

Scream for Me

Elizabeth Washburn

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A tension-filled story about a serial killer also delves into the nature of dysfunction.

Dysfunction in relationships is the prominent theme in Elizabeth Washburn's debut thriller, *Scream for Me*. A detective moves to a quiet town in South Carolina after escaping from the aftermath of a rough marriage, only to learn she's been assigned to the case of a serial killer who happens to be a local resident.

Written in a third-person omniscient point of view, Washburn provides a window into the world of a narcissistic sadist, as well as the lives of the main protagonists, Detective Elizabeth (Lizzie) Bowlyn and Special Agent Scott Rogers.

On the surface, Bowlyn is sharp, perceptive, and brave. But Washburn goes behind the scenes to view Bowlyn's frailties, including a dysfunctional childhood and a marriage that went terribly awry. As a result, she is vulnerable and fearful of falling in love again, until she meets Rogers. An FBI agent from DC who aides in the case and is very different from Bowlyn, Rogers exudes confidence pretty much 24/7. Coming from a large family with a firm foundation, his childhood memories are nothing but positive.

Tension builds as the conniving killer busily videotapes his heinous crimes and uploads them to the Internet, and more dead bodies turn up. However, Washburn not only keeps the story line fresh and moving, she also balances the focus on Bowlyn, who is emotionally struggling with her attraction to Rogers, with an examination of the killer's childhood and present relationship with his grandmother.

Bowlyn steels herself when she's around Rogers, but this does not stop him from coming up with ways to get around her coldness, such as frequently checking up on her to make sure she's okay. The realistic dialogue between the two, which depicts a healthy interaction that contrasts with the dysfunctional relationships featured in the story, is poignant.

Rogers's unconditional love slowly woos Bowlyn, who realizes that he genuinely cares for her. For example, just moments before she shares what happened in her marriage, Rogers expresses his love by saying, "Just say no and tell me you don't want [a relationship], and I'll leave right now and never bother you again, but I want you so badly. ... Please, tell me you're with me."

The cover design, which makes this seem like a book for teens, is actually quite apropos for the theme of dysfunction that "screams" louder than the horrendous events in this riveting thriller. *Scream for Me* is replete with unnerving open-ended chapters, original imagery, deep romance, and plenty of twists and turns.

ANITA LOCK (May 7, 2014)

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