



Willow Walk

S.J.I. Holliday , Susi Holliday (also writing as)

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When the past catches up, do you run and hide or stand and fight?

When a woman is brutally attacked on a lonely country road by an escaped inmate from a nearby psychiatric hospital, Sergeant Davie Gray must track him down before he strikes again. But Gray is already facing a series of deaths connected to legal highs and a local fairground, as well as dealing with his girlfriend Marie's bizarre behaviour. As Gray investigates the crimes, he suspects a horrifying link between Marie and the man on the run - but how can he confront her when she's pushing him away? As a terrified Marie is pulled back into a violent past she thought she'd escaped, she makes an irrevocable decision. And when events come to a head at a house party on Willow Walk, can Gray piece together the puzzle in time to stop the sleepy town of Banktoun being rocked by tragedy once more?

Willow Walk Details

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From Reader Review Willow Walk for online ebook

Rebecca Bradley says

Holliday has done it again, she has created characters who are believable and relatable, and shrouded them in a dark suffocating psychological thriller that has you gripped from start to finish.

Small town settings are wonderful places for crime fiction and Holliday certainly makes the most of it. I loved meeting a couple of characters I already knew and I definitely enjoyed meeting the new ones. Though some you really wouldn't want to meet on a dark street. A great read!

With thanks to the author and publisher for my copy.

Jules says

I'm not a huge crime fan, but loved *Black Wood*, so I bought *Willow Walk* as I really wanted to see what more this author had to give. The thing I like about these books, is despite being crime, they aren't overly heavy on the police procedural side, which is definitely the part I find least interesting.

This author really knows how to create great characters that are believable and easy to connect with.

I don't want to say much about the plot, so all I'll say is I loved the opening scene of this book, where someone wakes up at a party to discover everyone else passed out around them. The story then goes back in time during the lead up to that scene. The subject matter is rather heavy and at times hard to digest, due to the horrific nature of it.

Willow Walk is a darkly disturbing and chilling crime thriller that had me reading with great interest and a sense of unease throughout.

I can't wait to see what happens in *The Damselfly*, which is the third and final book in this trilogy.

Raven says

Having opened her series with *Black Wood* the first of the Banktoun trilogy, SJI Holliday transports us back to this seemingly ordinary town in *Willow Walk*, where dark deeds and murder are afoot. In a delicious mash up of *Twin Peaks* meets *Take The High Road*, Holliday once again traps us in the claustrophobic confines of this small town, and draws us into the lives of its singularly twisted inhabitants...

Opening with what is probably the creepiest prologue I have encountered for some time, *Willow Walk* quickly establishes a chilling air that draws the reader in instantaneously. What Holliday balances so beautifully is the very ordinariness of this small Scottish town, with the extraordinary dark secrets and emotional tribulations that exist within the lives of its inhabitants. Consequently, she can draw in characters to a greater or lesser degree as the story unfolds, and how the events impact on the wider community. Indeed,

with a flourish of authorial brilliance, Holliday has used a character that made only a fleeting appearance in the first book as one of the main characters in this one. Her characterisation is consistently superb, and shows great skill in playing with the sympathies of the reader throughout. Like Black Wood, there is a curious mix of likeable and dislikeable characters, and there's a wonderful sense of a grey area in their motivations and desires, demonstrating how far 'ordinary' people can have their own morality tested by the bad situations they find themselves in.

The stalwart figure of Sergeant Davie Gray is at the epicentre of the book, ruefully observing the downsizing of his police team, and grappling with affairs of the heart in his fledgling relationship with the secretive, and obviously, emotionally damaged Marie. With an escaped mental patient on the run, of which Marie knows more than she's telling, and the nefarious activities taking place when a travelling fair pitches up in Banktoun, Gray certainly has his work cut out in this one, but manages to retain the air of decency and professionalism that defines his character so markedly. He's a safe pair of hands as the evils of the outside world begin to encroach on the community that he works tirelessly to protect.

The characterisation of Marie was terrific, and desperate to avoid spoilers as usual, this is a woman who undergoes the brunt of the darkness that lies within the book. I loved the way that her character veers from moments of emotional tenacity, to the depths of despair and fear, and it's fair to say that Holliday really puts her through an emotional wringer. As we, as readers, begin to realise the weight of emotional turmoil that her former years placed her under, through the clever use of correspondence from a damaging figure in her past, her story is utterly enthralling, as is how she can possibly extricate herself again from a position of extreme danger and threat. Throughout the book, Holliday uses the other characters in a cameo form, to unveil a tale of teenage angst and the dangers of legal highs, so topical in Britain at the moment, and the protagonists ebb and flow in the book as a whole, but not to the detriment of the main narrative. It will be interesting to see which of the minor players will come to the fore in the next book, as even in a fleeting mention there are people within this book that I really want to know more about.

