



## The Girl On The Landing

*Paul Torday*

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Is Michael ill, or could the disturbing events he is witnessing possibly be real? A thrilling novel about identity and love from the author of 'Salmon Fishing in the Yemen'.

## **The Girl On The Landing Details**

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Author : Paul Torday

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## **From Reader Review The Girl On The Landing for online ebook**

### **Susanne Hopkinson says**

If you have read Salmon Fishing in Yemen you will enjoy this book, although it is a bit different. I actually found it rather creepy and actually looked behind me when going upstairs at night to bed. The story follows Michael, an unusual bloke, no money worries, crumbling estate in Scotland. He is quiet, reserved and married to Elizabeth. The story unfolds through each character's point of view. Is Michael starting to fall apart into a different reality - ie schizophrenia - or has he really seen 'the girl' from a picture on a landing in a large house he and Elizabeth visit. This is an intriguing story to be taken both ways, I suppose. We are asked to ponder what is 'normal' for Michael - drugged up to the eyeballs with lithium, or manic and hallucinating, convinced he can speak to people who are not there and who Elizabeth cannot see. But, can she.....? This book is very well written and slightly scary, but will have you on the edge of your seat.

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### **Marianne says**

What a fantastic novel. It is scary and thought provoking and heartbreakin. But so good. Have so many questions. Was it real or not?

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### **Wiebke (1book1review) says**

So I went into this book not knowing what it was about and I went out of this book still unsure of what I just read.

The story is narrated by two narrators, Elizabeth and Michael, who lead a rather cold marriage. Nothing exciting happens, Elizabeth keeps going on about how she got into this situation and that she is okay with her dull, desinterested husband.

Until things start changing and he starts paying attention to her, showing her what her marriage could have been like and she falls in love with this new version of her husband.

Unfortunately this new version only existst because he stopped taking some medication which suppressed things that are resurfacing now and have to be dealt with.

I really had problems with the writing of this novel, it was really difficult to get into, and the change between narrators (or who the narrators were in the first place) was not well done.

Then I didn't like the characters and their behavior all throughout the book.

Then the issue with the medication and everything connected to that was so superficial and to some extent unbelievable that it drove me up the wall.

The mystery part of the novel kept me going, as I was hoping for a resolution at the end, but there was none. There was just more confusion and no real statement was made on anything.

I really cannot recommend this book.

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## **J. says**

This was a really enjoyable and interesting read. The perfect easy read for a road trip or flight.

I read somewhere this book being described as a subtle ghost story and that's the perfect description. It also really aptly captures a particular sliver of British society, the upper class not royalty type. And their struggle with changing society, particularly with regards to race. It also captures an interesting portrayal of mental illness. In the end, I wasn't impressed with how the character with schizophrenia was portrayed but in the first half I think it was a bit better.

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## **Tsuhonets says**

Interesting book with an interesting approach, if nothing else.

Contemporary books with Victorian era suspense are rather sparse, so I was glad to come across this one since I completely, completely adore gothic horror. There's something very special in that style - above all it is the way how the most respectful and well-behaved ladies and gentlemen become faced with something completely inexplicable and monstrous that defies their rationalist world view. But not only that, in this book everything happens in a modern day world, through modern day knowledge and science. That allows the book to be viewed from various interesting additional perspectives.

In essence, the plot is very faithful to the gothic style (quite reminiscent of Le Fanu's Green Tea in fact). A man sees a female in a painting. The mysterious female begins to haunt him, but it appears that no-one else can see her. Strange things happen. Is the woman a ghost, or is the man mad? That is the question. The mandatory descriptions of inherited countryside mansions, gentlemen's clubs, wealth, monocles and tweed jackets have not been forgotten either.

The thrill in the novel was mainly great and the author managed to retain descent amounts of mystery for the reader to ponder, before the last pages anyway. I also got really good laughs from a particular scene where the protagonist destroys a dinner atmosphere by explaining about the mitochondrial DNA origins of Brits, making everyone thinks there's something seriously wrong with him because gasp - he isn't talking about "normal" things like golf or hunting or gossip. I'm all too familiar with that! However in some ways in general the approach was a little bit too scientific, almost so that this novel could be considered to stigmatise mental illness (schizophrenia) to obnoxious degrees.

