



## The Art of Drowning

*Frances Fyfield*

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Rachel Doe is a shy accountant at a low ebb in life when she meets charismatic Ivy Schneider, nee Wiseman, at her evening class and her life changes for the better. Ivy is her polar opposite: strong, six years her senior and the romantic survivor of drug addiction, homelessness and the death of her child. Ivy does menial shift work, beholden to no one, and she inspires life; as do her farming parents, with their ramshackle house and its swan- filled lake, the lake where Ivy's daughter drowned. As Rachel grows closer to them all she learns how Ivy came to be married to Carl, the son of a WWII prisoner, as well as the true nature of that marriage to a bullying and ambitious lawyer who has become a judge and who denies her access to her surviving child. Rachel wants justice for Ivy, but Ivy has another agenda and Rachel's naive sense of fair play is no match for the manipulative qualities in the Wisemen women.

## **The Art of Drowning Details**

Date : Published 2006 by Little Brown

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Author : Frances Fyfield

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## **From Reader Review The Art of Drowning for online ebook**

### **Kate Larkin says**

Definitely enjoyed the second half of this way more than the first; the lives of Rachel, Ivy, Grace, Ernest, Carl, Sam and Donald will all be inevitably intertwined. The reader gets that vibe about halfway through. The first half is pretty SLOW to move. There are several flashbacks and descriptions, while well-written, confuse and baffle the reader. This made me more curious to keep reading -- but I can see where it's frustrating. All in all, if you can make it to the end, it's worth reading. My four stars are for the four characters I enjoyed the most: Donald, Ivy, Rachel and Grace.

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### **Stayci Blea says**

This book took me FOREVER to read because it starts so slow. I'm a slow reader as it is, so it was hard to get into this book. I kept going because of all the good reviews it got, and I'm glad I did. It ended much better than it started. All in all, I'm glad I read it, but frustrated it took so long to get me drawn in.

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### **Michelle says**

This book was way too slow to move along for me. As I kept reading all I kept thinking was 'can something please happen soon?' and it never really did. The ending was even really predictable in my opinion. This book definitely had the potential to be a really good psychological thriller, but unfortunately fell completely short in the way it was delivered.

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### **Elusive says**

'The Art of Drowning' weaves a story about serious, shy accountant Rachel whose life is changed when she meets beautiful, unpredictable Ivy. Their bond is further strengthened when Ivy's parents treat Rachel like their own daughter. Therefore, she looks forward to spending time at their countryside house and farm but she doesn't realize that her idyllic days are numbered..

I found it incredibly difficult to be engrossed in this book mainly because it was terribly slow-paced. Barely anything exciting happened until the last one-third of the story. Besides that, the writing style didn't appeal to me as it was quite messy featuring constant shifts in perspective (all in third-person narrative). There wasn't a nice, smooth flow and combined with the lack of straight-up explanation about what was fully going on, the story was a little confusing and hard to get into at first. The only thing that kept me reading was the sense of impending doom. Plus, I was intrigued by the anonymous e-mails sent to Ivy's ex-husband, Carl.

Gradually though, it became evident that some characters were not as nice or innocent as they seemed. Rachel was a frustrating main character because time and time again, she ignored the obvious signs of danger even when several people mentioned things which pinpointed who she really shouldn't trust. In a way, it's realistic as it's not easy to accept that someone you care about and think so highly of could possibly

be so cruel and heartless. However, Rachel's failure to at least take some precautionary measures to protect herself was simply stupid.

The other characters weren't quite fleshed out. Ivy was supposed to be charming and magnetic but she was never convincing in that sense as the author didn't adhere to 'show, don't tell'. It didn't help that she wasn't a regular presence in the story. She just came across as flighty and untrustworthy. On the other hand, her parents Grace and Ernest were much more believable as a couple devoted to their farm and eager to meet their estranged grandson. Carl was likeable but considering his age and occupation (judge) which would have exposed him to the ugly side of human nature, his naivety was ridiculous.

