



Die Smiling

Linda Ladd

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The Girl Next Door...

A woman's nude body hangs spread eagled, riddled with bullet holes. Someone has used her for target practice--a twisted killer brazen enough to leave their calling card smack in the middle of the sheriff's shooting range. For Missouri homicide detective Claire Morgan, it's a wake-up call unlike any she's ever faced...

Just Happens To Be...

Mere hours into the investigation, Claire and her partner, Bud, find themselves face-to-face--and gun-to-gun--with a fleet of Feds who have been following a trail of bodies across the country. The only thing the victims had in common is the fact that they all purchased handguns at the same sporting-goods chain. Then Claire discovers two sisters who bring new meaning to strange relationships...

A Cold-Blooded Killer.

They couldn't be more different: the pampered princess and the misfit who always falls short of her "perfect" sibling. Now, one of them has snapped, dominating her sister and taking sadistic pleasure from the terror she can evoke in the eyes of innocent strangers. But which sister is the bad seed? The wrong guess could cost Claire everything...

Die Smiling Details

Date : Published August 1st 2008 by Pinnacle Books (first published January 1st 2008)

ISBN : 9780786018871

Author : Linda Ladd

Format : Paperback 380 pages

Genre : Romance, Romantic Suspense, Mystery, Thriller, Crime, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Die Smiling for online ebook

Paris (kerbytejas) says

Die Smiling (Claire Morgan #3) by Linda Ladd is an enjoyable read, but it lacks the grizzly, macabre, tension filled drama of the first two books.

I felt the romantic story line for Claire and Black was slow, and had little progression overall. There is some tension (Black wants a commitment from Claire) showing in the relationship through. Secrets come out for Shaggy and Nick, adding new dimension to their characters and roles in the continuing story line, and Bud shows an Alpha, macho, crazed side to his normally slick professional, laid back demeanor.

Cameo appearances by McKay, Charlie and Jude help to round out the story.

Overall a three star read for me, but moving on to books 4 as I'm hooked on the series

Julie says

Die Smiling by Linda Ladd is a 2008 Pinnacle publication.

This is the first book I have read by this author and I see her work is really well received. I try not to start a book or series with any kind of expectations but I do admit I was expecting this one to perform at a higher level.

So, while I do feel this was a solid thriller, it didn't quite live up to the hype for me.

Claire Morgan gets sucked into a twisted case by her partner, Bud, after discovering the body of Bud's girlfriend's sister.

The story alternates between the past and the present by describing the abuse of three children at the hands of neglectful and cruel parents which will have devastating consequences for them all their lives.

Almost right away I was pretty sure I knew which direction the author was leading me to and I put some pieces to the puzzle together immediately. Although it was impossible to know how everything would turn out in the end, I still felt a certain transparency to the story.

Since I have not read the previous books in the series, I was not sure if this vernacular used by Claire was her usual style of speech, but I guessed she is this way in all the books, and while at times she made me chuckle, she mostly ends up sounding silly and not at all like a seasoned professional.

I also missed out on how she wound up with Black and didn't exactly feel the chemistry between them. I know nothing about Black's background, but I thought he was one of the more interesting characters in the book, which of course has me thinking of reading one of the older books so I can find out how they became a couple.

To me the explanations at the conclusion were too pat and I wondered how gullible Claire really was. I'm thinking this situation could come up in future installments, because I was left with the feeling more went on than anyone was saying. I'm not sure I'm buying into the presumptions everyone made, and I was also astounded at how everyone just took things at face value and never questioned the answers.

Having said all that, this was a rather dark and twisty thriller, with some lurid themes and gruesome violence. The characters were very weird and troubled making for some interesting character analysis. This type of book is generally right up my alley and although I didn't like it as much as many of you did, it still did the job adequately enough. I'm thinking this book may not be the best representation of the series, so I'm not opposed to reading more from this author. It could grow on me. Overall three stars

Bette Stanek says

More like 3.75. Head to Head is still my fave of the series, but this one is a close second. Another gruesome and grisly murder for Clair to solve. This one hits almost as close to home as the first one did. You just never really know a person. Claire solves the murder in her typical style and refuses to let anything, or anyone, diminish her focus. That intensity leads to some relationship issues, especially with Nick. Claire needs to decide what she wants; her avoidance tactics aren't going to work much longer.

All in all, a good psychological thriller. Ladd has a way of integrating flashbacks into the current story that gives you all the clues you need, but there are still plenty of twists and turns to keep you guessing.

Natasha says

My friend had had quite a profound opinion on this (and a LOUD opinion, might I add) - and that was, IT WAS THE BEST BOOK EVER! So she lent it to me and I read it. And might I add, it was truly amazing. (I agree with my friend, although now I am a touch deaf :...) I was (well, granted, still am) obsessed with the *Sisterly Love* chapters, which are found ever so often throughout the book. I love Claire Morgan, she's sassy, she's hip, she's the main character in the book. And Nicholas "Nicky" Black, Claire's lover, was so beautifully scripted and detailed. The murder of Hilde S. was quite disturbing... actually, VERY disturbing. But the race to find the killer is enthralling... and the *Sisterly Love* chapters keep you reading! This is worth your while if you're a Tess Gerritsen fan, and you like tricked out, creepy reads.

