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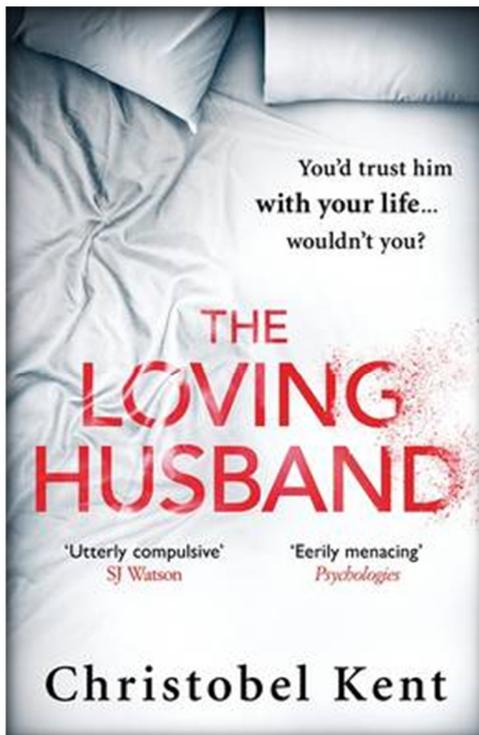
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BOOK GROUP

## LoveReading Reader reviews of **The Loving Husband**

by Christobel Kent

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



### Edel Waugh

*As soon as I received this book I was interested, the cover is very enticing! The story is about a family, a wife called Fran, husband Nathan and two children Ben and Emmie. One night something grizzly happens at their house in the countryside and it blows open Nathan's past and it becomes clear that Fran never knew her husband at all. This book did not give up its secrets in one go so if you like a slow burner mystery then this is the book for you. The author really sets the scene, it's eerie and uncomfortable and there is a sense of danger from the very beginning. I was never certain how reliable a character Fran was as her actions were often very*

*questionable and they left me suspicious of her and her motives. **The book literally takes you to the last pages before it will give you a full picture of what happened there and why. If you like a mystery or thriller then add this to your TBR list. Loved it!***

### Cheryl Kinney

***A scary, gripping and menacing read. I haven't read any previous work by Christobel Kent, however will definitely be adding her to my list!***

*'The Loving Husband' is a gripping read that is scary in places. There is an undercurrent that runs through the book, I was never sure of the husband and what his secret was. In fact it kept me guessing right until it was revealed in the final chapters. I would never have guessed!*

*The atmosphere created by the author is chilling, there were some places that were scary and made me look around to make sure was on own! Didn't help that was reading it late at night!*

*Without giving anything away, I feel for the main character and having to learn about her life and how it's not all it seems.*

*A clever and unique book that kept me reading into the night, would definitely recommend this book to others.*

You can follow Cheryl on Twitter: @cheryl\_bookworm

### **Elisabeth Thomas**

#### ***A perfectly enjoyable thriller.***

*Fran and Nathan Hall have recently moved to an isolated farmhouse on the outskirts of the Fens from the hustle and bustle of London. Fran met Nathan at a friend's party and after a whirlwind romance and unplanned pregnancy, they got married. Wanting their child to grow up in the country, Nathan suggests that they move back to the area that he grew up. A second baby, Ben, arrives and Fran begins to see them as the perfect family.*

*One night in February, Fran is disturbed by Ben, but Nathan isn't there. He isn't downstairs nor can she see him outside that is until she makes a discovery that will turn her life upside down.*

*As the police pursue their enquiries, Fran begins to discover that Nathan, whom she thought was the perfect loving husband and father, was perhaps not all that he seemed and that he had a past – a past that had finally caught up with him.*

*I enjoyed this book; there were plenty of twists and turns, blind alleys and false leads a perfectly readable thriller. The only thing was that the book moved between past and present frequently and this got quite confusing as there was little indication where the story was (especially as the same characters were in the present and the past). If this had been clearer then it would have been a 5 star read for me.*

Follow Elisabeth on Twitter: @ListheBookworm

### **Jo-anne Atkinson**

#### ***A twisty and intriguing book with a sideways look at a marriage and a hint of topicality. Set in a cold and bleak fenlands, the story***