The highlight of the story was of course that particular scene which takes place in the last few chapters. It was aptly disturbing and memorable. Overall, 'The Art of Drowning' is one of those books which requires lots of patience due to its slow pace and ambiguity but if you're willing to persist reading, then you might just end up enjoying it.

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### **Ann says**

Atmospheric, psychological thriller that had me questioning motives and appearances the whole way through. The story of newly single accountant Rachel Doe and her new friendship with Ivy who she meets at a life drawing class is superbly put together. Ivy is everything Rachel is not. She is a survivor who seems to know how to make the best of what life has to offer. She opens up a new world for Rachel and even Ivy's family adopt her. Their farm proves a haven for Rachel, though there are hints of darkness that she chooses to overlook until she can no longer ignore them.

Fyfield does this so well, that I, too, wanted to be enveloped by Ivy and her family into their pastoral paradise, until it all changed.

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### **Bill Kupersmith says**

I love Fyfield at her best but this book really disappointed me altho' one of the characters seemed almost as likeable as Diana in Gold Digger. The writing felt off - many clichés & a couple of minor howlers - & after 2/3 we already know who did the killings and the story turns into a damsel-in-distress thriller complete with immersion in porcine body wastes! The first murder (not a spoiler - it's narrated in the prologue) is one of those fascinating cases in which the victim is lured into an apparently accidental death with no evident crime being committed - a device I fantasise about - but the other killings are obvious and the occupation and identity of the villain easily discerned by a detective who one wouldn't expect could catch the 'flu in a nursing home.

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### **Courtney says**

Initially when I started this book I was intrigued and I was expecting to love it. The writing style was very beautiful and almost poetic. However, as the pages went on, the plot did not. It was overly detailed and there

were excessive descriptions of situations that really had nothing to do with the story and nothing was really happening in the story. The words were beautiful and the details and descriptions would have really made it a great read if the story was moving along, but there was absolutely nothing happening, no movement or progress with the plot or the characters. I was disappointed and hoping for so much more from the book.

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### **S.L. Hoyte says**

Written for Say What! Savannah Mae

“The Art of Drowning” is a gripping thriller by Frances Fyfield that takes place in London, England. When Rachel Doe meets Ivy Wiseman her world will never be the same.

The two strike up a mutually enchanted friendship and become inseparable in spite of the fact that they are complete opposites. Rachel is a socially awkward and sheltered accountant that “lives by the rules”. Ivy is a free-spirit – she’s full of life, does what she wants and is beholden to no one, supporting herself by maintaining odd jobs ranging from life-modeling for an art academy to cleaning offices on the night shift. The two become roommates and Rachel is soon “adopted” by Ivy’s entire family.

Rachel learns that there is more to Ivy’s world than meets the eye. Ivy has an ex-husband, Carl, and a son named Sam that she hasn’t seen in years, since the drowning death of her daughter. Ivy has no idea where Carl and Sam are living and when she shares the stories of Carl’s cruelty towards her and her family, Rachel is determined to find them to reunite mother and son.

All the while, mysterious events are occurring in and around London with seemingly no relationship to the main story but leads you to believe that something is connected and just not right. The tension builds dramatically as the stories come together for a climatic page-turning ending.

I loved the characters in this book. They are very well developed, complex and real. I had a love-hate relationship with each of the characters. Ivy could be enraging one minute and the kindest, most loving person you’d ever met the next minute. The intensity of the story and the characters definitely keeps you turning the pages.

“The Art of Drowning” is brilliantly written and the in-depth story keeps you guessing until the very end.

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### **Marina Sofia says**

As so many other reviewers have said, it's a much slower-paced book than most modern psychological thrillers, although I enjoyed the characterisation and descriptions. However, it was rather predictable, our antennae were pricked early on and it was all a matter of time until our main protagonist came to the same realisation. A matter of rather lengthy time, as she seemed so determined to believe the best of everybody. What I liked best were the descriptions of farming life and how it has changed over the past few decades. But that's not what a suspenseful thriller is supposed to be about, is it?

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### **Teena says**

Another fabulous Fyfield book - don't know how I missed it when it was published. Intense thriller with a satisfying ending.

