



Bleed Through

Adriana Arrington

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With his schizophrenia under control, life is looking up for twenty-five-year-old Liam Murphy. Independence looms on his horizon, and he's under the care of a psychologist who understands him. Then he witnesses a murder at the yacht club. He worries it's a hallucination and sign of regression, but soon becomes convinced that his meds have given him the paranormal ability to see past events and that the murder actually happened.

Attempting to make sense of his new talent, Liam finds an unlikely confidant in Mai Nguyen, a fellow college student and eternal optimist. Though she helps him navigate the unsettling memories threatening to engulf him, the emotional toll of learning terrible secrets he can't prove pushes Liam to the brink of lucidity.

Desperate to wrest back control of his life, Liam tosses his pills. He spirals into a relapse and captures the killer's attention as he bumbles through investigating the crime. Hunted by a possibly imaginary murderer, and haunted by self-doubt, Liam must distinguish between hallucinations and reality. If he doesn't, he risks losing either his hard-won sanity or his life.

Bleed Through Details

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Author : Adriana Arrington

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From Reader Review Bleed Through for online ebook

Bella says

One of the year's best psychological thrillers so far! While unreliable narrators have been sweeping the literary landscape as of late, the technique often feels like a cheap trick. Not so here, as first-time novelist Arrington delivers a perfectly drawn protagonist that you can't help but root for. Did Liam really see a murder? Is his mental illness really under control? Does his medication give him supernatural abilities?

Check out the rest of my review at BestThrillers.com

Mary Ann Marlowe says

I was fortunate enough to get an early ARC of this book and put it on my Kindle to read on the plane during a trip. I'd forgotten the premise, so when I started reading, I wasn't quite sure where things were heading, and it made for a pretty interesting read, because this book, even if I'd known where it was heading, defies expectations. Right away, things were a little off in the world of our MC, Liam, and then they went completely off the rails not much later. I love an unreliable narrator, but in this case, even Liam was keenly aware that his perceptions might not line up with reality, and although he seemed to want to present a factual account of his experiences, his brain had other plans. The characters he encounters are sometimes there, sometimes not, and as a reader, I'd find myself cataloging any pieces of evidence to help filter out those who fell in the gray zone, where Liam himself wasn't altogether sure. All of these threads begin to form a tapestry that creates a potentially imagined or possibly very real danger to Liam and his family.

I ended up tearing through this book, even spent 4 hours of my vacation flat on my back to race through the ending. Highly recommend.

Dani - Perspective of a Writer says

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Liam is a college student with schizophrenia who finally has his disease under control with the help of a psychologist who can get through to him. After witnessing a murder all his progress is in the can as he believes his meds have caused him to see events tied to the land. Due to a new girl, Mai, who he likes very much he tries to determine what is real and what is hallucinations as his actions put his family in increasing danger... will he be able to separate fact from fiction in time to save them?

I loved the setup of this book. I was quite caught up in Liam's new ability to see past events. It was quite puzzling trying to separate what could be really happening from what is potentially his schizophrenia. Mix in a true blue murderer and a lovely, accepting Asian girl named Mai and you have a pretty heady recipe for success going on here. Mai and her acceptance at this early stage of the story really made Liam a sympathetic character that I could root for. The problems between him and his mother and step-father seemed to be really realistic to me and I felt real sympathy for all involved.

The thing is Liam really read like a 24 year old who doesn't have all the answers and yet desperately wants to get out there and decide for himself. He wouldn't even go to class to see Mai, his crush! He waited outside in the car. I mean really... but I liked that about him. He was really consistent throughout the book. A bit crazy and all over the place but he was that way from page 1! And the end makes total sense when you think of how he's been all along...

