



The Dark Lake

Anthea Carson

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Something is wrong with Jane.

It's not that she still lives with her parents in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, although she's well into her thirties. It's not that she can't keep a job, stay sober, or function as an independent adult. It's something else. Something she can't quite remember.

There was a party. And a car. And the lake.

The Dark Lake Details

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From Reader Review The Dark Lake for online ebook

Ronda says

I had planned to read this over time, but could not put it down until I knew Jane's secret! This book kept me interested to the very end. It would make fantastic book club interaction. It is the perfect length to read in an afternoon & is full of material for great conversation.

Jeb Harrison says

Stand back! Here is a writer that has mastered the art of character narration to the point where you will think the narrator of The Dark Lake, Jane, has come to your house and is sitting in your living room telling her story. After a little while you'll probably feel a little antsy - Jane seems a little off - and later you might contemplate jumping out the window, because you've discovered that Jane is more than just a little off, she's creepy scary crazy and she might go postal at any moment.

Author Anthea Carson is not your average self-published genre storyteller, and The Dark Lake, unlike the flood of Kindle books being published, is a work of sophisticated complexity. Carson has cut her writerly teeth on the likes of Faulkner, Proust, Nabakov and perhaps a bit of Kafka. When I stood the first several pages of The Dark Lake up against popular author Ann Patchett's new book I felt Carson's work was far more compelling than the factory-produced cookie-cutter work of Patchett.

The Dark Lake, like most good fiction, challenges the sensibilities of the reader and generally asks more questions than it answers. Add that to Carson's mastery of voice, and her ability to tell her story such that the writing itself is barely noticeable, and you have the makings of breakthrough fiction. Not long ago The New York Times Book Review would have lauded The Dark Lake as notable work. These days one can only hope that Anthea Carson keeps producing. My bet is a big break is just around the corner.

Venus Perez says

The Dark Lake is a book that will leave you wanting more. I even feel like reading it a second time certain that I will appreciate it even more. It captured me from the very first chapter and was hard to put down. When I wasn't reading it, I was thinking about it and about what would happen next. It is refreshing to read the author's unique approach to writing and I wish more authors would take a different approach to writing every now and then like this author did.

Cassandra Leuthold says

The further I read into The Dark Lake, the more I liked it. The first 5 or 6 chapters confused me, and I had a

hard time getting a sense of Jane's character. There weren't enough physical details and concrete transitions to pull me into Jane's world.

As the story moved forward, it got really gripping as Jane tried to deal with her present and take turns at evading and picking apart her past. Reality blended with flashbacks and the after-effects of her drug years in a compelling, fluid way for most of the book. Jane came alive, sympathetic, relatable, and beautifully flawed.

Without giving away spoilers, I probably would've given 4 stars if not for the ending. It didn't work for me. I was reading so furiously to see how it ended, and I didn't get enough of my questions answered. The plot had me in its unforgiving claws and let me go without any sense of conclusion or bringing me down gently. I also grew to loathe the over-repeated phrase "little blue Chevette." I love that the story was based on a real incident, though.

Andrea says

Anthea Carson's "The Dark Lake" is a fast-paced novel that flits between the past and present-day life of Jane, a recovering addict who is trapped in limbo by a tragedy involving one of her best friends.

We first meet Jane in the present day. She is in her 20s or 30s, perhaps. Carson doesn't give a lot of detail about her physical appearance, leaving that to the imagination of the reader. We learn that Jane lives at home with her dysfunctional parents, attends AA meetings, and visits a therapist regularly. She can't hold a job, never graduated from high school or college, and constantly relives the past, torturing herself in the process.

So why bother reading about Jane when she sounds like so many wash-ups we read about in today's society?

Because she has a secret. A secret locked inside her mind to which even she doesn't hold the key. During the course of the story, we get bits and pieces here, a glimmer there, about what happened on the fateful night she relives over and over. What really happened that night? Did her friend survive the tragedy or perish? Can Jane overcome the past or is she destined to be lost to it?

At first it seems as if she might be lost forever.

