



## Shattered Secrets

*Karen Harper*

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**Shattered Secrets** Karen Harper

**Every town has its secrets...**

Returning to Cold Creek, Ohio, is an act of courage for Tess Lockwood. Abducted and held captive as a young girl, she is unable to remember anything about the crime that destroyed her childhood and tore her family apart. Now a grown woman with a bright future, she is certain she has put the past behind her. But when she inherits the family home, Tess must confront the demons that still haunt her and the town of Cold Creek.

Gabe McCord has always blamed himself for what happened to Tess. He had been a teenager when she was snatched from the group of children he was responsible for watching. Now Gabe has taken on the role of sheriff and hopes to shed new light on the cold case, especially given his growing feelings for Tess.

Tess isn't ready to recall what happened to her, and she has no intention of digging up any details that might remind her of the truth. But when another child in the town goes missing, she's certain it's related to her return to Cold Creek. Together, Tess and Gabe will have to work to unlock their painful memories in order to save another child and heal their damaged souls, for good....

## Shattered Secrets Details

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Author : Karen Harper

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## From Reader Review Shattered Secrets for online ebook

### Nikita (NjKinny's World of Books & Stuff) says

<http://njkinnny.blogspot.in/2014/08/ar...>

Teresa or Tess Lockwood hasn't been to Cold Creek in eighteen years. The old but still haunting childhood experience of her kidnapping and then recovery after eight months left an indelible mark on her mind. Although unable to remember anything of her time in captivity, Tess did everything to erase the town and that time from her mind and her life. But the death of her mother and the necessity to sell their old home in Cold Creek so she can fulfill her dream in her present life, has forced Tess to return to this small town. Determined not to stay any longer than necessary, Tess is unprepared for the train of events that start as a result of her appearance in the town and when another girl is kidnapped, it is upto Tess to unlock her long forgotten memories to save the child as well as her sanity!

This is my first book by Karen Harper and I was very thrilled to read a new author (for me). Karen is a bestselling author with a number of bestsellers under her belt and so when I got her upcoming book to review I was ecstatic. The cover of the book is intriguing and captivating. It promises a dark and dangerous story filled with mystery and suspense plus romance which it delivers. The blurb is very interesting and pulls the reader to pick this book up to read.

The plot is well conceived but I felt there is scope of improvement in the execution. The pace of the story is medium in the first half and then suddenly becomes a bit rushed in the second part. Too much time is spent on getting Tess to remember her story and I felt Karen needed to tighten the pace and the edit some scenes here.

The writing style of the author is engaging and I was kept interested so much so that I could not leave the book until I had finished reading it! The language is simple and flows beautifully.

The characterization is admirable. I could empathize with Tess who is still traumatized and unwilling to unlock the door to those painful and frightening memories of her childhood abduction. She is still assaulted by nightmares and although having attended so much counselling is still vulnerable to those events of so long ago. Sheriff Gabe McCord has a story of his own to tell. He was the one who was supposed to look after Tess when she was abducted. He has still not forgiven himself and is determined to catch the kidnapper. His own father who was the Sheriff at the time of the abduction kept trying until he died and now Gabe feels it is upto him to catch the elusive kidnapper and finally have some peace. Add to this, his traumatizing experiences in the Army, Gabe is driven, focused and almost obsessed with the case. *But is it his obsession which makes him extra protective of Tess or his guilt or is this feeling of protectiveness something else?* I felt connected with these two and thoroughly enjoyed their chemistry and hoped for a happily-ever-after for them! :)

The rest of the characters are also admirably sketched and make the small town of Cold Creek seem real.

The climax when it came was frightening, shocking and goosebumps inducing. Although I had an inkling to the real kidnapper but still I was left too scared and way too thankful of the fact that I wasn't really present in Cold Creek!

There are several other strains of stories like Tess' cousin, Lee and his family's blind faith in the Bright Star and his suspicious society which looked all too much like a prison to Tess, that are left unanswered and

which I hope will be taken up in the subsequent books in this trilogy.

