



In the Blood

Lisa Unger

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A Best Book of the Year -- Goodreads Choice Awards Nominee, Silver Falchion Award Winner, Suspense Magazine Best Books, Sun-Sentinel Best Mystery Novels, CBC Morning Show Top Pick, Indie Next Pick and Amazon Best Book of the Month.

Liar, liar, pants on fire . . .

College senior Lana Granger has told so many lies about her past that the truth seems like a distant, cloudy nightmare. But she meets her match when she begins babysitting for a volatile, manipulative eleven-year-old boy. Soon after Lana takes the job, her close friend Beck mysteriously disappears. Lana instantly begins fabricating stories-to friends, to police, to herself. Why doesn't her account jibe with those of eye-witnesses? Lana will do anything to bury the truth about that night...and about her life. But someone else knows her secrets. And he's dying to tell.

As darkly startling and finely crafted as her blockbuster bestsellers *Beautiful Lies* and *Fragile*, Lisa Unger's masterful new psychological thriller has already "set the bar for thrillers to come" (*BookReporter*) and is "guaranteed to keep the pages turning long past the midnight hour." (*BookPage*)

In the Blood Details

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Author : Lisa Unger

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From Reader Review In the Blood for online ebook

Liz Barnsley says

Coming January from Touchstone (US) and Simon & Schuster (UK)

Thank you to the author and publisher for the review copy via Netgalley.

Lana Granger lives a life of lies. She has told so many lies about where she comes from and who she is that the truth is like a cloudy nightmare she can't quite recall. About to graduate from college and with her trust fund almost tapped out, she takes a job babysitting a troubled boy named Luke. Expelled from schools all over the country, the manipulative young Luke is accustomed to controlling the people in his life. But, in Lana, he may have met his match. Or has Lana met hers?

A fantastic twisty tale, this is Lisa Unger back at the very top of the game when it comes to psychological thriller writing, a stunning look at the human psyche and nature versus nurture all wrapped up in a terrific page turning story.

Lana has a troubled past – she blocks out a lot of it and is in constant therapy. As she tries to come to terms with herself and what she has suffered, she takes on the role of child minder to Luke – another troubled soul. Lana is at the top of the tree when it comes to manipulation but Luke may well be on another level altogether. As the two of them play a truly twisted game of cat and mouse, hidden secrets begin to emerge.

I know I've said it before, but it bears saying again. I adore a clever book. One that treats the reader with intelligence, allowing that not every little nuance has to be explained, but also managing to incorporate many subtle clues that unlock the mystery that is Lana and Luke. Multi layered and intense this is truly inventive writing.

I was fascinated by these two characters for the entire book. Lana really is an enigma and Luke is actually quite a scary young boy – the ingenuity of the characterisation means that you are never quite sure where you are with him. With any of the characters in fact. I had a secret adoration for Beck, Lana's friend, she was certainly someone you would want on your side.

Overall an exceptional novel especially if you are a fan, as I am, of the psychological thriller. I can hear a few of those who follow my reviews asking "Did Lisa Unger beat you in the twisty tale game?" Well no. I unlocked the secrets using the actual clues the characters themselves give us – but I'm willing to bet that a fair few people will be flummoxed.

None of that is the point though – yes its fun to try and work out what the blinking nora is going on, but in the case of "In The Blood" its all about the human condition. When exactly does troubled become dangerous? And are we born with no way of changing what we become? Captivating and compelling I would highly recommend this.

Happy Reading Folks!

Michael says

Lana is a college student, haunted by the death of her mother apparently at the hands of her father. After enduring a troubled childhood, dominated by behavioral issues and mental illness she endeavors to try and move on with her life. With the help of medication Lana is making something of her herself when an incident occurs that threatens to undo all her good work.

Lana's best friend Beck goes missing one night, bringing back memories of another friend who disappeared years earlier and was later found dead, as well as memories of her father. To further complicate things she starts a new job babysitting a disturbed boy. The boy sensing her vulnerability, draws her into a dangerous process of manipulation and other mind games while her professor and mentor Langdon Hewes having put her onto the job slowly becomes more and more obsessed with her.

Featuring a damaged main character trapped in nighmarish situation of the past refusing to be forgotten, *In the Blood* is compelling reading although at times things did border on soap opera with the topical social issues. The story also threw plenty of twists but it could be argued that many came across as predictable. But despite those discrepancies the story was highly engaging and in terms of psychological thrillers while not the most unerving is still an excellent read.