Pamella says

Good. Dark but good. It has flash-back chapters mingled with the current day chapters. I started reading only the flash back chapters because my husband was also reading this book at the time. Then his 'Life of Pi' book arrived in the mail and he abandoned this one. I did not want to get too caught up in the novel and be reading when he wanted to read--that was my thought on only reading the flash-back chapters when I started. When he started his new book I went back to the start and read the current-day chapters until I was about half way through. I thought I had missed a tiny little 'tell' that would let me know which sister was murdered and which sister was the girlfriend of Claire Morgan's partner Bud. Maybe it was there but I never found it. I did not know which sister was the murder victim and which was the girlfriend until the end. In a way you think this is too bizarre to be real but you also feel on some gut level this could happen. I liked the book and I plan

to search for other Linda Ladd books to read. Now my husband is back to 'Die Smiling' and won't put it down.

Amy Phelps says

I really liked the story. The main character Claire is great. Brave, funny, witty. Her inner dialogue alone made the book fun to read. There was a lot of jumping back & forth between time & things kept getting confusing for me while trying to figure out who the kids were as adults. Over all it was a good story

Daelith says

Ladd had me trying to sort out the puzzle to the very end and cringing on a regular basis. Especially in her 'have you on the edge of your seat' ending. In her last book, she had me checking my bed before climbing in. This time she had me covering my mouth just to make sure facial parts were still in place. For anyone who enjoys sick s*** mysteries, Linda Ladd's Claire Morgan mysteries are perfect for you.

Diane says

Linda Ladd certainly knows how to write a good suspenseful, witty/sarcastic, and captivating novel.

I'm not going to give any of the story line away.

Detective Claire Morgan finds herself fighting her emotions on 2 levels - her love life and the case she is working on.

Again Linda Ladd has 2 storylines working towards joining up near the end. Knowing who the bad guy(s) is/are keeps you guessing throughout. The red herrings are there for sure, but some real surprises come into view - I don't want to give anything away because that just ruins the Wow factor and also the I never saw that coming.

Highly recommend this series - 2 thumbs up and 5 stars, seriously.

Reen says

Another evil serial killer for Claire and Bud to capture and another story high on the creep factor scale. I really like the way Ladd's stories unfold and how she brings the storylines together. Claire can be a little too careless about her own safety at times and I hope that she won't end up being a super-detective that never makes any bad decisions.

Matthew Olson says

High intensity

The good: I love how fucked up the killer is and we see it in these side flashes. There was a lot of tension throughout the book.

The bad: This needs a better editor. Too many glaring mistakes. I also wasn't as thrilled how the killer was "caught". It just didn't satisfy me. I also don't like how the fight with Black was resolved. Too quick and easy for my taste.

Susan W says

Very good. I do like this series.

Richard Cummings says

This is copied from my review of "Head to Head," the first book of this series.

This book scored on many counts, but was annoying in other ways. It was compelling enough to addict me to the series of which I have three read, and two to go. One interesting technique is to interweave the plot through the eyes of the "homicide investigator" (Clair Morgan) and the always insane serial killers. By moving the lunatics' stories around in time, earlier portions of the story are added as needed.

The things that are less appealing to me are the unending smarmy references to her (Clair's) sexual exploits. I'm no prude, but enough already. Very High School-ish. Also, the plots are not for the squeamish. There are no punches pulled in this department. So this series is not a flawless experience, yet I am compelled to read them all. Go figure!

Kjen says

4 Stars~~~Another creepy and purely evil serial killer for Claire to pursue. Still loving this series and setting. This is a fast-paced read that keeps the reader turning pages. I do love the way Ladd goes back and gives the histories of the killer and those tied to him...and she does it without boring me. No small feat! And it gives a much clearer insight without a big information dump.

A few things that kept me from 5 stars:

Claire and Nick's relationship-

Avoidance, anyone?! The fight was serious enough, but suddenly we're all made up and nothing is resolved. Okay...love that they are still together, but sooner or later, they will have to deal. Would have liked to see the 'break' be longer and Claire actually have to come to a realization of how significant Nick is to her.

The last 10% of the book-

Really? I am not above reading about TSTL heroines once in awhile. Usually they are not highly decorated homicide detectives, though. Claire's smarter than that...usually...but she does have her moments. The end of this book was one of them. Also(and especially), Bud's actions were fairly unforgivable. Don't see how she could ever trust him again...regardless of his reasons. But, alas, Claire's fine with it at the end.

On to the next...

Kari says

Oh. My gosh. I don't know if I can adequately explain just how lame this book was. I bought it while traveling. Thought I could read a little while my husband drove. I've got to be honest...I read the book in one day, but not so much because it was so riveting, but more because reading it was easier than watching my husband's driving!

Let me tell you some of the most irritating things about this...

First, the lead character: one of those "tough as nails" female cops who is just a "natural beauty", although she's far too concerned with getting the job done to notice such trivial details about herself. Her romantic interest: a fabulously wealthy man who just happens to be a stellar psychiatrist with a sterling reputation (he was written pretty much like any male lead of any Harlequin Romance novel I've ever read). Her partner: an incredibly attractive man who dresses like a male model and has women swooning over him as a matter of course. The hairdresser: a stereo-typical gay guy, complete with tight black silk shirt, unbuttoned to his navel thereby showing his chest and the ginormous metal medallion he wears (gee, don't all gay men dress like that? Ugh!).

Besides the lame characters, the way this author set up the story - largely centered around the "ugly duckling who becomes the beautiful swan and is tortured for ever more because of her tragic childhood" scenario, made me roll my eyes so often, I almost lost my contacts somewhere along my frontal lobe. Lame, lame, totally lame book. Save yourself the headache and don't read it (unless, of course, reading it is the only alternative to watching a madman drive you cross country at about 90 miles per hour).

Latoya says

The best so far! Creepiness factor is all the way up! However, I will never forgive Bud...ever.
