



Quicksand

Iris Johansen

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"Do you still miss your little Bonnie?"

This one sentence, spoken by a male voice in an anonymous phone call, is all it takes to drag Eve Duncan right back to that horrifying moment years ago when her only daughter vanished without a trace. Since then, Eve's life has become an obsession to find her daughter's remains. Only one man--a brilliant, ruthless killer--knows the truth about what happened to Bonnie. But taunting Eve might be his first and last mistake... Eve is armed with more than just her talent as a forensic sculptor. She brings with her former Navy SEAL Joe Quinn, Atlanta detective who will do anything to help Eve put the pain of Bonnie's death to rest. Even if he has to lie to the woman he cares about the most. And even if this killer wars nothing more than to lure Eve further and further into swamp of madness...

Quicksand Details

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From Reader Review Quicksand for online ebook

Rachael Uponen says

Honestly, if I had noticed earlier that the stars meant "did not like it," "it was okay," "liked it," "really liked it," and "it was amazing," I would have rated most of Iris Johansen's novels about a star lower. This will be my first review where I use that system. In my old system, this would have been a 3/5.

The difference between "did not like it" and "it was okay" was, for me, due to that I'm the most familiar with Eve's story. I was especially pleased that Jane MacGuire spent most of her time offscreen, so it was mostly Eve, Joe, some other guy named Luis Montalvo who's **also** attracted to Eve (and the feeling is mutual, but Eve loves Joe more and is loyal to him), and Miguel Vicente, Montalvo's yes man. I'm familiar with Eve and feel like she's better developed than Johansen's other heroines, and, as disgustingly saccharine as Bonnie is, I'm rather fond of the ghostly little tyke. It's also fun that I know what's going to happen in advance--at least, I know what happened to Bonnie. I have to say that knowing this information can make an otherwise dull book interesting. That's not exactly a compliment, though, if reading someone's books out of order makes a series **more** enjoyable.

It wouldn't be an Eve Duncan book without some new serial killer to taunt her about Bonnie, and this time, the killer is Henry Kistle, a murderer who specializes in killing children. He calls Bonnie "a flaming arrow in the darkness" (I do like this phrase) and claims that he killed her. Of course, Eve knows that he's probably just trying to hurt her, but her obsession with finding Bonnie's body compels her to do what he says. In order to give Joe and Luis incentive to join in, however, he tells her he'll be kidnapping and murdering another child. He doesn't just want to lure Eve in his trap--he wants to kill Joe and Luis first, to hurt her further.

All the characters in this book are irritating. We have Eve, who's willing to take incredibly stupid risks because of her Bonnie obsession (instead of, I don't know, joining a support group for parents of missing children or family murdered killed by serial killers); Joe, who's growing more and more frustrated with Eve's consistent determination and disappointment; a one-dimensional bad guy who says "bitch" a lot; and a precocious child to serve as further proof that Johansen has no idea how to write kids. This one isn't even a genius.

Joe was far from insufferable in this book, but he was still an insensitive prick when it came to Bonnie. He tells Eve that he doesn't, **can't** care about Bonnie, and even says that he wishes she had never been born. Later, he whines to himself that he's going to eventually leave Eve once he can't stand seeing her in pain any longer, "[b]ut not before he might have hurt her beyond healing." You do know you have control over this, right? Then again, this is how all the men (and sometimes the women) are in these books: "I'm selfish. I can't help it, so you'd better get used to it."

Eve isn't much better. She uses a woman from one of Johansen's earlier novels, Megan Blair, who has the ability to hear voices when she's near places where bad things have happened (and is now married to Grady the pedophile). Eve knows that Megan can help her find bodies and even children who have been kidnapped but not yet killed. The whole time, she hates on herself for letting Megan do something that's clearly tearing her apart--which it is, because Megan actually **feels** the suffering connected to the voices, as if it were happening to her in the present. Nonetheless, she doesn't even try to stop Megan, who insists on doing it because she wants to see Henry dead and she wants to save the girl he's kidnapped.

I'd be fine with Eve using Megan if she wasn't continually moaning to her about what an awful person she is,

and I would even be fine with Eve moaning if she were actually going to try and stop Megan. Instead, she just sits in the middle, admitting she wants and needs Megan's help, but oh my God, what a monster she is, but she really really needs Megan's help and she'll do anything for Bonnie (and the kidnapped girl) but ohhhh she's so mean and evil and--SHUT UP ALREADY.

