



# Stratagem

*Robin Carroll*

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**Stratagem** Robin Carroll

**A High-Stakes Simulation Adventure Leaves Grayson Thibodeaux the Prime Suspect. . .for Murder**

Deep in the gritty underbelly of New Orleans, psychologist Grayson Thibodeaux loses everything when his wife leaves him to climb her company's corporate ladder. He buries himself in his job of creating mind-bending adventure games for businesses as team-building explorations. When his ex-wife's company hires Grayson's to create an elaborate game, he doesn't see how things can get worse. Until she dies during the course of the game he created...making him the prime suspect for *murder*.

## Stratagem Details

Date : Published November 1st 2018 by Shiloh Run Press

ISBN : 9781683227304

Author : Robin Carroll

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Fiction, Suspense, Mystery, Christian Fiction

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## From Reader Review Stratagem for online ebook

### **Karen R says**

Fans of police dramas will enjoy this one set in New Orleans. A company who creates elaborate live game challenges with escape rooms has a surprise feature: a murder. Things get complicated as the victim is the ex-wife of the game creator.

This story was an interesting one, with a complex plot gradually building the suspense and drama through police interviews, some flashbacks, and eventually an action filled climax. There were so many people who could be the murderer that it surprised me when finally revealed. It was well written, creating a lot of character depth with meaningful dialogue and some heavy topics, with added faith. Grayson is a man who struggles with forgiveness understandably, and shows a lot of grace to others though the circumstances are difficult. Loved the conversation he had with Monique, as he wrestles with the "what-ifs" of his failed relationship; I found a lot of wisdom and encouragement in that. Others who care to "speak the truth in love" to him, like his colorful assistant Pam, were sources of inspiration too. Ultimately knowing that God can create something good out of our mistakes is a comforting thought.

Recommend to readers who enjoy crime mysteries with some action and faith elements. No romance here though the topics of marital problems and divorce are discussed.

4.5 stars

(An e-book was provided by the publisher via NetGalley. All opinions are my own.)

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### **Amanda says**

I love a good mystery and this one was great. Set in the historical city of New Orleans, the story was very atmospheric and the pacing was brisk.

The story focused on a murder that occurred during a team building simulation adventure in a creepy mansion. There are many characters (suspects) and as the crime is unfolded through police interrogations, there are more questions than answers. The story reminded me several times of the movie "Clue" as there were many characters and the setting was dark and creepy.

I found the story to be original and fun and although I guessed the culprit ahead of time, I was guessing throughout the story.

Overall, this was a very fun mystery that I highly recommend!

I received this book from the author/publisher to review. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

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### **Susan Snodgrass says**

'How could someone go so totally out of character?'

Grayson Thibodeaux is a psychologist who creates mind-bending games for companies to evaluate their

employees. He creates a game for the company who employees his ex-wife, Anna Belle, and she turns up dead. And he turns up as the most likely suspect. But as much as he was hurt by his ex-wife during the course of their marriage, he most definitely did not want to see her dead. But it's up to him to prove himself innocent as one certain police detective is determined to look at only Grayson and no one else.

Robin Carroll has always been a good suspense writer, but this time she ratchets up the suspense, layering intricate details with every chapter, totally keeping the reader guessing. The police detective interviews with those in attendance and on the suspect list are amazing and completely fascinating! I never did guess the culprit. And this was one book that had me crazy trying to figure out whodunit. Highly recommended !

\*My thanks to the publisher and author for a copy of this book. The opinions stated here are entirely my own.

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### **Susan says**

**Stratagem** is the first book I have read by Robin Carroll. I read a lot of mysteries and found myself craving a suspenseful read. I found this story to have an original plot, making use of a “game” like one might find in a reality show or escape room scenario as the setting for a murder. The author is an expert at pacing as details surrounding the murder are slowly revealed. The story is told from three different points of view- Grayson, Brandon and Anna Belle. Grayson as the ex-husband is the prime suspect. Brandon is one of the detectives on the case. Anna Belle is the victim. The author reveals characters with great depth as she handles heavy topics such as infidelity with care. There is a spiritual thread of forgiveness that is woven into the story. While I eventually figured out the identity of the killer, the motive eluded me until the exciting conclusion.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from Barbour Publishing and was under no obligation to post a review. All opinions expressed are my own.

