



Beyond Compulsion

D. Valencia

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Georges Lefanu is a gambler and a psychotic killer. D. Valencia takes those compulsions to a substantial depth in a penetrating story of Georges's upbringing, the degradation of Georges's love-struck partner, and the execution of a near perfect murder-for-hire. In its wide-ranging exploration of what makes Georges's evil mind tick, this novel is not for the squeamish; nor is it for readers offended by episodes of eroticism and scenes of blood-spattering sadism.

As an Algerian orphan, Georges is sold by his uncle to a French pedophile who later adopts him. The abused Georges becomes a sadistic abuser and then a prolific gambler. He lacks feelings, but his charms ensnare overweight twenty-eight-year-old Serena, who is haunted by memories of her father committing suicide when she was eight years old. While Georges views her as just another conquest in erotic lovemaking, the vulnerable Serena sees him as an escape from her obsessively clinging mother and her power-broker stepfather.

When Georges's gambling is unsuccessful, the unlikely couple travels from London to San Francisco and then to Las Vegas. There, Georges marries Serena, introduces her to heroin, and coldheartedly sets up her rape to pay off his poker debt. Always after new stakes, Georges tries to blackmail Aubrey Lester (the homosexual husband of Serena's American girlfriend Rosario), a move that eventually leads Georges to accept Aubrey's contract to kill Rosario. Egomaniac that he is, Georges believes he creates the perfect murder-for-hire in framing an innocent woman for the brutal stabbing. But a ghost from Georges's S&M past returns with a vengeance to set him screaming.

Readers will come to know Georges as an icon of evil. They will be shocked by his emotional, psychological, and physical abuse of Serena as Valencia insightfully depicts how the psychopathic sadist's "greatest triumph in life came from taking fundamentally decent human beings and corrupting them totally." His callous treatment of others besides Serena, such as the tourist he rapes, the prostitute he strangles, and the casino dealer he kills, are more examples of his depravity. And to send additional shivers up the reader's spine, there are the chilling details of the S&M club members engaging in perversions so gross even Georges "felt a momentary twinge of fear."

Valencia's well-written novel can be highly recommended for its authentic depictions of the depravity and degradation that leads Serena to tell Georges, "You are the most destructive man I have ever met." In realistic settings, including sites like the MGM Grand and Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, the fully developed major and minor characters play their roles in a suspenseful, fascinating plot that ends with a surprising twist.

Other than a patch of sermonizing dialogue about the benefits of creativity in an artist colony, the novel is a well-paced, gripping analysis of how and why some souls become mired in sins of the basest kind. The front cover art is ideally suited to the theme, but the back cover blurb is difficult to read and lacks the author's bio and a reference to his other works.

Beyond Compulsion will appeal to open-minded fans of British psychological thrillers.

WAYNE CUNNINGHAM (June 17, 2013)

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