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He appeared as if from nowhere, brutally slashed a man and a young woman in an office elevator, then vanished again without a trace. The woman survived and gave the police a detailed description of the killer's bizarre face, yet the police can find no sign of him anywhere. It's as if he never existed. But now he's killed again. And again. One woman holds the key to his terrifying secret...but how do you stop a murderer who isn't there?

Death Mask Details

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Author : Graham Masterton

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From Reader Review Death Mask for online ebook

Sarah says

Graham Masterton's Death Mask is the second book in the Sissy Sawyer series. In countries outside of the United States, Death Mask's title is actually The Painted Man.

Death Mask is a blood-bath thriller about an ugly, evil killer who appears out of thin air to bludgeon people, most often in elevators (trust Masterton to turn anything into scary). This particular killer is untraceable and non-existent when police and detectives are investigating murder scenes, which indicates that this killer is either really good, or just a ghost.

In another part of the city, a young artist named Molly discovers she possesses the gift to paint pictures that come to life (in other words, if you want a vase of roses, Molly can paint the roses to make them appear out of thin air). After the murderer wearing the "death mask" begins his killing spree, Molly is contacted by the police to sketch an image of the killer based on the description of a wounded victim. Of course, since Molly's paintings come to life, she is cloning additional killers each time she makes a sketch.

In an effort to catch and kill the multiple "Death Mask" killers, Molly works together with her husband Trevor, his psychic tarot-reading mother Sissy Sawyer, and a few fearless detectives to stop the murders for good.

As with all of Masterton's novels, Death Mask is completely unpredictable with a unique plot. This novel is surprising, scary, horrifying, gruesome and chock-full of every other element that makes a horror novel an amazing experience. Even the killer's motive is an enigma that will leave readers thinking about Death Mask long after they've finished it.

I did get a kick out of Sissy Sawyer and her relationship with her deck of tarot cards. Apparently, Sissy has been carrying her tarot deck around with her for her entire life and has given hundreds of tarot readings, but when she uses the deck to predict the killer's next moves, she is baffled and surprised about some of the cards that turn up because she is unfamiliar with them. How is that possible?

I can't remember a time I've ever been disappointed in a novel by Graham Masterton. Even his novels in the crime, mystery, and general fiction genres are excellent, specifically because all of them are unpredictable. Some of his novels have happy endings, and some don't, which makes Masterton that much more fun. Masterton is, without a doubt, one of the best writers of the horror genre.

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Lindsey Goddard says

I enjoyed this novel. There were twists and turns I didn't see coming, and the concept was pretty original. (Hey, you read enough horror, you begin to realize that *everything* has been done before!) I liked the idea behind this book. It made me think of that Oscar Wilde quote, "Life imitates art far more than art imitates life," only in this book it's a matter of art COMING to life! The pace kept my attention (none of those boring

parts that make you want to start skimming chapters). Overall, a good read.

Ryan says

With a body count well over 30 (maybe even over 40, I lost track) this has to be one of the bloodiest books I have read in a very long time, and I loved every minute of it. I haven't read much of Graham Masterton's work, but of the few books I've read, I loved every single one. This one is no different.

Molly is a gifted artist who has worked with the police in the past, sketching pictures of suspects and missing people. Lately her work is coming off the page and appearing in the real world. So far it's only happening with roses, but who knows what's next, or why and how it's happening. So when she is contacted to do a sketch of the man who attacked the victims in the elevator, she is presented with a killer who has a very red face, almost mask like in appearance, and black slits for eyes. He is then dubbed Red Mask and his reign of terror is just getting started. Through twists and turns Molly, with the help of her psychic mother-in-law Sissy, must figure out a way to stop Red Mask before he slaughters more innocents, including Molly's young daughter.

Death Mask explores the idea of where art ends and life begins. Did the Red Mask exist before he was sketched or did he jump off the page the way the roses did? If he did jump off the page, then who attacked the first two victims in the elevator? Why does two attacks happen at the very same time in two different locations in the city? Molly and Sissy must explore all the questions and more to figure out where the Red Mask came from and why he's doing these horrendous acts of violence.

Tushar Karkar says

Another gripping book from Masterton with the mystery of the masked killer unraveling right towards the end of the book. Loved reading it.