***Avonna says**

In The Blood by Lisa Unger is a contemporary psychological suspense that takes your emotions for a roller coaster nonstop ride from beginning to end. It is surprise, secret, OMG, repeat! This book has won several awards and it highly deserves them all. Now I am going to have to go back and read all of her backlist because she has me fascinated with her writing.

A short overview because there are so many twists and secrets it is hard to review the plot without giving something away. The book starts with Lana Granger, a trust fund baby, at a small college in The Hollows in upstate New York studying psychology. Her advisor and mentor, Langdon Hewes, points out a babysitting job that she takes to earn pocket money and help out a single mother. Luke is no ordinary eleven year old. He is attending a school for gifted and severely troubled youth that Lana has had internships at. A game begins between Lana and Luke, Lana's best friend, Beck, goes missing and everyone has agendas and secrets.

Ms. Unger's writing is beautiful and compelling. The characters are able to captivate and surprise you even as at times they repel you. The isolated and wooded location also plays a part in this story. I cannot recommend this book enough! I was lucky enough to win this book in a contest and I am so happy that I did. I have already passed it on for more friends to read and enjoy.

Carolyn says

This was another excellent psychological thriller from Lisa Unger.

Lana, a college student is hiding from her past in a small private college when she starts a job babysitting for a "troubled boy" who seems to know more than he should about her. She herself was a troubled child during her early years and was further traumatised by the murder of her mother, a crime for which her father was sentenced to death row. Lana's best friend Becky has just disappeared after they had a very public row and Lana and her past are now under scrutiny by the police and media. The college is set in the woods in a place sinisterly called "The Hollows" and the presence of a preternaturally clever, psychotic child and the many twists and turns in the plot makes for a creepy and gripping story.

Diane says

This book was so creepy and so fun at the same time. It made me remember how much I enjoy psychological thrillers. It has been awhile since I felt this drawn to a book. I didn't just want to keep reading. I HAD to keep reading to see what the next twist was going to be. Clues were constantly given, but in just the right amount that I kept formulating new theories with every chapter. I mostly figured the answers out just shortly before they were given. That is what made it so fun. The reader was given the chance to figure out the big reveals, but not so far in advance that it made it boring. To top it all off, the ending was priceless. Perfect vacation reading material when the sole purpose is to be entertained.

Suzanne says

I just read the last chapter of this book standing up, going backwards and forwards, whilst I was meant to be doing something else. This was good. It made it last longer. It drew out the end and made me work for more. This was my first book by Lisa Unger, and like so common for me, I'm late to the party! Never mind, I can catch up.

A great psychological thriller, mostly twisted characters with warped minds and ideals. These were a crazy set of characters, but one that I had to keep reading about to learn the source of the crazy, if I could put it like that. The author has a very easy to read style, I often catch myself wondering how authors can go to these deep and dark depths of these warped psyches. It must be intriguing research and learning.

This was interesting "The United States is excellent at breeding psychopaths - a country where we reward the individual with a hyperfocus on success at any cost. We reward narcissism - with our social networks and hideous reality television programs."

This is such a great read, it covers everything one would want in this genre. You can't put it down, hate some of the characters and gun for others. Love Lana and Beck, Dr Cooper. This is what I want in a book, so I was left a very happy customer. Do read it!! Now I'm off looking for more ;)

Brenda says

Lana Granger tried not to dwell on her past too much; the loss of her parents, while different, still had the end result of her being alone and lonely. Taken in by her Aunt Bridgette and cared for in a monetary manner by her lawyer, Skylar Lawrence, she knew she should be fine. But the state of her mind was the biggest issue – Dr Cooper was her true and only confidante as she worked her way through her studies at Sacred Heart

College in The Hollows, New York.

The nearby Fieldcrest School was a place which took troubled children; children who suffered from any and all types of psychosis, ADHD, bipolar – anything where no-one else would take them anymore. While doing several internships with clinical psychologist Professor Langdon at the school, Lana felt that perhaps her goal in life was to help this type of troubled child. So when she decided to take a part time job to supplement her studies as a babysitter/child-minder, she had no idea her life was about to change in a very dramatic but terrible manner.

Luke Kahn and his mother had only recently arrived in The Hollows and when Lana went for her interview Rachel was still trying to unpack boxes. But the house was amazing and Lana felt an immediate affinity to eleven-year-old Luke. Before she knew it she was friendly with Rachel and started her time with the family that afternoon. She would keep Luke entertained from when he arrived home from Fieldcrest School until Rachel returned from her new job at the bookshop, on a daily basis.