Once again, Holliday has weaved a tenebrous tale which is no ordinary tale of small town folk. As the extent of the depravity that Marie has experienced in her early life comes to the surface, the book attains an air of claustrophobic, psychological darkness that is both disturbing and voyeuristically intriguing, and which ultimately just keeps you reading. The extraordinary nature of Marie's experiences work harmoniously with the very ordinary preoccupations of some of the town's other inhabitants, and it is this balance of plot, and sterling characterisation, that makes Willow Walk such a deliciously dark and compelling read. Highly recommended.

Miriam Smith says

Chilling, creepy and compelling! Truly loved this book, once I started it I couldn't wait to see what happened throughout the story but didn't want it to end! Kept me totally intrigued all the way through. Lots of believable characters and a dark secret that's just so mind blowing! Haven't read this author before but I will definitely be looking for her work in the future. Thank you to The Book Club for the opportunity to review this book in return for an honest review.

Peter Carroll says

This is the second book in the Banktoun Trilogy, the first being Black Wood, which I read earlier in the month. It's a tale of twisted love and small-town relationships torn apart by bad choices.

I've really enjoyed both books. Holliday has a nice writing style and a good eye and ear for characters. Even the bad guys are usually in some way sympathetic. It's a bit overblown at times but never ridiculous or incredulous. The twists and turns of the plot are well-paced and you find yourself eager to read on to find out what's afoot. The author enjoys complexity and multi-faceted plotting, and uses a fairly big cast of characters, so you'll need to concentrate rather than skim read in order to keep up with what's going on, but that's not a bad thing.

I'm looking forward to the third installment and would thoroughly recommend parts 1 and 2.

Janet says

Willow Walk is book two in the Banktoun trilogy. I really enjoyed Black Wood and really looked forward to this one.

Set in the fictional town of Banktoun we met a couple of characters from book one, namely Davie, who is quickly thrust into another murder of a young woman on a desolate stretch of road. We know from the outset that something has gone terribly wrong in the narrative then the rest of the book cuts to the lead up. And boy what a story!! It's compelling with relationships, friendships, abuse, violence and emotional blackmail at the heart of it all. Ms Holliday has a brilliant knack of capturing the everyday whether they are situations or characters, it always feels realistic and never far fetched. Imagery, smells, nuances, personalities, settings that we don't really notice, if anything taken for granted but captured here so that you have to sit and think about them as you recall moments in your own head.

Whilst Black Wood had moments of dark humour that had me laughing out loud at times, this read more as a straightforward thriller. I actually missed the humour from the last book but given the subject matter I can fully appreciate the different approach here. Willow Walk is a very readable book that I enjoyed hugely and I am totally looking forward to book three. I'm just sorry it's going to be a trilogy.... I hope she's got something else up her sleeve!!

Highly recommend. Thanks to all those concerned for my review copy. Very much appreciated.

L.A. Starks says

Highly suspenseful novel set in a small English town with an all-too-true current-day problem.

Maggie says

I had read Books 1 and 3 of the 'Banktoun' books so I thought I should go back & read book 2. I was glad I

did.

In many ways it is the story of what happens when 'good' people decide to try & solve things and end up with unforeseen and tragic circumstances. The author is very good at creating likable believable characters and making you care about what happens to them. I also really like the setting as I find it easy to visualise and it becomes part of the story.

I think S.J.I. Holliday gets better & better. I enjoyed this one but I thought 'The Damselfly' (Book 3) was even better.

Sharon says

After enjoying Black Wood I was looking forward to reading Willow Walk and I'd like to thank TBConFB and publishers for an ARC in return for an honest review.

What I loved about Black Wood AND Willow Walk is that they are so real - the towns, the characters and the storyline all feel realistic. Willow Walk has the topical thread of the dangers of Legal Highs running through it which is highly publicise at the moment.

I love Davie and his character and approach to his police work - again extremely plausible and you can actually imagine him as your local Bobby!

Willow Walk is more than just a police procedural, it is a story of family dynamics, domestic noir and thought provoking plot around drug use in younger generation.

The prologue throws you straight in at the deep end and so from the start you know what you are up against, the rest of the book is a psychological dark build up to the climax.

Highly recommended

Ava Marsh says

S J I Holliday does it again with another brilliant crimey psychological thriller set in fictional Scottish Banktoun. I really loved her first - Black Wood - but this is even better: powerful, compelling and utterly realistic. Holliday has an enviable knack for creating characters you can totally believe in, and plots that are both satisfying and unpredictable. Pacey and compelling from the outset, this tale of obsession and dark secrets deserves to place its author in the top ranks of the UK crime-writing world.

Joan says

Very good story, set in a small town in Scotland. Something awful was about to happen and the suspense held all the way to the end of the story. Must read more by this author.

