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Therapist-turned-reluctant detective Jessica Mayhew is on the trail once again in this smart, fast-paced novel of suspense from Charlotte Williams—author of the debut *The House on the Cliff*—a tautly written psychological thriller that ventures deep into the recesses of the mind

Jessica Mayhew has enough problems without getting wrapped up in her patients' drama. Her separation from her husband doesn't seem as amicable as she once thought, and her daughters are drifting away as fast as they're growing up. But her new client—chic, moody, obsessive painter Elinor Powell—has a way of drawing people in and soon Jessica's getting involved with what seems to be a most artful murder.

Elinor presents a rare professional challenge. She blames herself for keeping a valuable portrait in her studio, where her mother was killed in an unsolved robbery. An attack of claustrophobia is interfering with her work, as is her deepening paranoia about her twin sister, Isobel, and her brother-in-law, Blake, a ruthless art dealer. But when Jessica meets the entire unhappy family at the debut show of Blake's protégé—a reclusive ex-miner producing gloomy canvases in the Black Mountains of southeast Wales—she starts to wonder whether Elinor might be on to something. Might there be more to her mother's death? Could Blake have been involved? And just what's going on in those lonely hills?

Set against the otherworldly Welsh countryside, *Black Valley* is a novel rich in character, intrigue, and harrowing dangers.

Black Valley Details

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Author : Charlotte Williams

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From Reader Review Black Valley for online ebook

Annabee says

'Zwarte vallei' is beter dan deel 1, 'Het huis op de klif', maar haalt evenmin de 4 sterren. Daaraan is vooral de zwakke protagonist Jessica Mayhew debet. Een geloofwaardiger personage zou zowel de plot als de spanning opkrikken, daar waar je nu als lezer onverschillig blijft onder de diverse gebeurtenissen.

Wat is er mis met Jessica? Dat is gauw verteld: ze is psychotherapeute, maar heeft geen mensenkennis. Jessica is de naïviteit zelve, laat zich door patiënten voor het lapje houden en heeft binnen de kortste keren een nieuwe verkering, nu ze weet dat haar ex-echtgenoot ook weer iemand heeft. Jessica's privégeneuzel gaat helemaal nergens over, al wordt het een stuk minder uitvoerig beschreven dan in deel 1. Zij staat niet zo lang en vaak voor de spiegel, er komen veel minder herhalingen van teksten voor, waardoor deel 2 prettiger leest. Ook een pluspunt ten opzichte van deel 1 is, dat de schoonheid van Wales uitstekend uit de verf komt. Black Valley ligt in het Brecon Beacons National Park, een bergachtig gebied, rijk aan natuurschoon en bezienswaardigheden, een toeristische trekpleister. Maar goed, dat is bijzaak, want dit is een thriller. Dat zou het althans moeten zijn, maar hij is niet heel spannend en daarbij tamelijk doorzichtig. Vanaf het begin voel je aan je water welke kant het opgaat, waarschijnlijk is Jessica de enige die voor verrassingen komt te staan. Het verhaal is redelijk gestructureerd, maar te gemakkelijk. De theorieën over tweelingen zijn interessant, uiteindelijk kun je je echter afvragen waarom ze zijn toegevoegd, want ze verlenen 'Zwarte vallei' weinig meerwaarde, de plot krijgt er geen opleving van.

Best een plezierig boek, gewoon leuk om te lezen. Wie een topthriller verwacht of een verwend c.q. fervent thrillerlezer is, komt onvoldoende aan zijn/haar trekken.

Uiteraard betreur ik dat de auteur in 2014 overleden is, ik zou graag haar verdere ontwikkeling hebben meegemaakt, maar Jessica Mayhew zal ik niet missen. Je zult maar zo'n therapeute hebben ...

Opmerking, gekopieerd uit mijn recensie van 'Het huis op de klif', want ook hier van toepassing: "Is dit wel de echte waarheid? Voor lezers met een rijke fantasie is het een kleine moeite een theorie te ontwikkelen die haaks op het slot van 'Zwarte vallei' staat en het tot een onaf verhaal maakt ... Dat zou pas spannend zijn!"

[spanning 3, plot 3, leesplezier 4, schrijfstijl 3, originaliteit 3, psychologie 3]

Charles says

i enjoyed the book it was well written and kept my interest through out the entire book. the plot line was good and kept you guessing trough out the book. i love how she gave you a true visual of the scenes of where the book was taking place. sadly there will be no more books from this writer. this was a goodreads giveaway

Gay says

Set in Cardiff, Wales, Dr. Jessica Mayhew is a psychotherapist. A new patient, Elinor Powell, comes to her with a case of claustrophobia. Her mother has just been murdered and a valuable painting stolen from her studio. Jessica is drawn into Elinor's life in several ways. Her friend Mari takes her to an artist's reception at

an art gallery owned by Elinor's twin sister and husband. The gallery is featuring the works of a reclusive artist whom no one has met. At the reception Jessica meets a man she becomes involved with romantically. A man is murdered, although it seems first as suicide. He was also involved in the gallery. Jessica learns that the art world is a small one in Cardiff and everyone knows everyone. The two murders are linked, and the artist turns out not to be whom all thought he was.

