

LAURA M. HUGHES



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The dead beckon and the little girl obeys. Night after night she answers the graveyard's call, though she dreads her encounters with the creature that dwells there.

But she'll soon come to learn that memories are much more dangerous than monsters...

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Danse Macabre Details

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Author : Laura M. Hughes

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From Reader Review Danse Macabre for online ebook

James Lafayette Tivendale says

"All angels are men, all men are crows, and all crows are liars."

Danse Macabre is Laura M Hughes's debut outing and at only 56 pages I was able to read this novella in about an hour. It follows a seemingly innocent and shy young girl called Blue who has to complete a mission given to her by a disfigured being claiming to be an angel. This shadowy fiend haunts a graveyard and states that Blue has to murder ten sinners and upon completion, her deceased mother and sister can escape purgatory and ascend unto Heaven.

It had a really intriguing beginning with a young boy telling a tale around a crowded bonfire regarding an apparently evil old man who dwelt in the neighbourhood and a couple of events that happened in this gentleman's immoral past. Blue remained lurking and listening in the shadows whilst this was taking place and then her story really begins. After this, the narrative follows Blue's actions and reveals important sections of her haunting past. Within a chapter, it would sometimes change between past events to present happenings to actions at a different place in the present and at certain points, I did feel slightly disorientated. I kept with it because I have seen nothing but good reviews for this book and fortunately it all worked out for the better with the different threads of the story all combining together quite nicely. I am unaware what era this is meant to be set within but not knowing doesn't affect the story. Whilst reading, I imagined it taking place in the early 1900's in an outback village somewhere. Hughes's writing is masterly, with lovely poetic prose and an utterly captivating and suspenseful ending where all is wrapped up nicely. (view spoiler)The descriptions of some events throughout the narrative (such as certain deaths) are not that detailed or thorough but this allowed me to imagine the action for myself instead of being told exactly what was taking place and for me, that is quite a refreshing way to read sometimes. There are not too many characters either and the players who are involved are not too complex due to the length of the book, however; I liked following Blue's thoughts and antics and I enjoyed it when crow and snail turned up at certain occasions before one of Blue's victims were disposed of. This is a pretty good debut outing full of wonderful imagery, a great amount of tension of the macabre variety and in my mind, it definitely seems to have a dark fairy tale feel to it. Laura was giving this book away free on Amazon when I purchased it which was a bonus but even at full price it is under £1.00 and it can also be read on Kindle Unlimited so it is 100% worth checking out.

Thanks for reading - James
www.youandibooks.wordpress.com

Daniel says

Fina mala pricica za koju priznajem da nisam iz prve pohvatao sta se desava (citanje na javnom mestu oce to tako). Vrlo lepo odradjena atmosfera puna nelagodnosti plus fin tvist na kraju. Jedino sto nema puno likova ali dobro na 60tak strana i ne mozemo ocekiveti preveliku razradu.

U svakom slucaju cu baciti i na druga pisanja ove spisateljice.

The Tattooed Book Geek (Drew). says

As always my full review can also be found on my blog: <https://thetattooedbookgeek.wordpress...>

This is a stunning read, in just 56 pages Hughes crafts a fully fledged story with a captivating main character in Blue and a fitting if somewhat tragic ending. Being a novella you know that words and space are to a premium and Hughes utilizes these perfectly, giving you a tale that keeps you intrigued, guessing and mesmerised. It's dark and ominous with an underlying tone of tragedy throughout.

In short, Blue is a young girl, tormented by memories, each night she visits the village cemetery and the graves of her lost loved ones. Each time, there is a man waiting for her there, Blue strikes a bargain with him and thus her tale of revenge and redemption is set.

Blue as I mentioned is a captivating character, the struggles she faces, the actions she must take and the consequences of those actions are all gripping. Even without a single line of dialogue she's a character that you really feel for. As the story progresses we see some flashbacks of Blue's, these help you as the reader feel drawn to her even more as you experience events that she has had to go through in her past.

Along with Blue there's also a few other characters, Snail and Crow are by Blue's side for her story, her sidekicks, offering advice and acting as her conscious. There's also the man who haunts Blue, he comes across as sinister and menacing and when his true intentions are revealed late on takes on a nightmarish aspect to.

The world building is also top quality, it's only a novella so we aren't given detailed and multi layered areas full of history and lore but what we are given works really well. While we don't actually know when or where the story takes place Hughes creates a vividly dark setting for her tale that fits the tone perfectly.

The book starts at chapter 10 and ends with chapter 1, this may seem strange at first, it did to me but it ties in well to the story and as you progress you will have an "ah" moment when you realise why the chapters are labelled in reverse.

Hughes writing is also praiseworthy, weaving together elements of fantasy, horror, ghost stories and thriller her style is dark and creepy yet she never goes overboard with the descriptions or gore for the horror elements, sometimes we don't need gallons of blood with viscera spraying everywhere and that old saying "less is more" is apt for Danse Macabre. Sometimes it's what you're not shown rather than what you are that allows you as the reader to imagine the scenes in your head as you read them. This means that those of you who would normally shy away from the genre can easily give this a go and treat yourself to this read.

Hughes has a way with words that borders on the poetic, she manages to create vivid imagery and emotion for her main character in Blue.

I don't read many novella's but this is the best one I have read, Danse Macabre outstanding, it is an atmospheric, haunting and evocative read that I highly recommend.

Mike Everest Evans says

Review TBC.