The girl, Laura Ann, is annoying. Full stop. Although she's scared, she knows that that's where Henry is getting his satisfaction, and somehow manages, at age 9, to gather up the courage to talk back to him, spit in his face, and pretend she's not scared. She also figures out that he's using her as bait and--again, at AGE 9--decides she's not going to play Henry's little game, because she doesn't want Eve and the other grown-ups to get hurt. Sigh.

Children are children. And once children understand that death is permanent, they have very strong self-preservation instincts. In fact, one of the reason Laura Ann is so "strong" *gag* is that she has some vague ailment and has had to survive through various surgeries. If that were the case, wouldn't her will to live be even stronger? Wouldn't she be even *more* scared? Look, we don't need for her to be selfless in order for her to be likable. Children *should* be selfish, at least when it comes to literal matters of life and death. In this situation, it made her seem like she wasn't a real child, which made me dislike her.

The bad guy is boring. It's as simple as that. I'm not a fan of sadism for the sake of sadism, especially if it's used as a plot device. I mean, what's different about this guy? He likes killing kids and Eve is somehow so "special" that he wants to kill her, too. I don't know, man. Considering how most serial killers who mess with Eve end up dead, you'd think they'd learn to stay away from her after a while.

I don't remember Luis from earlier books, but he's not terribly interesting. He's just as bad as Joe, forcing her to be more intimate than she wants to be, constantly reminding her that he wants to bone her (and saying that he knows she wants it as much as he does), even holding her hand, even though she tries to pull away, saying, "I deserve this." And of course, he's still a "good guy," and boundaries don't mean anything if it's the "good guy" disrespecting them.

The story is predictable, but that in itself was easy to predict. Johansen is very formulaic. She knows what sells, and her audience knows what they like. I can't fault her for that, and besides, the action was enjoyable to read, even though I knew (warning: SERIOUS spoilers about who kills someone) (view spoiler)

Unfortunately, none of the positives in this book overcome the negatives. It was average at best. And, as someone who's read the conclusion of Eve's search for Bonnie's remains, I'd say you could skip this one entirely. But if you're a fan of Iris Johansen, this is definitely one of her better ones.

Penny says

I really like the characters in this series. I got Quicksand after reading Stalemate, because I was left with unanswered questions. UGH! This book still didn't give me the answers, but I did enjoy having Miguel and Montalvo back in this story line. There were new characters introduced that were equally as interesting, Megan, who has psychic abilities, and Laura Ann, a spunky little girl, who is abducted by Kistle, who was named in Stalemate as the suspect who abducted Eve's daughter, Bonnie, years earlier and her body has never been found. If you enjoy suspense novels this series is for you. I have to check out Johansens following books to see if I can get my questions answered.

Andrea says

Surprisingly passionless writing for a thriller. Characters keep talking about "the horror" of whatever, but I never truly felt it. I also never felt any chemistry between Eve and either of the male leads - they all seemed like fairly unpleasant obsessives to me. Now Laura Ann - that's a character to love!

Joanne says

I love the Eve Duncan, Joe Quinn books. This one doesn't disappoint. have Eve and Joe finally discovered who killed Bonnie, even though the lead came from Montalvo, who wants to steal Eve away from Joe? I won't tell, but if you are a fan of these two characters, it is a must read. If you aren't, you will be after this book.

Julie (jjmachshev) says

If you have been reading the story of Eve, Joe, and Bonnie...then you MUST go NOW and get this book!! If you like romantic suspense (more suspense than romance), then you should really check out this series.

Backstory: Eve Duncan is a forensic sculptor whose daughter Bonnie was apparently the victim of a child killer. Neither Bonnie's killer nor Bonnie have ever been located and Eve just can't stop searching. She needs to bring Bonnie home...but since she can't, she specializes in child skull reconstructions to help identify dead children so at least their parents can have some sort of closure. Each book in this series provides hints and clues to Bonnie's case, Eve, her cop lover Joe, and other Eve intimates.

In "Quicksand", Joe has a good lead on one of Bonnie's possible killers. The killer is a true whack-job and delights in taunting Eve with each new kill. At points in this book, I wanted to smack Eve. For such a strong, intelligent woman, she has some definite stupid moments. Eve also has to deal with Montalvo (prior book). She's still strongly attracted to Montalvo, but cherishes what she has with Joe. In "Quicksand", Eve finally realizes that her obsession with Bonnie may be damaging her current relationships and just how far she's willing to go to "bring Bonnie home".

Terralyn Brown Barfield says

This series is hard to put down. If you haven't read the Eve Duncan, forensic sculptor series, start with them in order, as her relationships grow and change.

