



## **Drowned**

*Therese Bohman, Marlaine Delargy (Translator)*

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*Drowned*, set in the idyllic countryside during a short-lived Swedish summer, gets under one's skin from the first page, creating an atmosphere of foreboding in which even the perfume of freshly picked vegetables roasting in the kitchen becomes ominous.

Marina has left behind her stalled relationship and floundering career in Stockholm to visit her sister in rural Skåne, where she lives in a house full of books, gorgeous flowers and, as Marina soon learns, many secrets. Nothing is as it seems in this spellbinding novel of psychological suspense that combines hothouse sensuality with ice-cold fear on every page.

More than a mere thriller, this debut novel delves deep into the feminine soul and at the same time exposes the continuing oppression of women in Sweden's supposedly enlightened society. Mixing hothouse sensuality with ice-cold fear on every page, *Drowned* heralds the emergence of a major new talent on the international scene.

## **Drowned Details**

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ISBN : 9781590515242

Author : Therese Bohman , Marlaine Delargy (Translator)

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## From Reader Review Drowned for online ebook

### Cynthia says

Ophelia?

The first half of this book rather languishes but the second part picks up as the mystery deepens though it ultimately disappoints. If you have feminist leanings you'll hate this book. It's set in the Swedish countryside where Marina, a college student, goes to visit her botanist sister, Stella, who is living with her much older, author husband who's named Gabriel. Stella loves plants and her job in a nearby city planning office keeps her away from home for long hours. Marina arrives for her summer visit and she and Gabriel are left alone, apparently for far too long. They cross some boundaries they shouldn't. Marina is soon confused as she watches the odd dynamics between Stella and Gabriel. They're alternately companionable and hostile towards one another. What are the odd sounds she hears in the night?

This is a dreamy book with references to poetry, literature, art, and plant lore. It's engaging though I had the same sensation I do after eating too many sweets. It doesn't matter how good the sweets are eventually I'd like some vegetables and meat.

This review is based on an egalley provided by the publisher.

3.5/5

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### Nicole says

More of my reviews are at: Paperback Princess

I really wish I hadn't read this book. It did absolutely nothing for me. In attempting to create mystery Bohman only created confusion. Perhaps it was just my version, but there was never any break for a new chapter or even those page break things that indicate that you're moving to a new time or scene. I always felt confused because one minute something big was about to happen and then the next, they were having dinner.

The ending also resolves absolutely nothing. We know nothing about the characters other than Marina-our narrator-being the worst sister ever and that Gabriel-the husband- is an ass! Marina is unsympathetic as she talks about growing distant from her boyfriend and growing toward her sister's husband. Stella, the wronged sister seems distant and untouchable. Even when we read a little in her diary, we don't really get to know her.

The idea behind the plot was strong, sort of. Bohman definitely could have beefed up this book more rather than leave it like the bare bones story it is. I'm not even left wanting more about I just wanted this to be over. The bright side is that because it is super short, its quick to read which is the only redeeming quality of this book.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this book was the foreshadowing about \*Spoiler Alert\* Stella's death and the first book that Gabriel wrote and an image that is discussed in the book. The sex scenes leave you with nothing but feeling unfulfilled and there are no thrills in this book. I only kept turning the pages in an effort to finish what I started.

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## Jill says

This is a glorious mess of brain candy.

Mess, because:

- There's no real plot, and what there is makes no sense or is immediately predictable. Like mysterious older man and younger woman living together; he gets angry sometimes!! And she seems a little weird about it?? And then he cheats on her with her sister? WHAT COULD BE GOING ON. Call the 80s romance-thriller films, they want their tropes back. And nothing else really happens. Oh, except they all drink a lot of wine and it's very enticingly described.
- The characters are pretty pitifully developed. Stella and Marina's siblingship is probably the most basic way you could align two mildly-competitive sisters in a narrative. They're, like, mildly competitive...and get irritated with one another (and there's some overplayed idol-worship of Stella from Marina, the younger sister -- so revolutionary!). Gabriel is every other dashing, older, abusive douchebag you've read a romance novel about. There's a cat and some kindly elderly neighbours across the way, and that about does it for character sketches.
- This is a book about domestic abuse. It doesn't offer *anything* interesting or new about the topic, or even anything productive or helpful. Frankly, it sort of reads like fan fiction. Not having read *50 Shades*, I can't be totally confident of the following assessment; however, I have gleefully watched (and created drinking games for) all three movies, so really I'm an expert. Anyway I'd say *Drowned* is more thoughtful/better written, but has about the same amount of ultimate depth.

