



North of Montana

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After Ana Grey pulls off “the most amazing arrest of the year,” the squad supervisor -- who doesn’t like irreverent, tough-minded young women -- gives her a reprimand instead of the promotion she deserves. As a test, she is assigned a high-profile case involving a beloved Hollywood movie star and an illegal supply of prescription drugs. It doesn’t take Ana and her partner, Mike Donnato, long to realize “this is not a case” but “a political situation waiting to explode” -- and they’re holding the bomb.

As the boundary between her private and professional lives begins to blur, Ana’s own world collides with her investigation, and she is forced to confront the searing truth about the nature of power and identity, and the mystery of her past.

North of Montana Details

Date : Published February 10th 2009 by Vintage Crime/Black Lizard (first published 1994)

ISBN : 9780307390653

Author : April Smith

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review North of Montana for online ebook

Josh Ades says

April Smith barely squeezed out a 4-star rating on her first novel. The main plot itself was formulaic and fine, but nothing more than a nod to the great noir culture of Los Angeles. What kept the A plot from being compelling is that the protagonist never really faltered from her course. There wasn't much conflict. She hit a couple dead ends, had a semblance of a relationship with a movie star consider getting in the way, and was mildly distracted by the B plot, but none of these elements really created tension in the main, crime solving aspect of the novel.

However, the B plot in this novel is both compelling and quite well crafted. Smith creates a character that struggles with her identity, memories of her youth, and questions about her true feelings toward her grandfather. We learn alongside the protagonist what has really happened in her past and are left to consider how that effects her present character. The issues of memory, dreams, and identity are beautifully handled, redeeming this book from a quick, throw away read.

Kudos for an honest depiction of newer L.A. neighborhoods and the flaws beneath their surface.

Nick says

Is it wrong to complain that a book is just too derivative when it's genre fiction like a mystery? I mean, there are only so many plots, so many psychological drivers for the hero(ine), and so many red herrings and double switchbacks that the plot can follow. The answer is, yes, it's fine to complain, because the pleasure in a genre novel is the quality of the journey along those well-worn paths. In police procedurals that really work, character, setting, plot and neurosis converge time and time again as the hero (and the reader) puts the puzzle pieces in place. There are no cheap deus ex machinae, either in the crime-solving or in the hero's self-discovery. Or if there is, it has to be so powerfully rendered that I've suspended disbelief. That quality happened occasionally in this first novel about a female FBI agent on the case of a drug-addicted superstar, but not for long before one creaky contrivance after another rear their ugly heads and bring me down. Not recommended, even though I bought it at the recommendation of Robert Crais, apparently the author's mentor.

Kinza Azmat says

What a drag. I'm going south of Montana.

Jim says

Protagonist FBI agent Ana Grey in author April Smith's, "North of Montana", resides in a meandering and somewhat dark thriller facing many demons. With her mother long dead and raised by a grandfather she's also never met her own father. This is why Ana is very suspicious of all men. Interacting in professional or

personal parts of her life Ana likes to keep all men at a distance. Ana works on the FBI's super tough bank robbery squad wishing she could move up into more higher profile departments. By accident one morning Ana walks into stopping and arresting a bank robber in the act single handed. Expecting props from her boss she gets a reprimand in her file. With a request for transfer on the line this will not bode well for Ana's career. Out of the blue the head of the L.A.'s FBI field office taps Ana for a sticky and sensitive case. Famous movie star Jayne Mason is accusing high profile and very successful Dr. Randall Eberhardt of getting her hooked on illegal drugs that come from Mexico. Mason plays the very predictable role of an out of control aged star looking for more more of that taste of Hollywood glory to the max. Totally uncooperative with Ana for several weeks makes progress very minimal. Ana must track back to Dr. Eberhardt's Boston roots for a deep background check. It seems at every turn Ana has nothing but bad luck. Under pressure from the boss for results Ana stars taking shortcuts. In a plodding plot that gets sidetracked far too many times this was a very slow read for me. The book itself was written in the early 1990's and unfortunately many times shows signs of being very dated. Author April Smith leaves the impression that pre 9/11, the FBi was Keystone Kops era. I'd have to say I didn't find any characters from this book likeable nor someone to root for. Ana's sketchy past was far too vague to establish a connection with her in this yarn. Coming in at just over 290 pages this one read like it was 590 pages. Throughout reading, "North Of Montana", I kept think am I getting anywhere soon ? The plot needed more of a obvious connection to make title of book to make more sense. Also Ana's has one 'connection' with her partner on the bank robbery squad that really turned me off to this book. I almost sent it to the never finished pile at that point. Only two stars out of a possible five stars for author April Smith's, "North Of Montana". I should have left it in the bookstore.