At about 40% the story started to unravel. Up to this point I was thinking 5 star all the way, I was seriously intrigued, liking the relationships with Mai, his family and his psychologist. Then he goes off his meds (like it says in the blurb) and the story lost all tether to reality. The problem with a story and the fictional world it inhabits is that it is not reality. So when what is happening is crazy there has to be a steel core running through it helping us feel like the author is still in control. What I needed to know was what kinds of things do people with schizophrenia really go through and what was expanded upon or added? At this point I just sat back and rode the rest of the story to the end. I didn't enjoy it as much as the setup because the story kept being interrupted with thoughts about whether what was happening was schizophrenia symptoms or was it was something supernatural? Even when I got to the end there wasn't a note from the author explaining schizophrenia and what liberties she took or didn't take (like I've read in other stories of this nature). This was the biggest problem I had with the book. It made the first half 5 star and the second half 3 star so I split it down the middle for 4 star, but it doesn't need much to really be a strong story.

The crazy hallucinations really get out of hand and I felt like that was part of what having schizophrenia would be like so it was good to include it. RP the protector cat was awesome, hands down the best character of the book! I love how he centered Liam and the role he plays in a later plot point. The family drama was really real to me. I love that he got more of the truth about his dad and mom when she left and why. I love that the stepfather stayed true to his convictions about how Liam should be treated even though it threatened his career and his marriage.

One problem I had centered around the angst surrounding the stepfather, here is what I said while I read:

"Now the stepfather is being persecuted for what Liam did! Ack! I just don't like the whole situation: People he's worked with in the past think now he's a total villain? Either she doesn't understand the disease Liam has (in which case she shouldn't be the one investigating) or she is a racist. And since when do we presume abuse before there is proof?!"

It's not that I didn't think the stepfather shouldn't be investigated but the swing from trust to total distrust was not accurate for most situations of this sort, especially when the victim has such severe mental health problems.

I also didn't like that Mai disappeared suddenly and played almost no part in the story except for setup and the very, crazy end of the ending. I understood the end end of the book and it actually makes me want to see where the author goes from here... but this book's climax right before totally unwound. Solving the whole murder did, murder didn't was great but there was a lot of confusion here at the end and one major contrivance that I just don't believe the stepfather would voice let alone think.

Were there some problems, yes, but don't let that stop you from reading this book... we all need to explore mental health issues and understand what people different from us go through on a day to day basis.

BOTTOM LINE: A wild ride through a schizophrenic's world...

Thanks to Curiosity Quills Press for providing me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

You can find this review and many others on my book blog @ Perspective of a Writer. See my special perspective at the bottom of my reviews under the typewriter...

Devin Murphy says

Bleed Through was unsettling in the best way. It yanks me into the fractured mind of a young man with schizophrenia. Liam's life brings the reader into HIS full questioning of reality. With wonderful, fast-paced scenes, we shift from his versions of mentally steady, to uncertain, to full on hallucinations. This would be troubling enough, but what he sees or doesn't see becomes a suspenseful hook as he tries to navigate his reality. The book also dips into the paranormal, or does it? Reading deeper into the book trains you to rise above Liam's unreliability and begin to understand the parameters of his life and mindset. This book is more than a suspenseful thriller. It deals with mental illness in an interesting light and makes you feel empathy for Liam and his family. I strongly recommend this novel.

Kimberly Ruff says

Ms. Arrington skillfully nudges her readers from outside observers into full blown schizophrenia. The lines between what's "real" and a psychotic break are gradually erased, which leaves you questioning everything. Who's real, who's not? Is Liam's life truly in danger, or has his mind rendered him a threat to his loved ones? Suffice it to say, this proved a disorienting read. If the author's goal was to make you feel like you have schizophrenia, then she certainly succeeded. If her goal was to build empathy, understanding, and compassion for those who are struggling with this mental disorder and their families, then she nailed that one too. Liam tore at my heartstrings. His self-loathing, his selflessness, and his efforts to protect his family while battling these demons was truly heartbreaking. I loved Isaac, too. His efforts to keep every person in his family safe, including Liam, were admirable. He wasn't perfect. He made mistakes, which drove home just how difficult it would be to live with someone struggling to maintain his grasp on reality. Thank you, Ms. Arrington for opening my eyes, for forcing me to walk a mile in Liam and Isaac's shoes. I highly recommend this book.