Belinda says

A fun read as always with Masterton--lots of gore, suspense and well written characters. Scary enough that while reading it in bed, I had to go to the bathroom and found myself turning on lights and looking behind me--a high recommendation from me as very little scares me! The storyline was creative and scary --a bit of a veering off from most of Masterton's horror in the lack of a real life myth behind it--still an excellent and creative story and a terrifying killer character. Masterton is a true treasure--I am so glad I discovered him and he is so prolific! In the last 2 years or so I have read and purchased 25 of his books and I have not even made a dent. Which is a good thing!

Neil Davies says

I tend to forget, when I haven't read anything by him for a while, just how good a writer Graham Masterton is. His ability to draw me in from the first page (often the first sentence) never ceases to impress me.

Death Mask is a great horror story written by a true master of the genre. My only criticism, and the only reason it doesn't get the full 5 stars, is that the ending is a bit too quick and easy after all that has gone before. However that should not stop anyone from picking up this book - even with that small fault it is among the best of genre fiction available. I can only aspire to reach this level.

Lisa says

When I was a kid, I rather enjoyed Graham Masterton. There was one book in particular, *The Walkers*, that I remember reading over and over again and so, when I spotted Death Mask during a visit to the hairdressers, I thought I'd see if he was as good as I remembered. All I can say is that I must have had some seriously low standards as a kid, as *Death Mask* was utter gash from start to finish. It was so bad, in fact, that it completely stopped my hot reading streak in its tracks as I found anything else to instead.

Sissy Sawyer is a fortune-teller who is always proved right. Staying with her son and daughter-in-law, Molly, she witnesses a miracle as some roses that Molly has painted materialise in the back garden. Shortly afterwards Molly is called in to craft a composite drawing for the police of someone who has attacked two people in an elevator, leaving one of them dead. Nicknamed the Red Mask due to his red face, soon he's popping up everywhere, slashing people to ribbons and seeming to be impervious to any harm himself. It turns out that Molly's miracle wasn't limited to roses - every time she draws Red Mask, another copy of him appears and gets stabby, all thanks to a necklace that Molly is wearing. One of the charms on it once belonged to Vincent Van Gogh, you see, and after painting his self-portrait, an evil version of him murdered him (stay with me, it gets worse). And so Sissy and Molly come up with a plan - to draw Sissy's dead husband so that he can materialise and battle the various Red Masks on their behalf.

As a horror book, this was an utter failure. I'm used to suspending my disbelief - I'm a rather big fantasy fan after all - but *Death Mask* was so ludicrous that it utterly failed to raise my pulse, prompting only eye rolls instead. The characterisation was thin, the plot ridiculous, and no-one behaved the way anyone actually would, with the police constantly sharing important information with these unqualified civilians and letting them tramp around crime scenes, holding press conferences saying the killer could strike anywhere at any time and that they had no clue who he was, and letting a fortune-teller essentially lead their investigation for them.

Death Mask is apparently one of a series starring Sissy Sawyer. I can safely say that I will be giving the rest a very wide berth.

Also posted at Cannonball Read 9

Carl Alves says

In *Death Mask*, the main protagonist Molly Sawyer, has a special artistic talent. She helps the police in

drawing sketches for them. Her mother-in-law Sissy has psychic talents and reads tarot cards. The story really kicks into high gear when a mysterious double murder occurs in the elevator of a building in Cincinnati. The killer wears a red mask, which Molly depicts in her artist sketch. When the brutal killings show no sign of letting up, Molly and her mother-in-law come to the conclusion that her art work is coming to life. All of a sudden, there is more than one killer for the police to deal with.

Death Mask gives the reader just about everything they could ask for in a horror novel. For starters, the writing is superb, which is precisely what I would expect from Graham Masterton. The man is simply a master craftsman. The buildup in tension and horror is flawlessly executed. The premise of the story is unique and intriguing. The tension builds to a crescendo. The characters come to life. Despite the horror that Molly feels for springing a killer to life, she and Sissy don't back down in the face of danger. Although this isn't Masterton's best work, it's not far off the mark. The book is terrific fun. If you're a horror fan, this novel is a must read.

Carl Alves - author of Blood Street

Scott says

This was a well written supernatural horror story.

I thought that the end went on a little longer than it should have but it was still a good book.

This was my first Masterton book and it will not be my last.

Donna says

Okay. I liked this book quite a bit, and definitely more than the first in the Sissy Sawyer series.
BUT.

I do not understand why the author changed Sissy's dead husband's name (from Gerry to Frank), or her daughter-in-law's name (from Jean to Molly), or the daughter-in-law's personality (from conservative to just like Sissy), or added a granddaughter that as far as I can remember hadn't been there before, or moved Sissy's son's family from one state to another (granted, people do move sometimes, but I don't think that's exactly what happened here.) When you read the first book and then the second one straight after that like I did, you find yourself constantly being thrown out of the story by these anomalies. I did enjoy the story, I did NOT enjoy the inconsistencies.

