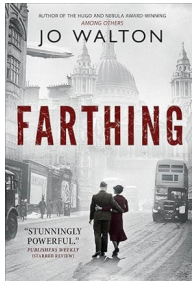




# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians



*Farthing*  
By Jo Walton  
Discussed May 2009

### Characters

The Farthing Set	Caught-In-The-Middle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lord Charles Eversley – long-time Conservative and member of various Conservative governments; father of Hugh (deceased) and Lucy; current owner of Farthing (country house, scene of the murder)</li> <li>Lady Margaret Eversley – wife of Lord Charles; staunch Conservative and reactionary; mover-and-shaker within the Farthing Set</li> <li>Sir James Thirkie, Baronet (murder victim) – long-time Conservative MP and member of House of Lords; loudly anti-Semitic; architect of The Farthing Peace with Nazi Germany; Minister of Education (with rumors of either Home Secretary or Foreign Secretary after upcoming elections)</li> <li>Mark Normanby – brother-in-law of the Thirkies; Conservative MP; Foreign Minister; rising star in the Farthing Set (with rumors of either Chancellor of the Exchequer or Prime Minister after upcoming elections)</li> <li>Lady Angela Thirkie (nee Dittany) – wife/widow of Sir James</li> <li>Daphne Normanby (nee Dittany) – wife of Mark Normanby; sister of Angela Thirkie</li> <li>Miss Sukie Dorset – poor cousin (and “secretary-companion”) of Lady Eversley</li> </ul>	Police/Inspectors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lucy Kahn (nee Eversley); daughter of Lord and Lady Eversley; wife of David Kahn</li> <li>David Kahn (murder suspect) – English-born Jew (son of a wealthy Jewish banker/businessman); closeted bisexual (during the War, lover of Lucy’s late brother Hugh); husband of Lucy</li> <li>Jack – Inspector Carmichael’s live-in lover (officially, Carmichael’s manservant)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspector Peter Carmichael (Scotland Yard) – called in to investigate the sensitive, high-profile murder at Farthing; born in Lancashire (northern England); closeted homosexual</li> <li>Sgt. Royce (Scotland Yard) – Carmichael’s driver and assistant; born in London</li> <li>Inspector Yately (Winchester police) – local police authority; first on the scene of the murder at Farthing</li> <li>Chief Inspector Penn-Barkis (Scotland Yard) – Carmichael’s interfering and politically-motivated supervisor.</li> </ul>

## Discussion Questions

1. The novel combines a murder mystery (English country house murder), political intrigue, and alternate history. How successful is the mix? How well is each aspect of the mix handled?
2. The novel is set in 1949 England. How successful is the author at giving you a “feel for the time period” – for example, English (especially upper class) culture; the English class system; etc.?
3. Chapters alternate between a first person narrative by Lucy Kahn and a third person narrative from the viewpoint of Inspector Carmichael. How did this affect your enjoyment of the novel?
4. What do you think of the LGBT content? How do you think the differing social and legal/political opinions about homosexuality affected “gay life” in England in 1949? What do you think about how the author depicts the following relationships: David Kahn and Hugh Eversley; Peter Carmichael and Jack?
5. What is your opinion about the novel’s conclusion? What do you feel about “the devil’s bargain” that Carmichael agreed to? What do you think about the final scene between Carmichael and Sgt. Royce?
6. Did you enjoy *Farthing*? Why or why not?

## Other Related Titles

“Still Life With Fascists” Trilogy by Jo Walton:

- *Farthing* (2006)
- *Ha’penny* (2007)
- *Half a Crown* (2008)

Books With Similar Themes:

- *The Summer Isles*, by Ian MacLeod (2005)
- *The Plot Against America*, by Philip Roth (2004)
- *It Can’t Happen Here*, by Upton Sinclair (1935)
- *Remains of the Day* (novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, 1993; film, starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson, 1993)
- *Richard III* (film, starring Ian McKellen, 1995)