Dr T says

Very disappointing in several respects. First, I looked at the title of this book and expected it be set in western Canada or Montana, but in fact it was set in a very dreary Los Angeles. Second, it was very annoying to read, as it developed extremely slowly. Third, I didn't find any of the characters very interesting or appealing, to the point that I really didn't care 'who-dunnit' or if the protagonist ever solved the case. Needless to say I won't be reading any more of the author's books any time soon.

Linda says

A straight forward who-dun-it with a few side plots to keep things moving. A great first novel written with lots of tension to keep the reader's interest. Language is terrific!

Quillracer says

April Smith is another author I've never read before and, as always, I am a little leery of reading new authors because I never know what I'm going to get. Will it be a winner or a loser?

North Of Montana had a long build-up to the main plot line – investigating a movie star's claim that a doctor hooked her on prescription drugs. While this often slows the pace of the story down, it seems to be more and more common these days. Several sub-plots that only tangentially touched on the main one slowed the story even more.

As in many books, the protagonist, Ana Grey, has a troubled past that affects her current actions. Perhaps I've read too many books with characters like this, but the more I encounter them, the more tedious I find them. Doesn't anyone have a normal childhood anymore?

Some of the descriptive prose in this book was very confusing. I was never quite sure if we were reading Ana's thoughts. Or was she describing something she was seeing? It almost read like an attempt by the author to be 'literary' but fell flat in my opinion, and just sounded pretentious.

I didn't find Ana to be an engaging character or even a likeable one. I just didn't care if she succeeded or failed. That is not the way to make me want to read another book by this author.

There was the obligatory sex scene but it seemed to come 'out of the blue' with no foundation under it. Yes, Ana and her partner had been flirting off and on, but there seemed to be no reason for them to get it on when they did. That she did it with a married man turned me off to Ana. I'm not picking on women here. I would find a man doing it with a married woman equally offensive.

Still, to be fair, this is the first book in the series and they sometimes can be a bit rough. Often the author planes down those rough spots in later books. So, if I encounter the second book in this series, I will read it. But I won't actively hunt for it.

April Smith isn't that good.

Libbie Buchele says

Adequate murder mystery with some interesting vignettes on rediscovering the heroine's El Salvadorian past. The romance seemed a little forced and the secondary characters were a bit cardboard-like and stereotypical, but I will read the next book

Virginia Harrell says

Because I enjoyed April Smith's writing so much in A Star for Mrs. Blake, I wanted to read her series featuring a female FBI agent. I enjoy this type of fiction - and, I did expect a bit more action. I was only mildly disappointed as there were parts that seemed to drag becoming slightly tedious. I like the character of Ana Grey and the way she was depicted as a person with pride, compassion and flaws. Ms. Smith is a master at prose but some of the shared thoughts and ruminations were a little too lengthy. Still, it was a good read, and I will pursue more in the series.

Lynn says

This is the first of the Ana Grey mysteries. Heard the author and she is writing some other books but plans to return to this heroine. I totally get the flawed heroine or hero idea but this character makes questionable decisions seem like a euphemism. Otherwise good story.

Cheryl says

It was okay.

Wendy says

I really wanted to like this book but it just wasn't a compelling story. Disappointed in the hookup especially since it doesn't seem to go anywhere. Depressing story. I will not continue with the series.

K says

It just did not click with me. Ana is an FBI agent, in LA, has an overbearing Poppy, an understanding partner, and a lot of issues. She seems very lost personally as an agent, and right away I felt "bells ringing" as she interacts with poppy. Glad the mystery is solved, but in a very sad way, for the case and in her personal life too.

Steve says

When FBI agent Ana Grey is assigned to the case of a murdered young woman, she already knows information her peers don't know: this may be one of Ana's distant relatives. The crime procedural genre is tricky to write well; it is all too easy to use clichés based on audience expectations. But this author can write well enough to break that cage. This was a fun read.

Staci Woodburn-Henry says

I read outside my normal genre for the Ana Grey books on the recommendation of a friend. After one, I was hooked. This is the note I sent him while on the second book:

I was reading while waiting for the bus this morning. When it pulled up, I got on without looking up. Still on the bus 45 minutes later, it's pouring rain and hail and no one can figure out how to close the roof hatch that I'm sitting under. Which is of course when I finally stopped reading and noticed that not only am I getting pelted, but I'm on the wrong bus, in the wrong part of town, and I'm late for work. But I'm laughing victoriously because it means that I get to read more while I dry off and wait for another bus to take me back. -- That, my friend, is the definition of a good read.

Highly recommend, bur warning: they're hard to put down so clear your schedule.