Lucy Hay says

Never one to shy away from the dark and taboo, SJI Holliday brings forth more rural town secrets in WILLOW WALK, book 2 in the Banktoun trilogy. Suspenseful from the offset, Holliday weaves two

seemingly different threads that come to an earth-shattering denouement in the resolution. It's clear Banktoun will never be the same again - nor will Davie or Laura! Can't wait for THE DAMSELFLY. In other news, I am a biscuit dunker and I've never tried to strangle a dog. JUST SAYIN'! ;)

Sarah says

Willow Walk is the second novel in the Banktoun trilogy, Black Wood being the first.

Black Wood was a really enjoyable novel that was dark and steeped with lies and secrets. Well I am pleased to say we get all that again in Willow Walk but there is also an added creepiness about this book which I loved.

The story tends to alternate between the story itself and letters sent from Graeme to his sister. These letters really creeped me out. You can tell who ever this Graeme is, has some serious issues and the letters really don't make for pleasant reading at all!

It was great to meet back up with Davie again as he was one of my favourite characters from the first novel. He certainly seems to have his plate full with a dead body turning up, escaped inmate and illegal highs, it wouldn't be so bad if things were good in his personal life, but unfortunately they don't seem to be going great either.

Even though I love a good old detective crime series, what I love about this trilogy is that the police work tends to be more in the back ground. It very much focuses on the residents of Banktoun instead. I think this makes it more engaging to the reader as I very much could feel what Laura and Marie especially were going through.

The main storyline of Graeme and his sister really grabs you by the throat. It's hard to say to much without giving some of the story away but what I will say was that it takes a lot to shock me but shock me it did. It certainly left me with chills going up and down my spine.

Even though this is the second novel in a trilogy, I think it works very well as a stand alone novel though it is great getting to know Davie especially in Black Wood.

Willow Walk is a dark and shocking read that will chill you to the bone. Highly recommended.

Many thanks to Black & White Publishing for a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Joanne Robertson says

I enjoyed Black Wood and was keen to get back to Banktoun for Willow Walk. I will just say that this can be read as a standalone novel although there are little references to what happened previously, it isn't something you feel in the dark about. Although if you haven't read Black Wood....why not??!! These books aren't just police procedural, they are suspenseful domestic noirs that feel like they are happening right in our own doorsteps.

The start of this book throws us right in at the deep end with someone waking up after a house party and walking through the silence of bodies crashed out on the floors and sofas to go home. But they don't seem to realise that maybe these partygoers are a little bit too still and that the smell of vomit and booze may be masking another more sinister smell.

We're back in Scotland again with Sergeant Davie Gray. He really isn't having much luck with the ladies at the moment as his girlfriend Marie seems to be acting rather strangely and is unusually distant. But this may be more to do with a case he is investigating rather than his charms, well he hopes so anyway! Or does he? In the small town of Banktoun, once again things are happening a little too close to home. But this is what I really love about these books, they come with normal characters that could very well be your brother or your friend or your Aunties cousin twice removed! Davie is the perfect example of this, he knows everyone in the small town of Banktoun and everyone knows him. He is there for advice if needed and runs the small police station whilst dealing with the constant worry about closure.

I particularly liked the way that letters were used throughout the book to show us the frame of mind of Graeme. I started to dread reading each letter when it appeared as it gradually formed a picture of what had happened in Marie's past. It was a great way of building up an insight into one of the creepiest characters I have read about in a while. He literally made my skin crawl!

SJI Holliday has created a town full of dark secrets and lies that could be any town in the UK today highlighting problems with drugs, drinking and bored teenagers. I love that the small town attitude is used to a great effect here and is a very realistic portrayal of a small Scottish community (I should know...I grew up in one!) where relationships, both work and personal, constantly collide. This is a dark, creepy story of murder and obsession that grabbed me from the very first page and has left me wanting more! This really has to be optioned for a tv series, Scotland needs a new police hero on the small screen and I think Davie Gray fits the bill perfectly!

Many thanks Black and White Publishing for my review copy which was provided in return for an unbiased review.

Liz Barnsley says

I was a big fan of "Black Wood" with its evocative haunting feeling and dark dastardly goings on, so I was really looking forward to Willow Walk and well, blimey! Ms Holliday has done it again and then some...

This was creepy good. Loved it. Having a decent eye for creating characters can make all the difference between a great novel and an ok one – the characters in Willow Walk are brilliantly drawn and accessible, some we already know, some we don't and around them the author weaves a deep and tasty twisty tale of relationship drama, criminal acts and life lessons, setting them once more in the claustrophobic small town vibe of Banktoun.

It is chilling stuff to be honest, causing the odd shiver, especially in the way that the plot is constructed, the letters are a touch of genius that just brings everything into sharp focus. I love the way the relationships are drawn, this writer is not one to back away from controversial topics, rather she faces them head on and makes you consider your own opinion, all the while telling a stonking good story that is engaging, fascinating and yes indeed a bit of a page turner. Thanks for THAT one sleepless night, but hey its worth it for the good ones.

The writing is sublime, the storyline darkly delicious with some thought provoking themes and genuinely intriguing characters. You really don't want to miss it.

On a final note LOVE Davey. Book crush. More please.
