



## The Fall

*Claire McGowan*

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## **The Fall** Claire McGowan

What would you do if the man you love was accused of murder?

Bad things never happen to Charlotte. She's living the life she's always wanted and about to marry wealthy banker, Dan. But Dan's been hiding a secret, and the pressure is pushing him over the edge. After he's arrested for the vicious killing of a nightclub owner, Charlotte's future is shattered.

Then she opens her door to Keisha, an angry and frustrated stranger with a story to tell. Convinced of Dan's innocence, Charlotte must fight for him - even if it means destroying her perfect life. But what Keisha knows threatens everyone she loves, and puts her own life in danger.

DC Matthew Hegarty is riding high on the success of Dan's arrest. But he's finding it difficult to ignore his growing doubts as well as the beautiful and vulnerable Charlotte. Can he really risk it all for what's right?

Three stories. One truth. They all need to brace themselves for the fall.

## **The Fall Details**

Date : Published February 2nd 2012 by Headline (first published January 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9780755386345

Author : Claire McGowan

Format : Paperback 384 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Suspense, Drama

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## From Reader Review The Fall for online ebook

### John Black says

I'm not sure how I came to this... possibly a review. However I do remember reading the first few pages via Amazon and wanting to read more. It's basically a crime novel but is also has a bit of chick lit to it. That puts it outside my usual comfort zone, but I think reading out of the norm from time to time is a good thing.

The Fall is mainly written from the points of view of two young women. Charlotte has a nice job in PR and is busy planning her wedding to City banker Dan. He's been a bit stressed out at work recently so they decide to have a bit of night out. Things go bad when Dan's card is refused in the club they visit and he ends up in an argument with the owner. Charlotte is a bit hazy on the details due to the cocaine she had taken. Things become even worse when Dan is arrested for the owner's murder the next day. While he's carted off to prison, Charlotte's world collapses – the wedding is off, she loses her job, her money is rapidly running out...

The other woman is mixed-race Keisha who lives a world away from Charlotte financially and socially, though not far geographically, in a council flat. She is trying to get her daughter back from social services and patch up her relationship with small time crook Chris (though he's the reason she lost her daughter in the first place.) As you might predict she's not exactly a stone's-throw away from the murder.

As you also might predict the two women end up working together to solve the murder whilst developing an 'Odd Couple' friendship. The third point of view is the policeman investigating the case who ends up with conflicted feelings for Charlotte. All these characters are well drawn and there are some interesting secondary characters too (although some verge on the eccentric, being defined by a few odd ticks and character traits)

The novel starts well and is an easy breezy read but unfortunately it gets a bit bogged down in the middle and I think could have been better edited there. Also I didn't really like the ending and there are few too many handy coincidences along the way. There are some good moments of humour though (in particular with Charlotte's PR job) and others may get more out of it than I did.

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### Stephen says

Enjoyed this one - an easy read but hard to put down even though it is obvious from the start who committed the murder. But the characters are so well developed that you end up caring what happens to them all. All very topical and relevant as well with its references to Facebook and corrupt bankers. Writing style reminded me of Into the Darkest Corner (although nothing like as creepy and threatening as that book becomes later on), another debut author book that I enjoyed recently. Don't often come across a crime novel which I like which I would try passing on to my wife but this is one of those, as well. Will definitely read more by this author.

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### Cleo Bannister says

Charlotte comes to on the floor of a toilet realising that she had lost everything, what had happened to cause her to reach rock bottom? Charlotte has been busy planning her very expensive wedding when her life is turned upside down. Keisha meanwhile is trying to persuade a Social Worker that she should have her daughter returned to her and her boyfriend Chris. One night Charlotte and Keisha's lives collide.

This book is really fresh, it is a crime novel but from the viewpoint of those on the outside. Supporting characters have never been so important as the story is told from both Keisha's and Charlotte's viewpoints. Their characters develop and although they come from very different backgrounds, they both struggle to overcome their weaknesses. The relationship between them is intriguing, as is the relationship between Hegarty, the Policeman, and Charlotte. All the characters in this book are finely drawn, they are engaging, so much so I read this book full of concern for both Charlotte and Keisha rather than the police procedural mystery element.

Claire McGowan has written a book that drags you into the story from the first page and produced a great debut novel.

