



Baby Jane

M.A. Demers

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There's more to good and evil than meets the eye...

When human remains are found in her pre-war fixer-upper in an east Vancouver neighbourhood, Claire Dawson's grand plans to fix the house—and her life—take a disturbing turn. Suspicious there might exist a relationship between the discovery and her own tragic past, Claire insinuates herself into the investigation, unknowingly placing herself in harm's way and Homicide's Detective Dylan Lewis in an impossible conflict of interest. And when Dylan's grandmother, a Coast Salish medicine woman, wades into the mystery, challenging the demon whose earthly form is behind the murder, the three find themselves embroiled in a high-stakes battle where lines are blurred and worlds collide—but souls are ultimately freed.

Baby Jane Details

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Author : M.A. Demers

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From Reader Review Baby Jane for online ebook

Pete says

Clair Dawson buys a fixer-upper home. While knocking down a closet wall, she discovers the remains of a baby. The story revolves around the mystery of who the baby is and how she got there.

It was hard for me to pin this book down. In the opening chapters the voice was distinctly literary: full of colorful imagery and rich, complex sentences. Then the tone switched into horror as Claire was physically buffeted by demons. Enter the handsome police inspector (Dylan) and we moved into the realm of cozy mystery. Claire and Dylan experience love at first sight and the story becomes more about their romance than about the baby. Then we're introduced to the inspector's grandmother and the story takes on a paranormal vein where we are plunged into parallel worlds where animal avatars are substituted for the main characters in the story.

While there's nothing wrong with variety, I think the mixed messages weakened the story. The writing was strongest, for me, in the opening (it almost seemed as if another hand had written this) and during the paranormal scenes. On reflection, perhaps this was because these scenes came solidly from a single point of view. Whereas in the other phases of the book, there was a lot of head-hopping going on that often pulled me out of the tale, and for me, at least, spoiled what is a good story albeit with a somewhat implausible ending.

Disclaimer: This review was originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. I may have received a free review copy.

Kajsa says

I won this book in a first-reads giveaway, and I'm so glad I did! It was really good read.

Baby Jane was well written, deep, and had an interesting "Native" aspect. The spirituality added an interesting twist in the typical murder mystery. The only thing I didn't like about it was in a couple places it would go on and on with a characters obsessive romantic thoughts about another, second guessing and over analyzing.

For the most part it was a really good book though. An excellent twist on an old classic.

TC says

Lately I've read a couple of books that encompass elements of the supernatural or spiritual so I was interested to read the description of this book, which hinted at a crime thriller with a twist.

Claire Dawson is looking for a new start in the home she has brought for renovation. She has a past she is trying to get over but it doesn't look like things will go smoothly when she finds human remains within the walls of her house. Detective Dylan Lewis arrives to investigate and the two immediately find themselves unintentionally winding each other up. Claire is determined to give the victim the dignity of a name and

decides to help the investigation along to ensure justice is served. The house has more secrets than just a body within its walls though, and when Lewis' grandmother Ta'ah, a Coast Salish medicine woman, hears about Claire's story she gathers the elders and goes to the property to deal with the demon within it. Claire's continuing involvement in the case brings her into repeated contact with Lewis and the sparks between the two are all too obvious, but the potential conflict of interest further complicates matters.

I loved this book and found it a compulsive page turner. The first chapter had me hooked, with plenty to read on for in order to answer a bunch of questions. Written in the third person the story is told from a few points of view, which allows the reader to get a good background and feeling for the main characters. I really liked Claire and Dylan, but at times wanted to bang their heads together. I also found the details of Ta'ah's role and beliefs fascinating. It has made me want to go away and read more about the Coast Salish people.

As far as the whodunit went the suspects were fairly clear early on, but the supernatural or spiritual element makes it stand out from a lot of other thrillers. I did wonder whether the presence of demons in the story might make it too far fetched for me, but actually in the context of the beliefs of the Coast Salish peoples it made it even more interesting. I also found the historical element, going back to what was happening in Germany before WWII, a clever element.

I'm not sure there is much I can give as a negative, it was well-paced, the main characters were well drawn and had a range of issues that made them flawed and human, and the plot had something to separate it from the crowd. I thought it was a great read and would happily recommend it!

Scott Gray says

Michele Demers has crafted a thoroughly enjoyable breakout first novel in "Baby Jane". Although the book hits a lot of familiar genre touchstones, it does so in a way that twists expectations -- and which ultimately weaves a strong character story that frankly left me emotionally drained in the end. The setup of the novel promises a tight marriage of police procedural and supernatural thriller, but the book is so much more than that. Most interesting for me was Demers' decision to weave the supernatural story in with a compelling First Nations magic-realistic tapestry, and to make full use of a broad palette of characters as she unfolds a narrative exploring both the best and worst of human desires.

The mystery of "Baby Jane" is compelling enough in its own right. However, the book's biggest strength is the character story and the essential moral questions weaving through that character story -- How do we cope with a loss for which there is no forgiveness or forgetting? And how far would we go in the pursuit of vengeance for those unable to claim it for themselves?

