



The Killing House

Claire McGowan

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When a puzzling missing persons' case opens up in her hometown, forensic psychologist Paula Maguire can't help but return once more.

Renovations at an abandoned farm have uncovered two bodies: a man known to be an IRA member missing since the nineties, and a young girl whose identity remains a mystery.

As Paula attempts to discover who the girl is and why no one is looking for her, an anonymous tip-off claims that her own long-lost mother is also buried on the farm.

When another girl is kidnapped, Paula must find the person responsible before more lives are destroyed. But there are explosive secrets still to surface. And even Paula can't predict that the investigation will strike at the heart of all she holds dear.

The Killing House Details

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Author : Claire McGowan

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From Reader Review The Killing House for online ebook

Clare says

The Paula Maguire series enters its sixth book and while I feel there's plenty of legs left in it, author Claire McGowan has taken the understandable decision to make this the last Maguire book. I've become really attached to these characters and I'm really going to miss them. The book opens with Paula in London, doing mainly paperwork behind a desk, her life having fallen into some kind of normalcy. The pull of Ballyterrin is strong, however, and Paula finds herself heading back to investigate the discovery of two bodies under a remote farmhouse. To complicate matters further, Paula gets an anonymous tip that her missing mother was held there too. So begins a complicate dig through the past, covering the Troubles the Good Friday agreement and a whole raft of personal problems in between.

This is another excellently written book from Claire McGowan. The dialogue is sharp and witty and there's no cardboard cutout characters here with what could have easily turned into cliché in the hands of a lesser writer being ably handled by McGowan. At long last the reader gets an insight into what happened to Paula's mother, long a source of mystery with Paula alternating between thinking she's dead or hiding out somewhere, there's a definite answer for the reader. It's smartly plotted and there's plenty jammed into its 300 odd pages.

I'm going to miss this series but I'm really excited to see what Claire McGowan has planned next. A fitting end to a fantastic series.

I received a ARC from NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for a fair review.

Miss M says

Ach, how I love it when things come right in the end...

Bruce Hatton says

In this, the 6th and final novel of this compelling series, it is eventually revealed what happened the Doctor Paula Maguire's mother Margaret back in 1993. This is the central mystery which has run like a leitmotif throughout the previous five books.

Before that, Paula has more recent problems to deal with. There is the discovery of two bodies buried by an abandoned farmhouse; one of them that of a teenage girl. Also, despite it being almost 20 years since the ceasefire and Good Friday Agreement, several former IRA members are found murdered. Everything points to a family of Diehard Republicans, the Wallaces. Do they have the answer to Margaret's disappearance too? As in the previous five books, everything builds up slowly to a thrilling finale.

It was rather sad to know that there'll be no more books in this series. As well as featuring a strong cast of well-defined characters and some intriguing mysteries, it also gave one a chilling insight into the sectarian divisions that still haunt the Irish borderlands.

Roman Clodia says

I've been following this series from the start and can say that this is the best of the six books. McGowan has always been superb at conjuring up the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and this book, especially, deals with the politics of the peace process in a knowledgeable and sophisticated fashion.

In the foreground are characters and families traumatised and torn apart by their history, trying to build and re-build lives shattered by violence. For all that, Paula has been an inconsistent main character: her role as a psychologist has never really fitted into the structure of these books as she does no 'psychologising' and seems to spend all her time conducting her own investigations which the PSNI never try to stop. That said, she seems to have dropped her most irritating traits in this book and is at her most sympathetic.

With a local plot intersecting with the long-term question of what happened to Paula's mother, this book seems to bring things to a satisfactory and emotionally rewarding conclusion. I hope McGowan isn't tempted to renew the series: as it stands it reaches the end of a narrative arc and is best left there: 4.5 stars.

Kate says

And so this wonderful series ends and it finishes brilliantly. Without doubt this is my favourite. I've been longing to see how this would resolve. You do need to have read the others first and you'll be fully rewarded. Review to follow on For Winter Nights shortly.

Christine says

The Killing House is the sixth and final instalment of the Paula Maguire series. It is hard to believe that it has come to an end. After this book, there will be no more Paula Maguire, forensic psychologist and expert on missing persons. Imagine no more Paula/Guy/Aidan love triangle. Plus we will finally have the answer to the mystery of Margaret Maguire.