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### **Nadia Zeemeeuw says**

The Fall is that kind of detective story with strong melodramatic background. The message is simple: we focus on our own emotion so much that stay deaf to emotions of our beloved ones. The story itself is quite interesting though has no exciting twists but a lot of despair ladies instead.

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### **Geraldine Ewing says**

Really enjoyed this. Fast paced and the female characters were all really relatable in their own ways. The various elements of the story came together really well and kept me really engaged.

The male policeman, much less so. Not a fan of the affair-sub plot but at the end I could see how it informed the overall plot. Hegarty's microaggressions towards Northerners (i'm not Northern) and anybody with a body type that couldn't be described as slim (I am not slim) really put me off him, and as such, I couldn't really be bothered when reading his sections.

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### **Bruce Hatton says**

This is a very ambitious, original and highly assured debut novel. Written from the viewpoints of three central characters in the aftermath of the murder of a nightclub owner. I loved the way the book dealt with the fragile state of the current British "class system" and was equally adept at describing the lifestyles of investment bankers and the soul-destroying environments of homeless shelters.

Although this is the sort of psychological thriller which could never have a truly "happy ending", there is a very well rendered resolution at the end.

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## **Sharon Bolton says**

It is almost insulting to refer to *The Fall* as a debut novel, as nothing about this stylish, mature and accomplished work suggests a first book.

Two young London women from diametrically opposite ends of the social spectrum are thrown together one night after a violent murder in a Camden nightclub. The fiancé of one becomes the police's prime suspect; the boyfriend of the other is ours. As the lives of both women go into freefall, they each lose everything and everyone on whom they previously relied. Before long, they have only themselves; eventually, they have each other.

The story is told from three different points of view: posh Charlotte, mixed-race Keisha and working class copper, DC Hegarty, and the book's great strength, to my mind, is the ease with which McGowan switches from sink estate London, to well-heeled banker land, to the inner workings of the Met, making each voice distinct and entirely convincing. Much of the book makes for a sad and sober read – how easily everything we have falls away – but the choice sprinkling of Irish wit keeps it alive and entertaining.

There is nothing not to like about *The Fall*. Claire McGowan has produced a compelling and flawless thriller. Damn her eyes!

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## **Ecokid says**

*The Fall* is an ambitious debut novel that delivers some memorable moments, but for the most part feels ungainly, as the characters are often used instrumentally by McGowen.

The story is centred on a chaotic moment in which the lives of two girls in their mid-twenties - who appear pretty dissimilar at first - collide with mutual tragedy. It's an interesting premise, but lacks any real momentum or mystery as the reader is quite quickly made aware of the real perpetrator.

There are some genuinely funny moments (mainly one liners) and snippets where the dialogue is both interesting and sincere; however, McGowen's bold intention struggles to be fully realised as a host of complex characters are unsatisfactorily explored due to constraints. This is evident in the relationship between Keisha and her estranged father, which is glanced over fairly quickly. McGowen often avoids providing a plausible explanation for why characters behave as they do at key moments, which results in the experience feeling a tad forced.

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## **Simon Lipson says**

I'm not particularly into thrillers but when esteemed author Peter James was quoted as saying this was a British *Bonfire of the Vanities* - my all-time favourite book - I was hooked. And there are, indeed, similarities - they both have a cover and some pages in the middle with words on them. Sadly, that's it. *Bonfire* is a work of genius, bursting with magical set-pieces, complex, inter-woven story lines, on-the-money social commentary and fascinating, nuanced characters spouting sparkling dialogue. *The Fall...*has

none of these.

I won't regurgitate the story here, save to say that there are three main characters, Charlotte, a white middle class woman whose banker fiance is accused of murdering a dodgy night club owner; Keisha, a mixed-race working class woman whose thuggish boyfriend knocks her and their child about and; Hegarty, a northern investigating detective now working the north London beat. There is no great mystery, although, in fairness, I doubt the author intended otherwise. We pretty much know from the off who dun what. Instead, I believe it's intended to be a sweeping, state of the nation, socially astute commentary, demonstrating the aching divide between the haves and have-nots; the misery of poverty and violence; privilege; race. But it fails on nearly every count.

Ms McGowan has a tin ear for dialogue. Whether she's serving up Keisha's quasi-patois or Charlotte's plummy nonsense, she keeps slipping or missing the mark completely. This is not how people talk. Worse, the senior policemen especially, sound as if they're characters in Dixon of Dock Green c.1962, 'I shouldn't wonder'. Presumably the editor excised 'stone the crows' and 'strike a light'.

