



The Lying-Down Room

Anna Jaquière

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He thought with horror of the lying-down room...

Paris; in the stifling August heat, Commandant Serge Morel is called to a disturbing crime scene. An elderly woman has been murdered to the soundtrack of Faure's Requiem, her body then grotesquely displayed.

At first this strange case seems to offer few clues; and Morel has problems of his own. His father – always a great force in his life – is beginning to succumb to senility; and he is unsettled by the reappearance of the beautiful Mathilde, the woman he once loved. Only origami can help calm the detective and focus his thoughts on this troubling crime.

As the investigation progresses, the key suspects to emerge are a middle-aged man and a mute teenage boy who have been delivering religious pamphlets in the city's suburbs. But as more elderly ladies are targeted, Morel will find his enquiries leading him back into the past, from the French countryside to Soviet Russia – and to two young boys with the most terrible of stories to tell . . .

The Lying-Down Room Details

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Author : Anna Jaquière

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From Reader Review The Lying-Down Room for online ebook

Raven says

The Lying Down Room introduces us to the charismatic and dedicated Chief Inspector Serge Morel. The story opens in Paris in the stifling August heat, and Morel is called to examine a disturbing crime scene. An elderly woman has been brutally murdered to the soundtrack of Faure's Requiem, and her body grotesquely displayed. The reasons for this murder and the choice of victim baffle Morel and his team.

But our detective has problems of his own. His father, such an influence in his life, is descending into the grip of senility. If that weren't enough for him, Morel is having an affair with a friend's wife, but has become unsettled by the reappearance of his lost love, Mathilde. Like so many other fictional detectives, Morel has a quirky interest to relieve his angst and focus his mind. In his case it's origami.

As the investigation continues, and further murders happen, his fingers fold faster and faster. He makes a connection between the victims and two individuals – a middle aged man and a young boy – who distribute religious pamphlets in the suburbs. Soon his inquiries take him back into the past, away from Paris into the French countryside, and eventually to the heart of Soviet Russia. A tragic story begins to unfold.

In terms of characterisation, The Lying Down Room contains all the key ingredients needed to herald the arrival of a new detective in the crime fiction genre. Morel is a very carefully constructed and wonderfully realised character. He combines natural charm and humour that immediately resonate. His interactions in both his professional and personal lives allow the many different facets of his character to shine – like the focused and dedicated police officer, and the man thwarted in love. There are some intensely moving scenes between him and his father. This relationship is filled with pathos, adding poignancy to Morel's situation. Morel is a man of contradictions with his character being all the more emotionally interesting for it, and consequently the scene is set for further exploration of this detective.

The narrative is particularly impressive, with nice, clean delineation between the various strands that come into play within the plot. Not only is the central murder storyline well paced and realistic, but as Jaquiere expands the story to encompass the personal narratives of the perpetrators themselves, she weaves together various locations and timelines. What emerges is an incredibly human tale of lost opportunities and wicked twists of fate that can put an individual on the path towards murder. Cleverly, this aspect of the novel invokes natural sympathy in the reader as we bear witness to the incredibly sad events in our antagonists' pasts, evinced in the stark portrayal of life in Soviet Russia, and the mental and physical wounds this produces. At times, Jaquiere handles the sheer emotional heartache of some of these scenes more in the vein of literary fiction rather than a genre crime novel.

There is little to fault in this debut, combining as it does a superbly plotted and emotive criminal investigation with the introduction of a police protagonist more than imbued with enough charm and interest to carry the weight of a series. Anna Jaquiere demonstrates all the natural flair and quirks of French crime fiction that fans of Vargas, Lemaitre, et al, will relish reading.

Elaine says

It is not often I give up on a book, and I really tried with this one but in the end, at about 50% of the way I had to call it a day, life is too short for a book you really don't like. The story is incredibly slow and long drawn out with so much padding. There is a lot of detail in the book, and some of it totally unnecessary. I didn't need to know what route Morel drove to work, or why he was stuck in traffic. I didn't need to know what colour his sister had painted her toes, or what everybody was wearing, eating or drinking. The crimes themselves sounded as if they would make a darn good read, but with all the extra waffle combined with a rather boring main character, I just lost the will to live with this book.

Cathy Cole says

I came to *The Lying Down Room* by a circuitous route. The second book in the series really caught my eye, primarily because it takes place in Cambodia, but I decided to read the first book to get a better feel for the character of Commandant Morel. I wish I'd gone ahead and read that second book first.