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### **Carrie Schmidt (Reading is My SuperPower) says**

Stratagem is exactly the type of suspense/thriller novel that I like to read – a plot that plays at your mind even as it plays with the minds of the characters, characters by the way that you aren't entirely sure you can trust. The whole lot of them. Just when you think you can relax around this character or the other, another layer of their lives or the plot is revealed and you just don't know anymore. I love it! It keeps me guessing, keeps me invested in the outcome, and lets me play detective right along with the actual (fictional) detectives.

Grayson Thibodeaux is in a very complicated situation, one which continues to get more complicated as the book progresses. Not only does he have a career which is at once horrifying and fascinating (he creates ‘escape room’ type games with psychological twists based on the participants’ history and medical records, etc.) but he is also the number one suspect in the death of his ex-wife, who died during a game he had created. The lead detectives make the situation even more complicated – one is a good friend who is considered biased toward Grayson’s innocence and the other is bitter at Grayson having not called her sister back after a blind date. So, you know which side she falls on in terms of whether he’s guilty or not, and her opinion really keeps her laser-focused on Grayson and unwilling to consider other possibilities.

Now... brace yourselves, y'all... there's no romance in this book and I STILL LOVED IT. It's pretty much a straight suspense novel with a very moving subthread on forgiveness. Particularly a scene at the end that

really touched my heart. While my mind was whirring with romantical possibilities throughout the book, I really didn't miss that sort of tension because there was plenty of other tension to be had as the suspense plot continued to unfold.

Bottom Line: Gritty but touching. Complex but easy to read. Intriguing but... nope, no opposite here... intriguing and riveting. Stratagem by Robin Carroll is the perfect choice to read on blustery, cold fall/winter nights when you're snuggled up under a warm blanket. It's impossible to put down once you start reading, so don't plan to sleep until you've finished it. Skillfully plotted suspense, layered characters, and a vivid setting all make this a must-read. Loved the nod to Darkwater Inn, from another of Carroll's current reads.

(I voluntarily reviewed a complimentary copy of this book)

first seen at Reading Is My SuperPower

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## **Lisa Johnson says**

Title: Stratagem

Author: Robin Carroll

Pages: 320

Year: 2018

Publisher: Shiloh Press Run

My rating: 5 out of 5 stars.

The setting of the story is in New Orleans where a company creates games for people to live out sometimes without them knowing they are living out a game. Games on You is hired by a Deets PR to help them establish the best person for a promotion within the company. The designer of the game is psychologist Grayson Thibodeaux who has a real gift for understanding how people will react to stimuli revealing their strengths, weaknesses and fears.

After getting information on each person in the game, a place is chosen, and the involved planning begins. Grayson's assistant, Pam, is a really smart woman who knows computers and loves to bet with Grayson on who will or won't succeed. Life is already complex when Grayson's wife Anna Belle is unfaithful to him and leaves him because she wants to be free to climb the corporate ladder. When her company hired Grayson's and Conner's company, the conflict of interest is about to be the worst of Grayson's problems.

When Anna Belle is found unresponsive in her room and later dies, the police of course focus on Grayson. From that point, the plot thickens along with many twists and turns. The author writes a fantastic suspense filled thriller that will have you on the edge of your seat. I thought the ending was surprising and very tense. Plan on being up a little late when you begin reading the adventure that awaits in this excellent tale!

Note: I received a complimentary copy for an honest review of this book. The opinions shared in this review are solely my responsibility.

Other reviews can be read at <http://seekingwithallyurheart.blogspot...> Also follow me on Twitter@lcjohnson1988, Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/lisa.johnson...>

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## **Amy says**

I decided to read a book that is a little bit different than what I normally read which almost always has to include romance. However, Stratagem is a suspense book about the murder of an ex-wife. While not my usual read, I have read author Robin Carroll's books before and the book premise sounded intriguing.

First off, Grayson Thibodeaux has such a unique job. It is one in which he creates a life game for businesses. Unfortunately his latest game design ends with the death of his ex-wife Anna Belle. Grayson of course was considered the prime suspect and the homicide detectives investigating both knew him personally. Brandon is his friend and he is on less friendlier terms with Danielle who certainly held a grudge against him.

I really enjoyed getting the details of how the game worked. We also get to sit in on the police interviews of all the suspects and others involved. It really made a complete picture and I enjoyed that aspect immensely. And the author gave us a little bit of Anna Belle's point of view before she died which really made the picture so much clearer.

