

ANNA O by Matthew Blake

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My latest book recommendation is ‘*Anna O*’ by Matthew Blake. It is an intriguing crime story exploring the question: are sleepwalkers technically conscious when committing a crime?

THE PLOTLINE

Dr Benedict Prince is a psychologist and leading expert on sleep disorders at the Abbey Sleep Clinic, a private and exclusive clinic catering for celebrities, politicians and royalty alike – as well as anyone with the financial wherewithal to afford the high fees. As a sideline, the clinic also has a contract with the police to act as consultants on criminal cases. It is regarding this lucrative arrangement that Ben is suddenly called to the office late one evening by his boss, Professor Bloom, for a meeting with Stephen Donnelly, Deputy Legal Director at the Ministry of Justice.

After being told the meeting is of the utmost secrecy, Ben is then told his help is needed on a murder case where the suspect, Anna Ogilvy, has been in a trauma-induced sleep for the past four years after killing two people. As Ben had recently written an article claiming to have found a new diagnostic method of waking patients from resignation syndrome, the authorities are keen for him to work his magic on Anna, so they can bring her to trial.

Keen to prove his theories work, when Anna is transferred to the clinic’s special secure VIP room, Ben starts to investigate her past and the events leading up to her present state. However, the deeper he delves, and the closer he gets to the truth, the more dangerous his involvement becomes.

MY REVIEW

I thoroughly enjoyed this novel. ‘*Anna O*’ is a rollercoaster of events leading to a total surprise at the end. Nobody is above suspicion. Just as you think you know the truth, something else happens to dash your theories.

With each chapter focussed on individual characters, their back stories gradually begin to unfold. Heroes become villains at the drop of a hat and vice versa until it is difficult to know who to trust. ‘*Anna O*’ is both a crime mystery and a study in morals. I found it gripping and extremely enjoyable. It is certainly worth a read, and I can highly recommend it.

THE AUTHOR

Matthew Blake studied English at Durham University and Merton College, Oxford. Before writing fiction, he worked as a researcher and speechwriter at the Palace of Westminster.

After discovering that the average person spends 33 years of their life asleep, Matthew felt the pull of a story. He began extensive research into sleep-related crimes and into the mystery illness known as sleepwalking, research that sparked a thrilling question: if someone commits murder while sleepwalking, are they innocent or guilty? It was then that his novel *'Anna O'* was born.

'Anna O' is published by HarperCollins and is available in ebook, paperback, hardback and audiobook format from Amazon. It is also available in paperback and hardback from Waterstones and Foyles.