***echoes the emptiness of the location.***

*Waking up in the early hours a February morning as her baby needs feeding, Fran discovers her husband is not laid beside her and a few minutes later she discovers his murdered body outside their fenland farmhouse. The local police are cynical and Fran is too stunned to think rationally but as the fog clears and Fran starts to put the pieces together she realises that her marriage was not what she thought it was and her husband had secrets as well as herself.*

*Having read Kent's first novel 'Crooked House' I awaited her second to see if she had built on that excellent foundation, however I found 'The Loving Husband' hard to get into at first. This is mainly due to the fact that I found Fran an extremely unlikable character, I was not sympathetic to her and that made much of the premise of the book hard to access. I suspect this is not what the author wanted but it added another dimension to the story as I did get into the book, whilst Nathan had secrets so Fran was not exactly the naive innocent wife, she had engineered their marriage. What is brilliant here, though, is Kent's way of setting a story in a specific location and making that location almost like another character. The bleakness and isolation felt by Fran echoes the bleakness and isolation of the Fens in February, and the local characters seemed bedded in the location and contrasted with Fran's London life well.*

***Kent is developing into an intriguing and clever writer.***

[www.pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com](http://www.pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com)

**Celia Cohen**

***A compelling psychological thriller with many twists and turns.***

*This is a well-crafted psychological thriller from Christobel Kent. It didn't take long before I was completely hooked - I just couldn't put it down and couldn't wait to find out how it ended. The characters are well drawn although I found myself getting impatient with Fran at times. Could you really live with a man and know so little about him?*

*This was the first book of Christobel Kent's that I have read, but I'm now off to find her previous novel.*

**Victoria Whish**

***This book is a psychological thriller that doesn't let up and will make you question everything and everyone until it's dramatic and***

**startling conclusion.**

*Fans of 'Gone Girl' and 'The Girl on the Train' will love this psychological thriller that has plenty of twists and turns to keep you hooked.*

*It's the story of Fran and Nathan who move to the country with their two young children and something happens one night that turns Fran's world on its head.*

*Christobel Kent is adept at cranking up the tension as we wonder with Fran, what the hell has happened and who can she trust now? It's difficult to say too much about the plot without giving too many secrets away but just when you think you've worked it all out, along comes another twist that you didn't see coming.*

*I think the sense of place helps to build a brooding atmosphere of tension and unease at the heart of the book and the descriptions of the bleak Fenland landscape add another dimension to the pace of the book and the main character's quiet unravelling.*

*There were a few moments where I had to suspend belief at some of the things that happened to Fran and wondered if certain things really rang true but the author is clever enough to keep us rooting for the 'heroine in peril' and believing in her search for the truth.*

You can follow Victoria on Twitter: @VicKWhish

**Vicky-Leigh Sayer**

***A twisty, at times unsettling novel that will keep you guessing.***

*Fran Hall wakes alone one night to the sound of her baby crying and her husband not by her side. She was certain that he had already returned from the pub, as she had felt his presence beside her and resented the fact that he hadn't got up to see to their baby.*

*She must have been dreaming.*

*Alerted to a noise outside, Fran goes out into the cold dark night, to find her husband, Nathan in a ditch.*

*The investigating Police Officers seem to have a deep seated suspicion about Fran. Why did the family move from London to the middle of nowhere? Did Nathan often go the pub alone? Was there something wrong with their marriage? Was Nathan violent?*

*Fran denies all of their accusations. They moved because they wanted a quieter family life away from the hustle and bustle of London. Nathan went to the pub to relax, but despite what she tells the Police Fran's marriage was far from perfect.*

*But then what is marriage?*

*The local bumbling policemen (who add a nice touch of humour to this novel) are determined to find out. No matter what paths that might lead them down, and how unprofessional at times they may seem.*

*The Loving Husband is a twisty, at times unsettling novel that will keep you guessing to its final pages.*

<http://thewelshlibrarian.blogspot.co.uk>

## **Joan Sidwell**

*To be read with all the lights on and the doors locked. Who is watching Fran during and after the night that changes her life forever?*

