



The Guilty Wife

Elle Croft

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WIFE. MISTRESS. MURDERER.

If you were being framed for murder, how far would you go to clear your name?

The debut psychological thriller that reads as *Apple Tree Yard* meets *Behind Closed Doors*, by way of *Double Jeopardy*.

I'm not guilty of murder.

Bethany Reston is happily married. But she's also having an affair with a famous client.

And no one can ever know.

But that doesn't make me innocent.

When Bethany's lover is brutally murdered, she has to hide her grief from everyone.

But someone knows her secret. And then one day the threats begin.

With an ever-growing pile of evidence pointing to her as the murderer, the only way she can protect her secrets is to prove her innocence. And that means tracking down a killer.

An incredibly taut, tense game of cat and mouse - with a twist you'll never see coming.

The Guilty Wife Details

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Author : Elle Croft

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From Reader Review The Guilty Wife for online ebook

Paula Brandon says

Bethany is a photographer having an affair (a very secretive one) with billionaire Calum Bradley. When he is murdered, Bethany starts getting stalked and blackmailed by somebody who knows about the affair, and is setting things up to look like she is the killer. So Bethany starts making the sorts of decisions you've come to expect in these sorts of thrillers, and winds up in a right royal mess!

Current popular fiction feels very sexist, to be honest! Us women are always "The Girl", "The Wife", "The Woman", "The Daughter", "The Mother" etc etc. On top of that, we're always guilty of something, hiding terrible secrets, or being an unreliable narrator. While having a likeable main character isn't a prerequisite for me enjoying a book, this is really getting old! It is possible to create a complex female character who isn't inherently deceitful! This literary trend now smacks of author laziness, as opposed to being an unconventional story-telling ploy.

My problems with this book were many. To explain why I didn't like it much, I will have to go into spoiler territory!

(view spoiler)

The Guilty Wife is readable and somewhat enjoyable on a potboiler level. It moves quickly. But for me, it was too cliched and predictable and "trendy" to really be effective.

Clare says

With thanks to Netgalley and Orion books for this ARC in exchange for an open and honest review.

In the first chapter Bethany gives Callum a USB stick which holds images of them having sex. Callum hides the USB in a book and promises it will be a secret.

Freelance Photographer Bethany Reston was happily married to Jason until she worked for millionaire

Callum. Bethany and Callum started an affair on the understanding they would never leave their partners. Bethany still loved dependable, safe, Jason but was in love with the more exciting Callum. One night Bethany told Callum how she felt and they had a row.

A couple of days later Bethany and Callum had a meeting and he explained he would never leave his wife. The meeting was short and Bethany walked home afterwards, the next day she was shocked to discover Callum had been murdered in the spot where they last met.

Scared of her losing her marriage and her business Bethany decided not to tell the police of their affair. However somebody has other ideas and starts to send Bethany threatening text messages. Then somebody sends the police CCTV footage of Bethany disguised in a large hat meeting Callum.

Bethany did not kill Callum and doesn't know why somebody is trying to frame her. Bethany tries to find out who the true killer of Callum.

Overall this was a tightly woven plot with plenty of red herrings. I didn't suspect the actual killer until the last couple of chapters. When the killer gave their motivation for killing Callum and framing Bethany I was stunned. Although to be honest the killer's plot relied on Bethany acted in a particular manner.

Congratulations to Ellie Croft on her debut novel. I look forward to her next book.

Paromjit says

This is a tense and fast paced debut psychological thriller from Elle Croft set in London. Bethany Reston is torn between two lovers. She is happily married to Jason whom she loves, and she is having a torrid affair with famous married business billionaire, Calum Bradley. Bethany runs her own photographic studio with assistant Fran that is doing rather well, so much so that Calum invites her to take photographs of himself for business purposes. This leads to a more lucrative personal reality photo deal for a coffee table book which has Bethany in Calum's life almost on a daily basis leading to their covert relationship. It all begins with Bethany's birthday gift to Calum, a memory card comprising of intimate and revealing images. She loves him, but he has no intention of leaving Claire, his wife, and their open marriage. Bethany is certainly a guilty wife, but when Calum is stabbed to death at a tube station, she is innocent of his murder, aware that she would be the prime suspect as his mistress.

