



Blood in the Water

Catherine Johnson

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Ashleigh Carter is no stranger to crime, but she's no criminal; or at least, not technically. By association she's as guilty as sin. Her father is President of the Priests MC, a motorcycle club that rides on the wrong side of the law.

Paul 'Shark' Reardon is caught in the middle. What starts out as a simple, yet dangerous, mission for his club, the Rabid Dogs MC is soon complicated by acceptance, friendship and a blue-eyed blonde who is very definitely off-limits.

Everyone's hiding something and trust is in short supply. Hazardous lives, already fraught with tension, are twisted into cross and double-cross. Somewhere in the middle of the plots and lies is a chance for love, if everyone can just make it out the other side alive.

Blood in the Water Details

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From Reader Review Blood in the Water for online ebook

Val Shameless ?? Steamy Reads ?? says

5 Stars

I just love gritty MC club books.

Makes me feel like I'm living a badass life for a few hours instead of just sitting on my very clichéd middle class white suburban couch with my puggle-dachshund and a coffee cup that says "Bottom Ho."

I've been hitting some serious pay dirt in the MC romance department lately and I'm seriously stoked about it.

Not only that, but between this and the *Dartmoor* series - which are both established series that I am late to find (how this happened, I have no idea, but I'm glad) - I now have numerous already published books to look forward to.

Numerous.

And that, my friends, is what we call a serious book win, no?

I mean, really, is there any better feeling than knowing you have multiple books on your tbr, with characters that feel like family, in stories you just *know* are going to be awesome?

That said, this book.

Not gonna lie (not that I ever do), this thing started off a wiiiiddle slow.

The writing is a kind of different style - limited third person narrative - and felt a bit choppy at first.

Also, the story started in the somewhat distant past with what at first felt like boring, superfluous background details regarding the lives of three of the more prominent characters.

At first it felt a smidgen tedious, but somewhere along the way all those details and seemingly trivial scenes lent themselves to what turned into a pretty awesome story.

I really liked Ashleigh - it's always SO nice to have a heroine who is a reasonable adult and not a TSTL idiot who does and says dumb shit.

Also, as I alluded to earlier, the club itself here is a *legit* MC club that actually discusses and carries out illegal and crazy shit...not just some group of guys who pretend to be badass and call themselves an MC club, but are really on the straight and narrow side of the law because ROMANCE novel.

NOT that I don't appreciate those books, because I do (if done well).

But sometimes, but it's nice to have real and truly gritty feeling MC club in my completely fictional and probably very unrealistic romance novel.

And Paul?

SOLD.

Looking forward to the next one.

Anne in VA says

The beginning was fantastic. The author did a fabulous job introducing the characters, this MC world and their history. My slight disappointment was that it never really came up after that. I thought we'd get at least a conversation between Paul and Ashleigh about how shitty his past was. Nope, never came up. Come to think of it, I don't even think she asked him WHY he decided to move to Louisiana. They had a strong attraction, but not much character growth between the two. Mostly just sex. You learn the most about these people in the beginning of the book before they even meet each other. It was a good read, but could have been fucking great. Just a little lacking and by the middle/end I started to lose interest. First book I've read by this author. Not sure I'll go back for seconds.

◆ Anna's "a?????g\$ ◆ says

3 STARS

It started out very promising but...

The first 50-60% was sooo looong.

Nothing was really going on except for the numerous introductions. And there were A LOT of characters to introduce.

I felt lost. And bored.

The writing is solid but I didn't connect with any of the characters. None of them were developed enough to gain my affection. We *did* get a lot of details on them but something was missing.

Both the hero and the heroine were uninteresting (to me). Their romance was lukewarm. They practically didn't interact until the middle of the book.

Despite everything, this book is not bad. In fact, it's better than a lot of MC books out there. It just didn't live up to my expectations.

Oh well.

When you make pancakes, the first one rarely turns out perfect. But the second one is always better.

On to book two!

Alyssa says

4 Stars

I love when I come across a hidden motorcycle club gem.

The mc sub-genre mayhaps be my all-time favorite. With that said, I always look for a stone I have yet to turn in the motorcycle club world. This one has been on my radar, but like most, I easily judge a book by its cover and its low amount of reviews. I'm glad I started clearing out my motorcycle club TBR and gave this one a shot.

This is one of those books that it paints a motorcycle club universe. It's gritty, it's not always easy, yet you have empathy and are rooting for everyone, even if you have to search for their redeeming qualities at the same time.

I will say this. This book starts slow AF. I'm talking a real snail's pace. The author really takes her time creating a world. With that though, you already find yourself attached to who's in this world when the story finally takes off.

I lived for Shark and Ashleigh. You want this to happen. And they are both great and well-developed MCs. And this was a slow burn on multiple levels. A - because of the aforementioned plot building. And B - just an actual slow burn.

