



In Bloom

C.J. Skuse

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The darkly comic crime sequel to *Sweetpea*, following girl-next-door serial killer Rhiannon as she's now caught between the urge to kill and her unborn baby stopping her.

If only they knew the real truth. It should be my face on those front pages. My headlines. I did those things, not him. I just want to stand on that doorstep and scream it: IT WAS ME. ME. ME. ME. ME!

Rhiannon Lewis has successfully fooled the world and framed her cheating fiancé Craig for the depraved and bloody killing spree she committed. She should be ecstatic that she's free.

Except for one small problem. She's pregnant with her ex-lover's child. The ex-lover she only recently chopped up and buried in her in-laws' garden. And as much as Rhiannon wants to continue making her way through her kill lists, a small voice inside is trying to make her stop.

But can a killer's urges ever really be curbed?

In Bloom Details

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Author : C.J. Skuse

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From Reader Review In Bloom for online ebook

Tracy Fenton says

I freaking loved Sweetpea. I thought it was OUTRAGEOUS and CRUDE and INAPPROPRIATE and TASTELESS, but honestly, reading (devouring) In Bloom in a day made me realise that Sweetpea was like Mother Teresa on Valium compared to this brilliant sequel.

Rhiannon is back, but this time she's not alone! She's pregnant and she's a walking, talking hormonal, baby brained psycho with a craving to kill.

Told again through a diary with the fabulous kill lists, Rhiannon is living at her fiancé's parents house, whilst he is in prison facing multiple murder charges.

If you are easily offended, squeamish, prudish or have a strong sense of morality then I strongly suggest you avoid these books.

If you have a sick, twisted, disturbing and questionable sense of humour, pick up Sweetpea and then read the fabulous follow up. I laughed, cringed, snorted and practically inhaled this book in a day. This is going into my Top Ten books of 2018 and then I am off to find some suitable medical treatment for the author who really is one messed up and dark bunny.

Matt says

C.J. Skuse is back with the sequel to her twist serial killer novel with more first-person narrative in a world where murder seems to be the easiest way to deal with scumbags. After her successful run of killing a number of sexual offenders, Rhiannon Lewis has been able to push the crimes off on her fiancé, Craig, who was recently picked-up by the authorities. Rhiannon's drama does not end there, for a workplace tryst left her pregnant and required that she dispose of the baby daddy in short order, though has decided to do so on the sly. Now, with the news breaking that she's been living alongside a serial killer, Rhiannon is not working, but has moved into her presumptive in-laws' home, who are led to believe that this baby is their grandchild. Plotting her pregnancy through a first-person narrative, Rhiannon has immersed herself into the life of an expectant mother, though she cannot shake the urge to kill, particularly those who are on the prowl to harm others. Enter the wee one in her belly, which acts as a sort of conscience to steer Rhiannon on the right path. As the urges continue to grow and the authorities start poking around ahead of Craig's trial, Rhiannon must use her willpower to stay clean and prepare to be the best mother possible. Still, one little murder couldn't hurt anyone, right? A wonderfully sarcastic and dark story that is sure to entertain the reader throughout. Recommended for those who like a little British humour alongside the insights of a serial killer.

A friend recommended the debut novel in this series, which I found to be decent and definitely a quick read. Returning to see how the pregnancy might add to the flavour of the plot and narrative, I was quite impressed with what Skuse created, so much so that I pushed through the piece in short order. Rhiannon 'Sweetpea' Lewis is quite the character, particularly with impending motherhood looming over her. Not only does the reader get to see a little more of her insight into ridding the world of sexual offenders, but also the struggle to regulate her urges in order to prepare for a baby. Rhiannon's banter, with baby and moms-to-be alike, is a mix of humour and downright struggles to find a balance, which permits the reader to see much of her inner

angst. The to and fro with the wee one is quite amusing and does provide an interesting subplot throughout the piece. A handful of others cross paths with Rhiannon, creating an interesting dynamic as she seeks to show little sign of panic or concern, while things are almost out of control below the surface. The story takes some interesting plot twists and provides the reader with some interesting perspectives, from trips with her pregnancy group to life living with in-laws and even some luring of paedophiles through internet websites. The reader can see, through a first-person narrative, what makes Rhiannon tick, which includes some of her 'list of things I hate' that appear to open specific chapters. Of note, Skuse has chosen to plot the pregnancy with gestation dates rather than the traditional chapter numbers, allowing the reader to see the ongoing progression of things, which helps also to explain Rhiannon's struggles as her pregnancy progresses. Fast-paced and told with blunt honesty, the book is one that complements the first novel quite well, though surely could be read as a standalone.