BUT brain candy, because:

- Bohman is a compulsively readable writer. Like, she's just so good. Halfway through *Drowned*, even knowing it was pretty trash, I ordered her most recent one because I NEEDED another one. Although, to be fair to my Amazon haze: *The Other Woman*, her second novel, is among my very favourites -- so I'm holding out hope that *Drowned* was just a first-novel blunder.
- She's also absolutely exceptional at crafting emotion. I don't know exactly how she does it, but somehow in her (fairly sparse) descriptions of Marina's actions and thoughts around Gabriel, she pulls an intense recognition of passionate obsession out of the reader. Well, me, in any case. It's impressive, it's subtle, and she improves on this tenfold in *The Other Woman* so read that instead.
- That's about it. It's not good. But it's so *good*!

Anyway essentially, this book made me want to sit in rural Sweden, ignore everyone, and drink wine. I call

that a win!!

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### **Annika Kronberg says**

Om det är något Therese Bohman är bra på så är det att skildra män som är idioter och kärleksrelationer som är trasiga och destruktiva (vilket jag älskar). Kvinnorna är fantastiska, smarta, observanta, modiga. Det här är en bok om kärlek och svek, om att vilja men kanske inte kunna göra rätt.

I alla Bohmans böcker är karaktärerna genomarbetade och intressanta, även om jag tycker att det märks lite att det här är hennes debut. Marina, berättarjaget, känns som den minst bearbetade karaktären och hennes personlighet är lite motsägelsefull, men kanske är det meningen. Miljön, sommarsverige, är dock fantastiskt beskriven och språket är rappt och enkelt. Som vanligt har storyn en lite knäpp twist på slutet.

Rekommenderas som strörläsning för den som vill läsa någon välskrivet men lättläst.

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### **Lori L (She Treads Softly) says**

Drowned by Therese Bohman is a literary novel and atmospheric psychological thriller. As the description says, the basic story in is deceptively simple. A young woman from Stockholm, Marina, visits her older sister, Stella. Stella, a horticulturist, lives in the countryside with Gabriel, a charismatic older man who is a writer. Marina finds herself attracted to Gabriel, but also seems to sense something dark and surreal about her sister's seemingly idyllic life. The novel itself is much more complex than the simple story would indicate.

The tone of Drowned is ominous and threatening right from the start. Even though the first part of the novel is set in the summer and there is lots of talk about the heat, the garden, the flowers, I still felt a shiver up my spine. There are so many undercurrents of conflicting emotions and things left unsaid that the suspense was building as I anticipated that something was dreadfully wrong and questioned what was really happening. There are small clues carefully introduced as the novel progresses that help make the conclusion very satisfying for me.

Due to be released on May 22, 2012, I felt that this translation of Drowned done by Marlaine Delargy (who also translated The Unit by Ninni Holmqvist, another novel I enjoyed), was very well written. It is a short novel that leaves a big impact. Although some readers may find the extensive descriptions exhausting to read, I Highly Recommended it. <http://shetreadssoftly.blogspot.com/>

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### **Sarah says**

Without giving anything away, this book is a great read....It's a psycho-thriller full of heavy heat and vulnerability when you fall in love with someone that isn't right....The character of the book leaves a stale relationship in search of fun and excitement...well this is a book that is intense and leaves you on the edge of your seat as you read and know the dangers that lay ahead of her.

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### **Merredith says**

Drowned is a fast, only 200+ page book that I finished in less than a day. While on vacation from university in Stockholm, Marina goes to visit her older sister Stella in the countryside. Stella lives with her older boyfriend Gabriel in his inherited cottage. Gabriel is a semi-famous writer, one whom Marina had read when she was younger. Not a whole lot happens in this book, and what does happen is important enough that I can't say without spoiling it. What you should know is that this short book is less story-driven and more mood-driven. The writing itself is very smart and creates an unease, and without that style, I wouldn't have even bothered to finish the book.

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### **Angel says**

Don't waste your time like I did.

This book was a huge disappointment. Because it was short in length, I stuck to my guns and finished it even though I should have stopped when I became irritated by the lack of breaks. Part One and Part Two. Everything else just a jumble of nothing.