This mystery is well-plotted and has a good smooth pace that moves the story right along. Jaquiere gives readers a strong portrait of Paris in August-- particularly of the murderous traffic and of Président Sarkozy's policies. We're told that "over the past six months Morel's team had closed more cases than any other team at the Criminal Brigade," and we're introduced to them, but the introductions are rather hit or miss. Morel feels that one member belongs elsewhere, and the one that readers see most is Lila Markov of the IQ of 174. She spends the entire book in a perpetual bad mood and just made me want to tell her to get over herself.

Morel has a lot on his plate because budget cuts mean fewer police officers to do more work. His father is in the beginning stages of dementia, and when Morel needs to decompress, he either makes a complicated origami bird or visits his married mistress. All the bones of *The Lying Down Room* are good, but I didn't particularly enjoy the book because I felt as though I were being kept at a distance; I never felt fully engaged with the story or with the characters. Now I need to decide if I want to follow Morel to Cambodia. If I do, it won't be in the immediate future.

Khay says

I picked up Anna Jaquiere's second book, "Death in the rainy season" at the airport and I simply couldn't put it down. I decided to buy her first book after reading some reviews and I was disappointed.

While I couldn't stop turning pages of her second book to get to the end, I had great problems getting through the pages in this first book. I had to force myself to push through the story. The plot was slow moving and although the suspect was revealed (or hinted) early in the book, you have to plow through the thoughts and storyline of a whole lot of characters in the book before you understand the motivation behind his actions.

And even in the end, I didn't think it was clear who really murdered the women. It felt like a flop. Maybe I wasn't paying attention but the narrative was really tiring. Stick to the second book; don't bother with the first.

Liz Barnsley says

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

At night Armand lay in bed with a sadness in his heart that ballooned until there was room for nothing else.

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At first this strange case seems to offer few clues; and Morel has problems of his own. His father – always a great force in his life – is beginning to succumb to senility; and he is unsettled by the reappearance of the beautiful Mathilde, the woman he once loved. Only origami can help calm the detective and focus his thoughts on this troubling crime.

The Lying Down Room is the first in a series featuring Serge Morel, and as an example of purely poetic Crime Fiction this one had it all.

Atmospheric, deeply moving in places and with a truly remarkable main protagonist, I was totally immersed in this world for the entire time. As Morel and team try to track down an elusive killer, I was with them all the way. The Paris setting is often sombre, always compelling and extremely well described, putting you right in the moment.

For pure story flow it doesn't get much better – the people are key and there are some interesting background events going on in the lives of the featured characters which will make you want to read further as the series progresses. The psychological aspects of the killer are fascinating and impressively authentic – this is not necessarily a book with huge amounts of twists and turns, it is more an examination of the human condition and the things that drive us.

Going on the must be read list immediately, Anna Jaquière is definitely one to watch. If you are a lover of Crime Fiction this one is definitely for you – if you are a lover of beautiful storytelling then don't miss it.

Petra Be says

I really liked the story even though it was not perfect and the ending was kind of rushed.

Did anyone else notice that the writer mentioned twice someone going/working overseas even though they never left Europe? I see the writer is in Australia so maybe she just did not realise her heroes were not in Australia??? But when you live in France and go working in Russia, you are not going overseas...

And also another thing that probably failed to be noticed by responsible people - a person watched news in France but "He doesn't speak much English so he had no idea what it was about."

But whatever, the story was enjoyable and I look forward to reading the next Morel story.

Susan says

Set in a sweltering Paris summer, this is the first in a proposed new series featuring Commandant Serge Morel. Called to the apartment of an elderly lady who has been murdered and then ritually laid out, he is perplexed by who would want to kill such an inoffensive and frail woman. Under pressure from his boss, Commissaire Perrin, who is more concerned with getting results and his face in the media, stressed about his elderly father and worried about his older sister, obsessing about a woman he broke up with many years before and short staffed, Morel attempts to solve the case.

Morel and his fellow detective, Lila Markov, make a great team in this novel. Lila is both strong and vulnerable – indeed, all of the characters in this book are well rounded. Even those we hear less about, such as other members of the team or the pathologist Richard Martin, seem that they will have more to offer in future books. Nothing is clear cut and we feel sympathy for all of the characters that we meet. As pressure on Morel builds to solve the case, there are more murders. Who were the man and young boy who visited the elderly women, leaving behind religious pamphlets and a sense of unease so great that they contacted the police to report them? Morel and Markov have to discover the motives for the murders and what ties the victims together, before more people die.