You also read this with a sense of dread. Although it takes time for this to really kick off, the crumbs you're given just give you the most anxiety because you know it has to get a lot worse before it can get better.

I wish there could have been *more* of Shark and Ashleigh. But this kind of leaned toward more of an mc world than a focused romance. And in this case, I'm not mad at it, but I just really vibed on them a lot.

So at the end of the day, cheers. Another great read. And I eventually have plans to get to Book 2.

Chaddy says

It took a long time to get into this book. The entire beginning was all backstory, which was good and bad. Good because I understood where all the main characters were coming from. There were no secrets that I had to uncover about their actions. I knew all their motivations and that was very satisfying. Bad because I had to force myself to keep reading so I could get to the romance and the actual meat of the story. Once I reached that point, which was around the 50% mark, I was happy I had kept going. This is not an mc-lite book. The club is not trying to keep themselves clean and there are descriptions of torture, which I found to be way too gruesome for my tastes. The second half action completely made up for the lack of it in the first half and had me on the edge of my seat. I was never completely sold on the romance between two of the main characters, Ashleigh and Paul, but I did like their commitment to each other. Once they were together, that was it for them. No third party ever came between them and that was refreshing. The second and third books are out in this series and I will be continuing on.

Rhonda says

If I were truly honest, I would've given 1 star, but the last 15% of the book was really good. I thought the book was about Paul and Ashleigh, but their story did not start until at the 50% or 53% mark on my kindle. I skimmed most of this book. To me, there wasn't much of a story or plot until the end. The first 50% is not really a story so much as it is just introducing many characters and describing their day to day life. It starts in the 1980's and continues up until present day. I understand when you have to give some back story to start with the main story, but this was too much. For example, at the beginning Ashleigh's dad was in prison. One chapter is all about him and his daily life in prison. Then it would go to the next chapter which would be about someone else and their day to day life and so on up until 50%. At one point in the story it introduced every member of the mc (with info. about their lives) that sat at the table in church. There was just a lot of information that I didn't see as having anything to do with the actual story of the H and h. For me, there is such a thing as too much info. Please don't let me dissuade you from reading this book. I'm not saying it was a bad book, I'm just saying it wasn't for me.

Rebecka says

4.5

Another beautiful story by a 'new to me' Freak Circle Author, Catherine Johnson. It will definitely not be my last by her. I had planned on working my way through the Freak Circle Authors eventually.... However, The Literary Gossip gave me the needed nudge by gifting me an copy of this e-book.

The glances into the main characters history was a welcome addition to learning the mindset of the main

characters and who they became in later years.

Paul finds himself in an awful predicament when he is patched over to the Priests MC. How could he know that he'd finally find everything he's wanted and even more he didn't know he was missing.

How can he possibly get through this without hurting those he has come to call family and giving up a place he now calls home? The only option-truth. He hopes that his actions and value will be of worthy enough to keep him from condemnation. A chance he's willing to take that chance...for her.

Janina says

Blood in the Water is the first Book of the Kairos Series and it's Paul and Ashleighs Story.

It starts of with a long view into the protagonists past and lots of backound info and i loved it.

Alternating POV's telling us so much about Samuel, Paul and Ashleigh and other members as well.

The glimpses of their childhood, incarceration, the way and why they became who they are now, made me that much more invested in everybody and this story.

When Ashleigh and Paul finally meet, they are very much instantly attracted to eachother but neither one of them is ready to give in. -Of course this beeing a romance they dont stand a chance ;)

Their Story is not free and easy, there is heartbreak, there is danger, there is loss but there is love, passion, family, forgiveness and brotherhood too.

Ashleigh is a strong heroine, independent with a mind of her own and Paul is full of dedication, strenght and loyalty.

I've read a couple of FCP Authors and their Books by now and i really did love some of them, this one beeing no exception. The Story was great and has me looking forward to the next Book in the Series **Bones by the Wood**.

C.D. says

So excited to have the first Freak Circle writer I discovered on Fanfiction.net come out with an MC novel of

her own. I always loved how this author's characters had an understated but undeniable chemistry. Not insta-love, but certainly attraction that always managed to meld into something more in a natural, realistic progression. Her characterizations are sublime, and the plot was realistic and enthralling. Ashleigh is a club princess, but not in the way you've read a thousand times over already. And Shark is certainly the worst kind of bad news for her, but these are adults coming to an inevitable conclusion which makes the plot unlike what you've already read. The relationships are set up to be doomed, and that's exactly why you keep reading. Plot- and character-rich, 100%.

Laurie says

I found the Freak Circle Press about a year or so ago and have overall been pretty happy with almost everything I have read by those guys. I was searching for something to read in the wee hours of the night and didn't want to put a lot of thought into it and found a reference to FCP. I hightailed it over to their page thinking I had read most of what their author's had put out, but I was thrilled to see I missed some. My problems of what to read have hopefully been solved for at least a week. Yippee!

