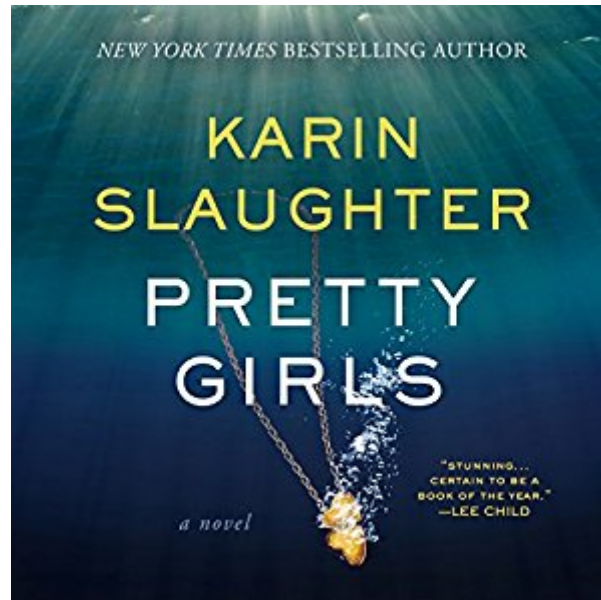




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Pretty Girls



Synopsis

Sisters. Strangers. Survivors. More than twenty years ago, Claire and Lydia's teenaged sister Julia vanished without a trace. The two women have not spoken since, and now their lives could not be more different. Claire is the glamorous trophy wife of an Atlanta millionaire. Lydia, a single mother, dates an ex-con and struggles to make ends meet. But neither has recovered from the horror and heartbreak of their shared loss—a devastating wound that's cruelly ripped open when Claire's husband is killed. The disappearance of a teenage girl and the murder of a middle-aged man, almost a quarter-century apart: what could connect them? Forming a wary truce, the surviving sisters look to the past to find the truth, unearthing the secrets that destroyed their family all those years ago . . . and uncovering the possibility of redemption, and revenge, where they least expect it. Powerful, poignant, and utterly gripping, packed with indelible characters and unforgettable twists, *Pretty Girls* is a masterful novel from one of the finest writers working today. Included with this gripping thriller is Karin Slaughter's chilling short story "Blonde Hair, Blue Eyes."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My review is not really needed, given all the similar reviews, but at least it will add to the weighting. I find Ms. Slaughter's writing mesmerizing. I have read most, if not all, of her books, and within minutes I am always immersed. I do, however, find the graphic violence hard to take, and agree with the reviewers who thought the in "Pretty Girls" it was over the top. About 3/4 of the way through I just stopped reading and looked at the end. I also agree that the plot was almost incidental to all the

violence; I think the book was intended to focus more on the characters and what an early tragedy did to their lives than to be intricately plotted, but it didn't hold together well enough for me. Too much coincidence was needed to make the solution work. I also agree that at least some of the characters -- in particular the chief villain -- seemed implausible, as did the scope of the conspiracy and the failure of anyone to notice for decades that a serial killer was among them. Too bad - I really loved Coptown.

Years ago I was obsessed with more general titles of mass fiction, particularly crime and detective novels. I didn't realize there was better reading to be found. I admit that Jeffrey Deaver and Patricia Cornwell were favorites. And while there is nothing wrong with mass market fiction, it seemed stale quite fast. Authors also tried to up the shock value with each book in what inevitably was a series. With life being hard, I realized I didn't want to read such depressing and at times depraved reading. That's when I focused on lesser known authors and titles, with a draw towards translated fiction. However, recently I was sent an ARC of *Pretty Girls*, a book that promised a deep mystery about a serial killer. I don't know why, but I fell for it. One lazy afternoon, I curled up with it. At first, the premise was intriguing. A father of a missing daughter is writing a long letter to her, to let her know what she missed while absent. Not knowing whether she was dead or alive, he persisted. From that we see the rest of the family and how they reacted to the loss. Two remaining daughters go in different directions, forever marked from the loss and the constant wondering about her whereabouts. The sisters, Claire and Lydia, are as different as possible. One tough and able, moving forward despite addiction issues and violence. The other, simply checking out of life to let her amazing husband make all decisions for her and spending her time as a socialite. Both women still seethe with rage but keep it hidden. Now, stop if you are wary of spoilers. I won't be too specific, but I will try and explain why this is one of the most appalling books I've ever read. Instead of giving up, I had to continue reading to see if it was truly as awful as I imagined. It was. After Claire's husband dies, her life unravels quickly, and it's discovered that her husband was not as he seemed. She handles this by falling apart, finally reaching out to her distant sister Lydia (found urinating on his grave) to help her figure out what to do. From here the novel dissolves into a violence-soaked whodunit wherein both sisters fight and argue while at the same time trying to solve the problem and see if they can find their lost sister too. Improbability becomes the underlying theme. Claire is an especially bizarre character: smart but without a shred of emotion (except tennis-invoked rage). She's benign and boring, and her existence is pinned to her outrageous beauty.