***This is a creepy addictive page turner, engrossing from the very beginning.*** *Fran, her husband Nathan and their two children move from London to a remote farmhouse in the Fens. One night Fran's life changes forever. Told partly in flashback to their lives prior to the move and detailing how Fran and Nathan's relationship develops and changes, the atmosphere slowly builds up as the story unfolds before and after that terrible winter's night.*

*Why was Nathan so mysterious about his past and his job? Why did Fran agree so readily to move from London? What does Jo, Fran's best friend know but isn't telling Fran? What events were real or in Fran's imagination, who can she trust?*

*Whilst I could empathise with Fran I felt that her character, maybe deliberately so, is kept at a slightly remote level, almost blurred, as though sleepwalking, as she goes through some semblance of existence over the days and weeks that follow.*

*The bleak cold Fens and the remoteness of the farmhouse add to the sinister feel throughout with the winter landscape illustrating the fallout from the night's event.*

*I couldn't put this book down. As Nathan's past starts to unravel and Fran gets closer to the truth the pace and tension do not let up, this is definitely not one to read late at night.*

**Sarah Harper**

***Sinister and compelling however certain events were a bit too far-fetched. I wanted to love this more than I did!***

*Unsettled and unbalanced, half asleep and half awake, the lines between dreams and reality blur for Fran. Stumbling outside into the pitch black of the Fen night she discovers the cold body of her husband lying in a ditch and Fran's world is instantly brought under scrutiny. The police need a suspect and Fran needs to understand the strange events of that evening but as her life is picked apart she begins to realise that her marriage was not all it seemed. What really brought her to this dilapidated farmhouse in the back of beyond? Happy and outgoing, Fran's London social life was full of nightclubs and parties before it came to an abrupt end. Meeting Nathan, their marriage was swift and baby Emme followed soon after. Lured to the Fens by Nathan's memories of his childhood there, Fran tries hard not to miss her old life and quell the fear she has of her bleak new home. But as Nathan increases his control over her, restricting her access to the car and isolating her from others, Fran becomes more and more nervous. Is she safe from 'the bad man' or is he closer to home than she thinks?*

*I'm completely in two minds about this book. It was sinister and compelling but I did find it pretty hard going. It may have been because certain events seemed a little bit too far-fetched and something about Fran just didn't sit quite right with me. I don't understand how she went from so outgoing and confident in her London life to being downtrodden and smothered by a man I didn't really get the impression she loved at all. It's a real shame as I so wanted to love this but I can't say that I did.*

**Genevieve McAllister**

***A dark brooding novel, asking whether we can ever truly understand a marriage - even from the inside.***

*Dark and brooding, The Loving Husband drew me in and asked whether we can ever truly understand a marriage – even from the inside.*

*Fran has moved to the Fens with her husband Nathan. A noise wakes her in the middle of the night and going outside to investigate, she finds him dead in a ditch. From then on, Fran's marriage is under scrutiny by the police and gradually we learn about the fault lines that existed between Fran and Nathan.*

*Christobel Kent has written a novel that appeals on several different levels. Firstly, it's a crime novel – we want to know who killed Nathan. It's also a study of how women can be subjugated by men both in marriage and in the workplace – the scenes written from Ali's point of view are nicely placed throughout the book.*

*The Loving Husband is well written and its huge strength is the description of where Fran lives. The house and the wintry Fenland environment – always hinting at snow – absolutely achieves the right tone for the novel and mean that what is going on is perfectly mirrored by the setting.*

Follow Genevieve on Twitter: @genmcallister

### **Victoria Emerson**

***A brilliant psychological thriller – I couldn't put it down!***

*I loved this psychological domestic thriller and couldn't put it down.*

*The characters were well formed and the atmosphere was very bleak. The plot was full of twists and turns that kept me guessing right up until the shocking ending.*

*My only criticism is that it felt overly long in places.*

### **Clare Turner**

***Well plotted, skilfully narrated and utterly gripping - a great summer read.***

*There seems to have been rather an excess of psychological thrillers lately. However this book, which might be more accurately described as “domestic noir”, is cleverly plotted, skilfully written and fast-paced.*

*Fran is married to Nathan, and living in a large and rather grim house in the Fens with their two small children. She is woken by a cry one night and, going downstairs, discovers the door has not been locked. Outside in the bleak and wretched yard, by the light of a passing car, she finds the body of her dead husband.*