Melody says

Eve Duncan is still searching for her daughter's remains and this is another testament of her devotion to that mission. Will her relationship with Joe stand the test again? What will become of Eve's attraction to Montalvo who shows up to test her heart?

I like Eve's character, but how many more novels will be dedicated to Bonnie? Ms. Johansen is bringing in new characters, but.....

I won't be quick to read the next novel (lol, I wasn't so quick to read this one either) devoted to Eve's tormented quest to put her long gone daughter to rest. I am growing bored.

Jennifer Wardrip says

This was another really good read in the Eve Duncan series, although I still find myself getting tired of Eve on occasion. I was happy to see a reappearance of Montalvo, was a little perked up by the fact that Joe Quinn grew a new backbone in this story, and was really excited by the part that Megan Blair played in the story (see *PANDORA'S DAUGHTER*).

I know that Eve needs to find the body of her daughter, Bonnie, for closure. I know that she's obsessed with this task. But, sometimes, you just want to smack her for letting it ruin so many other aspects of her life.

Many times throughout *QUICKSAND* I had to wonder what either Joe or Montalvo see in this woman -- I think she'd drive me batty. No matter what happens in the long run, though, I hope to see more of a paranormal aspect to the storyline: and it seems that there will be, what with the way the story ends.

If you're a follower of the Eve Duncan series, you'll want to read this one. It's good overall, and you can always hope that Montalvo comes to his senses and looks for a new woman to obsess over soon.

Barbara ★ says

[And I loved the fact that it was Eve who took him out and not Joe. I think Eve really needed to be the one to remove this particular sicko. (hide spoiler)]

Cara Noyes says

Another good one in series! Jeanine, why did you get me hooked on this author?

Sylvia says

♥ Miguel

♥ Montalvo

I'm in love with Montalvo and Miguel makes me smile. They are the best part about this book. I also love Bonnie... she seems a lot wiser than her mother.

I'm kind of getting tired of the relationship between Joe and Eve and their behaviour in general. Still it was a good read and I'm looking forward to reading the next one in this 'trilogy' within the Eve Duncan series. However I oh so much wished she would choose to be with Montalvo.

luxelibrarian says

I haven't read Iris Johansen books in a long time; they were my go-to book back in the day when all I read was romantic suspense. Now that I'm a bit older, I thought I'd go back to the Eve Duncan series and catch up on the ones I've missed- yeah, not going to happen. At least, not right now. This book wasn't bad, just very babyish reading for my literature tastes right now. I need more happening in a novel than a gal talking to her dead daughter on the porch (which I remembered from all the previous Eve Duncan novels). Just too juvenile for me. Plus, it always bothered me how Iris Johansen never have her characters any true humanity. Never once in her novels, do Eve, Jane, or Joe ever call each other by an endearment or a nickname - or anything that you hear on a human day to day relationship. Her dialogue sounds forced and typed. That is one thing that Nora Roberts, Jayne Ann Krentz and Karen Robards have down. I'd rather be reading their books instead. Too bad.

Kristina Van Hoose says

I picked up this book after enjoying *The Search* by the same author, but reading the two stories, one would never guess they were written by the same author. *Quicksand* follows Eve Duncan, a forensic specialist who spends her time reconstructing bodies with wax faces in order to help identify them. She began this career sometime after losing her own child Bonnie. She's married to Joe Quinn, a detective, and has an adopted daughter named Jane. There's also Montalvo, a man who loves Eve, and let's face it, she has some feelings for him too, but she's married so he's off limits.

Eve and Joe were only minor characters in *The Search*, and I'm starting to think that was a good thing!

Quicksand is a boring read to put it bluntly. The only thing that kept me reading was my personal goal of reading 50 books over the course of a year. Well, that and I kept hoping it would get better.

Eve Duncan is by far one of the most annoying characters I have yet to come across in a book. Throughout the story she complains about how she's dragging Joe into danger in her pursuit to find Bonnie's killer even though it wasn't his child. It's Eve's quest, after all, so he should sit on the sidelines and stay out of danger. However, Joe refuses to put Eve in danger, and therefore chooses to be more proactive about everything in order to find Bonnie. (view spoiler)

"Woeisme! It's my child. I should be able to go after her killer. I hate just sitting here doing nothing Joe! Let

me do something!" would pretty much sum up the greater portions of Eve's internal and external dialogue. Or, if you want it in Eve's own words, here's a quote from page 194:

"Everyone wants to protect me and I'm the one causing all this. Change your mind Joe. I'm neither stupid nor helpless. Let me do this alone!"

