



Gatsby's Smile

Morana Blue

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Gatsby's Smile is a psychological thriller/murder mystery.

A police psychiatrist's Imaginary Friend from childhood reappears and, in order to save future victims' lives, persuades the grieving doc to murder all the suspects in a mysterious serial killer case.

Dr Morana 'Moody' Blue, fears she's begun to manifest the symptoms of schizophrenia because Maro, the Imaginary Friend she had as a child, has reappeared – all grown up. Morana is aware that Maro's appearance is a subconscious manifestation of her recent grief as she's just suffered a miscarriage; but intellectually understanding your grief doesn't make dealing with it any emotionally easier. She knows, too, that schizophrenia tends to run in families – and her mother is positively psychotic.

Estranged from her unrequited love, the father of her lost baby, Police Chief Harry Black, Morana is nevertheless drawn into Harry's investigation of the murders of two young women discovered wide-eyed, naked, their pubic hair shaved – but without a single murderous mark upon their perfect bodies.

Suspiciously, though, when Morana witnesses the grisly murder of a third girl, she chases the murderer into the woods only to be found, the next morning, covered in the dead girl's blood and clutching the weapon that killed her.

Morana believes then that the murderer is trying to frame her and so must be someone she knows. Someone close. Her deductions garner four suspects: misogynistic Harry himself; Harry's mysterious new coke-addled sidekick DS Young; Robert the secretive Police Coroner with a penchant for nyotaimori geishas; and Doc the local GP/Police doctor who, she discovers, hasn't as gentle a bedside manner as he ought to have.

The four suspects themselves, however, gather evidence enough to believe that Morana herself is responsible for the serial murders: her clutching the murder weapon aside, no witnesses come forward to corroborate her story about the killer hightailing it from the murder scene – and she seems to be losing her mind: she's unpredictable these days; she's abusive, violent even, and she's talking to herself a lot... out loud.

In the face of Harry's rising fury, DS Young's amusement, Robert's conspicuous pity and Doc's simmering resentment, though, Morana does what she does best: by analysing the corpses and crime scenes, she slips inside the psyche of the murderer and, subconsciously manipulated by Maro, Morana finally determines that in order to save the lives of more potential murder victims she must physically eliminate the all murder suspects... one by one.

Gatsby's Smile Details

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From Reader Review Gatsby's Smile for online ebook

Robert Beck says

I liked it a lot, yes - and so I've given it 5 stars - but I know Morana 'Moody' Blue can do better. It's so with delighted trepidation - and still chuckling - that I look forward to her next deranged tome.

And I trust I'll be in it. Again.

Christine E. Long says

Slow start, engaging middle, satisfying end.

A little ponderous early on. I had to get my head around the rhythm of this author. Once that was accomplished, I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of getting in the author's head. I had to work for this, but it was entirely worth it.

Michael says

Too often the label 'psychological thriller' is applied to anything that contains a modicum of suspense or the ubiquitous serial killer. Thankfully there are authors like Morana Blue who are not afraid to delve into the parts of the human psyche that most of us will be more familiar with and offer a truly psychological slant to a crime drama. Things like dealing with dysfunctional families, love and death. Self-loathing and self-doubt. Paranoia and the feeling that it's all coming apart around you. It's all here. Morana Blue's triumph is how she uses the unspoken challenges that real people face to create characters with real depth and takes us into the darkest corners of their minds. If you like a good old fashioned whodunnit you won't be disappointed. But there's far more here than looking for clues or waiting for the dreaded red herring to flap onto the page. There's dark humour and one liners but there are also beautifully tender words about the consuming grief of losing a baby and losing the ability to go on. If you want a change from "white male, 25-40, highly intelligent and lives alone..." crime drama Gatsby's Smile may be what you've been looking for. I highly recommend it.

Pip says

The one liners in this book and some of the conversations made me actually laugh out loud though I probably shouldn't have done as the subject matter is rather dark and sad. Despite it being dark though it really is funny. I suppose that's what dark humour is. I'd like to read a follow up book. Soon, please.

Grant Nicol says

This book was a pleasant little surprise I must say. It's slightly unorthodox in the way that it goes about itself but that's what I liked about it. It's a psychological thriller in the true sense of the word. In many ways it feels as though the entire story happens between the ears of the central character, Morana 'Moody' Blue such is the claustrophobic nature of the narrative. The story doesn't move around very much physically either which makes it feel as though it's all being played out inside her head. She is a psychologist who works for the police and suffers from Dissociative Identity Disorder which makes her as unsure about what's going on most of the time as you are as a reader.

There is a killer on the loose at an old folks' home and as each body is found the vultures of suspicion circle slowly around Morana before taking a real interest in her and closing in for the kill. As she is unsure of whether she could be responsible or not you will find yourself every bit as confused as her colleagues, police officers 'Happy' Harry and 'Handsome' are. They are a little unwilling to think of her as a suspect, at first anyway, but get used to the idea as the circumstantial evidence builds and builds.

Initially you don't want to contemplate that she is the one committing the murders either but as her inner turmoil becomes evident and her relationship with her childhood imaginary friend, Maro builds you are left with little choice but to open your mind to any number of strange and disturbing possibilities.

That's where the fun begins. Once you discover that this is not just another police procedural but a genuinely strange and unsettling book you can settle back and enjoy the ride. There is some genuinely good writing and at times it really captured my imagination. The humour is dark and sometimes bleak. I liked that a lot as well. But sometimes it is beautiful and heartfelt too.