Bethany, a self obsessed personality with little awareness of what is going on with those closest to her, is emotionally distraught at the loss of Calum, drowning in her grief that cannot be publicly acknowledged nor shared with anyone. A public outcry led to Calum's previous mistress having acid thrown at her, her life destroyed after a leak to the papers assumed to have come from the police. This contributes to Bethany's fears and her decision to not inform the police about their affair. A drunken night out with her best friend, Alex, a divorce lawyer, leads to a odd tweet that Bethany deletes, she assumes its the result of her drinking.

However, after the murder, life spirals out of control as a series of incidents involving dead flowers, hacked social media accounts, alarming notes and photographs left in her flat by the killer, contributing to Bethany's paranoia levels and fears climbing sky high. The killer knows everything, leaves the murder weapon in her flat, and warns her not to talk to the police. The only crumbs of comfort she has is the love and support of Jason and Alex. Determined not to be framed for murder, Bethany draws up a list of suspects to investigate and find the killer.

Elle Croft has written a compelling and gripping thriller that has you desperate to find out what is going on. It is a story of twists that cannot fail to keep the attention of the reader. There are a few plot weaknesses, especially when the final twist is revealed, but other than that it is an adrenaline fueled thrill ride. Bethany becoming bored with the stability, dependability and reliability of her loving husband is more often a characteristic attributed to the husband, and women are judged significantly more harshly of the same behaviour in a marriage. An entertaining and engaging read. Many thanks to Orion for an ARC.

Suze Lavender says

Photographer Bethany loves her husband Jason very much, but she's also fallen in love with another man, Callum, and they are having an affair. Callum is a rich businessman and one of Bethany's clients. Bethany cares about both men in her life. However, her happiness is shortlived. Someone brutally murders Callum and Bethany is the last one who's seen him. Bethany is a suspect and she has to prove her innocence, but how can she do that without revealing her secret?

Someone starts to stalk and threaten Bethany and forces her to keep quiet while she's being framed for the murder. Evidence against her is piling up while there's nothing she can do to stop it. Bethany can't go to the police, so she has to find the killer herself. She has no idea where to start, because this person is always one step ahead of her. Will she be able to come closer and succeed or will the killer outsmart her?

The Guilty Wife is a terrific gripping story. Bethany is in love with two men and she's mainly looking after her own happiness. She feels remorse about deceiving Jason, but she can't stop the love in her heart. Her world shatters when someone murders her lover. This person is watching her and has access to her house. The killer is playing a game with her and Bethany has no idea who's behind it or why she's being targeted. I was intrigued from the start and couldn't turn the pages quickly enough to discover if Bethany would be able to find a way out of her dire situation or not.

Elle Croft has written a captivating story filled with surprising twists and turns. I loved how she works with tension. The story is fast-paced and eventful, so there's a constant pressure that I really enjoyed. I was incredibly curious about the identity of the killer and liked the suspense and mystery around it. I was especially blown away by the last few chapters. I loved the motive, the ending is spectacular and I was pleasantly surprised by the direction Elle Croft has chosen for her story. It's refreshing and original. The Guilty Wife is a fantastic thrilling book.

Rachel Hall says

Another day, another tragically inept debut psychological thriller centred around a marriage and this one is really scraping the barrel.. not only is it superficial, with the author appearing to have neglected to do any

basic research on police protocols and legal proceedings (a simple web search would suffice), but readers will need a blindfold to miss the holes in the plot and suspend disbelief. Throughout my reading I kept thinking the story must be headed to some “Candid Camera” moment or that the lead character would suddenly awaken from a spot of lucid dreaming as this was so far-fetched with the only moments of tension seeing what unlikely stunts Elle Croft would pull out of the bag next!

