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Something isn't quite right in the Val.

Richard Franklin has left his Midwestern roots behind to live on the coast of Maine with his family. But in the autumn of the year 2000, he must return to his Illinois birthplace on a sorrowful journey. His wife Michelle has been killed in New England by a hit-and-run driver who is never found, so back home he comes with her cremated remains, to fulfill a final wish and on her birthday scatter her ashes in the park along the river in Blackwater Valley—simply Blackwater Val to locals—the small town where they both grew up and fell in love.

With him he brings his six-year-old daughter, Katie, who still grieves for her lost mother: Katie, who can sometimes guess who's going to be on the phone before it rings. Who can stop all the clocks in the house, and break up clouds in the sky with her mind, and heal sicknesses, and who sometimes sees things that aren't there . . . people who are no longer alive. All gifts she inherited from her mother.

Only something isn't quite right in the Val.

Sinkholes are opening up, revealing the plague pits the sleepy hamlet was built over in the 1830s, when malaria and cholera outbreaks ran riot. Mysterious bird and fish die-offs begin to occur, and Katie can see ghosts of the dead gathering all around. But what she can't see is the charred, centuries-old malevolence which has been waiting for her, and wants her for its very own. Or the pale Sallow Man who haunts the town's nighttime streets . . . or the river witch—another Blackwater Val, of sorts—each of whom will be drawn one by one into the nightmarish bloodletting about to take place.

Blackwater Val Details

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From Reader Review Blackwater Val for online ebook

Xochitl says

It was a nice change of pace to what I'm used to reading. I got so immersed into the story that I honestly forgot that I was reading a horror novel until certain occurrences suddenly occurred.

Phil says

Decent read. Hard to avoid the Stephen King comparisons, particularly Needful Things, where a small town begins to unravel under the influence of an ancient evil. Some great characters and it rolls along at a good pace without dragging. Felt like there was a little too much crammed in at times - demons, ghosts, witches, psychics - and the ending fell flat for me, but nevertheless, it's worth taking the time to check it out.

Benoit Lelièvre says

This is a very traditional story of people-arriving-in-an-new-town-and-weird-stuff-happens, but it's really well crafted and written with an honesty and an intensity few other novels of that acumen can brag to have. Part of what makes BLACKWATER VAL is how subtle it was, despite the fact that William Gorman never really hides there's an evil gnawing away at the small town. Lots of it is filtered through the protagonist Richard's grief for his dead wife and the onslaught of memories tumbling down on him upon his return to his hometown.

BLACKWATER VAL is built with what I like to call the Sandcastle structure. Lots of thrillers use it. It means half of the book is spent building a mystery and the other is spent tearing it down and like many, I feel like BLACKWATER VAL built a mystery it couldn't possibly live up to, but the horrifying, nameless visions of another world is what is going to stay with me in the long run and not the subsequent explanations. Think Stephen King meets William Peter Blatty with Gothic influences.

Jan Strydom says

A widower returns to his hometown along with his daughter to scatter his late wife's ashes. But all is not as it seems in the cozy town of Blackwater Val. Something more sinister is happening among the community.

Blackwater Val starts off by developing its characters and creating the rich small town atmosphere and also establishing a sense of foreboding. But after a while it will suddenly thrust you into a dark and disturbing tale with twists and turns that will shock you with an ending that is the best I've read in horror fiction.

A stunning debut from William Gorman which is highly recommended. Looking forward to his future releases.

Summer Waite says

I had the pleasure of being a beta reader for this one and I must say that it truly was a great trip to a small town . loved the history, the deep dark secrets . exceedingly well written and a joy of the darkness that lurks!

Paul Anderson says

Blackwater Val by William Gorman (Crystal Lake Publishing, April 23, 2016) is Gorman's first published novel, and it's a hum-dinger! Filled with graphic sex and violence, the author has thrown everything but the kitchen sink into 467 fast-paced pages. There's a little girl, a dog, a scalp-taking Native American, a white buffalo, a sadistic cop, a plague, a fallen angel, an ex-con, a woman politician, a lesbian, prostitutes, ghosts, haunted houses (hell, the whole Val is haunted), psychic phenomena, a real live witch, Nazis, a reluctant hero, and a whole lot more. There's even a history lesson or two thrown in for good measure. Blackwater Val is an ambitious first novel.