Jakk Makk says

Too much red paint on this canvas, cardboard cutouts doing paperwork things, in a time period it can't commit to. Might work as weird fiction, but flops as a horror audiobook. I like the reader's voice but it seems misplaced with a largely female POV. Can't help wondering if the print version is a better experience. DNF one hour and forty minutes. "Everybody got stabbed in the 'vaters today? Well shucks howdy, boss."

Kasia says

Graham has been my favorite author ever since I plunged into the horror genre at the age of fourteen or so, I used to climb my dad's personal library shelves to get to the good stuff...after another fourteen years it's comforting to know that the master is still at his craft and these days all I have to do is go to the bookstore to get his latest, no ladders needed...Death Mask has been a pleasant surprise, I am a huge lover of his older works, the intricate lattice work of mysticism and folklore mixed with sensitive characters made for memorable reads, this book reminds me of the good old times when reading Masterton's books was the best part of my care free day.

Death Mask is clever and intense, sprinkled with mysteries and surprises and special treats to satisfy the hungriest of eyes that need a lot of juice out of words on paper. I adored the tale of a red faced killer who appeared and disappeared at will, one who was a murdering nemesis tracked by a police team and a very special sketch artist, one who had more power with her brush than she would have ever imagined. The novel does a wonderful job of drawing the reader into the so far undisturbed lives of some really special characters, when Molly discovers that her drawings seem to come to life she no longer knows how to handle the situation, but her talents are needed to help find a killer no matter what is going on in her head or in her personal life. A vicious murdering figure is on a killing spree and only Molly and her card reading mother in law have the sensitivity and enough intuition mixed with some otherworldly help that can help in solving the mystery of the insane assassin. Masterton does a tremendously good job of creating Molly and Sissy and Red Mask, not to mention the special cards, which were as haunting and enchanting as any fortune telling deck I have ever seen. For fans of mystery, horror and enticing thrillers mixed with something extra special this is a real treat, I adored this books and was ready to read more of the master, he has always been great in my eyes and this book was a real pleasure to read, not to mention a whole lot of fun!

Mary Johnson says

I've read some of the Katie Maguire series out of order and enjoyed them enough to decide to read from book one. However, I spotted this stand alone and the synopsis grabbed me.

It's a paranormal / paranonsense book that passed time when reading without concentrating during the introduction of a new puppy to my home. If you are a fan of the genre or want an easy read and can dispell any sense of realism then you might enjoy it. Otherwise, not the author's finest hour.....

Jade says

The ludicrous plot of Death Mask was far from what I expected. For all the tension the story tried to create with dreams of giants and portending tarot cards, the attempts at horror turned out more amusing than terrifying. References to Van Gogh helped little.

Elusive says

'Death Mask' weaves an immensely gruesome story about a mysterious man who murders people in elevators and has the uncanny ability to disappear every single time. Baffled, the police seek help from sketch artist Molly and her psychic mother Sissy to catch this cold-blooded man.

This is definitely one of Masterton's best books. From the very beginning, the story succeeds at capturing the reader's attention. There's no shortage of gore and best of all, the brutality isn't the only thing the book has to offer. There's plenty of greatness achieved via the combination of several elements and aspects such as the supernatural, investigation, police procedural and mystery. All of these were done very well indeed, something which is hard to achieve but the author pulled it off brilliantly.

Sissy's tarot cards were truly fascinating. There were abundant details and clues present in every card and the fun bit was reading about how Sissy deciphered the cards that showed up in her readings. However, the way every single card was specifically relevant to the Red Mask case requires a suspension of disbelief. Besides that, Molly's strange but awesome ability to make the pictures she draws come to life was fantastic. I liked how this was explained – it's easy to see that Masterton is dedicated to his story.

As for Red Mask, he was one hell of an unforgettable character. Although he repeated himself most of the time, he was badass, fearless and audacious. Plus, even at the end of the book, Red Mask was still shrouded in mystery but this added plenty of suspense. With two likeable lead characters coupled with other somewhat fleshed out characters such as Trevor and the policemen, this is one horror tale that will make the reader root for the protagonists while on the edge of the seat.

Overall, 'Death Mask' has a riveting storyline which was executed perfectly. This book is definitely worth every second.