Kudos, Madam Skuse, for a wonderful piece. I am eager to see where to take things from here, should you decide to build on the series.

Love/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

A Book for All Seasons, a different sort of Book Challenge: <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/...>

Cortney LaScola - The Bookworm, Myrtle Beach says

For as much as I loved Sweetpea, the sequel In Bloom just fell kind of flat for me. I just kept WAITING for something to happen. By page 200, still nothing... But the last 100 pages were good enough for me to hope for another sequel.

Obviously Rhiannon has no moral compass, but it bugged me how she kept taking advantage of Elaine and Jim. Who cares about the murder spree? I'm worried about their feelings! lol

Keeping my fingers crossed for another one.

Sarah says

In Bloom is the second book to feature Rhiannon. Would highly recommend you read Sweetpea, the first book, before reading this one. There is a lot of background that I feel readers would feel like they are missing out on if they don't read them in order.

It was great to catch back up with Rhiannon again. I'm sure we can all see a bit of ourselves in her, though luckily for the police, the rest of us can restrain ourselves from breaking the law and killing people, even though some of them do deserve it. Being pregnant you would think Rhiannon would maybe turn over a new leaf but then where would the fun be in that? To a certain extent, the unborn baby is a bit like a guardian angel and Rhiannon's sense of reason. She constantly questions what Rhiannon is about to do and makes her think more about the consequences. I loved the parts to do with Rhiannon talking to her unborn baby. It was quite tender, emotional as well as at times, funny.

Rhiannon is every bit as selfish as she was in the first book. At times we do see her mellow and think about other people. It was great to see but then on the other hand it also broke my heart. I've got to admit I'm not completely sold on the ending of this book. I think the author has kept true to the character and deep down I know it was the right one but my conscience still struggled with it.

In Bloom is every bit as dark and twisted as the first book. It is a highly entertaining read and I loved being inside the mind of a serial killer. It probably won't be everyone's cup of tea but I for one thought it was a great read and follow on from Sweetpea. Not sure if this is the last we have seen of Rhiannon but I hope not.

Lou says

'In Bloom' is the sequel to C. J. Skuse's first crime novel 'Sweetpea' and is part of the series of the same name. I don't feel this works as a standalone novel as it relies heavily on the happenings from the first book. As a result, I recommend reading 'Sweetpea' before embarking on this one. This book starts immediately where the last one concluded.

In 'Sweetpea' we met serial killer and girl-next-door, Rhiannon, who was ultimately bored with her unsatisfying life. Little does anyone know but she has a kill list featuring everyone from the Lidl checkout worker who mishandles her apples to the driver who continually cuts her off on her way to work. What this confirms is that Rhiannon is barely sane and is highly unpredictable, not exactly the best combination in someone with a penchant for violence. This time around things are a little different for Rhiannon and she is torn between wanting to commit further murders and striving to make sure that when her unborn baby arrives she grows into the role of perfect mother. Having successfully framed her fiance for her brutal killing spree, she is now living with her prospective in-laws and is planning exactly how to dispose of her lover's body. One police officer appears to be suspiciously interested in her but so far she has managed to get away with it. Can Rhiannon continue to escape justice for her crimes? Is she still able to kill despite being heavily pregnant? Can she find a way to suppress her craving to kill?