The story is primarily set in the Rock River Valley of north-central Illinois, which just happens to be where I live. I can recognize many of the landmarks, although the author used poetic license and renamed a few. But I know this haunted place, just as Bill Gorman knows this haunted place. Gorman once called this place home. I still do.

Richard Franklin and his six-year-old daughter Katie return to the Val to scatter Katie's mother's ashes in accordance with her last wishes. Michelle Deadmond Franklin had suffered from terminal cancer, but it wasn't cancer that killed her. She died as a result of a hit-and-run accident in eastern Maine where Richard and Michelle had moved after they married. Eyewitnesses said the dark-colored car that killed Michelle looked dirty, and someone had written "Wash me" on the dirty car. The car and driver were never found. Until now, that is, when Richard sees, parked outside Nain Lutheran Church, a dark-colored car with "Wash me" still written in the dirt.

Rich Franklin can smell the evil that infests the Val, but he's blind to how close the evil is to his own family. In fact, Rich is blind to a lot of things until his daughter is kidnapped by the evil and Rich is forced to act. Michelle and Katie are the seers in this tale. Rich sees nothing until Katie shows him.

I can envision this novel as an epic motion picture with a cast of thousands and multimedia special effects. The movie would need an "R" rating, of course, for the violence and the sex and the foul language.

If you like extreme horror with a strong, almost blasphemous, supernatural theme, you'll love Blackwater Val.

And, if you happen to live in the Val like I do, you'll find it impossible to sleep nights after reading Gorman's gruesome tale.

Angela says

This novel is eerie and unsettling. It will leave you with goosebumps, but keep you asking why. I dare not

say anything else due to spoilers.

Sara says

One of the best horrors I've ever read ... juicy fiction, scary as you like with the many plot threads perfectly interwoven .. It also put me off finishing my tea one night , thanks for that !!!! A must read for horror fans just eat first?

Summer Waite says

Nothing is ever what it seems

The val is a great visit to the darkness within the heart of man. The secrets of history, the things we humans will do to live, to die and to move up in the world, some times we are better off where we were. Excellent read. Canterbury wait to go back!

Frank Errington says

Review copy

Blackwater Val is a debut novel worthy of your attention. William Gorman has concocted a wonderfully entertaining story combining ancient curses, ghosts, witches, and evil incarnate, with an endearing six-year-old girl, who is lovingly called Katie-Smatie, as the catalyst for it all.

Following the hit-and-run death of his wife, Richard returns to the town he grew up in to spread her ashes as stipulated in her will. It doesn't take long before the reader realizes there is something off about Blackwater Val.

Young Katie is a very special little girl.

There are touches of Ray Bradbury in William Gorman's writing, but truthfully he has his own distinct voice, deftly weaving a number of seemingly disparate story-lines into a gritty and compelling tale. There is a huge twist I should have seen coming, but I was totally blindsided. I love it when that happens.

Certainly recommended.

Blackwater Val is published by Crystal Lake Publishing and is available both in paperback and e-book formats. If you subscribe to Kindle Unlimited you can read this book at no additional charge and if you are an Amazon Prime member you can read it for FREE through the Kindle Owners Lending Library.

William Gorman grew up listening to macabre stories and dark fantastical yarns from his grandfather, a magician and former 'mentalists' during the last great, fading days of vaudeville. Blackwater Val is his debut novel. In his spare time Bill hangs around German shepherds and listens to classic rock.

Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says

Blackwater Val is a small town where something has gone horribly wrong. In the tradition of Stephen King, William Gorman gives us a book that's all about an almost unimaginable evil. The characters of Blackwater Val are ones you easily like or happily dislike. . They're not fully fleshed out, and they're definitely stereotypes, but he writes them in such a way that you don't care. Even though the violence starts almost immediately, the book has a 'slow burn' feel to it. The author has a habit of giving you scenes that propel the plot, and peppering in scenes of violence. I actually liked this. I'd be getting a bit antsy within a certain chapter, and suddenly someone gets gutted. Makes a horror hound happy, it does.

There are lots of deaths, violence, and mayhem that delight the casual reader in Blackwater Val. However, there's more than a few reasons why you may want to carefully consider who you recommend it to. This book, whilst not stuffed with it, does have quite a few scenes of disturbing imagery. Most of the truly disturbing imagery revolves around dead children. There are two baby deaths that happen (though they're not described in detail). There's also a few scenes with an aborted fetus. If you've ever had a loved one cremated, there's a scene where they talk about cremation that will bother you. Even now I have to force my thoughts away from it.