Besides being suspense and a murder mystery, this book definitely takes a look at the failing of a marriage and divorce and the effects it has on the partners. It also took a hard look at forgiveness and what that may look like when it is all said and done and the secrets have been all uncovered. I felt for Grayson and this book was sad in some ways as we begin to get the picture of the dissolution of his marriage. At times the book could be heavy, but it was a good read.

I received a complimentary copy of this book. I was not required to post a positive review and all views and opinions are my own.

<https://pausefortales.blogspot.com/20...>

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### **Jessica Baker (A Baker's Perspective) says**

Wow, this book was a page turner! I love suspense books, typically because I enjoy figuring everything out. But this book? It was so much more than that. Yes, it was fun to figure out the whodunit. The author masterfully crafted a string of clues that make you think you're going in one direction, only to bring up something new and make you second guess your answer. There was a point where I just kind of shook my head and decided to read for enjoyment rather than reading for sleuthing. And that is when I started connecting with the characters more. Carroll writes well rounded characters. You get to know each and every character as you read, and although you are trying to solve the case, you can almost sympathize with all of them, which in turn makes it difficult to point your finger at them.

Carroll's descriptive writing also brings you right into the story. I felt the slap that Grayson received. I felt the shock of finding out about his ex-wife. I was surprised as details of the day of the "murder" came to light. This is the best thing about reading, feeling as if you are a part of the story, not the reader of the story. Carroll managed to hook me from page one, and from there I just dove deeper and deeper into the story line. When it came to an end, I was almost sad. Sad to leave these wonderful characters, but mostly sad to read Carroll's writing. I cannot wait to read more book from her!

I received a complimentary copy of this book. I was not required to write a favorable review. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

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### **Debbie says**

"Stratagem" by Robin Carroll is a book that is a good read. The plot is a A High-Stakes Simulation Adventure game that turns to murder. The story is written partly as a murder investigation with the characters telling of

what part they played leading up to the murder.

It was a very easy read and flowed along nicely.

It was hard not to think all the characters were guilty of the crime, in fact I was thinking the whole time I read the book that it was all part of the game and the murdered victim wasn't really murdered, but I was wrong. I am never good at figured out the guilty person in books I read or movies that I watch, maybe that is a good thing because it keeps me reading and watching. I really liked this book and was wrong about every assumption I made about every character. I am glad I was wrong because all these characters are people that I wanted to like and I ended up liking them all except the real killer.

I haven't watch movies like The Hunger Games and etc, but this book made me think I might want to. But, "Stratagem" had a little faith factor in the story, by this statement, I mean the character of Grayson Thibodeaux is known to others as a Christian and lives by his faith, not that any preaching is included in the book.

This story is a story of trusting in someone even when the evidence shows trust is not deserved and forgiving even when it is hard.

The story is about adultery and abortion is talked about briefly.

I was given a complimentary copy by the author and Celebrate Lit. These opinions are my own.

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## **Sheryl says**

Grayson Thibodeaux, a psychologist along with his longtime sociologist friend, Colton York, has built a business called "Game's On You" where they create these elaborate custom games for corporations to use to if they are considering promoting someone within and there are several viable candidates or for any number of reasons. Between the two of them, they have made this a lucrative business.

The latest game that Grayson designs just happens to be for the PR Firm his ex-wife, Anna-Belle works for, they're looking for the best candidate to fill this position, and she's among a group of several people. Grayson is against taking this job, but his business partner finally convinces him that it's like any other game they have designed and it's not a big deal.

Famous last words Right?

Anna-Belle is ambitious to a fault, and she's still not happy with her divorce settlement from Grayson. She has a showdown with him regarding their settlement in the reception area of his office right before she's supposed to start this "game."

The only people who know this is a game are the CEO of her firm and their board of directors and the staff of "Game's on you." So the last time Grayson sees Anna-Belle things couldn't get any worse. He goes out of town and returns home to find a duo of homicide detectives who have been trying to hunt him down over the long weekend but unfortunately for Grayson; he lost his phone while out of town.

Ms. Carroll has done a great job with this mystery; I love the New Orleans setting plus it being a faith-based novel was a bonus.

I look forward to reading more from her. I think this would be a great start of series; she had me right up to end on who murdered Anna-Belle.

Disclosure: I would like to thank the publisher and NetGalley for providing an e-galley in exchange for honest review. The opinions I expressed above are my own.

