



Sympathy for the Devil

Justin Gustainis

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Supernatural investigator Quincey Morris and his partner, white witch Libby Chastain are drawn into a case of demonic possession that takes them to the very heart of government.

Senator Howard Stark wants to be President of the United States. So does the demon inside him. With the competing candidates dropping out due to scandal, blackmail, and 'accidental' death, Stark looks like a good bet to go all the way to the White House. And if he gets there, Hell on Earth will follow. Occult investigator Quincey Morris and white witch Libby Chastain are determined to stop this evil conspiracy. But between them and Stark stand the dedicated agents of the US Secret Service – and the very forces of Hell itself. Quincey and Libby will risk everything to exorcise the demon possessing Stark. If they fail, 'Hail to the Chief' will become a funeral march – for all of us.

Sympathy for the Devil Details

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From Reader Review Sympathy for the Devil for online ebook

Jeremiah says

Sigh, where to begin. This book was awful.

Morris and Chastain are barely in the book. Morris takes a character turn early in the book that makes absolutely no sense at all, then is cured almost instantly when he needs to be. Maybe 10% of the book seems to be about him.

A character pops up who is far, far, more interesting than the so-called "main" characters of the series: a former CIA hitman returned to Earth from Hell in order to kill a demon-infested presidential candidate. He made me instantly stop caring about almost everyone else.

The dialogue continues to be horribly clunky. Does anyone ever read this stuff out loud?

The so-called "inside baseball" about American politics is almost all extreme cliché at best, and at worst just plain ludicrous, complete with tiresome references to Bill Clinton and George W Bush.

The main character shares a name with another significant character in pop culture: Howard Stark. Instantly distracting every time his name is mentioned.

I could go on and on...bleah. What a drag.

Kinksrock says

This has been my biggest surprise of the year so far. I did not expect to like this book because the plot is so similar to that of one of my favorite horror novels, Graham Masterton's THE HELL CANDIDATE. The basic plot of both: A presidential candidate is possessed by a demon, and the world is doomed if he wins. (I traded e-mails with Justin Gustainis. He had never heard of THE HELL CANDIDATE and was surprised that no one had ever mentioned it to him before.) Well, it seems that two writers can have the same idea independently 30 years apart, and both do a great job with it. I loved this novel and think that Gustainis did a great job combining the horror and political elements. I recommend it to horror readers, whether you've read THE HELL CANDIDATE or not.

Mara says

Sympathy for the Devil, the third book in the Quincy Morris series, is a paranormal thriller in which the race against evil (in whatever form you imagine it) is the core of the plot.

I don't think I've ever read of so many main characters in a story, all fundamental for its development.

This is the first book I read in this series (but not the author's first), but I was right to think it's a stand-alone.

There is a lot of past history for the leading guys, but you can read this without needing them at all.

For the fantasy purist out there, this is set in our world. It's not clear how much of the secret is out of the bag. There are reference to Anita Blake and Jill Kismett as being real, so in theory at least some of it has been spilled. Still, *Sympathy for the Devil* is mainly a political thriller, so most of its focus is on American politics (with a nice mix of Hell's one too).

Duane Gosser says

This continues to be a fun if not particularly deep series. Will read more this year.

Deirdre says

Demonic interference with politics, Morris discovers that the aftereffects of being caught by demon fire isn't good and can cost some people. He goes through a downward spiral that needs Chastain to drag him out of it and they also have to try to work out how to defeat a demon who has Armageddon in mind.

Interesting and I like the characters, they are not all powerful and they do have flaws, and there are times when you wonder what they plan to do next. The bad guys were also interesting and I could imagine them succeeding if they kept going. I enjoyed the read.

Mayra says

The next presidential election is getting near... and handsome, charismatic Senator Howard Stark wants to become president. There's only one problem: He's possessed by Sargatanas, a powerful demon who wants to unleash all evil on earth. To make things worse, Stark's assistant happens to be a malevolent, highly-intelligent practitioner of the black arts, and she'll stop at nothing to get what she wants. One by one, the other candidates begin to die, some of illness, others due to mysterious accidents.