Gorman spends about half the book building things up. This makes it so he can gleefully engage in an epic battle of good versus evil at the end. If you're someone (like me) who likes to get right into the thick of things, the first half will be a bit of a bear. I found myself walking away from it to go do something else a few times. However, finally all the threads are in place, and I got hooked. From there on, I didn't want to put Blackwater Val down.

Overall, Blackwater Val is a solid read from a talented author. It disturbed me, creeped me out, and made me think. While it's not the type of book I willingly pick up because I don't like slow-burns, I still enjoyed it. I'd recommend it to fans of Stephen King and William Peter Blatty.

Disclaimer: I received a free copy from the publisher for review consideration.

Bob Langdon says

I read an essay by this guy, "William Gorman" in a book called, "Writers on Writing." He told how he'd spent five years writing, editing, and finally getting his first novel published. I guess the moral of the story had something to do with perseverance... I forget. Anyway, I thought, "WTF is William Gorman anyway?"

So I Googled his name. And there it was: "Blackwater Val, a first novel by William Gorman." "Stupid title for a book," I thought (not to mention the cover art). Then I clicked the "Send a free sample to my Kindle device" button. I figured he'd spent five years creating it, the least I could do is read the first couple of sentences.

So I did. And I was hooked! This Gorman fellow has some serious writing chops, and his debut novel is a real page turner. I raced through all 480 pages of it in 2 days. And now I want more.

I hope it doesn't take another five years to birth the next one.

Yvonne Davies says

Richard is travelling back to Blackwater Valley to honour his wife Michelle's final wishes of scattering her ashes on her birthday in their hometown. His wife whilst battling Leukemia was killed by a hit and run. Travelling with him was their young daughter Katie. Katie is an exceptional girl with inherited powers. Katie can see ghosts, but it doesn't stop there, she can also heal people and animals by removing their illnesses and also get them to see what she can see. Nobody else knows how special she is except her dad.

Whilst in Blackwater, Richard takes time to reconnect with Michelle's family and his old school friend Tommy, who due to his own loss ended up getting into trouble.

Unbeknown to the residents of Blackwater, evil has established itself in their small town. Ancient plague pits opening up all over town, unexplained deaths and birth deformities in animals are just the start.

Throughout the trip Katie's life is in danger but no one is aware of this until near the end. With the help of Tommy and a local witch can Richard save his little girl?

The history of the town and the local residents idiosyncrasies kept the story flowing and gained my interest. From the moment I started reading, I was hooked.

Richard's memories of growing up in Blackwater and his time with Michelle show how raw his grief is, and it is incredibly moving.

Whilst reading this book you sense that something is going to happen and when it does it is big!

This is the first book I have read by this author and it won't be the last.

If you like Stephen King, then William R Gorman is an author you need to look out for.

Books says

Set in the year 2000 with occasional glimpses into the past, Blackwater Val is an absolutely captivating supernatural thriller; the kind of book you would read more than once. When Richard Franklin returns to Blackwater Val with his six year old daughter Katie to scatter the ashes of his deceased wife Michelle, they get much more than just the expected grief of saying goodbye to a beloved wife and mother.

Any book that starts with a scene that includes Hitler, his dog and a hint at sorcery that might kill millions is bound to grab my attention. From that point on the book is an exciting, often scary, journey of discovering the truth behind the strange and mostly horrifying occurrences in and around the town of Blackwater Val.

The well fleshed out and imaginative characters in this novel contribute to the realism and believability of the story. All the characters, even the main ones like Richard

and Katie, are realistically flawed. At first I was amazed that so much nastiness could be going on in one little town; that is until I discovered the magnitude of evil that lurked in the midst of said town.

The story develops at a comfortable pace; keeping the reader in suspense while moving forward fast enough to keep you turning the pages. Here I must commend the author for the amount of research he must have done to write this book.

Thrilling, suspenseful and very often frightening, Blackwater Val is most certainly a book that you should read if you are at all a fan of anything supernatural or horror related. (Ellen Fritz)

Melissa says

Very creepy and enjoyable, but perhaps a bit overdone. There was just a little too much going on near the end. Clearly a nod to early Stephen King. I'll be looking for more by this author.