This is a really excellent mystery and a great start to the series. The author has created a great cast of characters and an interesting location. I really look forward to following this series and recommend this first book highly.

Lily Malone says

I read this book as part of the Goodreads September 2015 Australian author challenge. This being my selection under 'crime' fiction.

What did I think? It's hard to say. On the one hand, I got to the end and read it in 2 or 3 nights. That says a lot on its own because I rarely finish a book if I'm not enjoying it.

I've seen other reviewers comment on the amount of detail in the book in a negative sense. It wasn't like this for me. I enjoyed the writing style very much and didn't feel weighed down by description or detail.

My problem is that while I quite enjoyed the story from a plot perspective, I felt that a lot more could have been done with it. I think the characters could have been developed further.

There are many, many sub plots. Morel and his father who is starting to show signs of dementia. Morel and his sisters, including the sister about to get engaged. Morel and Mathilde. Morel and origami. Morel and Solange. The Dufour husband & wife. I'm not sure how necessary all of these are. Morel's stalking of Mathilde doesn't sit well with me, given Morel is a senior member of the police force, and the 'hero' of the novel.

When I read crime, which is my favourite genre, I need to absolutely love the main protagonist. I'm thinking of Lucas Davenport or Virgil Flowers in the John Sandford novels, and Joe O'Loughlin and Vincent Ruiz in Michael Robotham's books. These are regularly 5 star reads for me.

I didn't get a good picture of Morel, although I can sense how lonely he is and how much he is struggling through life, and I empathise with him. I also want to give him a bloody good shake.

My favourite character quickly became Lila, and I'd be interested in reading more about her in future books. I also find I'm 'flat' about the killers too. I would have liked more POV of the killer/s earlier in the book. For me, one of the best paragraphs in the story was when the victim sees someone sitting on the trampoline in her garden... we know it's the killer and we're hoping the old lady doesn't open her door. I think a scene from the character on the trampoline just prior could have been really interesting.

So for me, 3.5 stars. It's good. It's interesting. Armand's relationship with his mother was done well, but there's a lot going on all over the place. I think a little paring back and more fleshing out of character could have made this a better read for me.

Elliot says

Page 3: "He throws his coffee cup into a bin."

Page 4: "Commandant Serge Morel finished his coffee and tossed the cup into a bin"

Page 37: "It was sloppy work. He crushed it into a tight ball and threw it into a nearby bin"

At some point I'm assuming the author heard that you need some action and staging to run alongside dialogue, and then also saw a bin. The rest is history.

Gave up after 40 pages.

Katrina says

1.5 boring from start to finish and had a super shitty ending.

Jennifer Berner says

I liked the characters and the plot, but the ending was abrupt and unsatisfying. I felt like the author just didn't feel like fully developing the story and the ultimate motivations of the characters and the killer.

BookwormDH says

Outstanding debut novel...Brilliant!

Christine says

Beautifully written, The Lying Down Room is the first in the Commandant Morel series.

I read Death in the Rainy Season and I longed for a little more Morel. Morel is introduced in The Lying Down Room. Set in Paris, we get a real sense of the hot, sultry Parisian atmosphere and a quirky detective in Morel. Morel is on the case of a murderer, who is brutally killing elderly widows and leaving them displayed

in their beds.

Morel is a fascinating flawed lead, with an unconventional personal life. He lives with his father, whose health is deteriorating, with periods of confusion and erratic behaviour. Morel has a married mistress, as well as an unhealthy obsession with a lover from his past. He may be a bit of a mess; but professionally he is sharp and good at seeing through lies. It is teamed with sidekick, Lila.

This is a crime read to just savour and read at leisure. With religious overtones, forbidden sex and links to Russia, the story moves between the past and the present. Slowly we start to understand the prime suspect. The beauty of this novel is that we truly get to know Morel and his life in Paris, as much as solving the mystery of the murders.

An enthralling introduction to the lovely Morel. I fell a little bit more in love with him. Anna Jaquière brings the magic of urban Paris to life, giving it a dark subtle twist. I hope for more of Morel.

Birgitt Krumboeck says

A very good tale! An amazing debut.

Kmalbie says

Sensitive and well written, tho there were some inconsistencies. Would have given it 4 stars, but the ending was too subtle for me and a bit unsatisfying. I liked Commandant Morel and Lili. I would read another (2nd in a series).