Enter the good guys: occult investigator Quincey Morris and his partner, white witch Libby Chastain. Together, they risk their lives while trying to find a way to exorcise the senator, which isn't easy. After all, how do you get passed the US Secret Service and the forces of hell itself?

Sympathy for the Devil is pure entertainment. I've read all of the books in this series and I have to say I've always thoroughly enjoyed them. Just like in the earlier installments, the story, told from multiple points of view, opens with a reader-grabbing scene and continues its quick, suspenseful pace until the end. Gustainis makes the stakes high and the characters sympathetic, making you care for their predicament. He's great at making you hate the villain. The secondary characters are interesting, too—even some of the bad ones are likable. Lots of action and dialogue propel the plot; Gustainis doesn't spend much time on description. If you're a fan of urban fantasy and supernatural, political thrillers, you'll relish this one. Also, the book stands alone perfectly, so don't worry if you haven't read the earlier novels. I certainly look forward to reading what Quincey and Libby are up to next.

Brooke says

The presidential election is coming up, and candidates are dropping like flies. All but Senator Howard Stark who has been possessed by the demon Sargatanas, whose goal is to win the election and destroy the world. Quincey Morris, occult investigator, and Libby Chastain, white witch, find out that their two separate cases are actually the same one and decide to fight evil, once again, together. What they are about to face is like nothing they've seen before, and it could very well kill them as they attempt to get passed the secret service, Stark's black magic dabbling assistant, and exorcise the senator.

The Quincey Morris series is a fast paced one. Each book brings in a new villain and a new group of conspirators, but it also brings back the characters we have grown to love. The alternating points of view allow the reader to easily see each side of the story, while still wondering what's going to happen and how are they going to get out of this one? They are also so well crafted that a casual reader could easily pick up on whose point of view they are reading, because each character has distinct quirks, personality, and voice.

Quincey and Libby are one of my favorite duos in this genre. They work well together and keep each other in line. They are funny and sarcastic. And they don't take crap from anybody, including each other, not even hell spawn. It was nice to see their relationship grow in this one. It didn't take an romantic leap, but their friendship thrives under the pressure and Libby's growing attraction can be seen. I don't know if this is a path Gustainis will take in future books, but I must say...I wouldn't mind.

As for the plot, I was really concerned when I saw that it was a presidential election and politics would be involved. At some parts I found the political talk drawing me out of the story, but I understand it was necessary to clarify characters and their roles and where the plot was going. This was probably the only down point in the whole story for me, thus the four crows instead of five.

What I enjoyed most was that the line between good guy and bad guy, while sometimes very obvious, blurred when it came to the secondary characters working on the case. Another duo entered into this book, and both are working for someone with their own agenda against Stark. They were probably one of the best additions, because they are witty and bring some sexual tension to the story.

Lastly, I'm super impressed with Gustainis' knowledge about how the secret service works, and this part, while heavily featured, never felt phony. It was well fleshed out and it's obvious that careful planning went into each scene.

I'm a huge fan of this series, and must say I have a tiny crush on Mr. Quincey Morris, he's a perfect gentleman.

Mein Hime says

So far I've been scaring myself silly with this book. Reading at night is not recommended for those with an over-active imagination! Curious to see where the story leads but in the meantime enjoying the ride.

Update: It's taken me a few weeks to complete this book with good reason. I'd previously enjoyed Gustainis'

books and recommended them to friends. This is one I would definitely not recommend. The third book in an otherwise strong series has really "jumped the shark".

Firstly, the pace is sluggish. Gustainis takes great pleasure in educating his readers at every turn. I believe he is in the teaching profession. Sadly, it makes the dialogue clunky. Nearly every character but especially Quincey, has a terribly apt quote. Seeing as he spends so much time on the necessary job of educating the reader about the U.S political system, this proves distracting.