I really love that Skuse has built a niche for herself and the contrasts between the dark/black humour and the vicious killings works very well. A lot of the story is tongue-in-cheek and the characterisation is incredible - Rhiannon is a complex character who certainly appears to have lost touch with reality a long time ago. If you are willing to consider taking the risk of murdering someone for how they handle your shopping you really have lost the plot, not that you should consider killing anyone! Despite her somewhat unhinged personality she does have a habit of saying exactly what she thinks and I feel many people will be able to relate to her in some of the highly amusing things she comes out with. One of the aspects I loved most was Rhiannon's first-person narration which works particularly well here as it gives the reader access to her thoughts, so even when she isn't voicing her opinion you know what is going through her head at any given time. It isn't too often you come across female serial killers so kudos to Skuse for creating such a fabulous character and an intensely gripping series.

All in all, a fantastic read that is engaging and very, very funny! Fast-paced and executed well, with intriguing characters. It's even better than the series opener. I look forward to Skuse's future books and pray we have more adventures with Rhiannon to come!

Many thanks to HQ for an ARC. I was not required to post a review and all thoughts and opinions expressed are my own.

Kim Ebner says

IN BLOOM

By, C.J Skuse

My rating: * * * *

This novel is the sequel to my favourite novel of 2018, Sweetpea. I absolutely fell head over heels in love with that novel and so I couldn't wait to read the sequel. I sometimes find that sequels don't quite live up to the high standards set by the first novel, and this was the case here too. I think the shock factor that I felt when reading Sweetpea had, to some extent, lost its effect by this second installment. This novel is still dark, crude, shocking and sometimes funny, but the addition of Rhiannon's pregnancy sort of diminished the "hard core" nature of the read and of Rhiannon's character. In this book, Rhiannon spends her time trying to be good, and whenever she thinks about doing anything crazy, dark or bad, the "foetus" (aka, Rhiannon's conscience) reprimands her and she manages to pull herself together...well for most of the book anyway. I did find some parts of this book a little slow, and a little too focused on the pregnancy. But the good news is that the pace picked up from about half way, and I enjoyed this one enough to award 4 stars, and to hold thumbs for another sequel. The ending definitely lends itself to that...and yes, there are things I need to know dammit!

Christine says

In Bloom should be available on the NHS. Laughter medicine. It is dark and comic. Wildly wicked and clever. It will make you scream with laughter.

C J Skuse gave us the best ever adventure of a female serial killer in Sweetpea. We were introduced to Rhiannon an unforgettable young woman, with a few dark secrets up her sleeve. We are so lucky to have a sequel, that unexpectedly is even better than the original. Sweetpea was wonderful and perfect. In Bloom is that little bit more wonderful.

Rhiannon is a serial killer. She aces murder, like she has a GCSE in it. She only kills people who deserve it. She has morals, of a sort. The really evil ones in society are her prey. She has managed to get away with it so far. The story follows directly on from Sweetpea. Now life has become complicated for our anti-hero. Rhiannon is expecting her ex's baby. She has a fresh dead body to dispose of. One police officer is progressively very interested in her. She is facing up horrible hormone explosions, the awful mummy brigade, getting fatter and a baby foetus with attitude. Can Rhiannon continue to escape justice? Can she still kill, with a gobby baby inside her? Can she stop writing lists of people she wants to murder? Mm mmm, you really want to find out.

C J Skuse is a genius. Sweetpea and In Bloom are two of the funniest books I have ever read. Skuse hits the right comic notes, with dark disturbing accuracy time and time again. Rhiannon is a dream of a character. The plot was incredible. A serial killer who tries to reform, with some success. I love Rhiannon so much. Probably wouldn't want to meet her on a dark night. Or befriend her on one of her Christian road trips. Nope I would stay well clear of our lovely serial killer.

My advice (in the style of Rhiannon's kill lists)

1 Read *In Bloom*. If you haven't read *Sweetpea*, get hold of a copy as soon as you can. You don't want to miss this series. Hint to the author – more Rhiannon please.

2 Forget walking the dog, eating, working or all the other boring stuff you do. Reading is more important. Start it now. No excuses.

3 Laugh. Laugh some more. Try not to make too many people stare at you, by snorting with laughter.

4 Start making your own kill list (or maybe not...)

Highly recommended

Liz Barnsley says

So so so so good. Beautifully done, murderously funny and engaging as heck. Full review near to publication.

