



Grave Intent: Novel

Deborah Leblanc

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In all their years at the funeral home, Janet and Michael Savoy had never seen anything like the viewing for nineteen-year-old Thalia Stevenson. That's because they had never seen a Gypsy funeral before, complete with rituals, incantations and a very special gold coin placed beneath the dead girl's hands... — During a chaotic gypsy burial service at the funeral parlor of Michael and Janet Savoy, a ritual gold coin is stolen from the corpse of the teenage daughter of an egomaniacal Roma gypsy chief. The theft unleashes a curse on the Savoyes, unwitting unbelievers who come to realize their own five-year-old child is doomed to a gruesome death if they can't unravel a foreign culture's arcane mysteries in time to return the coin "before rising of second sun [sic]."

Grave Intent: Novel Details

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Erin *Proud Book Hoarder* says

Gypsies have always fascinated many, and apparently continue to do so, as is evident by the steady supply of written and filmed stories surrounding them. From the ominous warnings uttered by Bela Lugosi at the beginning of the *Wolf Man*, to King's cinematic flop 'Thinner', which took a somewhat comical over the top approach to the traditional curses, some rules – as with vampires, werewolves, etc. – remain consistent. Deborah LeBlanc, in her second novel, opens *Grave Intent* with a desperate mother cradling her young baby, mindfully resentful toward her husband, who is about to bestow upon their daughter an act she feels is unjust and unneeded. Forced to participate in the hideous ritual, the novel then charges up with modern-day events, introducing the reader to the main characters, and from there propelling toward relentless horror, strange occurrences, and explorations of the all too common human trait: greed, and it's eventual result: revenge.

Characters are believable and to be cared about on multiple levels, with dialogue being rich and convincing, particularly when showcasing the southern culture. The plot itself works, fitting like a comfortable and slightly familiar shoe. Events were paced quickly, not pausing overly much, keeping the book open in my hands. There were enough creepy moments to signal this is rightfully a horror novel, but nothing blood-curdling. (Then again, getting the blood-curdling effect from horror books can be hard once you've read enough of them. The old jaded effect, ya know).

Suspense is backed with ample build-up and well-sketched tension, not feeling out of place. It always helps that it's easy to relate to the characters when something does happen (or almost does). Sadly, suspense and horror aren't there from the start, having the reader needing to exert a bit of patience to get there. There are some aspects of the novel that are slightly melodramatic and overdone, as well as the 'hauntings' themselves – slightly over-the-top with the aftertaste of Kraft. Most chapters end with cliffhangers, which is effective with R.L. Stine and children/teen novels, but can grow tiresome and predictable with the adult crowd after so many years of seeing it.

Overall nothing too memorable – you won't remember plot details a year from now – but it's a good way to pass the time, especially for those who enjoy the classic gypsy curse type atmosphere. LeBlanc continues to please with her writing, earning her title as a Bram Stoker nominee. I'm eager to give her next book a shot.

John Bruni says

I've only ever read one other book by this author (*Family Inheritance*), but the two books have the same problem: the characters are very bland, and the plot is pretty typical. The only standout character for me was a guy who only showed up for one chapter. He's a biker who talks about the Master Dude and makes decisions with Bible passages. I'd love to see more about him, but everyone else were kind of blah. The story is your basic Gypsy curse story. Not much to it. That said, there were some really great scenes. The one involving a Ferris wheel is tension at its finest. There's also Michael's frantic, nightmarish drive to get out to his wife and daughter. It's the perfect moment of frustration. Anyone who has ever been in a desperate hurry to get to somewhere will recognize the feeling. And then Janet's battle to save two little girls will keep you on the edge of your seat. There is one more problem, though: the curse itself. It starts because of a stolen

gold coin and a dead girl's soul. It makes sense to me that the coin needs to be returned or the girl's soul will be lost forever, but if that's the case, why make it so difficult for the Savoy's to get that coin back to where it belongs? That doesn't make sense at all. I can't really recommend this book, but those who give it a shot will find a few cool things in it.

Terri Lynn says

Gypsy curse run amok.

Sarah says

I thoroughly enjoyed this. Really suspenseful, right up until the end. I never read this author before, and was pleasantly surprised to find another horror author I like. Really ratcheted up the suspense throughout and kept me eagerly turning pages. I would really give it four and a half stars

K.L. Burnham says

I enjoyed this but was ready for it to end.Maybe because I purchased Stephen King's novel yesterday and couldn't wait to dig into that..lol.

Donna says

Probably 4.5 stars to this one. It was a great read with some genuinely creepy moments, not overdone. I read the last third or so of the book in one go because I just had to find out what happened, lol.

Well worth reading.

Karyn says

Not bad, but not as creepy as her other books. Became a little drawn out towards the middle.

T says

Read through this in one day, so a short, fairly entertaining read.

Brett says

Horror

Reva Nowell says

I liked this book. I did think that some of it went on and on.

Rosemary Smith says

I liked this book. I was especially fascinated by the Gypsy lifestyle. I would love to know more about that. The character descriptions were great. I liked the story. I almost wish it were longer and even more detailed. It ended too soon for me. You could do more of that for me.....it gave me chills.

Write faster, Deborah....

Darcy says

I really liked the prologue, but found the first few chapters boring. I wanted to know more about the Roma/gypsy people. In the end with the characters not being able to hold my attention I gave up, not the book for me.

Jasmine says

I was so scared while reading this book, but it keep me wanting more

Stephanie says

Very interesting read, about the customs of gypsy's. It gets spooky...

Linda says

Bit slow to begin, got confusing but overall a fun read.
