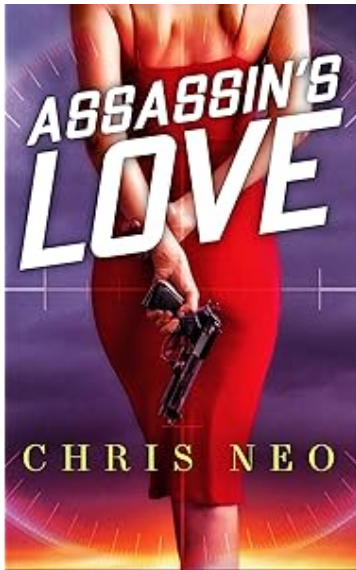




# Readers' Favorite® Book Reviews and Award Contest

## Book Review Mini-Critique



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These are the opinions of your reviewer, and although they are not a literary professional, they are an avid reader of books just like yours.

**Title:** Assassin's Love  
**Author:** Chris Neo  
**Genre:** Romance - General



**Appearance:** The appearance of a book can make a significant impact on the experience of a reader, whose enjoyment is often enhanced by an enticing cover, an intriguing table of contents, interesting chapter headings, and when possible, eye-catching illustrations.

**5**

**Plot:** The characters of a book should be well defined with strengths and flaws, and while they do not have to be likable, the reader does have to be able to form a connection with them. The tone should be consistent, the theme should be clear, and the plot should be original or told from a unique perspective. For informative books -- those without plot and characters--this rating refers primarily to your concept and how well you presented it.

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**Marketability:** Marketability refers to how effectively you wrote your book for your target audience. Authors may include content that is above or below the understanding of their target reader, or include concepts, opinions or language that can accidentally confuse or alienate some readers. Although by its nature this rating is very subjective, a very low rating here and poor reviews may indicate an issue with your book in this area.

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**Review:**

Reviewed by Stephen Christopher for Readers' Favorite

Couple Valentino and Heleanne are shopping in the local market when they come across a stall selling 'Assassin's Treats.' The salespeople appear to be gypsies, and Heleanne jokingly asks them if they're assassins. Not given a complete answer, the couple is left wondering. Shortly thereafter, Heleanne falls hard for one of the swarthy gypsy men, and Valentino takes a shine to one of the young ladies. Heleanne hatches a plan for the young lady, whom she presumes really is an assassin, to work for them as a maid and eventually poison her wealthy husband. However, Valentino isn't as dumb as he looks and has a few secrets of his own. Does Heleanne's plan succeed, or is she in for a rude awakening? Find out in Chris Neo's *Assassin's Love*.

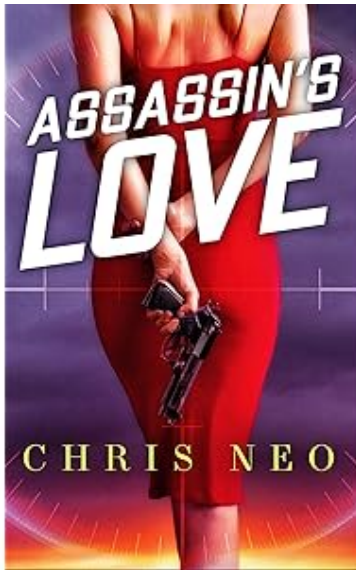
*Assassin's Love* is a novella, a format that suits this narrative perfectly. It's such a page-turner that the reader has little chance but to consume it in one sitting. Valentino is an endearing character, and the reader can't help but want him to be spared any misery; on the other hand, Heleanne is pure evil, and the reader will secretly hope that she'll get what she deserves. The shocking twist at the end—which all good novellas must have—will satisfy even the most experienced thriller fans. I devoured this story from the opening line to the last, and I love the mix of romance, suspense, sex, and death. *Assassin's Love* is for everyone who enjoys a quick suspense thriller with some romance thrown in and an ending that comes out of left field.



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**Review:**

Reviewed by Asher Syed for Readers' Favorite

In Chris Neo's *Assassin's Love*, at a crowded spring market, Valentino and his wife, Heleanne, encounter a travelling caravan whose members secretly take paid killing contracts. During that encounter, Heleanne becomes fixated on one of the men and uses the caravan's services to arrange her husband's death so she can inherit his wealth. The plan places caravan assassin Rafaella inside the house as a maid, giving her direct access to Valentino's food so she can poison him without raising suspicion. As Rafaella spends time with him, they begin a romantic relationship that disrupts the assignment. At the same time, Valentino shows signs that he is far more capable and aware than Heleanne expected. With pressure mounting from both Heleanne and the caravan, Rafaella is forced to decide whether to complete the contract or protect the man she was sent to kill.