There is some real talent on show here and I can see this book doing very well. The character of Morana Blue is as complex, or maybe complicated would be a better word, as you will find and her struggles to make sense of herself are honest, painful and chaotic. A bit like real life really. She is maybe not someone you would want to spend the rest of your life with but she's a lot of fun on the page. If you like things dark, pithy and intricate this will be a book for you.

Lacy R. says

This book was a dark, psychological thriller that aroused my interest. Once I picked it up, I couldn't put it down. The protagonist Morana "Moody" Blue is very compelling and the fracture in her psyche over the loss of her unborn baby drives her to do impossible things. There has been a series of murders and she is determined to find the killer out, even as the investigation narrows down to she herself becoming one of the Fabulous Five suspects. She seems to suffer from schizophrenia like her terribly disturbed, withered old mother. The book has a bit of repetition in that it comes full circle from the beginning, and I always enjoyed the marvelously twisted, explicit details that she incorporated into the story. One lesson I took away from the book is that everyone's parents damage them in some way. That's no excuse to bend to the madness within. The sexual flavors of the book were intense and complicated, and some of the happenings were downright disturbing, but it titillated my imagination.

Lily J says

I fancied a bit of a change and the synopsis of this book ticked all the right boxes and I'm very glad I took a chance on it because I got into the story right from the start and I just didn't want to get out. The narrative just takes you away with it and keeps on going and going. The characters felt very very real to me and so very very believable. They all seem to be dealing with their own separate psychological demons and I began to care about them all so much - especially Morana and her sadness (and her madness?) - that feeling as I did that I was in the room with them I felt that I wanted to sit round with them, have a coffee and help them all figure themselves out.

Although the actual serial killer story is intriguing and keeps you guessing right to the end, I think it is the people in the story that I became most attached to. There are no stereotype bad-guys or police chiefs running around putting their foot down in all the stupidest places and saying the stupidest things to get in Morana's way. It's quite the reverse. Everyone seems like you know them from somewhere and you're likely to come across them in real life one day somewhere and you know they are decent people trying to get through life under the worst circumstances and wouldn't trample on you just for the sake of artistic license.

I have to say I laughed out loud in some places then felt secretly guilty about it because some things shouldn't be laughed at but I suppose it's like getting a fit of the giggles at your favourite granny's funeral. I know my granny wouldn't mind.

Just a word about writing style. It's a quite stylish sort of cross between noirish pulp fiction and clever (but not too clever!) literary alliteration - if that's the right word. I haven't come across it before and I don't think it's so much an acquired taste as it is rather refreshing. Morana seems to write from what's actually in her mind and in her heart.

I hope this story is not autobiographical and I hope it's the start of a series because I would love to read more about these people. Morana and Harry especially.

Gatsby's Smile

Morana Blue says

There was a time when I would've called Harry a minute or two after I'd seen the body. While I was still seeing, in fact. I'd be stood there, staring down at tonight's shade of death. Absorbing the scene. Disorganized killings, mainly. Crimes of anger; crimes of passion. The same thing, in the end. Ordinary, regular murder. Men who snap. Women who smoulder. I'd take a moment. Pull out the 'phone. Then call him. And in that long silent open moment - the moment just after you've pressed the button but just before the first bell tolls - I'd get a vision of Harry and what he was doing, right then, when he got the call. Another call. From another crime scene. From another me. He'd be stood there, staring down into a skillet - or a sauté pan, maybe - with a le Creuset spatula in one hand and a cold beer in the other. He'd flip his steak, taste his beer and his mobile would ring. It'd be in his overcoat pocket. Or re-charging, perhaps, by his exclusive wine rack in a dark walk-in cellar-type space just off the kitchen. He'd take the skillet off the heat and go answer the 'phone. Maybe he'd be hoping it wasn't me. Or was me. Though more probably he had no notion at all of whom it might be. Harry wasn't waiting on anything. Or anyone. 'Hey,' I'd say. There'd be a beat. Maybe he'd flip. Or taste. Then, 'What've we got?' he'd reply. I used to wonder whether Harry ever did the things I imagined. I'd never seen him in his home. I'd never seen him eat. But I knew he drank. Nowadays he's waiting, I suspect, to feel safe. To forget that he'll ever have to answer the 'phone to me again. On account of what I'd done. On

account of him never being able to forgive me. Harry has eyes like Gatsby's smile. And it's putting me off.

Gloria says

This book was such an intense read - the author takes you from such darkness to real snort out loud humor in just a few lines which I think must be so hard to do. Just when I'm thinking oh no...please...no more murder/mayhem/despair...bam! I'm snorting my tea through my nose and all's well in my little reading world.

The characters are so richly drawn they almost feel in the room with you and here's the rub (as Morana would say) the real reason that I wrote this little review - the conversations here are absolutely fantastic, especially combined with the reader watching Morana slowly, slowly getting more and more disheveled and beat up as she tries to solve the murder of several girls.

"I've just escaped from hospital," I said, then indicated my clothes, "These aren't mine. Pinched them off the ward. I think I need a piece of string to keep the trousers up..."

His eyes widened, slightly horrified, trying to absorb this and, naturally, not finding it funny at all: I was a thief. A thief who stole from the sick - or, maybe, the dying.

"She'd had her appendix out."

"Who?"

"The woman I robbed. She was only sick."

"Righty-oh..."

"I mean she wasn't dying. I didn't thieve clothes of a dying person....."

"That's good to know."

And..

"SWAT? For me?" Still trembling, one hand clung to the ambulance gurney, the other held a massive sterilised cotton wool wad under m nose.

"Tactical Support was busy. You got Dennis and Arlo".....

"Which one broke my nose?

"That'd be Dennis."

Anyway, off now to source a tin of Family Circle from World Market.