Sandi Ward says

This novel takes a fascinating look inside the mind of a character with severe mental illness. The writing was incredibly vivid, to the point where I could "see" scenes happening in my mind, like a movie. (This book would certainly make a great movie—I am imagining films like *The Sixth Sense* or *Fight Club*, with plenty of shocks and reveals).

The main character, twenty-five year old Liam, cannot always distinguish between what is a hallucination or delusion and what is real. As the book goes on, I as a reader found it a little easier to tell, but for the main character his imaginary friends and enemies inflict tremendous pain and suffering. At times the scenes in Liam's head play out like a horror movie, and serve as a stark reminder of the challenges people with mental illness can face, especially when they have a psychotic break from reality.

There is a secondary magical aspect to the book, which I won't reveal, but it adds to the suspense. I got a kick out of the fact that Liam's most loyal protector (against the voices in his head) is the family cat, who is able to dissipate (in Liam's mind) threatening hallucinations.

Liam's step-father makes a valiant effort to protect him against a system that seems rigged against him; the step-father is a sympathetic character despite mistakes he makes. There is also a sweet younger sister who the reader can't help but continually worry about; while Liam would never cause intentional harm, his unpredictable behavior sometimes ends in chaos and dangerous situations.

Overall, a thought-provoking and gripping thriller!

Kristen Burns says

4 Stars

Full Review:

I received an ecopy of this book from the publisher. This has not influenced my review.

I'm having a hard time figuring out how to review this book, mostly because the main focus of the book was Liam's schizophrenia---not the paranormal and definitely not the romance that's hinted at in the blurb---and how it affected him and his family, and I have zero experience with that which means I am in no place to say whether it was portrayed accurately. So I'm basing my rating/review on the assumption that this was a mostly accurate portrayal, and I'll try my best to explain it.

One thing I can say is that the author included a lot of aspects of the schizophrenia. There wasn't just a laundry list of symptoms. Sometimes there wasn't any explanation at all, for that matter---I thought one of Liam's hallucinations was a real person in the beginning. But that's not an insult to the book, it's a compliment, because the author managed to put me in Liam's shoes and *show* me what life was like for him. He saw and heard things as though they were real, so I did too. He had delusions and believed things, so he didn't stop to think, "Schizophrenia causes delusions, and one of mine is that..." No, he just had his thoughts about these things because he believed them to be real. And the author didn't just include symptoms but also things like how mental illness affected Liam emotionally, how it affected his life, how other people treated him because of it, the side effects he had to deal with because of his medication but also how those side effects were worth it because of how important his medication was, his visits to his therapist and how much she helped him, etc.

This book was also so much more emotionally intense than I was expecting. For one thing, Liam's hallucinations were *scary*. As another character put it, Liam himself was generally not violent, just unpredictable, but in his own mind, he sometimes saw hallucinations that told him to hurt people or that threatened to hurt people themselves if Liam didn't listen to them. They also physically hurt him sometimes; he didn't obtain actual injuries, but he felt the pain, or he injured himself just trying to get away from them. Other times his delusions made him believe scary things, like that people were demons. So it wasn't that I was scared *of* him, it was that I'd be scared if I *were* him. But the real intensity of the book came from the way Liam's life and the lives of his family were affected, especially when he stopped taking his meds. The family aspect definitely came across as realistic, and the book got pretty heavy and even a little bit heartbreaking. I can't say I agree with all his mother's decisions, but Isaac was trying, even if he wasn't perfect. And Liam himself didn't want things to be the way they were, didn't want to be a danger to anyone.

There was also a paranormal aspect though. For most of the book, it was clear that certain things in the book were schizophrenia and that other certain things were paranormal, but there were some things that blurred. That was the point though (it's in the blurb even), and the author did a great job of that. Liam was an unreliable narrator, so even I wasn't always sure what was real, what was retro/precognition, and what was

hallucination. But then---this is what bothered me---even the definite schizophrenia things started getting iffy, like how the cat could sense the hallucinations and how the hallucinations could sometimes touch things in real life. I didn't see any reason why those particular paranormal bits were added and would've preferred the actual schizophrenia remain fully real in order to make it a more accurate portrayal.