Carson has written and published several short stories, the novel "Ainsworth," and has co-written a book about chess. "The Dark Lake" seems drawn deep from the depths of her imagination and successfully captures the reader's imagination till the story's end. And then you have to read the sequel.

Randi says

I had trouble even rating this book. Did I like it? Yes I did. It was a fast read. I felt connected to the main character, I felt her pain. Trying to remember what happened the night the car went in lake seemed to be what stopped her from moving on.

Jane a recovering addict/alcoholic attends AA meetings, anger management and a therapist. She has moments where it seems that she really wants to remember that night but when she gets close to finding out she "freaks out" and runs away from it. Her mother is very distant with Jane and Jane seems to be closer to

her father. Her father seems a little "off" as well. I found myself trying to figure her parents out but then realized Jane is telling the story and maybe this is just her view on them and not how they really are.

There are so many different moments in this book that had me asking the same question....Is the reason Jane is the way she is caused by mental illness or is it caused by the drugs?

I had moments of confusion, moments when my heart ached for this woman who is trying to get past the trauma of that night. By the end of the book I was still confused on her mother, her father and mostly what happened that night.

I'm sure my questions will be answered in the books to follow. I can't wait to read more about Jane and see how her story unfolds.

I was hoping that a few questions would be answered by the end of this book but I was only left with more.

I received this book free from Goodreads First Reads.

Suneeta Misra says

The Dark Lake

This is a psychological study of the mind of a disturbed woman Jane, as she goes through her therapy sessions. It was hard to get into the story because the author has used the language more suited to the characters in the story rather than what a reader is used to seeing in a literary novel.

We follow the main protagonist, Jane, as she works through her previous destructive lifestyle which led to a climactic event. There should have been a little more detail on the characters and motivations of the other players like Jane's mother and therapist, and the group of high school friends who are central to the story. The narrative goes back and forth into Jane's past which was very effective in decoding the events and moving the story forward. The story is based entirely on the perspective of the central character and therein lays its strength and weakness - strength, because we see the hallucinatory nature of the events as they unfold, and weakness, because we do not get an outsider's perspective on the motivations and consequences of Jane's actions. All in all, this is a very interesting and unique story which needs to be fine-tuned to remove some of the typos and other narrative-structure issues.

Kelly says

The Dark Lake is the story of Jane, a disturbed and painfully introspective character who just can't seem to get her act together. In the story, we follow Jane from therapist to anger management to short-lived jobs as we try to piece together the stories of her alcoholic and drug-induced past that led her to where she is today – a high school dropout living with her parents who goes to therapy more often than most of us go to work.

Carson is a master at peppering this story with rich detail, beautiful imagery, and an inner monologue that is uniquely Jane. The story jumps back and forth from the past to the present, which reinforces and simulates the mental state of the protagonist, adding another layer of authenticity to the story. In addition, Carson

creates a strained and complicated relationship with everyone Jane interacts with – her estranged best friend from her old life, her parents, and her therapist.

It's a psychological suspense with a unique literary quality. I look forward to reading more of Anthea Carson, and I'd recommend *The Dark Lake* to anyone.

Kelly Hitchcock
Author of *The Redheaded Stepchild*

Theresa Dawn Sinclair says

The *Dark Lake* is a very dark story indeed, written through the eyes of a very troubled woman whose disturbing memories of something in her past are twisting her sense of reality. She isn't very likeable which makes this a difficult read, yet her anxieties do help to draw us in, if not to actually sympathise fully. Perhaps if a reader had a similar background of drugs and wild youth, it would appeal more. This reader was a little lost in that world and thus unsympathetic occasionally. BUT....the way Anthea Carson writes this story is most believable and therefore quite terrifyingly good.

It is part of a trilogy I believe...but I'd prefer to have had some closure on this part. I am pretty sure most people will have guessed the dark secret concerning her friends long before the end but a trilogy ought to tie up all the loose ends in one story before the next story in the trilogy begins. So about the father.....???

Anyway, I read this super fast because above all it is a page turner. I'd advise the author to do a thorough read through herself as there are quite a few very small errors in the text. Nevertheless, I'd recommend the book for those who enjoy a dip into the dark side.

Kenya Wright says

O---kay

hmmmm

This will mash your mind into mush!