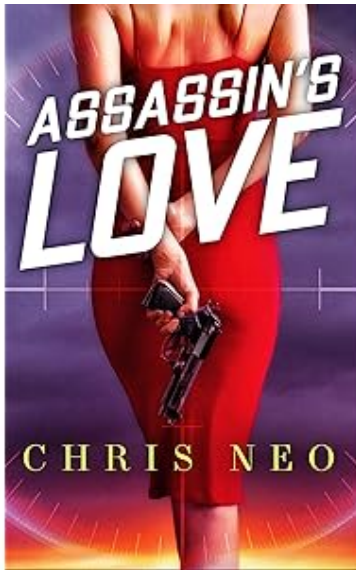
Chris Neo's *Assassin's Love* presents a romance set within a covert network, where two individuals move from guarded exchanges into a bond shaped by changing motives. Rafaella stands apart through her adaptability and composure, shown in how she maintains her cover while staying close to Valentino, adjusting her behavior in response to what she learns. Valentino stands apart through his observations and measured responses, while assessing those around him, then altering his behavior in ways that change how Rafaella operates in his home. The settings are spectacular, especially when Neo makes them intimate, from a candlelit dinner arranged entirely by Valentino that alters the rhythm of the household, to a rose-filled bath, and how every character moves inside the carefully arranged and visually stunning environments. Overall, this is a brilliant romantic thriller for readers looking for something a little bit different and a lot of fun. Very highly recommended.



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**Review:**

Reviewed by David Jaggart for Readers' Favorite

Chris Neo's *Assassin's Love* focuses on Valentino, a rich but lonely man, and his wife, Heleanne, who is plotting his demise. The story moves from a busy bazaar to the couple's private home as Heleanne conspires with a gypsy named Alexi to have Valentino murdered. They send in Rafaella, a skilled assassin, to do the deed from the inside. The primary conflict develops when Rafaella tries to poison Valentino's food, while he stays on high guard, even using his dogs as tasters. It creates a weirdly intimate but deadly environment. As the deadline from the gypsy clan and their leader, Baba, draws near, the pressure on Rafaella to carry out the hit becomes even more intense. Is it possible for a mission to fail because the assassin sees something worth saving in her target?

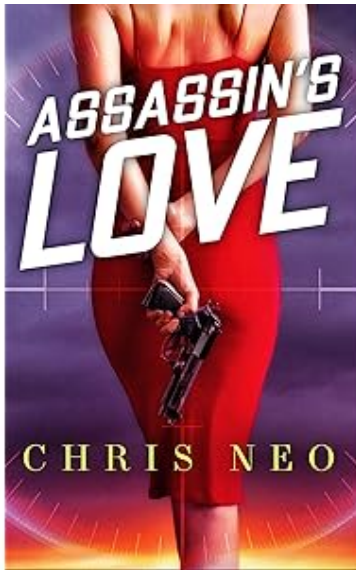
*Assassin's Love* is an exciting thriller with a strong romantic element. The storyline is both brisk and engaging. I loved the change in scenery from the crowded bazaar to the beach house. The whole situation is fascinating because of the external pressure of the assassins' code, which is constantly at odds with Rafaella's internal hesitation. The plot is very no-frills, which will hold your attention, especially if you're looking for a fluff-free read. I didn't expect Valentino to be as observant as he was, which kept the assassination scenes from coming across as predictable. It's a fun, dramatic story for anyone who likes the trope of a killer (or, in Rafaella's case, a hitwoman) falling for the person they are supposed to take down. Fans of a similar book, *Agnes and the Hitman* by Jennifer Crusie, will enjoy this read.



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- Overall Opinion:** 5 The overall starred rating takes into account all these elements and describes the overall reading experience of your reviewer. This is the official Readers' Favorite review rating for your book.

**Review:**

Reviewed by Pikasho Deka for Readers' Favorite

Assassin's Love is a romance thriller by Chris Neo. Valentino visits a gypsy kiosk with his gorgeous wife, Heleanne. In this market, both Valentino and Heleanne begin to flirt with two gypsy cousins. While Valentino likes a raven-haired beauty named Rafaella, Heleanne strikes a bond with Rafaella's cousin, Alexi. Heleanne soon devises a plan to get rid of her husband by offering Alexi gold and emeralds. In return, Alexi must assassinate Valentino. Alexi and Heleanne soon begin an affair, and he takes her to his boss, Baba. Baba assigns Rafaella to the task, only for her to fall in love with Valentino. As Valentino and Rafaella's feelings for each other grow, things get further complicated. Can Valentino and Rafaella's love survive? Or will Heleanne succeed?

Assassin's Love is a fast-paced novella packed with romance, action, and mystery. Author Chris Neo drops the reader into the scheme of things from the get-go, crafting an absorbing narrative from the first page to the last. The plot primarily revolves around four people from very different backgrounds. It lays the foundation for friction and drama. There are a couple of twists and turns and a reveal toward the end that I'm sure readers will not see coming. I certainly didn't. Valentino and Rafaella's blossoming romance was the book's highlight for me. I also enjoyed Heleanne and Alexi's dynamic. Despite being antagonists, the two are an absolute riot in every scene they feature together. All in all, it was a breezy read, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Recommended to readers of crime/romance thrillers.