The author did not really explore the parapsychological vehicle, rather the book presents the view that everyone who sees or hears imaginary things is mad, must be locked up and medicated. I don't claim that this is what the author wants to say, instead from between the lines one can see that he has a somewhat anti-psychiatric agenda. And there are a couple pretty obvious plot details pointing to this.

Towards the end stages the book had some sections which I found very hard to read. It angered me and... I wished the things would have been written to go differently. It's frustrating to be vague but I feel it's hard to say much about the content without spoiling the plot. The characters could have had more depth as well, especially the protagonist's wife, and sometimes it seemed as if the author would have tried all too hard to make his puppets move the story to a certain direction instead of achieving a natural flow. That distracted me.

Overall though, I still enjoyed the book and found it entertaining and fascinating. Personally I would like to give it rather high points.

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### **Marianne says**

“How comfortable that idea is: that everything wrong with the human race is the result of some malfunction, some microscopic chemical change in our brains, some evolutionary wrong turning in our genetic code.”

The Girl On The Landing is the third novel by British author, Paul Torday. For ten years, Elizabeth has been married to Michael Gascoigne, ten years that Elizabeth says “demonstrated that at least I had commitment, although in my bleaker moments I thought that it might just be inertia”. Michael, boring but very wealthy, decent and reliable, begins to change after a weekend in Ireland, and Elizabeth discovers a spontaneous, romantic man she wishes had been present for those early years. Even when she discovers the reason for this profound change, and the danger it poses, she is reluctant to give this new man up.

This novel has a rather slow-moving start, but this tempo reflects the tone of the Gascoigne marriage, and as later events are described, the pace certainly picks up. Torday uses a twin narrative: Michael, who is eventually revealed to be an unreliable narrator; and Elizabeth, whose perspective demonstrates just how easily one can be ignorant of the true nature of one’s partner. Torday touches on the covert racism of the English Gentleman’s Club, as well as the medical profession’s opinion of what is “normal”, mental disorders and the drugs used to treat them: “...what type of human can conceive that a drug which obliterates the patient’s identity so entirely is a cure for anything?”

Torday said he trying to find the “ultimate novel” and wrote compulsively: each of his seven novels is a different genre, and The Girl On The Landing has been described as a subtle ghost story. This edition also contains a reading guide and a preview of the next book Torday wrote: The Hopeless Life of Charlie Summers. Said Charlie Summers makes a cameo appearance in this novel: Torday’s characters tend to do this. This thought-provoking novel is another brilliant Torday offering.

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### **Weebly says**

This is a library book read for Hartwell WI book club.

The book started out to be just another relationship drama, but as Michael disappeared and Mikey emerged as the book progressed it became more and more like a thriller. I didn’t quite understand the Lamia references through the book, but that was made clear at the end. The book kept me hooked in and I really enjoyed it. I look forward to hearing what the rest of the book club think of it tonight.

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### **Katy Noyes says**

Mysterious tale of a man with secrets... it grew on me as I read on

I didn't like this much to start with, but I persevered as I have loved other Torday novels. As I came to understand the characters more and see the twists emerge, I appreciated the build-up, the tricks employed, the tension built. It reminded me a little of 'Death of an Owl' in terms of some of the characters and situations.

An enigmatic man, quite cool and hard to fathom proposes to a woman he first meets at a party. Having feelings towards him not quite of 'love' Elizabeth says yes to Michael, they build a quiet life of routine but no real passion, travelling between London and his family home in a rural part of Scotland. Eventually some secrets emerge that change both our perception of the characters and their own.

It's a slow build up, but does pay off for patience. The narration is shared between the married couple and gives a good insight both into how they see each other and their relationship and how they see themselves. It's nicely conveyed and as we learn more, clarity eventually descends.

Not instantly as riveting as 'Salmon Fishing' but it's a good read if you like a slow-burner.

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### **Jaana says**

It's safe to say that *The Girl On The Landing* isn't one of those books that suck you in instantly. It takes time, and a bit of genuine effort to get into the flow of the book, but once you do it's truly hard to stop reading.

I have to be honest, *The Girl On The Landing* isn't on top of my list of favourite books, but it's pretty damn close. Where as the slow-paced beginning almost put me off the book, the second half made me finish it in a matter of hours.

