

Plunging to the Bottom of the Deep Blue Sea

Scharlie Martin

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The desire for revenge becomes action toward redemption as a murderer hunts down a pedophile in this alluring psychological thriller.

Plunging to the Bottom of the Deep Blue Sea is a compelling novel that juxtaposes themes of dark human emotions with a narrative tone that offers sensitivity and propriety. Scharlie Martin offers a gripping look at how events can make men fall to great depths of immorality.

Russell steps out one evening with a plan to exact revenge on his ex-wife by shooting her with his bow and arrow. While he's trying to plot how to create a situation that won't point to him as the number one suspect in the crime, he witnesses a man abducting a young girl. Though Russell saves the girl anonymously and is labeled "Robin Hood," he feels compelled to capture William, the kidnapper and would-be rapist. This leads Russell on an investigation into the criminal's intricate and complex family history—a journey that becomes even more intriguing and dangerous.

The author steers clear of gratuitous profanity, sex, or violence, opting for the intensity of the disturbing scenes to be conveyed through straightforward observation of the events and powerful word choice, as when she refers to William's exploring fingers as "black grubs."

Crazed by his recent divorce, Russell's flaws make him a likable protagonist even as he fumbles through his defective plan to murder his ex-wife. His need for revenge is balanced with his gentlemanly manner with his new flame, to whom he confesses, "I need you to know how smitten I am with you. I don't want this to be any 'slam, bam, thank you ma'am' kind of deal."

Martin's use of irony adds to the alluring quality of the novel. Not only are there numerous ironies in the fates of William, his father, and grandfather, but also in the fact that Russell, a would-be murderer himself, is hunting down a criminal. In addition, Russell becomes aware just how easy it might be to cross the line from normal to abnormal sexual relationships when his mind, "kept circling like a bird of prey" over the image of the "nubile, young body" of his new girlfriend's daughter.

Though there are some minor typos, such as "loosing" instead of "losing," the narrative flows smoothly and is filled with effective metaphors, such as William and his grandmother riding "life's bobsled."

The title refers to Russell's description of his Internet search for information on William, and pedophiles in general: "Researching pedophiles on the Internet was truly a plunge into the primordial ooze of the deep blue sea."

Plunging to the Bottom of the Deep Blue Sea is a hypnotic adventure that delves into the psyche of a man who recovers from his own darkness by investigating the history of a pedophile.

MAYA FLEISCHMANN (January 6, 2014)

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