*From then on, events escalate in a rather bewildering way. With the involvement of the police, Fran herself seems to be the real suspect and having little local support, she finds herself increasingly isolated and possibly in danger. Only Ali, the Family Liaison Officer and Karen, her sole local friend seem on her side.*

*The book moves between the past events that brought Fran to this state, and her increasingly frantic attempts to discover who killed Nathan and why - and who he really was. It is hard to feel too much sympathy for Fran, bemused as she (and the reader!) are by all the questions, many of which one can't help feeling she should have asked some time ago – not least how she allowed herself to become so very isolated and deprived of all outside communication.*

### **Jill Peters**

*I read the initial chapters of *The Loving Husband* and was left feeling somewhat frustrated with Fran and her seemingly detached manner towards her husband Nathan's murder.*

*Fran seemed to be allowing the murder accusation fingers to drift over and be pointed at her. I found the Police response to Nathan's murder was also strange and lethargic. Their modus operandi appeared to be that of some decades earlier and yet I had understood the story to be taking place at the present time.*

*Progressing further into the book, the story gradually became more gripping, with separate little stories and scenarios from the past and present gradually merging with each other. The individual stories were disturbing even frightening, with some of the characters deceitful, covering up other lives and people. **After a slow, hesitant start I couldn't put *The Loving Husband* down.** My thoughts jumped from it had to be him that committed the murder to perhaps it was Fran with her perceived flakiness after all.*

*I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It was a change from my usual genre of reading but will now look to read Christobel's previous book, *The Crooked House*.*

### **Kathy Howell**

***This book was well worth waiting for...I couldn't put it down!***

*The story begins when Fran Hall wakes up one night to find her husband has gone from their family home, although someone has been in their room...and*

*their bed. Fran goes to look for Nathan and finds his body in a ditch at the back of the house. The story line has many twists and turns, and keeps the reader guessing all the way through. It is a really good book, so well written, that I would thoroughly recommend.*

### **Pam Woodburn**

***The title of this book is certainly a misnomer. Set in the bleakness of the Fens in wintertime, there is a constant air of menace from the outset.***

*Fran, the main character moves from London, with her husband and young family, to a dilapidated house in Norfolk. Before they have had time to settle in properly, one murder follows another until it is revealed that perhaps Fran is not the frightened, innocent young Mum that she appears. The police officers who deal with the case also lack conviction. The plot is complex, jumping from the past to the present and often leaves the reader confused and obliged to re-read the previous pages. It was very difficult to feel any sort of empathy for any of the characters.*

### **Sharon Wood**

*I'm sure after the success of 'Gone Girl' many authors wanted to jump on the bandwagon with their version of the domestic thriller. I'm sure some were justified and others weren't and I'd put 'The Loving Husband' firmly in the latter category. **I was quite looking forward to reading this book from the description – “Can you ever truly know the one you love?” but I was frustratingly disappointed.** Fran has a background working on a magazine in London – she would appear to have been a feisty woman but after moving to a remote house and a remote life she seems to become a complete wet dishcloth. She has no idea what her husband does for a living, there seems to be no chemistry, no interaction, no nothing in their marriage. Even the title is a misnomer – it should be retitled 'The Absent Husband'. There are two policemen investigating her husband's murder, both bumbling, leering, misogynistic throwbacks to a 1970s police force – I wasn't sure whether they were supposed to be comical or not, but modern they definitely weren't. The writing style is choppy to say the least and jumps all over the place and never really explains anything. Fran finds something shocking in the attic – I read it twice, but still don't really know what it was or where it fitted in to the story. Sorry, didn't mind it whilst reading it, expecting something good, but hated it when I had*

*finished. Very, very frustrating.*

### **Emily Curnow**

***This novel has so many twists and turns that you are dizzy until the final pages when all is revealed.*** *The mystery and high tension keeps you reading as fast as you can until the end, drinking it up as if you have a desert thirst. It is full of emotion and confusion, giving the reader an insight into the process of police investigation and bereavement. A very enjoyable novel. It would be enjoyed particularly by fans of 'Gone Girl' or 'Girl on a Train'.*