Tania says

Blue always preferred numbers to words. Words have power. Words hold painful truths and delicious lies. Just one word can stir up a hundred memories and a thousand feelings so that you can be hurt by a word or killed by a sentence.

3.5 stars. At only 56 pages this novella definitely had a bigger impact on me than most short stories I read. The language was beautiful and the story reminded me a bit of Neil Gaiman. If you are a fan of his, then try this.

Petrik says

Mini review

Just within an hour, you can experience a great enchanting and haunting tale.

To sum up this little gothic horror novelette in one word, it's truly **macabre**. If you know me by now, you will know that I rated my novellas quite critically, in fact, there are only three novellas that I've read up to this day which received a 4 or higher rating from me. Those novellas are Secret History, Emperor's Soul and Edgedancer, all written by Brandon Sanderson, Laura's little story is the newest addition to that list.

I will not talk about the plot at all, this book is short enough already, you can read it in an hour. All you have to know is that for its short length, Laura has managed to tell an evocative story with her wonderful prose. She really has a way with words, every setting and the plot she weaved felt vivid and memorable.

“Words have power. Words hold painful truths and delicious lies. Just one word can stir up a hundred memories and a thousand feelings so that you can be hurt by a word or killed by a sentence.”

By the end of this little story, the first thing that came to my mind is that Laura Hughes seriously needs to write more books; **this is a wonderful novella that I'll recommend to everyone who's looking for a great short horror read.**

You can find this and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at BookNest

Petros Triantafyllou says

Hughes' little novelette is the short story of the year.

“Blue always preferred numbers to words. Words have power. Words hold painful truths and delicious lies. Just one word can stir up a hundred memories and a thousand feelings so that you can be hurt by a word or killed by a sentence.”

Laura is a virtuosa of prose. Dancing between beautifully written allegories and masterfully placed expositions, she has written an ostensibly "non sequitured" story with vivid imagery and even pace. *Danse Macabre* is a fast, one-hour read, and the paperback costs only four pounds, so do yourself a favor and buy it now.

You can find more of my reviews over at <http://BookNest.eu/>

J.P. Ashman says

Dark, haunting and clever. An emotional roller coaster that will leave you guessing, wondering and feeling for the a main character caught in a horrifying string of events that end with a satisfying if not tragic ending.

Highly recommended!

Gaia says

I know the author of this book, so my review may be biased. This is a novella Laura wrote. It took me a bit of time to get into the story. In the beginning I was mostly just confused and wasn't sure what was going on. I persisted and I'm glad I did, because after a while things became clearer. The story is quite creepy, I enjoyed reading about this creepy atmosphere. After things became clearer I enjoyed the story a whole lot more. I liked the way the chapters were done, counting down from ten. it was cleverly done. Overall it's a nice story that I enjoyed reading.

Mark Lawrence says

This is a gothic horror novella at 25,000ish words many modern writers would call it a long short story and Michael Moorcock would call it a book.

The primary strength of *Danse Macabre* (the 7th book of that title thrown up by Goodreads search) is the prose. The descriptions and atmosphere are excellent. Not perfect - to my taste Hughes often uses one more adjective than needed - but really very good.

The period and location are rather tough to pin down and quite possibly it flits across centuries and continents. At first the story is rather confusing and you have to bear with it across some rather swift scene

changes, but once you get the hang of the thing it becomes fun.

There are twists, there is satisfying murder, there are moments of sadness.

I'm rounding this up to 5*. I'm a proseophile. If you like novellas you should like this one. Hughes should write a book. And remove 3 adjectives a page.

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G.R. Matthews says

A short, dark story of redemption and fall. Some beautiful imagery and a delicate touch with emotions. The story carries you along in the mind of a small girl, lost amongst sorrow and loneliness.

Emma says

Deliciously creepy novella. Review to follow.

Kitvaria Sarene says

I quite enjoyed that little novelette!

It was darker than expected, though not scary. It had quite some good unpredictable twists and kept the reader in the dark about what was going on for quite a while!

I especially enjoyed the mix of what felt like a bit of Poe, with a young child's POV, a dash of bloody murder, a bit of deceit and some lore to spice it up!

Definitely worth a look for a quick "story snack" between the big books! I'll definitely keep an eye out for more works of Laura Hughes!

Nimrod Daniel says

I would have never heard of this novel without being familiar with fantasy-fiction and Laura. Danse Macabre feels more like a horror story than a fantasy, which is not exactly my cup of tea. I usually feel that horror elements in horror stories are used for no good reason, but only for the sake of horror itself (maybe that's the whole idea?). That's me anyway.

From the very beginning you can feel how creepy and bleak the world is. Other readers might like it but I

didn't like the horror atmosphere in this novella. I must admit that I'm not not fond of that writing-style, and I didn't feel the plot was tight enough. I forced myself a few times to keep reading and I'm glad I did.

There are few things that I did like that I liked in this novella. Laura pulled nice plot-twists, Snail and Crow are interesting characters, and the second half was better than the first one, especially the ending.

I'm not exactly the target audience for this story, so don't be discouraged by my review if you're into horror stories.

“All angels are men, all men are crows, and all crows are liars.”

3.25/5

Scott Hitchcock says

3.5*'s.

Ms Hughes has excellent prose which really added a dark subtext to this interesting horror novelette. She is able to simultaneously depict the scene, characters and action into one fluid motion with nothing superfluous added.

The plot itself was easy to figure out and she flipped through events near the end in a furious fashion where she could have developed things more. I do hope she writes something longer and more developed in the future.