I picked Catherine Johnson's Kairos Series first, mainly because I liked the title (Blood in the Water is a pretty kickass title). I read some reviews and was forewarned that it starts out slow. They were not kidding. There was way too much back story going on, and I felt like that author was doing a lot of telling but not a lot of showing. Forewarned meant I knew that it got better so I slogged my way past the slowness and tried to ignore the writing style. They were right, it got much better.

You can read the synopsis to get the gist of the story so I won't retell it. Paul was a great H. He was absolutely ruthless and not afraid of mess which was hard to take at times. He was hot, sweet, and an absolute teddy bear when it came to his woman. He was also stuck between a rock and a hard spot which is not where you want to be in a Motorcycle Club, much less when you are caught between two different clubs. There were times when I felt like what he needed to do was obvious, but then I had to remember that this was an MC and his actions were understandable.

Ashleigh wasn't my favorite h of all time. She wasn't bad, she just seemed kind of mousy at times. She was a club princess, being the daughter of the Priests President, but she wasn't spoiled and didn't put on airs. She could take care of business if she needed to, but seemed to take the high road first and only resorted to being tough if she needed to.

These two had a rough road and some seemingly insurmountable problems. They had chemistry and there were several sexy times, although it took forever to get there.

Once the story got going, I was glad I chose it. There were a few things that I felt were left hanging, like what the hell were Tag's issues? Overall I'm pretty happy with how it ended. I will definitely be reading the next book in the series.

Warning, this is about a 1% MC club who are into illegal activities with no apologies, in other words this is a gritty read. There are some pretty graphic torture scenes and if that makes you uncomfortable you either need to skim over them or skip the book altogether.

My Rating: 3.5 Stars

TeriLyn says

5 "*Reckon your right, beauty.*" Stars

My FCP freak for life reading buddy and I read *Blood in the Water* together for our latest stop on our FCP MC tour. In her review, Irene states she's a "creature of habit" when she finds a certain kind of book she wants to read all she can. The same can be said for me. We were fortunate enough to find the MC books from the Freak Circle Press and while each author from the FCP we've read presents something different in terms of writing, plot, and characters but they all share the same kind of realist perspective on MC culture that has proven both highly addictive and larger than life.

Catherine Johnson starts her journey with a long prologue of sorts in which she delves into the childhoods of both the hero and heroine of *Blood in the Water*. We immediately realize a major contrast in how the two were raised. It's worth mentioning here because it really sets the tone for Paul Reardon as our hero. Our sympathies lie with him a lot more because Ms. Johnson has made it impossible for the reader to feel anything but compassion in the small things Paul notices or feels; small things any one else would take for granted.

Paul "Shark" Reardone is a man who bases his loyalties on a warm bed and a brotherhood he found after spending his youth in and out of juvie. He's an enforcer within the MC and let's just say compassion isn't something you'd believe he possesses. But it's there in every thing he does, even the most gruesome of acts. The compassion might not be for whom but for the art of his "craft". It shines in him when he meets Ashleigh and the members of The Priests MC to which he is reassigned in a sense. The Priests, led by President Samuel Carter, provide a very different kind of life, a different kind of warm bed and brotherhood to which Paul can't help but want the more and more he receives. Ashleigh wants to feel the ultimate protection of a man who loves her fiercely. Having grown up the daughter of an MC president she understands fierce and more than understands, Ashleigh accepts and cherishes the kind of family she has in The Priests. She's a woman who's guarded with her feelings about relationships but once she's in, she's all the way in showing Paul a tenderness he's never known.

There's so much I can say about these characters and the loyalties they portray in this book. Each of the members of the MC brought something unique to the table. Catherine Johnson wasn't afraid to make us hurt in this book. She made us feel deeply for this club then made us hurt with them. We were tested in the same ways Paul was, in the same ways Samuel was, and Ashleigh. We felt everything as we were reading this book and to us that's the mark of great MC writing: to feel and to hurt and to shine when the characters do. To feel content in the events that happened but still hurt because of them.

If you love MC, you'll enjoy *Blood in the Water*. I can't wait to see where Ms. Johnson takes this story in the next book.

Susan says

Catherine Johnson is a friend and fellow writer in the Freak Circle Press.

Paul “Shark” Reardon and Ashleigh Carter have immediate, powerful chemistry, but there are major obstacles between them and the relationship they both discover they want—more and bigger obstacles than Ashleigh even realizes.

Paul, a club enforcer with a renowned talent for, um, extracting information from unwilling subjects, comes to the Priests MC under murky pretenses. He patches over from the Rabid Dogs MC, a supposed ally of the Priests. But he comes with a secret, a mission that could ruin Ashleigh’s life and end the Priests.