This is novel-by-numbers stuff. I can picture Ms McGowan with her cork board plastered with yellow Post-Its containing the three personality traits of each character, pink ones for the story beats, green for locations. There's no genuine insight, no understanding, no intuition.

It's not without redeeming elements. I finished it, so the story itself clearly held sufficient interest. I did want to find out what happened to the characters, albeit the ending was rubbish. I quite enjoyed the simmering love story at its centre, albeit when it relocated to Singapore, it became silly.

Goodness me, I've just found out that Ms McGowan is the Director of the Crime Writers Association and that Peter James is the...hang on...yes, he's its Chair. Who'd've thought?

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### **Niki Mackay says**

I LOVED this book. Page turner, really believable characters, very different from each other, and beautifully written.

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### **Karen says**

One murder, three people's perspective on it.  
The story had me hooked, I kept wanting to go back and find out more

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### **Steph says**

I enjoyed this book and very easy to read.  
Two very different main characters, prim and proper Charlotte who's fiancé has been accused of a racist murder and rough and ready Keisha who's lowlife boyfriend may just be the one responsible.  
But ultimately these women help each other along the way to discovery the truth. The truth wasn't a mystery though, at all, it was obvious from the start. The ending was nice though.

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## Gail says

I had this book on my kindle for a while and thought I would give it a read whilst awaiting a pre-order to arrive. All I can say is, wow! I wish I had read it sooner. It's a cracking read and I couldn't put it down.

I liked Charlotte and Keisha but really liked the lovely Matthew Hegarty. The pace at the beginning is relentless, slows up in the middle and regains pace again. I particularly liked how the story was written from the viewpoints of the three main characters, and the trial itself was quite brilliantly written.

I was particularly stunned by the ending (or should I say saddened) and didn't see it coming to the conclusion it did.

I cannot wait for Claire's next book, due out in March 2013 I believe, but what I would really like is to see more of Matthew Hegarty as I'm certain a series of books could be written around him. Just a thought.

Highly recommended. 10/10

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## Jane says

It looks like a crime novel, and yes, it is a crime novel. But it's not so much the story of a crime or the story of an investigation as the story of the effects of one crime on two very different women.

Charlotte has a wonderful life. She has a high-flying career in PR, she is engaged to Dan, a wealthy banker, they live in a luxury London apartment, and she is making elaborate plans for a dream wedding.

Keisha has a less wonderful life. Chris, her boyfriend has started to drink heavily and is often abusive, and her daughter was taken into care after a violent altercation, and she wishes she could leave but she has nowhere to go.

They sound a little stereotyped, and they are a little, but they are also believable, fallible, interesting human beings. And an interesting study in contrasts.

Their paths cross in a nightclub. Dan wanted to go somewhere different after a very difficult day and Chris had business there.

At the end of the evening a man was dead, and Dan was arrested and charged with murder.

Charlotte is devastated. She can't believe it, but the evidence is there. Her wedding plans are ruined, her friends abandon her, and her employer seizes an opportunity to let her go.

Keisha is worried. Chris disappeared that night and he came back with blood on his clothing. She finally leaves, but she's scared. She wants to do the right thing but she knows that there would be reprisals and that

she could lose her daughter for good.

Two women who could crumble, but they find that they have more strength than they realised and they both pick themselves up and try to carry on. But it's difficult, and both will face new complications.

But they will meet, and they will support each other: the woman whose boyfriend is accused of murder and the woman who believes her boyfriend is responsible for the murder.

It's a touch unbelievable, yet it works.

As a human story The Fall works very well. There are a few too many coincidences and contrivances, but I could live with that because Claire McGowan handles her material so well. She has created two distinctive voices, she says a lot about race, class, how people react to difficulties very well, and she kept me believing and turning the pages.

But as a crime story it was not so good, Because it is clear from the start what happened. Because all thoughts of a defence are put on hold until the end of a book and then things start to happen far too quickly. And because it all felt just a little bit contrived, designed to fit around the stories of the two women.

The Fall is a very readable book, but it doesn't quite work as well as it might have.

But the idea was great, and I'd certainly give anything else that Claire McGown writes the benefit of the doubt.

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### **Jack says**

An interesting tale about the aftermath of a sordid little murder and it's impact on two characters in particular.

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