Secondly, the characters are acting out of character. The bisexuality of Libby is simply pushed too far and I found it quite surprising the author proposes a scenario in the final chapter that would be a sever moral and ethical falter for Libby. I can't describe it without spoilers, so suffice to say, it was fairly strange and took me right out of my suspended disbelief.

Thirdly, parts of the action simply don't make any sense. Yes, I know it's science fiction/fantasy but within it's own universe, I expect it to follow rules already laid out by the creator. An assassination scene mid-way through certainly did not ring true.

Fourthly, there wasn't enough focus on Libby and Quincey and far too much on the sexual shenanigans of another couple.

So, in case you hadn't guessed, I didn't enjoy it past the first gripping chapter. I can now see why it was so difficult to get hold of on first release. On the plus side, I know now enough about U.S politics to follow the candidate selection, should I ever feel the urge.

Phil says

A few flaws but mostly pretty great.

Ellie says

Sympathy for the Devil is the third book in the Morris and Chastain Investigation series by Justin Gustainis. Quincey Morris is a paranormal investigator and Libby Chastain is a white witch and occasionally their work brings them together. This time it's because a presidential candidate has been possessed by a demon determined to make it to the White House and hell has sent its very own assassin to sort things out.

The premise is a good one but I felt that too much time was spent on politics and that it could easily have been a non-supernatural tale of corrupt politicians. There's not a lot that happens that couldn't just be put down to not very nice people. I understand politics is full of them! Not being American, the run up to the presidential elections is not something I have a lot of understanding of and I only take a passing interest in the whole affair from afar. Though having watched The West Wing, I do have the ability to be entertained by a fictional account but this just didn't hit the mark.

Having been told the book works as a standalone read I felt there were just too many references to something that happened previously for that to be the case. I may be more interested in the earlier books to understand a bit more about the relationship between Morris and Chastain. For a series with their names in, they didn't get

much page space. There are just too many characters for a real understanding of any of them. I get that in politics there are a lot of people involved but they didn't all need their own story.

Being told from various different viewpoints, there wasn't much mystery to the investigation. Nothing to keep me gripped and I struggled to get through it at my normal pace. I do think it would appeal to a different audience...not to sound sexist but maybe it's a man's read. There are numerous references to the stereotypical male fantasies which come across as a bit cheesy (but I'd probably say the same if it was reversed).

Ladiibbug says

#3 Morris and Chastain Investigations series - Urban Fantasy

Back Cover says it best:

"Senator Howard Stark wants to be President of the U.S. So does the demon inside him. With the competing candidates dropping out due to scandal, blackmail and "accidental" death, Stark looks like a good bet to go all the way to the White House. And if he gets there, Hell on Earth will follow.

Occult investigator Quincey Morris and white witch Libby Chastain are determined to stop this evil conspiracy. Between them and Stark stand the dedicated agents of the U.S. Secret Service, as well as the very forces of Hell itself. Quincey and Libby will risk everything to exorcise the demon possessing Stark. If they fail, "Hail to the Chief" will become a funeral march, for all of us."

Kathy Martin says

This was another exciting episode in the Morris and Chastain series. Quincy Morris begins the story in a depressed state after an exorcism goes wrong. He feels guilt for what he feels were mistakes on his part. The priest who was conducting the exorcism and who is a friend of Quincy's was blinded by the demon inside the teenage girl. When Libby has trouble contacting Quincy, she visits him in Texas and helps to pull him out of his depression and self-destructive behavior. Just in time too....

Suspensions have been raised that one of the Republican presidential hopefuls - Howard Stark - might be a demon. Quincy and Libby are being asked to investigate. Libby is brought in when one of Stark's political opponents dies in a freak accident at home. Libby smells black magic at the scene and has her suspicions raised.