Seriously.

I'm not even sure how to rate this book. I think because I sat here in front of my computer debating what I should give it, it had to get more than three stars. The premise and looney character gave it an extra star.

Therefore I will say that this is a must-read for people who love DARK and Psychological thrillers.

Beatrice says

Something is buried deep in Jane's mind and in the lake. Something ghastly and frightening. We follow the

protagonist through a labyrinth of memories both distant and more recent, which recur with slight additions and changes. This patchwork of images, insights and fears slowly builds up to the complex picture of a troubled mind searching for a truth that eludes it.

The vivid, colorful and palpable descriptions of characters and places (Krishna and her room and belongings will stay with you forever!) contrasts masterfully with the blurred boundaries of time and space that the protagonist will need to overcome in order to find some direction and closure to her anguished search.

Jane's voice is what leads us through the maze of self-deception and actual fact, and the reader is enchanted and enticed by the very real anxiety of her search. We are driven by this convincing yet visibly disturbed narrator, and delve deep into her psyche in her desperate hunt for meaning.

There are also many winks for those readers with a literary background, an extra bonus which in no way interferes with the pleasure of reading for pure entertainment. Occasional touches of humor and sarcasm lighten up the profundity of the protagonist's predicament.

I felt I was lead into this gripping text, deeper and deeper, and I was scared and fascinated at the same time. Only when you get to the very bottom of this uncanny dive will you get a glimpse of the truth, but until then, the trip down is certainly worth your time.

Veronica Morfi says

When I started reading this book I thought it was a stand alone but after seeing the other reviews I found out it's part of a trilogy. Thank God, cause I was expecting everything to be resolved in the end but I was left a little bit confused. I guess I will just have to wait for the next book.

The Dark Lake is the story of Jane. We follow her through her crazy life, from therapy appointments to anger management meetings and back home with her parents. She is struggling to get and keep a job, wishing that in the end she will be able to move out, all the while haunted by the memories of her past and a night she can't really remember.

This book was very different from what you usually can find out there. Jane's mind is a huge labyrinth. You never know where you are going to end up next. During her everyday life a lot of memories from her past flash before her eyes, she can't really separate her dreams from reality and has a few hallucinations too. I especially loved the memories. I had so many theories as to what happened that night and what is going on right now. Unfortunately I was expecting a big bang at the end that never came and then I learned that the book is part of a series. I can't wait to finally figure out what is going on with Jane and see if any of my theories are correct.

Roberta Smith says

I vacillated on how many stars to give this book. Four stars? The story idea is great and if it isn't a true story, it sure comes off as one. The dialogue is top notch.

Two stars? I got lost. I had to ask myself several times, where am I now? Why can't the author at least make the setting clear each time the character goes back and forth in time? What year is it when we are in the present? How old is this character now? She was born in 1964, but when we are in the present some of the things mentioned don't sound like today. The ending is meant to be a cliffhanger so you'll read the next book. Okay. But the type of cliffhanger isn't fair. This book should have told us who she is really seeing in

the end. That would be the cliffhanger. This ending irritated me. The characters aren't likeable. The main character is extremely selfish and disrespectful, even when far beyond her teenage years. Ah, wait. She does have redeeming qualities. She wants to work. She wants to be productive. She wants to conquer her mental illness, and the illness she has is major. Conquering it can't be an easy feat. Finally, the book needs to be edited by a pro. There are misspelled words, wrong words, formatting errors and odd tense choices throughout.

Back to four stars? In some ways this book is brilliant, and it is always interesting. If the storytelling is irritating and lacks clarity it is because it is mimicking the predicament of its main character. Everything is through her eyes and since she is off, the storytelling has to be off. In the end it works.

So I split the difference and gave the book three stars. It won't be for everyone, but for readers fascinated by mental illness and how a person copes, this book is perfect. It certainly is unique. I'm glad I read it.

Nicolas Wilson says

I rated The Dark Lake 3 stars. There were a lot of things I enjoyed, but I felt that it had a lot of flaws that undermined it. These fell under three main areas: overall narrative structure, narrow characterizations, and a general need for more proofreading. There may be mild spoilers in the review below.