Mandy White says

Oh Rhiannon I love you!! This books was just as funny and disturbing as *Sweet Pea* which did make me laugh. I didn't want it to be over when it was but all good things. I hope it isn't the last we hear from her.!

Blair says

Sweetpea introduced an unforgettable antiheroine in the shape of Rhiannon: put-upon editorial assistant, long-suffering girlfriend, Sylvanian Families collector, and secret serial killer. Now, having framed her cheating ex-fiancé for her latest killing spree, Rhiannon's free to continue working through her kill lists. But she's also pregnant... and hearing the voice of her unborn child telling her to stop. Can she, and will she, curb her murderous urges for the baby's sake?

Sweetpea was a scream, but I approached this sequel with concerns that it might over-egg the pudding with Rhiannon's expletive-laden witticisms. And at first, it did seem rather uneven. The first half feels a bit disorganised somehow (perhaps it was just that my review copy was in need of a final edit?) and it also relies a little too heavily on the reader remembering a lot of stuff from the first book. But at some point everything started snapping into place and I fell in love with Rhiannon all over again. I loved her ending, and Marnie's too. *In Bloom* didn't quite have me in hysterics but there are definitely some laugh-out-loud moments, and some seriously relatable additions to the kill lists too.

This wouldn't work as a standalone novel – don't bother reading it if you haven't read *Sweetpea* first – but it's an entertaining continuation of Rhiannon's story, and Skuse again manages to make a mass murderer weirdly relatable. The ending leaves room for the series to continue, and if it does I'll be back for more.

I received an advance review copy of In Bloom from the publisher through NetGalley.

Shirley Revill says

When I listened to this audiobook I didn't realise that it was a series and this the second issue. If you like gory murders then this is the book for you because there is a serial killer on the loose and it ain't pretty. There is more cutting up than my local butchers shop on a busy day in fact the first body was hacked and dispatched in the first few minutes. This is a serial killer with a difference though as her unborn baby talks to her with a voice of reason. I so wished I had listened to the first book because I believe I would have enjoyed the second book so much more.

Lainy says

Time taken to read - 1 day

Pages - 384

Publisher - HQ Stories

Source - Review copy (ARC)

Blurb from Goodreads

The darkly comic crime sequel to Sweetpea, following girl-next-door serial killer Rhiannon as she's now caught between the urge to kill and her unborn baby stopping her.

If only they knew the real truth. It should be my face on those front pages. My headlines. I did those things, not him. I just want to stand on that doorstep and scream it: IT WAS ME. ME. ME. ME. ME!

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My Review

Firstly let me say this is the second book in a series, I absolutely advise reading the first, Sweetpea, available to buy now. This book picks up where Sweetpea leaves off, Rhiannon is pregnant, her boyfriend is in jail awaiting trial for several gruesome murders, murders Rhiannon committed herself. Trying to come to terms

with pending motherhood, the changes in her body, her bossy fetus and of course her constant need to kill, Rhiannon has her hands full.

If you haven't read Skuse, and I am not sure of her other works but these books are absolutely not for the easily offended. Rhiannon is a brutal killer with no morals, she has a gob on her that could make a sailor blush, she is self absorbed, horny, crude, sarcastic, hilarious (in a very non pc way), dangerous and one of the most psychotic female serial killers created!

Each chapter (well almost every chapter), like the previous book opens with a list of people she would like to kill that day, if circumstances permitted. She is trying to deal with her changing body, roller coaster emotions, blood thirsty ways oh and the police who are investigating her partner which means questions questions questions.

The book started off a bit of a different pace for me and I wasn't sure if I was going to like this as much as the first, sequels often have the hard job of keeping up with the previous offering. Needless worry, in fact this is one of the very few times I rated the sequel higher than the original which is no mean feat and hats off to the author. Once the book gets going it ensnares you and I found it hard to put the book down, some of it like a car crash you just can't look away. She is a terrible person, a brutal murderer but you find yourself rooting for her, a vigilante who doesn't like animals being hurt so she will always get points off me for that!