No. Honestly, Eve, you are a bit helpless. It leaves me asking, "Well, Eve, why don't you find a way to be productive and do something instead of sitting there whining about how you aren't doing anything then?"

And yes, Eve, you're stupid too. (view spoiler) She is a classic example of what has become a very stereotypical view of the helpless, stupid woman character portrayed in movies and books. I wonder if Johansen realized this.

Now, this love triangle between Eve, Joe, and Montalvo is intriguing, I suppose. Or at least, it would be if Johansen would show readers why the characters love each other in the first place. (view spoiler)

Not to mention, I swear I remember Eve finding Bonnie in *The Search*, which was published in 2000. How then is Eve still looking? I guess this book therefore takes place before *The Search*, which, while it has the same characters in it, doesn't exactly explain where in the timeline it fits.

Plus, this book is listed as "An Eve Duncan Forensics Thriller." This book is not a forensics book. Eve's work reconstructing skulls is a minor, minor plot that is forgotten and one that remains without a conclusion upon the end of the book.

The climax was also uninspiring (view spoiler)

After reading this book, I have to say I am completely disappointed with the Eve Duncan series. I probably won't be reading any others either, but if I do, it'll be a library book where I won't have to waste money like I did on *Quicksand*. It did at least give me a laugh when I read, "'He's killed another man,' Joe said baldly." I'm not sure how one can do that, but it was a humorous typo at least.

I would have been happier if the story was about Laura Ann, Miguel, and Montalvo. The three of them were at least interesting to read about, and their sections in the story made it worth reading. Unfortunately, the remaining sections made me want to throw the book at the wall.

Doris says

This was one of the better stories in the Eve Duncan series, even though Eve was her usual incompetent self, only coming into her glory when doing facial reconstruction. This particular book did not dwell heavily on the reconstruction, although I was looking forward to the discussion Eve would have with the skull and herself, and any bystanders, as she tried to build a person from the bare skull.

Again, this novel was blah on the Eve side, but the return of Montalvo (whose wife's skull Eve reconstructed in an earlier book) and the firm stand of Joe Quinn (Eve's lover) as he finally states his wish to separate the obsession of Eve with her missing daughter, Bonnie.

I also liked Megan Blair - I believe this is the first I have seen of her - and her role, although not as fully developed as I would like, was both believable and sad.

The story itself hinges on the fact Eve needs to find her Bonnie for closure, and how her obsession ruins lives around her, while also making her prey for the sickos out there who enjoy hurting others and using them for their own obsessions. If she could let go, she could see that other people, such as her adopted daughter Jane, need her just as much. If she can't, perhaps others (Quinn, Montalvo, Jane, Miguel) should let her go before she drags all of them down into the quicksand that seems to be her inner turmoil.

Although, the ending with Joe and Bonnie was good, and brings hope that maybe things will get better, especially as it suggests more of a paranormal aspect to the world Eve inhabits, with others who can see or hear the dead (such as Megan) brought in to build the storyline.

Overall, a good fit in the Eve Duncan series, and fans will want to read this!

Linden says

A very abridged summary: Years before the opening moments of *Quicksand*, Eve Duncan's daughter, Bonnie, was abducted and murdered. Since that time, Eve's primary interest has been trying to find her remains. So when she gets a phone call from a serial killer claiming to know where Bonnie is buried, Eve joins the search for the caller's latest captive in hopes of finding her daughter as well. Though mainly a traditional action-filled murder mystery, *Quicksand* also adds the element of psychic searchers.

My primary gripe: I feel cheated in some way by stories that have either too many happy coincidences which benefit the protagonist and equally short-changed by stories that have a continuous series of bad luck complications. *Quicksand* falls into the latter. Somehow it seems that plot-driven stories too often have to depend on trouble after trouble to keep the engine of a book's action in gear. In a way it reminds me of a tennis match when the plot has a series of tricky plays that get overcome only to face another; the threats and complications operate only as a progression of things at a similar level. One ball returned after another.

Background: When I first read *The Hunt for Red October*, I was amazed at its structure; there was more than a big picture problem to be solved. When I read of the explosion about a third of the way through the book, I wondered how it would be possible for the author to sustain the story after that high point. Silly me. There were two more of them, each building and resolving, as well as also moving the story along its arc of the bigger conflict to a grand denouement.

It is that sense of plot that I find missing in *Quicksand*. The sense that each difficulty encountered is part of a larger idea, rather than just another rally across the tennis court being replaced by another one--different in its details but, in essence, just the same thing: how to return one more ball successfully.