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

Review: BABY JANE by M. A. Demers

I found BABY JANE quite an engrossing and exciting book. The novel was fast-paced throughout, with plenty of action, backgrounded with lots of Native spirituality, paranormal visions, emotional depths, grief, love, longing, and greed. Crime, of course--the co-protagonist is a homicide detective in Vancouver--but also, history, domestic violence, abuse, and psychological disorders.

Claire, a devoted teacher, buys a 1930's residence in Vancouver after receiving an out-of-court settlement. During renovations, she hears sounds leading her to a closet wall, and unearths remains. Hence she meets detective Dylan, who is half Native. A rocky start leads to a budding romance, complicated by Claire's dating suave Rafael. Dylan's grandmother is a shaman, who endeavours to solve and to spiritually heal the horrid events which resulted in the wall burial. The division between light and dark, good and evil, is very clearly delineated in this special story.

Ysolde says

I thought the mystery involving the baby behind the wall was really interesting, the story seemed to lose focus and got sidetracked by Claire and Dylan's romance, though and even more so by her date with a friend's relative who turned. It just seemed so out of character. Loved how the Native American culture was effortlessly weaved into the story.

Bookworm LLC says

After a horrible loss, the protagonist moves into her new house she bought with settlement money. As she is settling in, a mystery begins to unfold, upon the discovery of a mummified baby in her walls, a path is set, leading her down a road she was not expecting. With the help of a nosy neighbors and a homicide detective, a crazy interweaving of suspense is unfolding. This book has love, suspense, ties to the Nazi party, and even some native American tradition.

Bella Deon says

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Renee says

This is a riveting page-turner of a book. It had a natural flow and rhythm that made it one of those "hard to put down" stories. Michele Demers is an excellent writer who has a wonderful sense of humor. I recommend this book to anyone who loves a great read.

T.T. Thomas says

Baby Jane by M.A. Demers is a can't-put-it-down, page-turning mystery thriller that will have you up late at night, a little afraid to go to sleep and wishing it were tomorrow so you could pick it up and keep reading.

And you'd stay up all night reading, but you want to drag it out, make it last, not end!

Demers is an excellent writer who has a wonderful sense of humor, fabulous pacing, great character development and a taut-line story that grows ever more seductive as you are pulled into the web of not-so-coincidental happenings that beset the protagonist, Claire Dawson.

Claire is a woman with secrets of her own, which bring her into conflict with detective, Dylan Lewis, who at first loses his footing in the face of Claire's compelling magnetism, a force that pulls him in deeper and deeper as he tries to balance his attraction for her and his duty as a police officer. His Native American roots speak to him of her secrets, and her soul. The other characters in the book are the perfect complement to the story.

I recommend this book to anyone who loves a great read with overtones of foreign entities meshed seamlessly with real-life characters who have more than their own demons to survive in the face of a mystery of a death that will take the reader right back to the dark forces that were a hallmark of World War II...and beyond.

I hope we hear a lot more from M.A. Demers, and I was thrilled to be able to download a Sample onto my iPad, and then buy the whole book in one fell swoop. Don't read the Sample if you're not ready to buy the full book because you WILL want to buy the book! The more self-published authors I read, the happier I am about the future of books! Sure there's plenty of dogs out there who can't write, but there's some really, really good writers to discover and enjoy. Demers should be in the top echelon of your list. No I don't know her (or him---I'm thinking 'her') and yes I'll buy the next Demer book! Why didn't I give it a 5-star? Oh I could have, easily, but you have to knock me out to get that---the 4-stars just knocked me on my ass, and that's a great start!

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

This book had a lot of promise with a plot that really excited me at first. A baby's decomposed body is found behind a wall in a young woman's apartment during renovations after she has moved it. Where did the baby come from? Why was the baby walled up? Did the baby die of natural causes?

I was really hooked early on as the discovery is made and some supernatural elements start to weave their way into the story. A relationship develops between the female lead protagonist and the detective heading up the case investigating it. Early on I found this quite palatable but it does tend to dominate the book as do peripheral relationships as it goes on.

Whilst police are making enquiries there are those that have got wind of the discovery and a whole lot of mystery as to who is at fault starts to weave its way in to the book. A history of lies, deception, dysfunctional families and wrong-doing are revealed as the book rolls out. Not all of it very nice to digest. Meanwhile our female lead helped by her elderly neighbour are doing their own investigation.

I started to feel the book really drag on and felt it was too long with not enough punch. By the time some quite unusual spiritual and supernatural elements were included the book lost a lot of credibility for me. It would have fared better to my thinking to stay as a crime/mystery exploring who killed the baby in the wall rather than branching out in eclectic directions.

I did not like the last third of the book and felt a bit let down with where it ended up. It could easily have been a 4 star book if it had stayed on course. It may appeal to those who like a mystery with romance thrown

in and are open to supernatural elements weaved into a crime story. Sometimes that works brilliantly well and often it does not. For me this was not the right combination. 3 stars.

Many thanks to the publisher via NetGalley for my copy to read and review.

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