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### **Twin Opinions says**

This book was long and hard to read in the beginning. Had the beginning not been so drawn out I would have rated this book much better in my opinion. Once I got about half way through though I was hooked.

The mystery part was good but it was lacking good suspense until the end. After the halfway point I was enjoying the characters and the story itself. At that point I was desperate to know what would happen. The ending was ok.

I would have preferred a more definite ending after all that happened. I liked that she left the son out of the tragedy. I was not expecting that type of show down in the end, so I really liked that. An interesting read by Fyfield.

<http://twinopinionsreview.blogspot.co...>

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### **Sharon Jones says**

The began as a very puzzling book with the first two chapters devoted to incidents that were not explained until almost the end. It was a mystery and not a mystery as the crime was being plotted while one was reading and then you were not sure of what the crime would be until almost the end! Some chapters were devoted, again, to incidents involving people that were unexplained. It took a while before their relevance became clear.

So, it was a difficult book at the commencement to follow but as it went on it became clearer and easier to follow. A strange reading but worth the effort.

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### **Karen says**

Rachel Doe needs to sort out her life. She's had such a sheltered, cautious existence; an accountant, only daughter of very timid parents, the only really daring thing she has done in her life was to do in her lover - a liar and thief. All she got for her efforts was suspicion and a greater sense of loneliness and isolation than she had ever had before.

When Rachel meets Ivy she's totally captivated and they soon become involved in a very intense, platonic friendship which surprises everyone. Ivy is so different from Rachel, she was a real wild child - charismatic;

a life-drawing model; ex-junkie; cleaner and ex-wife of Carl - now a Judge. The relationship is even more intense for Rachel as she finds, in Ivy's mother Grace, the sort of mother figure that her own never was, encompassing, loving, fun and ever so slightly happy crazy, Rachel is ultimately as attracted to Ivy's family as she is to Ivy.

Ivy's divorce from Carl came after the drowning of their daughter in a lake not far from Ivy's family farm. Since the divorce she has had no contact with her son. Rachel finds herself trying to bring about a reconciliation, at least between Ivy's parents and their grandson. Whilst she is repulsed by Carl and the stories of his violence and cruelty towards Ivy, she also finds herself strangely attracted to him. Can this charming, considerate man really be the monster that tore Ivy's son from her arms and caused the death of his own daughter?

As the friendship between Rachel and Ivy escalates and Rachel's attempts to firstly contact the Judge and then get him to agree to meet with Ivy's parents, there is a slow building of tension. Events occur around them that appear to have no relationship to what is happening between the main players in the story, but at the same time, the reader is made more and more aware that there's something very odd going on. The story unfolds rapidly and whilst you can guess that there's something really sinister going on, the question is what exactly is that "something".

There's a great sense of escalating tension and conflict in this book. Rachel is an interesting character as she moves from infatuation with Ivy, through doubt, to justification and denial, and finally strength and inner steel. Ivy is very edgy, intense and obviously complex. The surrounding characters are flawed, human and retain your interest. There is a bit of subtext around the story - the difficulties of farming life, Carl and his life with a teenage son, a sympathetic and overworked policeman and his own family.

Having read quite a few Frances Fyfield books in the past, THE ART OF DROWNING is definitely a major standout, it was compelling, retained interest and was nicely paced with a very realistic and satisfactory ending.

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### **Tony Snyder says**

Amazing! Deft characterization and an effortless flow conspire to make this an entrancing mystery! This book clinches it...I'll be reading all of Fyfield's books!

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### **lea says**

Il était assommant. Il m'aura fallu quatre mois pour le terminer. Une belle plume, un vocabulaire soutenu et riche mais un livre long, fade la plupart du temps et un thème qui promettait tant, ruiné par l'ennui des deux cents premières pages et l'étrange fin. Je lui accorde, néanmoins, deux étoiles pour le petit pincement au cœur que j'ai eu en apprenant qui était responsable de tout le chaos et, principalement, parce que Fyfield à réussi à me duper également, tout comme Rachel.

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