

THE FALL by Claire McGowan

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My latest book recommendation is *'The Fall'* by Claire McGowan. It is an intriguing crime thriller about two diametrically opposed women who form an unlikely partnership to do the right thing.

THE PLOTLINE

Charlotte Miller has everything; a well-paid job, designer clothes and a handsome fiancé, Daniel Stockbridge, who she is about to marry. However, that is all about to change.

Totally wrapped up in her expensive wedding plans, Charlotte had been oblivious to the fact her future husband had more important things to worry about than their upcoming nuptials. The bank he worked for was under threat of liquidation, meaning he was about to lose his prestigious job and could no longer afford to pay for the grand wedding she had planned.

After breaking the bad news to Charlotte, Dan suggests they go out to a Jamaican club in Camden, which he thought sounded good. Still reeling from the shock, Charlotte is reluctant to go, but after seeing the stress in Dan's eyes finally agrees to go. However, before they leave the flat, Dan produces some cocaine, which he persuades her to share with him, telling her it will relax them. Unfortunately, when they arrive at the club and Dan tries to buy a drink, his company credit card is declined. Fuelled by the cocaine, he becomes aggressive and starts shouting until the owner, Anthony Johnson, takes him into the office to sort things out. Woozy from the cocaine, Charlotte waits outside for Dan to return, thinking no more about the incident until the police turn up at their flat the following day and arrest Dan for the murder of Anthony Johnson.

Unable to remember much about that night, but convinced Dan is innocent, Charlotte is determined to prove her fiancé is not a murderer. However, because of a previous incident at work where a black colleague had left due to racial harassment, together with the fact Anthony Johnson was also black, Dan is further accused of being a racist.

Assumed guilty by association, Charlotte suddenly finds herself targeted by Anthony's sister and her friends, who viciously attack her. Fortunately, the incident is witnessed by Keisha Collins – a mixed-race girl with problems of her own – who intervenes. A victim of domestic abuse, whose child had been taken into care until she could provide a safer environment for her, Keisha could not be more

different from Charlotte. However, after realising her partner, Chris Dean, could possibly be mixed up in the murder, Keisha decides to join forces with Charlotte to find out the truth.

MY REVIEW

'The Fall' is one of the best crime thrillers I have read recently. Alternating between each of the main characters' viewpoint, the author paints a vivid mental picture of the very different backgrounds inhabited by Keisha and Charlotte. Keisha is poor and domestically abused by her violent partner, for whom she dropped out of further education. Charlotte, by contrast, was brought up in an affluent family and educated at the best schools. However, despite their many differences, the two girls manage to form an unlikely alliance, which turns out to be beneficial to them both.

'The Fall' is brilliantly written with well-drawn characters. Their complicated relationships and tense interactions kept me hooked until the very end. I can thoroughly recommend it.

THE AUTHOR

Born in Northern Ireland, Claire now lives in London. She published her first novel in 2012 and has followed it up with many others in the crime fiction genre, as well as in women's fiction (writing as Eva Woods). Writing thrillers for Thomas & Mercer, she has sold over a million books and has had several number one best sellers. She ran the UK's first MA in crime writing for five years and regularly teaches and talks about writing. Her first non-fiction project, the true crime book, *'The Vanishing Triangle'*, was released in 2022. She also writes scripts and has several original projects in development for TV, as well as having had four radio dramas broadcast. Several of her novels are also in development as television series.

'The Fall' is published by Headline and is available in ebook and paperback format from Amazon. It is also available in paperback from Waterstones and Foyles.