



My Pet Serial Killer

Michael J. Seidlinger

Cinestate (Oct 31, 2017)

Softcover \$16.00 (468pp)

978-1-946487-02-5

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My Pet Serial Killer, by Michael J. Seidlinger, is an unsettling and deeply graphic thriller focusing on the overlap between sex and violence.

Claire Wilkenson is a forensic criminology student with an unhealthy interest in deviant behavior. At the story's start, Claire is on the prowl to pick up a new "pet"—a serial killer that she can own. This search leads Claire down a path of bloodshed and manipulation. Claire trains her newest "pet" by embarking on a road trip to murder her ex-pets.

Claire's first-person narration is bizarrely rendered. She loses herself in memory and fantasy, making it more and more difficult to tell what's happening, especially during chapters marked as "optional" that underscore the concept of society's unhealthy fascination with murder. To not fully indulge in these chapters seems like a disservice to the thematic message of the book; they are almost dizzying in their quality.

Claire does not provide much information about herself, though she presents as self-aggrandizing and temperamental. To most people, Claire appears as an enterprising and beautiful young woman who is no different from anyone else. This is the image she prepares for the outside world; it underscores the notion that anyone could be a violent psychopath.

Other characters are less dimensional. Claire uses two assistants on her road trip whose personalities undergo rapid change. The pets that she intends to revisit are barely explained. Her current pet is also presented as a "mystery." These gaps provide additional evidence of Claire's unrelenting narcissism.

My Pet Serial Killer is a strange book, dark and sadistic, with the perfect tone for what it details. Seidlinger has chosen an unconventional way to propel his story into something more than what it is. Claire's spiraling thoughts, combined with the uncomfortable optional chapters, make this book stand out.

SHANA CREANEY (November/December 2017)

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