I also want to mention that this is one of those rare cases in which the blurb is spot-on. What it promises is exactly what the book delivers, albeit with less romance than it seems to suggest.

So, to summarize, I didn't like that some of the schizophrenia seemed to be paranormal, but the emotional aspects, the characters, and the affect it all had on Liam's life seemed realistic. And overall, I found this to be a very tense, intense, and gripping book!

Recommended For:

Anyone who likes paranormal thrillers and unreliable narrators. Anyone who wants something that is a little trippy but also intense and heavy with a big focus on the impacts of mental illness and who doesn't mind that the schizophrenia itself has some seemingly paranormal aspects.

Original Review @ Metaphors and Moonlight

Elise Hooper says

Bleed Through is a clever novel that kept me uncertain of what was real and what was imagined. It's a fascinating look into life with mental illness, and the main character, Liam, is a sympathetic character who must struggle to navigate a slow descent into uncertainty and paranoia. Scenes are richly drawn and the fast pacing makes this a page turner. Great summer read!

Jenni Walsh says

Once upon a time I worked in a role where I briefly studied schizophrenia, and while there are different subtypes and characteristics, it was interesting to see Arrington develop Liam's mental illness, presenting itself with hallucinations, paranoid delusions, disorganized speech, disorganized thinking, and significant social or occupational dysfunction. His behaviors and mannerisms felt real to me, even with the paranormal element thrown in. Liam was a gripping character. In fact, I often gripped the book tighter as he took us through scenes, or as we saw the scenes through the eyes of his mother or step-father. In Liam's scenes, I often found myself trying to guess whether elements were real or if they existed solely in his head. This guessing game made the novel very thrilling and engaging, and I couldn't wait to see how it all turned out, knowing Liam's struggle was never going to unfortunately end. Overall, Arrington's debut was a thrilling, dark read!

Adrian Dooley says

Well that was different and I have to say very entertaining. Read it in three or four sittings which is always a good sign.

Liam Murphy is a 25 year old college student who suffers with schizophrenia. Back living with his mother,

sister and stepfather after his own father died, he thinks he witnesses a murder as he sees a man beaten to death on a marina. But there is no evidence of the murder. No blood stains, no sign of struggle. Was it just another hallucination?

Trying to put it to one side and still attending his psychologist, he sees an apparition appear from her. Is it someone from her past? Is it her sister or is it more hallucinations as Liam really has trouble telling what is real and what isn't.

With no one to confide in he stumbles across a friendship in college with a girl called Mai. She treats him differently than everyone else. She isn't afraid of him or suspicious. She doesn't think he's weird. She's intrigued by him and is a straight talker. Soon he feels he can tell her anything and confides in her about his visions and that he can see memories of people. Can he really have this gift or is it his schizophrenia? Was there really a murder or is it his imagination? Is Mai even real?

This is a stonkingly good read. We get the set up from the off. Schizophrenic guy with a history of bad hallucinations. What's real and what isn't? Told from his perspective it's a rollercoaster ride as we journey through his troubles as he tries to come to grips with family life, the voices in his head, his imaginary companions and his newly found apparent gift of these visions.

There is a bit of a curve ball to this novel as well as there is a supernatural element to it throughout. It sounds weird mingling the two elements in a novel - schizophrenia and supernatural but it works brilliantly here, helping to blur the lines even further as to what may and may not be real.

Liam is a great central character, hugely flawed of course, especially socially with his illness and can be a pretty unsavoury character for large parts of the story but you can't help being on his side, feeling sorry for him and rooting for him throughout. The family dynamic is very well written too as is his relationship with Mai.