Set in London and narrated by thirty-six-year-old happily married photographer, Bethany Reston, *The Guilty Wife* is the story of just what happens when Bethany’s married lover is murdered because, despite loving her husband of seven years, Bethany is also in love with multimillionaire businessman, Calum Bradley. After being hired to take media photos of Bradley and subsequently contracted for a long term television series, Bethany quickly finds herself in the midst of a steamy affair with an easily recognisable public figure who insists on conducting their relationship under a veil of secrecy after a previous girlfriend was the victim of an acid attack when her identity was exposed. Although married himself, it transpires that both Calum and his wife have dalliances outside of the marital union and he makes it abundantly clear to Bethany that he has no intention of leaving his wife. After giving Calum a memory card containing steamy photos (what do you give the man who has everything?), which are obvious evidence of their involvement Bethany is more than a little disgruntled by his vehement no-strings attachment policy. Parting under a cloud Bethany returns home to supportive, handsome and loyal husband, Jason but as she anxiously waits to hear from her lover her world is rocked by the breaking news that Calum has been found dead after being stabbed...

For shallow Bethany her grief is quickly followed by the realisation that self-preservation is of the utmost importance and just as she is planning how to retrieve the memory card she finds herself coming to the attention of the Met police, who Calum has forewarned her not to trust, and so she presents their relationship as strictly professional, neglecting to mention the affair. However, having parted company with her lover just minutes before his tragic stabbing Bethany withholds evidence and unable to discuss her predicament with anyone she struggles to hide her distress. As a rash of unsettling incidents occur, from the delivery of dead flowers, her social media accounts being hacked to letters being left inside her locked house, Bethany realises that someone must know about her passion for Calum and his real killer is intending to line her up as the fall guy! Appearing to have access to her home and an omnipresent threat it is only a matter of time before the murder weapon turns up in her living room! Together with best friend and unlikely divorce lawyer, Alex, she draws up a list of suspects and undertakes her own bit of amateur sleuthing (with disguises) as she attempts to point the police in the right direction and prevent her memory card photos ever seeing the light of day. A big ask for a criminal mastermind, but a monumental one for gullible Bethany who has no ability to consider her actions and factor in likely responses. Actively encouraged by Alex to consider Jason and other possible suspects Bethany is caught in a spiral of surveillance, disposing of evidence and lying to the police. Having the means, motive and opportunity for killing Calum herself she determines that the only way to preserve her freedom is to find the real killer with their own valid motive for wanting Calum dead and the possible options outside of husband Jason and best friend Alex are disappointing limited to two!

The Guilty Wife is a fast paced story with plenty of twists, albeit unlikely, which keeps the tempo up and hold readers attention for the next coincidence, of which there are a legion. More disconcerting is the fact that a number of loose ends and elements of the plot were simply never followed through to a conclusion and Bethany rather loses sight of whether she simply wants to avoid being framed for murder, save her marriage or simply prevent anyone seeing the steamy photos. Her method of attack is more headless chicken than strategic assault and I found it very difficult to believe that the characters involved in the story were all aged above mid thirties and there is an absolute lack of emotional depth to the character of Bethany. You might think that any sensible middle aged woman faced with a slew of planted evidence would quickly realise that honesty is the best policy and she is unlikely to fool the police whilst simultaneously avoid being implicated by a killer, but alas, common sense is not a prerequisite for any character in a psychological thriller it

appears!

Attention to detail was abysmal and at risk of sounding petty I had a number of issues with trivial details throughout which compound and grate over the course of the novel; Bethany scrubbing a frying pan after dinner in the millionaires luxurious apartment, a business mogul having a fan club and women needing physically escorting from his offices, a Detective Constable phoning Bethany who is neither under arrest or caution and saying, “I believe you’re involved in this murder somehow...”. Really?! Is this credible?

The ridiculously condensed last gasp drama which wraps the story smacks of an author losing interest in her characters and given that the only actual firm evidence that connects Bethany to Calum Bradley is the memory card of photos and the rest merely circumstantial I was bemused at how the court drama was so portrayed in such an unbalanced manner. In short, *The Guilty Wife* is a simplistic and superficial attempt at rewriting *Apple Tree Yard* and for readers short of time and with few quibbles about plausibility, this might well suffice. Abysmal from page thirty onwards the only upside is brevity, however armchair detectives will be disappointed by Elle Croft’s poor attempt to disguise the guilty party.