The most impressive thing about this series has been the insight we have had into life during the Troubles, in Northern Ireland. We have seen how Paula's family were devastated and left without answers. We have some understanding of what it was like living with violence, danger and checkpoints. We have witnessed the after-effects of the Good Friday agreement, made twenty years ago. Politics in Northern Ireland is complex. We know that Paula has never really recovered, from the trauma of her mother going missing. Aidan also witnessed the murder of his father, as a small child.

The Killing House takes us to the heart of the Maguire family's dark times. Paula Maguire is working in London, with her old flame Guy. Aidan is still behind bars, for murder. She returns to Ballyterrin for a wedding. Bodies are uncovered at a farmhouses. Paula is asked to assist. Soon a picture emerges, this was a killing house. A place where the IRA tortured suspected informants. This soon connects to Paula, as it appears her mother was held here. Is this the place where Margaret Maguire died? Paula discovers the truth about the past.

Claire McGowan beautifully ties up so many loose ends. What a relief! We get a glimpse into Margaret Maguire's life and see what happened to her. Paula finally chooses between Guy and Aidan. This was done

without an appearance on the Jeremy Kyle Show, complete with DNA test. Paula has dithered about men for so long. I couldn't take much more of the soap style love life complications. The story ends on the right note. We got a very satisfying conclusion.

This has been such a fine and utterly compelling series. McGowan has shown us a fascinating and dark period of recent history. I am going to miss Paula Maguire and the people in her life. I recommend reading all of the six books. They have been a delight!

Julie Lacey says

When I requested this book from NetGalley I didn't realise it was book 6 in the series but I think there's enough background information given for this book to be read as a stand-alone.

I really liked this book and Paula's character is hard not to like.

Paula has been working in London for a while but she's asked to go back to Ireland as some bodies have been found buried at a farm.

The big pull for Paula is that her mum has been missing since she was a girl and she's desperate to know if she's one of the people found on the farm.

Paula's fiancé is in prison in Ireland and while she's visiting another contact she comes face to face with him. Deep down she knew he wasn't a killer but how can they prove this?

It soon becomes clear that the barn on the farm was used by the IRA and in particular the Wallace family. As the story progresses we learn what went on in this barn, otherwise known as 'the killing house'

This is a really good read and I'd highly recommend it.

Thanks to Headline and NetGalley for giving me the opportunity to read this book.

Clare says

With thanks to Netgalley and Headline for this ARC in exchange for an open and honest review.

I had the Dr Paula Maguire series on my TBR list for sometime. Last year I listened to the whole series in one go so I really felt I knew the characters. If you have never read this series I would suggest you start with the first book The Lost to understand the characters and their relationships.

At the moment The Killing House will be the final book in the series. Although the author hinted Paula may return in the future.

Throughout this series the disappearance of Margaret, Paula's mother has been in the background. Paula found out that Margaret was a informer for the British army. She had been having an affair with her handler Edward and was pregnant with his child.

The start of the story is the POV of Margaret in 1993 when she was kidnapped from home. In the present day Paula and her daughter Maggie are back living in London, Paula is back at The Met and is working with her ex colleague Guy Brooking on missing persons.

One day she receives a call from her friend DI Helen Corry back in Ballyterin. The body of a unknown female had been found in the farm that used to owned by the Wallace's who had IRA connections. Paula was due to go back to Ballyterin for a wedding and could she come home early to look at the body. Bored Paula jumped at the chance to return to Ballyterin. When Paula examined the body she found the female was wearing a dolphin pendant that looked similar to one Paula was given by her parents when she was 13.

Meanwhile Ex fiance Aidan O'Hara is still in prison for murdering the man who shot his father. Although Aidan admits he attacked the man he was certain he was still alive when he left him. After some thought Aidan has decided to appeal his conviction. As Paula gets sucked into the secrets of Ballyterin again she worries the body is Margaret.

I am glad to finally find out what happened to Margaret. Once again with this series I was glued and read more than half the book in one sitting. The chapters about poor Margaret were dark and menacing, the threat of violence was palpable. The story of the Wallace's and their farmhouse was well thought with many interwoven threads to the story.

I enjoyed the conclusion of this book and feel glad Paula, Aidan and Saiorse got the ending they deserve. I have thoroughly enjoyed this series and look forward to reading more from Claire McGowan.

