

Book Review: Marion

By Leah Rowan

Thanks to NetGalley and Kat White at St. Martin's Press for this advance reader's copy, in exchange for an honest review. "Marion" is scheduled for release on June 2, 2026.

It's hard to think of Alfred Hitchcock and not recall the iconic shower scene in the film "Psycho." In the film, Marion Crane is violently and repeatedly stabbed by Norman Bates.

But what if Marion turned the tables and surprised her attacker?

That's the road down which author Leah Rowan proceeds. When a bus breaks down, stranding a young woman in a small town in upstate New York on her way to her sister's house in Saratoga Springs, a satchel filled with \$100,000 that she stole/borrowed from her advertising company tucked under her arm, she checks into the Billings Motel. Norm Billings, the owner, seems nice enough, but clearly obsessed with caring for his ill mother.

Showering later that night, Marion hears someone entering her room. It's Norm, and he's brandishing a knife. But Marion incapacitates him with a kick to the privates, grabs the knife, and turns him into Swiss cheese.

Now Marion is a killer. But wasn't it self-defense? And is she really a thief? Wasn't she considering using some of the money to help her sister, Lauren, get out from under the abuse of her husband, Ron?

Thus begins a wild ride where Marion finds exactly what her alter ego is capable of, and the lengths she will go to out of loyalty to her sister. And to escape law enforcement.

While the storyline is a bit of a stretch in a couple of spots, the narrative hits hard from the opening chapters and moves at a frenetic pace. Especially when Hannah Pierce, a young paralegal and investigator, comes into the picture. The chapters offer alternating perspectives of Marion's exploits compared with Hannah's investigation two weeks later.

There are scenes that will make you roll your eyes and shake your head, wondering, why would anyone do something so stupid? But the more Marion's life seems to unravel, the more you may find yourself rooting for this unlikely vigilante. And the ending is likely to leave you slack-jawed.

"Marion," complete with numerous twists and turns, is hard to put down. Accept the premise and jump on for a wild ride.

Four stars for what I understand is Rowan's debut novel.