Excellent background on the art and therapist's world. Well done! This is the author's second book, however she died in 2014. Bourbon Street Books.

Jenny L says

I had been eagerly awaiting this second novel from Charlotte Williams, and whilst I enjoyed it, I do feel the plot was rather neatly and quickly resolved. You are left with a very unsatisfactory ending, as the main character, Jessica questions her career as a psychotherapist. Overall good, until the last several pages.

Lindajk says

Very good read I'm just sorry I didn't know there was a book before this one?I would have liked to have read it first. I will definitely read it now!! Thoroughly enjoyed this book

Christine Marshall says

I gotta say this book was tough to get through... I am really not one into the world of high posh paintings and it had too much sex in it and not enough mystery, but the worst part of all was that the therapist, broke the most essential rule there is in therapy... all in all I give this book a two, because it did have a therapist in it, even though she didn't have much of the common sense that a therapist would have.

Rebecca says

I enjoyed reading this, especially for the psychological underpinnings and the pointed criticism of the art marketplace these days. Here and there the narrative plodded along, but I cared enough to find out whodunnit to finish the novel. The setting in and around Cardiff Wales was atmospheric and charming.

Sheryl says

I'm so glad I got this book as a First-Read- Win. I would have hated to missed out on it. It's the 2nd of a two part series. I'll be reading the 1st installment pretty quick. It's sad because Ms. Williams passed away in 2014, hopefully someone will pick the series up it's great and would be well worth it.

This book literally grabbed me from the prologue, I knew I was hooked. It's about a young aspiring artist(Elinor Powell) , her family owns a very prominent art gallery in the area. She was given a very valuable painting when she was younger that she left in her unlocked cottage one night when she went out and didn't

lock the painting in the safe. Someone walked in and stole the painting and during the crime someone very important to the family was murdered. This case baffled the police as well, so there was an ongoing investigation that was going on. One DS was especially interested in the case and even though she was told to move on she still had a nagging feeling about the case.

Elinor is having such a hard time adjusting to everything that her GP suggested she see a therapist to help her work these issue out. She was referred to Jessica Mayhew who is has a full plate in her professional and personal life that the last thing she needed was to get involved with troubled patient but she sees a challenge and decides to take her on. She has mixed feelings about the crime that had taken place plus the patient herself. Jessica sees herself getting pulled in with this manipulating family and it really takes over her life.

It's set in the Welsh countryside, with a lot of beautiful historical landmarks. This book kept leading me into different directions, from the start of the book and it so many different directions even from the very start. It's one of the best psychological thrillers I've read in awhile.

Ruth says

OK - not stellar.

Lucie says

I just discovered this author. I love the main character and would love to read more of her adventures. My next read will be the House on the cliff.

Stacey says

I wish to thank Goodreads First Reads for the good fortune of winning this extremely entertaining and excellent book. This is an exciting and interesting psychological thriller and murder mystery, full of terrific characters. The author did an excellent job with character development. I especially liked how the bad guys were handled. The author never let you know until the end who the bad guys were, but you always had that uneasy feeling without even knowing why. The story was very suspenseful, keeping you reading frantically to find out the outcome. Unfortunately, this wonderful author passed away recently depriving the reading world of future books.

Kate Hopkins says

Not very convincing, though made me want to return to the museum in Cardiff & see all those amazing works of art again.

Amanda Morgan says

This murder mystery focuses on a therapist, Jess, and a particular patient of hers whose mother has recently been murdered, and the issues Jess is having in her personal life. Jess and her husband have recently separated and she's learning how to navigate single motherhood of her two daughters and how to get back into the dating scene. When Jess gets a new client, Elinor, who is an artist who is suffering from claustrophobia since her mother was killed recently. Elinor has a twin sister Isobel, and Isobel's husband Blake is a suspect in the murder. Through Elinor, Jess finds herself getting more involved in the world of art, finds a new boyfriend, and gets much more involved in Elinor and Isobel's drama than she would like. I thought the mystery was well-built and suspenseful, but that the ending was hurried and didn't live up to the rest of the story. I was glad to have received this via Goodreads First Reads.

Susan says

a good psychological thriller that is fast pace as Jessica a psychotherapist come to suspect that her client elinor may be a killer thanks to goodreads firstreads for the free book

Crystal Johnston says

a bit of a predictable ending - was aware of where the book was leading about half way through. touched on some interesting ideas about twins and their connection but otherwise tried to make a murder mystery that fell a little flat with not enough mystery.