A dark, thrilling and suspenseful story which will touch your heart with the romance and also freak you out with the frightening realization that the world is full of danger, I give Shattered Secrets a **4 out of 5** and recommend the book to everyone. This could have been a full 5 star book if more attention had been given to making the first part more crisp and well paced. Anyhow I look forward to reading the subsequent books in the series and more from Karen Harper in the future.

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### **Dobby0390 says**

This was the first Karen Harper I've read. The concept was intriguing, but the delivery could have been stronger. The character development wasn't quite there, and some of the suspension-of-disbelief threads were so out there that they pulled me out of the story. I prefer much tighter writing, especially with this genre. Overall, I think a good editor could have worked with the author to tighten the pace, smooth the rough edges, and flesh out the characters. With those changes, it could have been a 3 or even 4 star book. As it is, though, this goes onto my "Once is enough" shelf.

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### **A Reader's Heaven says**

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

*Returning to Cold Creek, Ohio, is an act of courage for Tess Lockwood. Abducted and held captive as a young girl, she is unable to remember anything about the crime that destroyed her childhood and tore her family apart. Now a grown woman with a bright future, she is certain she has put the past behind her. But when she inherits the family home, Tess must confront the demons that still haunt her and the town of Cold Creek.*

*Gabe McCord has always blamed himself for what happened to Tess. He had been a teenager when she was snatched from the group of children he was responsible for watching. Now Gabe has taken on the role of sheriff and hopes to shed new light on the cold case, especially given his growing feelings for Tess.*

*Tess isn't ready to recall what happened to her, and she has no intention of digging up any details that might remind her of the truth. But when another child in the town goes missing, she's certain it's related to her return to Cold Creek. Together, Tess and Gabe will have to work to unlock their painful memories in order to save another child and heal their damaged souls, for good...*

The first in a new romantic suspense series by well-known author Karen Harper.

The first 1/3 of this book was quite interesting - it laid down the character of Tess and her backstory, setting up a nice little mystery story. I was hooked by that point. But then, it started to plummet downhill pretty quickly, I am afraid.

The dialogue got to be ridiculous - if you knew people who spoke like that in real life you would be questioning their sanity. The actions of Tess and Gabe seemed to be well out of proportion to the situations they were in. And, speaking of situations, they got increasingly more absurd and the way Tess and Gabe got out of them became purely insane.

I am still giving this 3 stars as I am hoping that future books will help the author clear through the silliness she put on those characters and tighten it up a little more and give the reader a real suspense novel.

Paul  
ARH

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## Judy Collins says

*A special thank you to Harlequin MIRA and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.*

**SHATTERED SECRETS** by Karen Harper, a Cold Creek Series (Book 1) romantic suspense crime trilogy about three different sisters, three desirable and dangerous men, and three endangered lives.

*The Cold Creek Trilogy begins with SHATTERED SECRETS (Tess' story)-Sept, FORBIDDEN GROUND (Kate's Story-heroine)-Nov, BROKEN BONDS (Charlene's story)-Jan; set in a small rural town in the Appalachian area, holding dark secrets (*when the sisters return for a wedding, they become involved in crime and love*).*

Returning to the rural area of Cold Creek, Ohio, is an act of courage for Tess Lockwood (former Teresa). Abducted and held captive as a young girl and was held for eight months, she is unable to remember anything about the crime that destroyed her childhood and tore her family apart.

Now she is back, to settle her mom's house she inherited and her goal is to sell it as quickly as possible, in order to purchase the Sunshine and Smiles Center for preschool kids in Jackson, Michigan where she has worked for years. She plans to live upstairs and redo the space downstairs, where she would teach and protect the young children.

She is not sure how people in this town would react to her as eighteen years have passed since she has been back. She is haunted by the cornfield, where she had run to hide when Gabe their teenage next door neighbor and the Sheriff's son had told her to cut it out and called her a crazy tomboy. However this cornfield may prove to be a sanctuary instead of the site she feared all these years, and Gabe may be more than a friend.