It seems that there are factions in Hell. One group of demons supports Stark's bid for the White House while a second group opposes it. The second group has returned a CIA assassin killed in 1983 to life and tasked him with killing Stark. He is Mal Peters. He has as his partner a fourth rank demon known as Ashley. Half the story is told from their points of view as they try to find a way to kill Stark.

Both groups come together after an assassination attempt on Stark is thwarted by Libby's actions. But they soon realize that their goals are the same - removing the demon from Stark's body and returning it to Hell

before it can cause Armageddon. Only their ways of accomplishing the goal is different. They end up working together in a thrilling climax to the story.

The thing I like best about the Morris and Chastain series is how very real and possible it all seems. The paranormal is interwoven so seamlessly with reality as I know it. The world building is fascinating and well done. I recommend the series to all lovers of urban fantasy.

Vicky says

Quincey Morris and Libby Chastain investigate paranormal stuff. Libby is a white witch and Quincey is following the family business. On Halloween, presidential contender Howard Stark is possessed by the demon Sargatanas, thanks to his administrative assistant, Mary Margaret Doyle. However, thanks to the factions who contend against each other in the NetherWorld, another demon, Astaroth, sends a former CIA assassin back to Earth to kill Stark before he can be elected and begin Armageddon. Lots and lots of woo-woo, in fact, this book is the very definition of woo-woo (a technical term invented by the readers and followers of Dorothy_L). There was a lot of telling so the book moved rather slowly at first, but the scene had to be set. Once the action started rolling, things picked up quite a bit. Entertaining, but I did not like this one as much as the first two in the series. In the current political atmosphere, evil minions ruling the Earth do not seem so far-fetched.

? Irena ? says

I love the two main characters. The story isn't as strong as the previous two (especially the second book). The blurb says it almost all and the prologue pretty much sets the villains. It is written as the other two, with short scenes featuring different characters. That could be a great thing in if an author wants to give us a different perspective or the view into the other side, but really not so great in this case. Even if I am not that interested in political system of the USA, I would find some non-fiction to find out more than I already know. I had a feeling Gustainis is teaching us which ruined the story for me. There was just too much of it. Second reason I don't really like this book is that the two main character are not really *main* characters.

There is less focus on Libby and Quincey than on any other character and that is really the main reason why I am giving this book this rating.

(view spoiler)

Emily says

Sympathy for the Devil is the third book in a series, but don't let that deter you from picking up this dark, snarky, entertaining story. As a matter of fact, it's nice to know that there are other books in the series, as I'll be able to catch up while waiting for the next installment in the series!

There is a lot going on in this story, and it certainly is timely. A presidential election is looming and candidates are out trying to shore up their positions and emerge at the head of the pack for their parties. Even under normal circumstances, this involves mudslinging, secret revealing, dirty tricks, and all other manner of

attention-grabbing stunts; add in something a little off the path like demonic possession and you might even convince me to watch CSPAN.

I'm kidding about the CSPAN, but not about the level of detail and observation that goes into every element of the story. Our intrepid investigators, white witch Libby Castain and occult investigator Quincey Morris, find themselves sucked into an investigation where nothing is as it seems, and it's hard to pinpoint who the good guys are or if they even exist. This is a big picture conflict; while nobody will miss a slimy politician who made a deal with the wrong demon, being responsible for the destruction of humanity and the world as we know it is something that nobody wants.

It should be said, too, that if you're looking for cuddly demons who are abrasive but misunderstood, then you need to look elsewhere. The demons here are what one might expect from the denizens of hell; they are cruel to the nth degree, they have no regard for anyone or anything, and they speak their horrible minds freely, with all the profanity and R-rated content that one might expect. Even the "not as bad this time around" demons are intense. Those on the side of righteousness certainly have their work cut out for them.

This book is definitely part of an ongoing series; there are elements that are not resolved at the end of this book (big ones, if I may say so myself) that set the stage for the next book nicely. I'm definitely interested in seeing how things progress in the next novel. I'm a recent arrival to this series, but I'm definitely a fan after Sympathy for the Devil's strong showing.

Overall Grade: A
