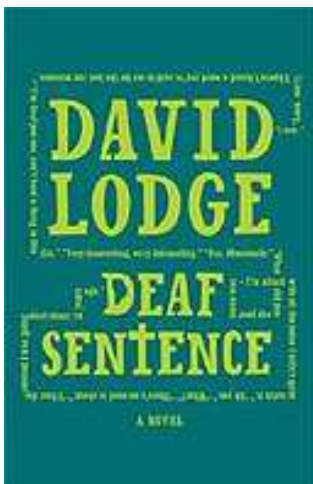


Deaf Sentence by David Lodge



Desmond Bates the 60-something hero of David Lodge's 14th novel is a retired linguistics professor at a Midlands university, his later life has turned both stagnant and problematic. His wife Winifred (Fred), nipped, tucked and surgically reinvented, is now the proud co-owner of a shop called Décor; his 89-year-old father, still haphazardly quartered in southeast London, is clearly in decline; and a glamorous but faintly sinister American postgrad named Alex wants him to supervise her thesis about suicide notes. Each of these difficulties is given a controlling context by the deafness that makes party conversation unintelligible and even answering the phone a sonic obstacle course. What begins as a modest comedy of modern manners becomes increasingly darker as the humour blackens and the characters reveal their underlying complexities.