearly 'well-oiled' on several glasses of wine! - would find a willing publisher these days. A self-publicist like Kingsley, however, could find a way into print...if only as a contributor to Goodreads!...or on some centre-right blog making fun of menopausal Blair babes & crazed Corbynistas! The Guardian would not be happy!

Natalee says

I ended up giving up on this book. It is a good read from how far I got but it was taking me forever to get through and I found myself wishing it would just be over already. So I'm giving up but, feel free to let me know how the ending goes and how the story develops. I got to page 138. It took me about a month to get that far.

Kelly says

KA #20, if I'm not mistaken. A big thank you to K for getting me that much closer to completion of the catalog.

Nathaniel says

A story of a man that walks a fine line from his time as a child, to his time at Uni, both before and after the war, finishing with his life as a middle aged man. He is both a hero and an anti-hero.

Jill says

First published in 1994 and written by well-known English novelist and poet, Kingsley Amis, the blurb on the book cover of the edition I read of *You Can't Do Both* says it is "*strongly autobiographical*". Given the little I read about Amis, I would tend to agree. Known for his drinking and affairs, Amis has seemingly poured himself into the hero, Robin Davies.

Apparently when asked by the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko if he was an atheist, Amis answered "It's more that I hate Him." Robin espouses similar views.

John Osborne of the *Literary Review* says this book '*Will have you whooping with delight.*'

blank stare

....So that *didn't* happen but I wasn't bored witless either. More that reading a book about a serial cheater written by a serial cheater just isn't really my thing.

Nevertheless a somewhat interesting read, neither particularly entertaining nor enjoyable. Except I suppose if Kingsley Amis is your favourite author and you like reading a fictional version of his life.

** Thanks to Kinga for the recommendation (Just you wait....)*

Tim says

I am not sure if this late Amis novel was ever published in America; I think it's one of his best, certainly one of his most affecting. And more autobiographical, nakedly, than anything else in his fictional oeuvre.

Dan Honeywell says

Amis at his most sentimental with funny bits here and there.

Emily says

Decided to read Kingsley before getting onto Martin... whole father and son thing. Which is what the book is about too. Scary insight into British middle class males and their frustratingly repressed behaviour.

C. Kempe says

A very unusual book from Amis: more true than his memoirs, it covers the early life of "Robin" and shows how he became the compulsive womaniser that we all have heard Amis to be.