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### **Maureen Timerman says**

A book that will keep your attention from beginning to end, and when the answers start to come you will be shaking your head and wondering how you didn't come to this conclusion.

I was quickly page turning to find the answers here, and find out who committed the murder and why. The author was great at keeping me guessing and it wasn't until about three fourths of the book was finished that I thought I had the answer, but did I?

I recommend this book for a clean, interesting murder mystery that will keep you guessing, shaking your head and changing your mind.

I received this book through Celebrate Lit, and was not required to give a positive review.

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### **Kara says**

This isn't my usual read, but it was really good and kept me guessing the WHOLE TIME.

Anna Belle was very easy to dislike and yet she didn't deserve to be murdered, the whole story is Grayson, her ex-husband, finding the strength in God to forgive her while trying to keep his cool while being investigated as the prime murder suspect. I knew he was innocent from the start, but proving that innocence was deeply challenging.

Loved Detective Brandon, couldn't stand his partner, Danielle. I even suspected her at one point because of her attitude towards Grayson. Really enjoyed the scenes when both detectives are questioning everyone who was present when Anna Belle died. My favorite scenes are when both detectives learn new information at certain interviews that no one else mentions, how they just are in disbelief at the mistakes made during this investigation.

I truly felt that the strategies used during the "game" were questionable and inappropriate. I seriously don't understand why the four players didn't leave after they were challenged with certain fears. I don't think any job promotion is worth that. Beyond the shock and mystery of Anna Belle's death, the whole situation was messed up.

Other than that, this story was really fascinating from the start and as Grayson and his assistant race to find answers as the same time those detectives are investigating, I had no idea who the culprit was and Anna Belle was just a horrible person who ended up being a victim. I was very satisfied with the ending and how Monique stayed around for Grayson. Really loved the title of this book!

I received a complimentary copy of this book from Barbour Publishing and was under no obligation to post a review. All comments are my own.

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### **Ibjoy1953 Hannabass says**

MY THOUGHTS ON THIS BOOK

I will have to say, I've never heard of mind-bending adventure games. So this was a new adventure for me. Grayson Thibodeaux ended up in the middle of his ex-wife's murder, being the prime suspect. All leads ended up with Grayson. Or was someone else trying to throw the blame on Grayson and get off scott free?

The investigation was interesting, I am always amazed at how investigators end up with so many leads, and figure out the person they need. And this one seemed like a cut and dry case, but the more I read the more holes came up in the investigation. I like Grayson. He was just all around a good guy, and loving Anna Belle wasn't an easy job! But Anna Belle's mom was a different thing. I love her, her character was well created and she was just the sweetest lady. It warmed my heart that their relationship started and would continue

I feel like I'm jumping around with this review, but there's a lot going on in this story. A lot of interesting issues, and some not so fun. If you enjoy a good suspense/thriller, I highly recommend Stratagem by author Robin Carroll! I have read many of Ms. Carroll's books and love them all! I encourage you to check out her other books when you check this one out!

A copy of this book was provided by Celebration Lit Tours for me to read and review. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions in this review are mine only.

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### **Dana Michael says**

This is a different kind of book than I normally read. I usually read romantic suspense thrillers or anything with a bit of a romance. This book is totally mystery with no romance. But, with that said, I'm a big fan of this author..So I thought I'd check it out. This book reminded me of cop movies or tv shows with a cast of characters and you get to guess who done it. That was fun because I really didn't guess until it was revealed. If you are a huge fan of murder mysteries, you will enjoy this book.  
3 and a half stars.

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### **Suzie Waltner says**

4.5 Stars

If you are a fan of psychological twists in your entertainment, then Stratagem is for you!

Robin Carroll gives readers a book filled with twist, turns, several suspects, and a game that is based on your weaknesses and fears. But what an entertaining ride it is!

I had an inkling of who the murder was at the beginning but my mind was changed several times throughout this story.

Grayson Thibodeaux is an intelligent character I sympathized with—especially as more about his life and his wife are revealed. The man was beaten down by his ex-wife in his marriage (and even after), but not once did I believe he was the murderer.

The addition of Brandon's point of view as he and his partner are given the investigation from the legal side of things, and Stratagem is a well-rounded, complete read that will have me looking at escape room games differently the next time I go!

Disclosure statement:

I receive complimentary books from publishers, publicists, and/or authors, including NetGalley. I am not required to write positive reviews. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.

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