Her relationship with a specific character I really liked but it also had me a bit beside myself, by exposing herself to friendships she increases the risk of exposure. At one point it reminded me of, or rather, it echoed Hannibal Lecter and Clarice Starling's weird relationship but in a good way, absolutely not a criticism. This book is an absolute mind trip, Rhiannon is a unique killer I think and I have read hundred of books with murderers but this is my first pregnant killer who goes on a bit of a journey herself to "mend" her ways but will she be successful? How easy is it to quit your murderous ways, how do you change your future when your past just won't go away and most importantly can she keep it together when all eyes are on her? Packed with bad language, murderous behaviour, sex, lies, kill lists, an outrageous book with a main character holy water and a priest would struggle to bring from the dark side, I loved it! 5/5 for me this time, I will be checking out the rest of Skuse's work and wait impatiently for the next book!

Laura says

Book reviews on www.snazzybooks.com

Can anything follow the sheer, utter brilliance of Sweetpea? I am so pleased to say that the sequel, once again following serial killer Rhiannon, is in my opinion even better!

It's another dark, crazy and laugh-out-loud-funny story which I didn't want to put down. Rhiannon is as brilliant as ever, with razor sharp observations and utter disdain for certain aspects of human relationships and nature and just everyday life. Her 'kill lists' are always entertaining and the fact that she is now 'with child' takes nothing away from the level of dark humour; in fact I'm amazed to say that it's even more crude, even more shocking and even more twisted than Sweetpea was. I love the different take on the serial killer genre, turning various conventions on its head with one bolshy character.

The plot is incredibly engaging and the pace is perfect; if you haven't read Sweetpea then I say enjoy that first, then jump into In Bloom. I devoured it in (almost) one sitting. Highly recommended!

Thank you to HarperCollins UK for providing a copy of this novel on which I chose to write an honest and unbiased review.

Mandy says

Another funny instalment of Sweetpea, I did like the talking fetus and the subsequent conversations. Didn't make me laugh out loud quite as much as the first book but it was still amusing with plenty of dark humour and I did like the ending.

Zuky the BookBum says

I'm so happy to be bringing you a review for the second book in the Sweetpea series, *In Bloom!* As many as you saw, a couple of weeks ago I posted my big fat 5-star review for Sweetpea and was so excited to dig in to *In Bloom...* and I wasn't disappointed!

Rhiannon is the best character I've met in a long, long time and she was just as funny, rude and psycho in this novel as she was the first. I'm so glad. She is also pregnant! She even takes a bit of an emotional turn in this book, recognising her role as a mother and the effects it will have on her child, and making her best efforts to help a friend out of trouble.

With the story in this book, it didn't excite me as much as the first book did, but I think that's only down to the fact this is the second book in such a unique series. Sweetpea stood out from the crowd in the book world for being so funny, offensive, and dark. And while *In Bloom* is very much the same, it's suddenly less unique because of the first book. That's not to say this doesn't have a good storyline. We're following the life of deranged Rhiannon... I mean of course the storyline is good! But, it wasn't as fast paced and intense as the first novel. There is of course the violence and darkness that appears in Sweetpea but not nearly as much.

However, the ending of this one I found far more satisfying and sinister than the last book. I'm hoping, with all my fingers and toes crossed, that the ending has left an opening for book #3.

One thing I did love about this story was the links it pulled in from Sweetpea. You definitely couldn't go into *In Bloom* without having read book #1. Firstly, there are spoilers for the entire first book, and secondly, there are loads of little inside jokes and mentions that would go straight over your head. So, if you want to read this, you need to read Sweetpea first – it's not a standalone!

I felt like Skuse focused far more on developing the characters in this book and we got to see a little more into Rhiannon's mind and mental state. We also got to know some secondary characters really well too, I'm worried we won't get to see them again (if there is a book #3)... and just when I got a bit attached to them!

Overall, I loved this book! It's a 5 star review still, but I probably preferred Sweetpea that little bit more. However, I keep finding my mind coming back to the end of this book – if we don't get a book #3 I'll be thinking about where Rhiannon's story is going forever!

Thank you SO much to HQ for sending me this book in exchange for an honest review!