Deborah says

I enjoyed this debut novel by Croft and was keen to learn whodunit - though I'd kinda guessed (the who but not the why).

I liked Bethany and could identify with her - initially anyway, though know others may struggle with her character. She openly admits to her affair though also tells us she loves her husband. And I appreciated her honesty as we're taken on the confusing 'journey' with her.

I liked the few twists at the end, but was also a tad confused and have shared my thoughts below for those who've read the book!

The full review is on my blog: <https://www.debbish.com/books-literat...>

*****Spoiler discussion - BEWARE!!!*****

I'm actually writing this about 10 days after I finished the book and wish I'd written it straight after when it was all more familiar.

My main issue is: when Bethany talks to Jason in jail and asks for the divorce he mentions the photographs, which leads Bethany to think he murdered Calum. However, we then hear from Alex (who I'd suspected all along) and find out she did it. But timing-wise, had she told Jason about the pictures before he went to the prison or how else did he know about them.

And I think giving Alex two reasons to frame Bethany didn't quite work. I initially thought we'd find out she'd known Calum or had an affair and that was the reason she'd killed him and framed Bethany. But then she confesses to her great love for Jason. Although then we learn she had also met Calum and had been rejected by him - and I think perhaps the two motivations were overkill.

But that's just me. I found the end a tad confusing so keen to hear what anyone else thought.

Mandy White says

I have been on a roll of great books.. and this one did not disappoint!

Bethany is a photographer, happily married but having an affair with her famous client. Then the client is murdered.

This a page turner that had me hooked... nobody is to be trusted!! Thanks to Orion Publishing via Netgalley for a copy of this book to read and review in return for my honest opinions

Joanne Freitas says

Um livro que fala de como algumas amizades não são verdadeiras e nos podem enganar pois as vezes estamos demasiado cegos para ver as pessoas que estão mesmo à nossa frente. Fala também que as vezes não é dado o devido falar a pessoa que nos ama mas outra pessoa pode tar de olho no nosso “amor” e fazer de tudo para tê-lo.

Bookread2day says

My review on www.favouritenovels
Twitter@favouritenovels

MY FAVOURITE NOVEL

The Guilty Wife by Elle Croft is absolutely brilliant! I loved every page of this fast paced story. My money was well spent buying this paperback from Amazon. Bethany Reston is in love with two men, one her husband Jason and the other with billionaire Calum Bradley. Both Bethany and Calum are married. When Calum is murdered its Bethany who was the last one to see him alive. Every bit of evidence is pointing to Bethany as the killer. I've deliberately left out vital information about The Guilty Wife so I don't spoil any of your reading time. This book is a must read must buy.

Aishling Murphy says

The Guilty Wife by Elle Croft is a super book. After the first few pages your hooked , a real page turner. Bethany Reston is happily married but currently having an affair with one of her famous clients. But one night after leaving her lover, Callum is murdered. Unable to come clean about where she was the night in question in fear of letting her husband know the truth, Bethany must do everything she can to prove her innocence. The suspense is brilliant and I loved the shocking twist.. well worth a read.

Michelle Ryles says

Elle Croft has certainly come up with an amazing original idea for a novel: when Bethany's lover is murdered, she can't grieve or reveal her whereabouts on the night he was killed because then her husband would know she was having an affair. It's proper nail-biting stuff as Bethany spins a web of lies that see her digging deeper and deeper into a hole that she won't be able to get out of.

I was already hooked at the start but then Elle Croft took it up a notch to ensure that my eyes would remain glued to each page. Somebody knows about Bethany's affair with her client, billionaire Calum Bradley, and they manage to spook Bethany by getting into her house undetected and leaving threatening notes. As evidence starts to appear that makes Bethany appear guilty of murder, she is warned by her stalker to say nothing to the police. Bethany has nobody to turn to but her friend, Alex, who is a lawyer. I breathed a sigh of relief, sure that Alex would sort it all out. Then Bethany is arrested...and the truth comes out at last.