But from the moment he moves to Absolution, Louisiana, Paul is overwhelmed by the warm welcome and the strong, loving sense of family among the Priests and their kin. The Rabids have nothing like it, and Paul, with a dark, sad history, has never known love and care like the Priests show him before he’s even unpacked his furniture. It changes everything he knows about the world, and it changes his reason for being in Absolution.

Ashleigh is a big part of that. The President’s daughter, she’s one of the first people he meets, and she captures his attention completely. Knowing how his mission would hurt her, he tries to stay away, but he can’t. They embark on a torrid, intense love affair.

But he still has that secret. The main arc of *Blood in the Water* follows Paul’s integration into the Priests, his education in the loving ways of real family, his deep love for Ash and her for him, and his crisis as he tries to figure out how to leave his old life and claim his new without taking down the very family he’s come to love and value.

Catherine Johnson creates a vivid world full of lively, real people with real relationships and real problems and complaints. And real love and affection. Paul’s start in life is positively heartbreaking, but he becomes a strong, honorable, powerful man capable of great love. Ashleigh’s life has not been quite so painful but has not been without its challenges. They make a wonderful couple with sizzling chemistry. And the Priests are a family I want to get to know more of. I can’t wait for more books in this series.

~IreneOust~ says

The thing is, I am a creature of habit. I like what I like and tend to stick with it. The fact that MC is one of my favorite genres is no secret. I love the simplicity of the culture, if you will. I love that the things they care about are simple things yet things that matter most: family (of blood relation and the kind you make for yourself in life) & loyalty, just to name the two. I like that betrayal is frowned upon to the point that you [almost] never live long enough to get a second chance.

I know there are plenty of MC books out there but [for me] none really have the depth of the stories that are

born inside the beautiful mind of Freak Circle Press authors.

‘Blood in the Water’ by Catherine Johnson is my latest FCP read.

From the way we get to know the main characters [through the events that happen early on in their lives and shape them into people they become] to the curve-ball Catherine throws in around 22% that makes you go ‘WTF????’, the story sucked me right in!

This is yet another fantastic tale of discovering something you didn’t know was missing in your life, re-evaluating friendships, testing loyalties and having love being the driving force behind certain actions that may mean the difference between life and death. It’s a story about real people, having real issues, dealing with real problems. It’s a story about finding out you belong at the same time you are forced to make a choice that can change the course of your entire life forever. I am not sure if the author planned it but the fact that this story takes place in a town called “Absolution” is really symbolic [to me].

The beauty of the characters created by the Freaks is that they are always flawed but they seem to OWN their flaws. They are who they are and you either take them as they come or watch them as they go. They are usually the hardest on themselves and even the strongest of characters have weaknesses which only proves they are human and makes them very easy to relate to.

If you appreciate well written stories that take time to develop, characters that come with enough emotional baggage you’d probably need a U-Haul to carry it all, supporting cast that gives said stories even more layers, you’ll love ‘Blood in the Water’.

MadLoveBookBlog says

This book is really good, if you can go past the first 20% of the book. The first 1/4, it is very confusing. Back and forth in time, that got me lost and almost frustrated because had to go back and ‘re_read over, for me to understand. I almost give up on reading. At times, the author elaborated scenes and chapters too much, she could’ve resume, and shrink and condensed. It would’ve come out better.

I like to give authors the chance, and so glad I did. After the first quarter, as soon as Paul arrived at the compound, the story takes off until the end, with a satisfactory and nice landing and a beautiful conclusion and HEA.

Judy says

Another winner from the Freak Circle Press. This was a first time author for me and I can say without a doubt that I look forward to more books from this author. She has a fluid writing style and the ability to draw you into the characters’ lives and emotions. I would like to say that I hate it when I love the bad guys, but how I do love these bad boys with their emotional baggage, alpha-possessive traits and sexiness. The H, Paul Reardon, has never known real love. He’s been on his own his whole life and only the depraved

members of the Rabid Dogs MC offer him a sense of belonging. He is sent on a mission to kill the president of the Priests MC. That plan goes to hell when, upon his arrival to the Priests MC, he is shown nothing but love, support and the true meaning of family. Add to that the immediate connection between him and the president's daughter, Ashleigh. Ashleigh is coming down from a bad marriage and does not want to trust any man again with her heart. The sexual tension and sex scenes are off the chart hot. The tenderness and love that Paul feels for Ashleigh is so strong, you can feel it as you read. This is one of those books where you ask, how can a man who can commit such acts of torture be so gentle and loving. But I got it. All of the primary and secondary characters were real and you feel them as they struggle with their own emotions, both the ups and the downs. One of the secondary characters dies and that was a heart wrenching, tear jerking moment in the book.

There is a HEA for the H/h and no cheating. I look forward to book 2 in this series and could see myself reading many more books by this author.