Towards the ending of the book I found myself more forgiving of the constant dwelling on little details, which first annoyed me greatly, as they all started to make perfect sense. If you're not a very patient reader, much like I'm not, don't despair - all the pieces will be knotted tightly together and it will all make sense. Well, mostly, but that's the beauty of the book.

I'm still not sure what made me pick up this book at random at the bookstore, but I'm glad I did, because it sure has given me a lot to think about.

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### **Susan says**

This is the first book I've read by Paul Torday. It kept me on the edge of my chair. I don't want to put any spoilers in, but it did interweave human drama, English manners, suspense, and something extra... sort of dark, sort of odd, and it kept me turning the pages! I won't say any more...

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### **Rodrigo Acuna says**

"Apparitions and mental conditions, inventions and creations of the mind."

This story is about letting go, returning to a more wild state, a place before nations and nationalities a place

where legends, sensual, sexual passions and the true savage live, a place where you follow your instincts till you howl at the moon. Commune with the goddess and hunt animal all animals, till you disappear into the primordial forest in your mind.

A marriage of convenience between two strangers, and old fashion life where modernity is intruding into the set British ways of doing things, old gentleman's clubs, fishing trips, boring social dinners, a boring boring life, where Michael unbenevolent to everyone has began a plan of escape, a transformation into a past where there were only primordial men and forests. The first glimmer is a girl in a painting, followed by her ever growing reality that awakens in him a surprising Michael, that sparks passion in his wife, even love, controversy in social circles and a dislocation of reality, that seeps like blood into every cranny of their lives.

Very well written, full of atmosphere and contradictory feelings for the reader, the characters are well written and the settings feel real and full of life. A very different thriller that is not about capture but escape and there is where this book will have some detractors, it is not conclusive but open ended and even allegorical in its ending like the feelings it awakens in Michael; that like his namesake is a fallen angel of sorts.

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### **Jerusha says**

Well well well, I certainly was not expecting that. Don't read a blurb, don't read a synopsis if you'd like an old Victorian Gothic horrors set in the cold, remote of Scotland (my home!) dive right in like I did and be swept away in a tale that leaves you breathless. The twist and turns come thick and fast, astounding you at every turn of the page. A fantastic, and indeed, a very gripping read, I started and finished on the same day!

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### **Spaghettitoes says**

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The book starts with the couple in Ireland for the weekend but the person's name isn't given. The excuses given for why they can't remember the person's name is just annoying. It didn't

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### **Kerry says**

I will have to think some more about this book. Is it believable? I guess for the plot to be so I have to accept the author's premise that evil has a genetic basis and can be passed through generations, the 'bad seed' theory. There is something nagging at me about the storyline though, as though I have missed a clue that will make the whole novel more plausible. This book is a gothic thriller, set not in the genre of the nineteenth century but in the Scottish highlands of the twenty-first century. I understand that Michael (Mikey) Gascoigne can 'see' the Lamia but not that she/it is also visible to his wife Elizabeth. Michael is a damaged soul, a boy who was treated for a severe mental illness with lithium/ mind altering drugs in order to curtail the 'voices' that haunt him and drive him to commit acts of violence but also give him powers to conceal himself in order to move through the landscape unseen and unheard. Michael grows up and marries Elizabeth. But the man who marries Elizabeth is a drug-controlled version of his true self, and the situation really goes pear-shaped when he decides that he will no longer continue to take his medication, and he begins to revert to his 'true self'. Slow-moving at first, but this is intentional, a metaphor/allegory for the slow-moving life of the drugged

Michael before he reverts to passionate 'Mikey' and his marriage and life with Elizabeth really heats up and spirals out of control. Scary in parts, but believable? Hmmmm.

3.5 stars

I think what is troubling me is the role of the housekeeper, Mrs MacLeish. Why did the author include her character and not flesh out her relationship with Michael? It seems that she is the only remaining witness to his life as a child and it is obvious that she knows more about him than she tells Elizabeth. Why does she disappear without any further involvement?

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### **Amanda says**

An easy read with a beautiful setting. I wasn't fond of the unanswered questions at the end. Elizabeth was a bland character. I enjoyed the chapters from Michael's perspective more.

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