The narrative takes shape in a combination of our main character Jane's current timeline, and her past recollections. These settings are interspersed quite frequently and the lack of any context to the recollections makes it difficult to put past events in a cohesive timeline, even non-significant conversations. I found it quite distracting wondering whether this conversation or argument had happened before a different one, or whether it was current, albeit featuring a character who had previously appeared only in flashbacks. I reread sections multiple times trying to fit it into the overall series of events. I wasn't thrilled with the inconclusive ending. The overall effect was jarring, and detracted from the characters.

I enjoyed Jane, our main character, but felt that the narrative was too leading to allow her a lot of room for growth or nuance. She is not intended to be likable, but to gain a measure of depth through her past interactions. I would have enjoyed more scenes set in the current path of the narrative to give a stronger sense of Jane's current personality and the other various effects of her mental illness, not just her attachments to the past, and the expectation of her current relationships following the same patterns. Her (and her therapists) focus on one ambiguous dream/memory felt forced, given the stated scope of her problems. I would have liked to see more depth to her illness and her personality outside of the main narrative. Especially in her dealings with current characters such as her mom, there was little real depth to the interaction and the tension or conflict suffered because of it.

There seemed to be some some uneven spots in her characterization in the middle section. Upon beginning anger management, she decided she would enjoy that job, even though she dislikes her counselor, dislikes the nature of the class, dislikes the people in the class, has been incredibly hostile during other support groups, shows a lack of empathy to other "troubled" people in her groups, and generally has no reason to think she would want to be around those classes for a living. The motivation made little sense, and I was relieved that she did not return to it. It made it easier to pretend it hadn't happened, for the sake of the character's continuity. The thought process in that section did not feel organic to the character.

I'm prepared to see some technical errors in any piece of writing, but there were a lot more than there should have been in here. Some were simple errors or typos: incomplete quotation marks, extra punctuation, no indents on new paragraphs, words that were obviously not the word intended(e.g. things not thinks), or common mistakes(there not their). Others were grammatical flaws: changing between past/present tenses mid-sentence and mid-paragraph, adding extra filler words(like, really, etc.) in the narration, repeating information already presented in a sentence, fragmented sentences. Note: I shared this review with Carson, and she said she was removing the proofreading errors I noticed. I'm sure newer readers will have a smoother experience.

We've been given an incredibly unlikable main character, and I'm impressed with Carson's skill in getting me to like her, despite that. She has the potential to be an engaging writer, and I'm looking forward to seeing her storytelling evolve in future works. I wish we could rate half-stars as well. I'd happily change the review to 3.6 for the new edition, with the changes Carson spoke to me about.

(Another note: my copy of *The Dark Lake* was provided for review purposes.)

Harsh says

I was looking for a psychological drama to read and this book had caught my eye with its brilliantly created cover. Imagine my joy when I received a free copy from the author to review. Anthea Carson has taken a bold step by making her main character Jane mentally ill. **While this does defy the norms of making the protagonist likeable, Jane's troubled past and her craziness bordering on insanity kept me stuck to the story.** Despite Jane's psychological issues, she came across as a believable character. She wasn't someone I could relate with but she could have been that neighbor's daughters whose life is in complete shambles. Jane did not get along with her mother, her friends or for that matter anyone. She attended AA meetings and had difficulties with maintaining a steady job. This did make the character a bit annoying at times but also kept the book grounded.

The Dark Lake is a bit complex and continuously flits back and forth between the past and the present. While this was a good writing device, it wasn't executed very well in some places leading to some minor confusion. **The narrative and the dialogue however, kept the story flowing.** I have nothing but praises for the dialogues. They added the color of life to the entire story almost making me feel as if the characters were conversing right in front of me.

The ending however disappointed me. It felt like a mid-season finale in a TV series where not much has been resolved and you're left feeling incomplete and yearning for more. Even with this feeling of incompleteness **I would recommend this book to people for Carson's wonderful writing style and strong narrative.**

I saw that she had a sequel out and I'm pretty sure that whoever reads *The Dark Lake* will be compelled to buy the sequel. Well played Anthea Carson.