She's unsympathetic and spoiled. Her beauty is mentioned endlessly, as Lydia's chubby body is as well. I'll get back to this, it's important! What ensues next is an urgently-paced effort to find the killer, one who rapes women with machetes and uses waterboarding as torture with his own urine. Yes, you read that right. Branding, dismembering, burning skin: ho hum. It becomes so common, nearly every page, that one stops being shocked. And that's what disturbed me the most. I felt sick, like I was contributing to such violence just by reading this. Was it giving potential serial killers ideas? Was this misogyny intended to make us reflect on the wonderful sisterhood that tries to rid the planet of the monster? Or reflect simply on horrifying images? Did the female author find it necessary to use this to fuel our interest? To show that women are most often the victims of violent crime? Maybe she had a message, but it's lost in the violence itself. One thing I noted was that nearly all the women in the story face such brutality. They are graphically described by their body parts, what happens to them, and inventive ways to torture them. They are literally in pieces. Unlike anything you think you've seen on Forensic Files or any number of horror films. And they are categorized with generic labels: either beautiful, or fat, or well-dressed, or frumpy, or rich, or poor. No further explanation or revelation. Labels. From a female author, that was a surprise. And yet, the men. The men in the story remain fully functional. Their bodies are not chipped away at. They are not described in such helpless positions with no way of escape. They remain whole, despite a whole bunch of women hanging from cattle hooks, disemboweled, and violated. In fact, the only real comment the author makes about the men in the novel is a strange obsession with their mustaches, commenting on nearly every single one. And they are not given superficial labels. Of course, this "mystery" is of the "no one can be trusted" variety and yet very little makes it where you care. As it appears, beyond the suspension of disbelief, is that everyone is a criminal. It's too vast a conspiracy with little explanation for how it began. Events in the first part are never tied to latter parts. Motive is what appears to be lacking. The author then tries to solve it and tie it up in a few last improbable chapters that are actually laughable. The sisters try and save each other in a last ditch effort at unity but are so dazlingly naïve that you want to smack them yourself. It is refreshing that the problem is solved by two women rather than the inevitable bored male detective who usually comes in to save the day. But that's not enough to salvage this gory mess. And of course, everyone lives happily ever after. I'm off mystery novels like this now for a good long time, if not forever. A violent world surrounds us, so sinking into this sewer of ugliness is not going to make anyone feel good. Except perhaps a serial killer who is bored and looking to up his game (for which

this may serve as a "how to" manual. It's that awful. I don't know how popular this author is, probably very, but in my small little voice I have to say what she's written is disturbing and hateful and as misogynistic as anyone could be accused of being. She's not done a service for women by creating characters that solve crime, she's created women that are eternal victims, who even in their victory are disappointing and weak. That itself is a crime. The author's last name? Slaughter. Go figure that one out. If it's a pseudonym, I can't imagine a more apt one. Thanks, but no thanks, to Century Publishers for the Review Copy.

Seemed a slow starter for me with the alternating character perspectives... then those characters' lives began to weave together in an ever tighter plot that keeps you guessing and fearing the worst. I knocked it down one star, only for the descriptions of some graphic violence that I didn't need swimming around in my brain. It was a definite page turner once the characters were set up.

Thrilling page turning intensity. Karin did it again. Karin has a way of making you feel that you are right the middle of this frightening tale. When a murder brings two estranged sisters back together secrets are discovered, and their lives are put in more danger. With no one to trust they go to find answers themselves. This book didn't have a hero. There was no need for one. Lydia and Claire didn't need one. They just needed each other. Karin has always written women very well. Strong and no nonsense. From Sara Linton (Grant County/ Will Trent) to Kate and Maggie (Cop Town) and now Lydia and Claire. Claire may not have started strong but what counts is when she needed her back bone, she stepped up. I have to admit that my favorite time of year is when the time comes when an announcement comes of a new Karin Slaughter is going to be released.

This was my first read by this author, I like psychological thrillers and the reviews brought it to my Kindle. This book catches you from the beginning, but it is definitely not for the faint of heart. It gets to the center of a very twisted person, what made him and his history. It was very disturbing and explicit with the violence toward women. But that said, the book was a page-turner that I could not put down, lots of surprises and the family and spousal relationships at first seem clear and then look out for surprises ahead. Good read with a satisfying conclusions.

Ms. Slaughter is a masterful and wonderful storyteller. I couldn't put the book down, in fact, it was

the first thing I picked up in the morning and the last this I put down.....and it was worth the loss of sleep!!!!

If you like reading about torture, rape and snuff films then this should be right up your alley but it's not my cup of tea. As a Mom I should've Googled this book beforehand because the imagery is hard to erase.

Karin Slaughter has a way of reeling the reader in and holding tight. This book kept me in the edge of my seat. I could feel the terror in my stomach, but just couldn't stop reading . The end will definitely not disappoint .

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