Too much fancy prose and no storyline to back it up.

I very rarely have given a book only a one star rating. I wanted to like this, but the characters were so undeveloped and the ending was so disappointing I felt cheated by the author. I gave my time to this storyline and I got nothing back.

Not dedicating anymore to even this review.

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### **Lily at Bookluvrs Haven says**

I want to warn you all ahead of time. There will be lots of spoilers in this review, so be forewarned... I try never to include spoilers in my reviews, but in order to really express why I feel the way I do about this novel, I will have to be fairly detailed.

For those of you that decided to proceed ahead:

I am so conflicted with this novel. As I began this story I thought that this would be an easy 4 star review. I was gripped from the beginning. It started out mellow, and really interesting. The relationship between these two sisters was terribly awkward and perplexing, and once I realized that there was a connection between Marina and her sister's husband, I rubbed my hands in anticipation and thought, "Here we go! Dramarama!!!"

And yes, I got some drama. Marina has a quickie affair with her bro-in-law which I expected. What I didn't

expect was the lack of emotion surrounding it. I figure that someone who just slept with her sister's husband would feel somewhat guilty and even more awkward around her sister, and yet, the story continued on uneventfully. There were some very subtle hints that there was something dark surrounding Gabriel, but with the exception of a couple of swear words and outbursts... it was really anti climatic, and uneventful.

Second part of this novel - where it falls apart for me.

Marina returns to her sister's house after a few months after her sister's drowning to pack up and organize her things? I am never really sure if that is her purpose for returning as she then apparently states she is now living there with Gabriel to the neighbors.

She ping pong through falling for Gabriel again, liquifying at the mere touch of his hands, to suspecting foul play in her sister's 'accidental' death. But with the exception of seeing his eyes 'change' and a tone to his voice, once again, it's pretty uneventful. Another outburst here and there, but from the outside looking in, I didn't really relate to how she would see him as a homicidal maniac and run through the house and lock her door, to then the next day, letting him get under her skirt.

At the end, there is a scene that is abusive, and his real nature is finally confirmed but it took the entire book to get there. And then it abruptly ends.

So... what happens to Marina. Is that dim wit going to stick around and be his next puppet? Furthermore... what the heck happened to her sister?? There is always a mere suspicion that things were not as they seemed with her death, and yet, that too goes completely unresolved in any way.

It was a well written novel in the technical sense. I could not put this down and ripped through it, but honestly, it was to look for answers that never came.

'Mixing hothouse sensuality with ice-cold fear on every page...' Well there was some 'sensuality' in this novel. Ice-cold fear on every page? .... Not at all. More like frustration on every page while I anticipated something explosive out of all that tension that continuously built up... and it just ended in disappointment.

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(For this and more reviews visit <http://bookluvrshaven.blogspot.ca/>)

## Hayley says

Therese Bohman worked as a literary critic for a number of years before penning her own novel and so I imagine she was particularly conscious of publishing's favourite catchcry, "show, don't tell". This cardinal rule explains how an author should show through a character's experience that, for example, it was cold, rather than simply saying, "it was cold". But the opposite is also true, in that too much of this description / exposition can become exhausting for the reader who simply wants the story to keep moving.

The problem with 'Drowned' is that it is primarily just pages and pages of exposition and the story itself so

minimal that I wonder why she even chose to write it as a full-length novel. The main character, Marina, visits her sister and her sister's partner in the countryside and essentially spends her days milling about the house - not exactly compelling reading. There was nothing endearing about the characters, despite the author's best efforts to make them more likeable through their hobbies and stories of their childhood, and the relationships between the three lacked necessary spark.

Part way through we learn a tragedy has occurred and the juxtaposition between Marina's first visit and her second is quite striking. The story slowly begins to simmer with tension and while Marina related everything from her first visit in minute detail, on the second visit she has difficulty remembering where the days have gone. I expect this technique was used to show the signs of an increasingly unstable mind yet was so subtle that the reader was left to their own interpretations. This resulted in an ominous conclusion that was chilling but also unfulfilling because it felt as if the story ended just as it was finally getting interesting.