Vicki - I Love Reading says

I have read and enjoyed all 6 books in the Paula Maguire series. It's been a great journey with her. Book 6 is just as good, if not better than the others. I felt this time around one or two things were settled. Although there certainly is scope for a lot more of Paula Maguire, her character is first class. She's by no means perfect, yet wants to do the right thing, most of the time. She has a knack of getting herself into quite a bit of trouble at times.

After moving to London to start a new life with her young daughter, it's not long before Paula ends up back in Ballyterin. Back to the old ways in no time.

Paula has returned when she was asked to help try to identify two bodies. The bodies have been found buried on a farm that is currently being renovated.

It soon comes to light that Paula's mother, who as been missing for many years could have a link with this farm. Is Paula finally going to be able to solve the mystery of her missing mother, and find out once and for all if she is 'Dead or Alive'.

Claire McGowan has certainly created a series here that drags you in, as each book ends you just can't wait for the next one.

Superb writing that draws you in right from the word go.

Elaine Tomasso says

I would like to thank Netgalley and Headline for an advance copy of The Killing House, the sixth and possibly final novel to feature forensic psychologist and missing person expert Dr Paula Maguire.

Paula is bored in her new job in London and jumps at the chance to consult with her old team when she returns to Ballyterrin for a wedding. DI Helen Corry has an interesting proposition for her, instead of finding a missing person she uses her skills to identify bones that have been found on a local farm with IRA connections. Could it have something to do with her mother's disappearance in 1993.

I thoroughly enjoyed *The Killing House* which is an absorbing novel with plenty of twists and turns. It reaches deep into the past and shows that The Troubles have cast a long shadow which still permeates present day life in Northern Ireland. It seems to me that Ms McGowan does this in a very practical way, choosing to highlight individual experiences rather than concentrating on the politics, although the brief mentions the politics do get made me see them in a different light. It's an extremely complicated and emotive subject but I have to admire Ms McGowan's skill in making it easily understood.

The novel is told in the third person and alternates between Paula's present day investigation and personal problems and her mother Margaret's experiences in 1993. Somehow the two narratives dovetail extremely well and had me gripped. I felt as if I couldn't turn the pages fast enough to find out what was coming next. It is, however, not an easy novel to read as the casual violence is upsetting and the fear felt during The Troubles almost palpable. Apart from this atmosphere it requires a fair amount of concentration to keep up with the characters, their motivations, secrets and intertwining relationships.

The novel is not without its moments of humour. The descriptions of the run up to Avril and Gerard's interfaith marriage are amusing and all too believable (I walked the same tightrope 30 years ago), deadly because they are so unimportant in the grand scheme.

Paula is an interesting character. Her life is overshadowed by her mum's disappearance and she is fairly obsessive about finding out what happened to her, regardless of the consequences. I'm unsure of how to view this obsession. Is it incredibly selfish or will it help her to heal and allow her deal with her chaotic personal life? Ms McGowan is at pains to point out some of the pitfalls and pain it may cause so I suspect she may be in two minds herself.

The Killing House is an excellent read, thoughtful and exciting at the same time, which I have no hesitation in recommending.

Bookread2day says

So here it is the last Paula Maguire. Claire McGowan does add that's it from Paula for the next time being at least and thanks for following her on this six year journey with Claire.

Miriam Smith says

"*The Killing House*" by Claire McGowan is the sixth in the forensic psychologist Paula Maguire series and includes the satisfying and shocking conclusion to Paula's past history. Although I haven't read any in this series there was enough information to bring me up to full speed and I felt very attached to Paula by the end of the book, even though this was my first encounter with her.

When two bodies are discovered while renovations are being carried out at a farm, their identities remain a mystery. When Paula Maguire currently living and working in London, returns to her Irish hometown of

Ballyterrin to assist in the puzzling missing person's case, an anonymous tip-off claims her own long lost mother is also buried on the farm. When another girl is kidnapped Paula must find the person responsible before more lives are destroyed but even she can't predict the investigation will strike at the heart of all she holds dear. Will the mystery of her own missing mother be solved after her 'disappearance' in 1993?

The first couple of chapters had me drawn in completely and I knew this was going to be a very compelling book. Claire McGowan writes with such passion for her characters that you truly feel you know everyone personally and I particularly took to Paula, she was very interesting and realistic. I liked the way the story was told in the third person and had an alternating time line. My favourite chapters were the flashbacks to the telling of what actually happened with Margaret (Paula's mother) the day she disappeared and the final ending to the whole story was quite tense and emotional.