It's a blast of a read. An easy read, very entertaining and has some interesting ideas in it. I'm not sure how accurate it is to the illness of schizophrenia but that's not really the point. It's an obvious work of fiction that veers into supernatural so the schizophrenia, although being the central theme throughout the book, is more a vehicle for the basis of the story. A story that I really enjoyed reading and would have no hesitation in recommending.

I would like to thank NetGalley, Curiosity Quills Press and Adriana Arrington for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Andrea Christenson says

I started off really liking this book. Apart from some gruesome language, the writing was well done, the story quite intriguing, and the characters likable (fun to try to guess which ones were real and which were only imagined). But somewhere around the middle of the book, it all went off the rails. The story became scattered and the characters acted, well, out of character.

Also, the "imprint" angle should have been pursued further, or not included at all.

I'm giving it three stars because I liked the idea of the story, but ultimately was disappointed by the book.

Nia Ireland says

I reached the halfway point of this book and almost couldn't finish it, and not for the reason you'd expect.

This book is excellently written, almost too well. Liam, the main character, suffers from schizophrenia in a way that few literary characters do: realistically.

When medicated, Liam's situation is more palatable but when he stops taking his medication around halfway through the book... it starts getting hard to read. This is as it should be though, schizophrenia isn't palatable, it's hell for sufferers and the people who love them.

As the reader, you have to try to work out for yourself what's real and what's a hallucination – Liam is the most unreliable of narrators, which the author masterfully uses in this book.

This story will stick with me for a long time, I think – Liam was a lovable character, despite his best efforts. On the path to recovery, now his therapist has found a good combination of medication for him – he starts to want things for himself, such as a friendship with Mai, his open minded fellow student.

All these things at risk when he starts to see things, despite his encouraging progress with his mental health. His battle against his own mind to figure out what's real and how to keep the people he loves safe from himself and his visions is the true making of this story.

I don't think this book is for everyone, it's heavy as hell and at times, pretty confusing. But if you're up to the challenge, you won't regret it. This is the portrayal of a mentally ill character who doesn't have their struggle belittled by being magically healed by the end of the book, or by finding out that they're actually a supernatural creature or some other cliché – this is suspenseful, heart wrenching and very respectful.

Jacqie says

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

This book felt gimmicky, a bit like a stunt written so give an impressionistic feel for how a schizophrenic might perceive the world. I've worked in the mental health field and didn't care for it. It felt like the author was trying to be edgy, but this is an experience that can't really be replicated.

R.S. says

Is regaining control over his actions and getting a chance at independence worth the horrible visions 25 year old Liam's anti-psychotic medications trigger? Or should the murder he just witnessed be his bigger priority?

These are the questions that both the protagonist and the reader will struggle to answer in this gripping debut from Adriana Arrington. With short, but action packed chapters, *Bleed Through* is an engaging thriller that will leave you wondering how much of the heartbreaking story is real and how much is just in Liam's mind. It's a brutal yet sympathetic look at the burden of living with mental illness on both the afflicted and those around them, which left me thinking about its complex plot for days after finishing it. It's a must read for

anyone interested in fast paced, character-driven suspense.

Nina Laurin says

BLEED THROUGH is an explosive mix of psychological suspense and paranormal thriller featuring Liam, a twenty-five-year-old struggling to manage his schizophrenia, who starts to suspect that his hallucinations aren't just that.

It's not the easiest concept to pull off. Yet when I read BLEED THROUGH, I never thought that Liam's condition was glossed over in any way. I can only admire the amount of research this portrayal must have required. It's a daily struggle (in the words of Liam's therapist, a moving target) and medications have debilitating side effects. The not-so-pretty aspects are front and center, which makes you root for Liam even more.

And that's before the paranormal aspect kicks in. Are the visions merely hallucinations? Or does Liam really have a gift to see what others can't? Is it a mix of the two? After a while, Liam (or the reader) isn't sure what's real anymore.

Liam is a great main character whose flaws and struggles make him all the more believable. It's a quick, page-turning (in my case, kindle-screen-tapping) read. It moves fast and pulls you in from the beginning, with twists and turns that keep you guessing till the end.
