

## The Night Child

**Anna Quinn**

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*The Night Child's gentle dealings with heavy subjects highlight the fragility of the human mind.*

*The Night Child* is a powerful, heart-wrenching psychological tale that examines a teacher's mental breakdown.

Just as school breaks for Thanksgiving, a child-like apparition shocks high-school English teacher Nora Brown into a near stupor. The apparition appears once more to tell Nora to remember "the Valentine's dress."

Rattled to her core, Nora consults every doctor she can and finally winds up in a therapist's office. There, she discovers that the apparition is closely related to a childhood trauma, repressed so fully that it has fractured her psyche. Nora struggles to understand and recover before she drives her family away.

It should be noted that this book requires a massive trigger warning. Nora's story involves child abuse and sexual violence, both of which are described in graphic detail. However, the darkness and shocking revelations aren't used as attention grabbers. They highlight Nora's fragile condition and the lengths to which her mind went to protect her.

Most of the story unfolds in the therapist's office, where an empathetic and caring therapist carefully guides Nora toward unlocking her memories. Between flashbacks and Nora's own narrative, the truth behind her childhood comes out. Physical, verbal, and sexual abuse collide to shatter her innocent mind.

Writing is sparse and eloquent, slipping in and out of Nora's fractured mind in a way that is fascinating and enthralling. Characters are extremely well developed, especially Nora, whose difficulties connecting with people, be they her unfaithful husband or her energetic daughter, feel realistic. An ambiguous ending makes room for a possible continuation of Nora's story.

Though it is emotionally challenging to read, *The Night Child's* gentle dealings with heavy subjects highlight the fragility of the human mind and the intense journeys required to heal deep wounds.

JOHN M. MURRAY (November/December 2017)

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