I'm pleased I've encountered this series albeit right at the end, I'd be happy to still read the previous books in the series to see how Paula's character developed over the years and I'd certainly read more by this very talented and professional author.

All in all an excellent thriller based on the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland which gave a saddening insight to how the residents at the time coped and lived during such terrible times.

4.5 stars rounded up to 5

Simona says

What a fantastic finish to Book 6 - the final in the Paula Maguire series

Cleo Bannister says

For the sixth episode in this series set on the border between North and South Ireland Paula Maguire returns to Ballyterrin from her new London home for a wedding. Home to where her determination to discover more about her mother's disappearance when she was just a teenager are strongest.

This is the best series about 'The Troubles' that I have read. Paula Maguire's personal story along with those of her friends, including Aiden whose father was shot dead when he hid under a table as a young boy, really underline what it was like for those who lived there at this time. But the series isn't just about the past, in this book two bodies have been found at a remote farmhouse and Paula Maguire is asked, as a former member of the missing persons team, and forensic psychologist, to find out who they were.

As in the previous books in the series, Paula's work in the present is told alongside her determination to understand the past. This is easier said than done when what she discovers could be devastating for her former Police Officer father and the life he now has as husband, father and grandfather. Paula Maguire is just the type of protagonist I like most, she is brave and yet conflicted, she makes mistakes and she tries to put them right and she loves and loses along the way – in other words under Claire McGowan's pen she has truly come to life.

I love the style of storytelling, and in *The Killing House*, we are transported back in time to hear the voice of one person held by the punishment team who have them held captive to find out the information for their cause. There are some horrific characters in this book but all held together by the basic goodness of many others, even those who may have done wrong in the past. The author has a way of differentiating between

those who got caught up in the times, and those who enjoyed being part of it, exceptionally well so that the reader is able to look at this point in history at a personal level.

The current investigation, and the resultant politics which take into account the peace process are fascinating to learn about. The legal challenges in respect of crimes committed many years ago are put into the context of how the victims and their families, and of course the police officers, are trying to bring comfort in the form of knowledge, without the firm expectation that those who killed will face a trial. This book is full of the action which also underpins the series with danger around many a corner for all involved. There were many fast page-turning moments where I was on the edge of my seat wondering what would happen next.

There is never any doubt at all about the setting, the turns of phrase, without going to ridiculous lengths to recreating the accent, remind you on every page, the remoteness of some of the places describe and of course the interactions between the characters which are both heart-warming at times and so very practical at others.

I suspect that this is the last in this series, and I will miss Paula and what a ride it has been! This book has been meticulously plotted to ensure that the story arc which precedes it is wrapped up properly and although I think the time was right, I will miss the characters which I have invested in over the entire series. It was lovely to be given a proper conclusion to Paula's personal story which I'm sure mirrors, at least in part, the stories of many others who lived through this time.

As this is what I suspect is the final episode in the series, I wouldn't recommend starting with this one, you really should read the books in order.

Liz Barnsley says

A brilliant "conclusion" to Paula Maguire's journey. A genuinely compelling and thought provoking series overall and this one had me on the edge of my seat to find out if Paula would get her happy ending. Y'all better read to find out..

From the first book to this book, the stories have been absolutely gripping – each separate mystery brilliantly plotted and compelling – throughout though has been the thread of loss- what did happen to Paula's mother? Every book has had a moving forward of sorts, now here we are and the end is in sight...

Claire McGowan writes with a quiet intensity that just draws you in, her characters are beautifully flawed and authentic, the Irish setting comes to life not only in style but in substance. There is an underlying emotional sense to these books that is really impressive. Poor Paula, she has been through the wringer over the years, with her relationships and her difficult career – the author offers no guarantees that the rug won't be pulled out from underneath her yet again in this final reckoning – so to call it a page turner doesn't really do it justice. You honestly won't be able to put it down.

As a reader who has followed these from the start I was very emotional myself when I got to the end of *The Killing House* – whether in a good, cathartic way or a completely destroyed sobbing heap way I'll leave you to find out for yourselves – but I HIGHLY recommend this and the books leading up to it. If you haven't read them yet get the lot, go on a binge read, it'll be more addictive than anything on Netflix I can promise you that. If you, like me, have been waiting for this "closure" then you won't be disappointed. Absolutely and completely brilliantly done.