What a superb debut from Elle Croft. *The Guilty Wife* was glued to my hand until I finished this nail-biting, twisty and suspenseful psychological thriller. I'll definitely be keeping an eye out for Elle Croft's next book.

I chose to read an ARC and this is my honest and unbiased opinion.

Liz Barnsley says

Cleverly plotted psychological thriller with a woman trying desperately to prove herself innocent of a murder - plenty of twists and turns just as there should be and a cracking addictive read.

Full review for December e-book release.

Latkins says

In this enjoyable and fast-paced thriller, Bethany finds herself framed for murder when her secret lover, billionaire businessman Calum (we never find out what his business is exactly), is found stabbed to death. Bethany, a photographer, began the affair with Calum after being employed by him to produce a coffee-table book of photos giving a behind-the-scenes look at a new documentary about him. Despite still loving her dependable husband, Jason, she fell for Calum too, though she feels very guilty about betraying her husband. Calum is also married, to Claire, but theirs is more of an open relationship and she tells him about the affairs she has had. A few years previously, one of Calum's old lovers, Kitty, was exposed to the press and had acid thrown in her face by a stalker, but the culprit went to prison.

The novel begins as Bethany gives Calum a memory card of steamy photos of them for his birthday, which he conceals in a book (you know that this is a very bad idea!). A few days later, Bethany is upset when Calum says he'll never leave Claire for her, and she leaves him alone at a tube station, only to discover the next morning that he's been brutally stabbed just after she left. CCTV footage showing her, but not identifying her -she's wearing a hat - as being on the scene, circulates, and she realises that it's only a matter of time before the police question her. But then the real killer begins a campaign of threatening notes, left in

her own house, as well as incriminating photos, and the hacking of her Facebook and Twitter accounts. The killer seems to have access to all aspects of her life. They tell her that she cannot go to the police, and it soon becomes clear that she's being framed.

This book is far from perfect - the writing isn't brilliant. I lost count of the various things that happened to Bethany's stomach - it was always twisting, turning to ice, enveloping birds and butterflies, etc. But that doesn't really matter, as the story is a strong one. I must admit that I guessed who the culprit was about halfway through - but, again, that didn't really matter, as towards the end of the book it still takes the story in unexpected directions. There were a fair few plot holes and unlikely scenarios, as you usually get in these kind of thrillers, but overall I thought this was an original take on the genre.

Mistress #darklings says

Wow! What a book! I was hooked from the start by the first couple of chapters alone. A brilliant, unique storyline (for me at least) so it did get me quite excited. I couldn't wait to turn the pages, see what else had been thrown into the mix to confuse me and keep me guessing....which I did until the very end.

Really well written, fast paced with short snappy chapters that give you that "Just one more chapter" mentality.

A wonderful book that the author has done well to put together, the flowing writing keeping the reader held within its pages. Highly recommend this one.

Although I was lucky enough to receive this as an ARC, all thoughts and opinions are entirely my own.

Joanne Robertson says

If you loved Appletree Yard or the more recent Anatomy of a Scandal then you are going to love The Guilty Wife!! It's a very cleverly woven story with a sting in its tale that will leave you wanting to go back and read the whole sordid drama all over again to spot those clues you missed first time round. Full of unreliable and disagreeable characters, I was gripped from the start by Bethany's dilemma but this is one of those books where I trusted no one and suspected EVERYONE as the plot twisted and turned at an addictive pace. An intriguing idea brought to life with a punchy writing style all wrapped up in a whodunnit that relied a lot on coincidence but was such an enjoyable page turner that I was able to forgive the few quibbles I had with some of the plot holes!! And when will everyone learn that "those" sort of pictures and videos are NEVER a good idea??!! I had a lot of fun with this book and have already put Elle Crofts next book on my wishlist of books to look out for in 2018!