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### **Kristin says**

I could easily have read this in one sitting if I didn't have to contend with the length of my lunch break and the necessity of attending my book club! As it is, I read it in 3 sittings. The reason I didn't want to put it down is that the writing is so... beautiful? Engaging? Powerful? Enticing? I'm not quite sure what to call it. The descriptions were phenomenal, and I felt like I really was in this isolated farmhouse, first in the stifling heat of summer and then in the dripping chill of late autumn. The difficulty in assessing a translated work is that I don't know how much of this was the author's talent and how much was the translator's skill, but I think that the sheer genius of this work indicates that both women are very good at their jobs.

Anyhow, this is about the most subtle story of suspense I have ever read. Really, you could read it as a long short story (or maybe novella) about the relationship between sisters, betrayal, and even art, as opposed to a novel of suspense. The suspense is there if you want to look for it, but it is so incredibly subtle that you almost have to make a marked effort. It's in the greenhouse orchids, on the record player, floating on the lake. It's mostly atmosphere. Clearly, it is difficult to describe. This really is the kind of book you have to experience for yourself. I was thinking about it for hours after I finished it.

On a side note, I love the picture of Therese Bohman on the flap. She looks **exactly** like the kind of woman to write this book, all dark and striking and intense and intelligent.

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### **Naomi says**

Synopsis: Marina visits her sister, Stella and while there falls under the spell of Stella's violent, sadistic and manipulative husband, Gabriel. Tragedy strikes and Stella dies. What are in Stella's diaries and will Marina fall victim to Gabriel's manipulative ways the same way her sister did?

My opinion: I really could not wrap my head around this book. I found it has taken me a few days to even write the review. I found it simplistic in its' writing and was scratching my head at the end of it. Furthermore, I found the characters to be underdeveloped and for it to almost feel "thrown together". I am a fan of Nordic Noir and Scandinavian writing. In fact, I have a group on Goodreads dedicated to it. But this one was lacking in a lot of the characteristics that I love about that region's writers.

Source: Reviewed through Netgalley for the publisher

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### **Laura says**

Although this novel involved some of my favorite things (botany; Pre-Raphaelite art; tall, dark, handsome men), it wasn't everything that I hoped it would be. I found some of the foreshadowing to be a bit clunky, and was also irked by some glaring historical inaccuracies relating to the Pre-Raphaelites (at one point, it's claimed that Elizabeth Siddal died of pneumonia after modelling for Millais' Ophelia; in fact, she died of a laudanum overdose a whole ten years after Ophelia was painted). I also found it implausible that the main character could be so ignorant about Pre-Raphaelite art, while writing a thesis on Rossetti. I did think that this was well-written though, with lots of specific sensory details, and a palpable sense of rot (clusters of aphids, dried-up sunflowers, etc.). Overall, I preferred the first part of the novel, with its beautiful, Swedish summertime setting.

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### **Diane S ? says**

This was a very different and hard to process psychological novel. I actually read part of it and put it aside for a few days just to think about what I was reading. The writing is lush, the prose wonderful the descriptions are very visual and sensory, at times beautiful. So on one hand is this beautiful background and on the other little random clues that point to madness and violence in a relationship. Yet these are easy to dismiss and the woman in this story does so, almost as it probably is in real life when one is trying to justify staying in an abusive relationship. It is not until there is a death that this woman begins to question the things she has experienced and witnessed, begins to re-evaluate what she thinks she wants. This novel has almost a dreamlike quality to it and I really can not decide if it was brilliant or just pedantic, in the end I decided that regardless the prose is superb and I wanted to see where it ended.

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### **Magenta says**

After reading this book I simply put it down and walked away. A few days later it hit me: nothing 'gripping', 'haunt[ing]' or 'disturb[ing]' (as described on the front cover by Emily Maguire) actually happened in this book, and that is why I found it rather empty and a little disappointing.

Upon beginning to read I found it detailed and rich in imagery, a quality I usually enjoy in novels, yet as I continued this exact trait became the book's downfall. So heavy in description it lacked in storyline, feeling and depth. As beautiful as the images created were (like expansive, pastoral paintings) there was no development of connection to the characters or their happenings, leaving me feeling a little disconnected from the story as a whole. The juxtaposition between part one and two was done marvellously, yet I felt I had missed out on the actual action of the story, leaving an empty space in the book, which the author slowly began to fill, but not fast or thoroughly enough.

I chose this book to read first after a dry patch of only reading novels for year 12 and textbooks throughout the year, in doing so I expected more; I wanted it to spark inspiration in me again. It failed to do so, unfortunately.