But with a suddenness that shocked everyone, Lana's best friend Beck went missing and the last person to see her was Lana herself. What had happened to Beck? Why did Luke seem to have such a hold over Lana? And was she actually scared of him, an eleven-year-old boy?!

This was absolutely riveting! What a gripping psychological thriller; twists, turns and a plot which just kept getting better! And the ending – WOW! I have no hesitation in highly recommending this great novel!

With thanks to The Reading Room and the publisher for my copy to read and review.

Patrice Hoffman says

This is not my first rodeo with Lisa Unger but In the Blood is definitely my favorite. The titles I've read Black Out and Beautiful Lies pale in comparison to this title. I'm all for a good psychological thriller and In the Blood definitely fit the bill.

Lana Granger is college student who's soon to be graduating. Because of her focus in psychology she volunteers at a school for troubled children named *Fieldcrest*. It is here her professor shows her a posting for a job as a nanny. He convinces her that she's done great work as a counselor and should relish take on this job since her trust fund will soon be off limits until she is 30.

Lana meets Rachel Kahn, the mother of a disturbed/troubled child named Luke. Rachel expects Lana to run from the job as a nanny after she goes into the whole history of her sons past. She tells Lana that Luke has been diagnosed many times with ADHD, manic depression, bipolar disorder, and a host of other mental illnesses. This doesn't scare Lana away. She actually is inviting the challenge into her life because of her own history. But what exactly is that history?

Because Lana is a person of so many lies, she's the primary suspect when her roommate Rebecca goes missing. She was the last person seen arguing with her at the time of her disappearance. With the pressure mounting the many lies she has told becomes a source of her own anguish and she isn't sure anymore what happened either. It doesn't help that someone wants to expose her and her many lies.

Lisa Unger introduces us to a character who has some serious issues. And given her family makeup we know she's capable of anything. Lana also shares the narrative with a diary. We don't know who's diary this is so I won't spoil that for her at all. This diary suggests disorders I've never even considered or heard of. Before, I'd never heard an infant referenced as being *High Demand*. I assure you this exists. I'm sure all the parents out there are like DUH... but seriously, I didn't know this was even an issue.

Lana's insight into the psych field makes her the perfect narrator. She's aware of human behavior and how that relates to the people in her life. Each character is analyzed with such viridity that it's easy to see the amount of depth they have. This also leads us to realize that Lana isn't all knowing with her own self. We're only sure that something in her past has caused her to be emotionally underdeveloped and in need of finding herself.

I wish this weren't a review copy because I don't think I turned a page without highlighting a passage. Lisa Unger will reel readers in from page one with details about human behavior and never let go. I can't shake questions from my mind that have since stayed with me upon finishing the novel. How has circumstances reassembled me into the person I am today? When do we stop hiding from who we really are? What's really the difference between choice and reaction? What happens when we don't find the answers we're looking for?

There is so much that can be talked about in this book but I feel that every point I want to discuss in this review leads me to giving away clues that are best led to by the author. Sure there is a lot that was predictable and expected but the characters, especially Lana, are interesting enough to keep readers invested in this novel. In the Blood is an intense psychological thriller that will have readers wondering what's in their blood that causes them to act as they do. I highly recommend this title.

Copy provided by Simon & Schuster via Netgalley

Robert says

Is evil predetermined genetically, or is it based on environment and upbringing? IN THE BLOOD attempts to answer this question, and I can state rather emphatically that my mind might never be the same again. The mental mind trip left me in a cold sweat, and there's a chance I may now be prone to night terrors. If I wake up screaming, though, I'll only have myself to blame, as I attempt to pound through the pain.

The plot moved along at a slow simmer with some rather unexpected twists and turns, as I kept a death grip on my Kindle and flipped the pages with one eye closed. Terror of the psychological variety proves much more appealing to me than some dude in a hockey mask slashing oversexed campers with a machete. And there's plenty of terror to be had here, most of which floats just beneath the surface, bubbling up when you least expect it, and grasping you around the ankle before pulling you beneath the water.

Lana Granger may have told more than a few lies in her day, each one building upon the one before it. Even though she might show aspects of being a pathological or compulsive liar, I'd still stand behind her. Despite Luke being only eleven-years-old, I wouldn't stand behind him, even if I were holding a shovel in one hand and a grenade in the other. There's a term that often applies in situations such as these: **little bastard**. And should you look it up in the dictionary, you'd probably see a picture of Luke's sneering mug (among others).

I am proud to say I have more Lisa Unger novels at my disposal, so when the night terrors cease, I shall revisit her to kick start the screaming and cold sweats all over again.

I received this book for free through NetGalley.

Cross-posted at Robert's Reads

Phrynne says

I think this is a pretty amazing book. It had me second guessing everything all the way through and then when I got to the end I found I had made several majorly wrong assumptions. I almost need to read the whole thing again knowing what I know now! This is my first book by this author and I will certainly be seeking out more.

karen says

so.

did i enjoy reading this book?

absolutely.

it was a fun and pacey novel but i gotta say - and this *never* happens - i guessed every little surprise twist and turn very early on. so for me, the pleasure of the unexpected discovery or blow-your-mind reveal was not at all a factor. BUT, if penn and teller can be gracious and enthusiastic week after week and still enjoy the shows put on for them without experiencing the element of surprise just because they enjoy the *craft* so much, then i can take a page outta their book and agree that surprise isn't everything, and style really does go a long way. this was my first unger book, and her style is solid - she's written an engaging, unusual story with vivid characters and many twisty turns and red herrings and even though by some total fluke she didn't lose me this time, i am definitely looking forward to reading another of her books and giving her a second chance to make a fool out of me.

i won't say anything else about the book because other people should have a chance to be surprised by it, so instead of words, enjoy a bunch of animals who are surprised:

he's not surprised *yet*, but he's a slow reader - he'll get there...

Sue says

I wish to thank the author and publisher for the review copy of "In the Blood" by Lisa Unger via Netgalley. I have to admit that I was so impressed with this excellent dark psychological suspense thriller. This novel has it all, and had me gripped right from the beginning.

"It was all a game...and he had won. He had exposed her secrets."

Lana Granger lives a life of lies...what web of lies we weave! She had come from a dysfunctional family, with her mother murdered and her father in prison charged with her death. Lana, a psych major, chose to go to college at a liberal arts college, in New York, where she would feel safe. With her trust fund almost tapped out, she takes a job babysitting a troubled boy named Luke, a special needs boy. Expelled from schools all over the country, the manipulative young Luke is accustomed to controlling the people in his life.

Luke is a smart, gifted, crafty and confident. He loves to play games, and win by his rules. He is a psychopath, and can figure you out, your needs, in order to get what he wants from you. Luke has his own desires, no feelings...he is a Manipulator!

Lana has a troubled past – she blocks out a lot of it and is in constant therapy. As she tries to come to terms with herself and what she has suffered, she now takes on the role of child minder to Luke – another troubled soul. As the two of them play a truly twisted game of cat and mouse, hidden secrets begin to emerge.

But then Lana's best friend, Beck didn't show up for class, and foul play was suspected, as her bag was found in the trees leading away from the campus library. This was the second girl that had gone missing from the same small university in two years. And both of them were connected to Lana. She was now a person of interest in the case. But then the game changed, and it was now a matter of life and death.

This is a multi layered fast-paced novel with fascinating realistic emotional characters. There was such depth to the characters, and I felt empathy for the mother that assumed this life-time burden, and the victims that had been exposed to psychological trauma. I can feel their pain of learning to suppress their emotions as a means of survival.

"In the Blood" is an exceptional novel, and I would highly recommend this novel especially if you are a fan, of the psychological thriller.

Natasha says

That was pretty fucked up.

3.5 stars.

Most of this book I was just terrified of Luke. He's seriously a psycho. The idea that kids out there like him

actually exist haunts me. NO THANKS.

I didn't see the big twist until it was basically right in my face, so I appreciated that. Twist #2, also didn't see coming, although I should have.

The ending was so gratifying.

Noeleen says

This was my first time to read a book by Lisa Unger. I'm not sure at this stage if I will read any more. I thought this really started off very well, suspenseful, thrilling, creepy, a good haunting atmospheric setting, lots of twists and turns, unreliable and disturbed characters, basically all the good ingredients of a real page turner, and it was...until I got to about 80%. Up to this point, I was sure that this book was deserving of four stars as I had a really hard time putting it down. Unfortunately, the last 20% of it just fell apart for me. As the layers and truths were revealed, rather than finding myself shocked, I found myself 'eye-rolling' more and more. I have mixed emotions about the last 20%, I think perhaps it was trying to be far too clever for its own good. It just got too impractical and unrealistic for me. Overall, a quick, suspenseful read which will definitely keep you turning the pages and if you can suspend disbelief, it will work for you. I find that I'm pushing it to three stars because it did keep me turning the pages but unfortunately it's not one I will be rushing to recommend.

Dem says

3.5 Stars

I really enjoyed this suspenseful and exciting psychological thriller by Lisa Unger. This is my first novel by this author and she really had me turning the pages with the twist and turns in this story.

At 417 pages the the novel is a perfect length for a thriller in my opinion and edgy enough to stand out from other thrillers doing the rounds.

I don't read a lot of thrillers and when I do this is the exact type of book I am interested in, it is dark and haunting and has lots of twists and turns to keep the reader on their toes.

I especially loved the characters in the novel as they were interesting and different. The plot is clever and the pace of the story is perfect.

I enjoyed the read and I certainly look forward to other novels by this author.

Delee says

[image error]

Louisa says

HOLY MOLY JUST HIT ME OVER THE HEAD WITH A STICK!?

If you like psychological thrillers, this is the one for you. I'm not saying it wasn't slightly predictable, but the pacing and structure are so well done you'd be hard-pressed not to be impressed anyway, hence my 5-star rating. The twists in this could rival an F1 race track. And talk about an off-the-charts creep factor.

I AM STILL BUZZING FROM READING THIS!! What can I even read now?!

Carol says

Lies, lies and more lies! Had to stay up late to finish this one. Once I got to the final creepy graveyard scene, there was no putting it down. This "*PSYCHO*" mystery-thriller has a unique plot and a surprising twist or two that made for a fast and addictive one day read for me. Enjoyed it.

Matt says

The best thing about **In the Blood** is the ominous mood it occasionally captures. Unfortunately, the first-person narrator is a bit of a whiner, prone to asking herself plot-centric questions over and over and over again, to the point that it becomes silly. Here's a short paragraph from page 212 of the ARC to illustrate her annoying habit:

"I got dressed swiftly and walked into the living area. What did he mean, time was running out? What had he seen that night? Who had he told? Did he know where Beck was?"

She does that throughout the entire book. I put up with her constant self-pity (she's a self-described "misery magnet"), but the way she kept asking herself questions that the reader should be asking got old really fast.

The mystery plot was okay, but it never really grabbed me. The author sets up all kinds of nicely creepy elements (a bloody trauma hidden in the past, a series of missing girls on a secluded college campus, a weird little sociopathic boy, an eerie scavenger hunt, a hidden journal...), but there's not a lot of forward momentum to the narrative.

I wish there was more of a 'ticking clock' aspect to the missing person case that fuels the main story. A greater sense of urgency might have helped quicken the reader's pulse. Instead, events happen at an almost leisurely pace. Part of the problem might be that the missing girl isn't much of a character. We barely know anything about her, and what little we do know doesn't particularly warm us to her.

On the plus side, the creepy little boy is a lot of fun in an "Omen" kind of way, and some of the darker elements found in the journal entries interspersed throughout the novel are intriguing. At its best, the book recalls the classic Italian Giallo films from the 60s and 70s. The prologue contains echoes of Dario Argento's "Deep Red," and the campus setting reminded me of Massimo Dallamano's 1972 shocker "What Have You

Done to Solange?"

There are two or three semi-decent twists towards the end of the story, but none were all that thrilling. Ultimately, the whole thing felt a bit too safe and somewhat hokey to me. For a novel with the word "Blood" in the title, it could have used a bit more of the stuff.

Diane S ? says

There is absolutely no question that this author has gotten the recipe down for outstanding thrillers and mysteries. This one is no exception, twists and turns galore, a few I did not guess until just before the reveal. Interesting, actually very interesting and complex characters and a very unique setting which she has used before, "The Hollows."

Of course there is the little cynic in me that kept thinking this was an updated version of the novel and movie, "The Bad Seed" and had to laugh when near the end of the book, a newspaper heading, screams, "The Bad Seed." Also maybe a few too many psychopaths in one place, really makes one wonder how many are actually out there and how easily they manage to find each other. Scary. Also the inner dialogues of Lane, while interesting at times, almost bordered on preachy.

So despite my inner cynic, this quickly paced novel, kept me turning the pages to find out how this was all going to end. Have to admit I loved it.

ARC from NetGalley.