Gabe is back as well after Iraq, and has taken over his parent's house, the current county sheriff and hopes to shed new light on the cold case, especially given his growing feeling for Tess.

Tess isn't ready to recall what happened to her, but when another child in the town goes missing, she's certain it's related to her abduction. Together, Tess and Gabe work to unlock their painful memories to save a child and heal their damaged souls.

The chilling Halloween timing, the rain, and the 20th anniversary of her kidnapping, combined with the new kidnappings—are they linked? From the nearby pet cemetery, the Hear Ye Commune compound, a scarecrow, taxidermy, a creepy town, veterinary, tombstones, a wand, Bright Star Monson, insane asylum, drugs, graveyard, books, librarian, a cult, and childhood traumas which trigger buried memories—abductions, a predator, and some crazy, weird, and wackos, and the old saying “Spare the rod and spoil the child.”

A story of crime against innocent children, an average woman's life impacted by crime and tragedy, who finds the strength and courage to solve the crime with a little help from the hunky police. All add up to a suspenseful and engaging tale with a twist of contemporary romance.

*This was my first book by Harper and look forward to the other books in this gripping trilogy!*

<http://judithdcollins.booklikes.com/p...>

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### **JustaDreamer says**

THIS IS NOT A ROMANCE STORY! Now that I have said that... This isn't a bad book but it is a suspense thriller with hardly any "Romance" at all. I mean we had a part where the guy gets to first base. The story keeps you guessing because there are so many odd characters and (spoiler) it's never the most obvious person. Neither of the main characters caught my interest. The heroine seemed very mousy and timid and the hero spent all of his time running (daily) to rescue her. I just like stronger characters. These two seemed to blend into the background like wallpaper.

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### **Caitlin says**

Ok, so during the first 1/4 of the book- I had high hopes. Things were interesting, promising a great mystery. Then things got...well ridiculous. Without giving the end of the book away, let's just say that the clues found include a vintage scare crow called "Mr Mean", a stuffed pit bull, a life size stuffed doll, and other outrageously odd things. The ending was absolutely absurd. I'm sorry...but come on.

As the wife of a police officer, I tend to hate reading crime thrillers. The way the officers are portrayed as well as the way they operate in these books are usually so off the wall and the opposite of reality. This one did not have too much of that, however it was very unrealistic that Gabe took Tess with him on his interviews and investigations. Especially with her being a prior victim in the very crime being investigated. There is no way that would have happened in reality. Ever.

The conversations were forced and somewhat unrealistic. The dialogue was more informational than a real conversation would be. It was like each character had to relay the new facts on the case. It just didn't read well at times.

Tess was not very likable. She was...well...dumb. She never listened to advice, never followed police orders. She was "better than" all that and would take dangerous situations into her own hands, even when it wasn't needed. A little of that in a novel is ok, even welcome, but after so much of it you think "come on! Stop being stupid and getting in the way!" She irritated me to no end.

I did love the setting of Tess' new home being Jackson Michigan. That is my home town, and it was fun to see the name of that small town in a book- as well as the reference to The Cascade Falls.

I loved the unraveling of the mystery, as it used Tess and her amnesia as the tool of the story. As she remembered what happened in the past, the story would unravel and reveal more detail. That was a fun way

to tell a mystery, and I did enjoy that part.

\*I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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### **CD {Boulder Blvd} says**

3.5 Stars rounded up

Review to come...

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### **Tanya C. says**

I liked some things about this book quite a lot but other things bugged me enough that I'm only giving it a 2-star "OK." I liked the characters and the main storyline of the kidnappings quite a bit but towards the end it felt like the author threw in every possible stereotype to endanger the protagonist. A meth lab? Was that necessary?

Also, I don't know how to explain it exactly, but there were numerous moments where she used a 10 dollar word when a \$ word would do... in a way that I found jarring because people don't speak that way.

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### **Diane says**

Seems like everyone has a secret in this book, some red herrings and some just downright despicable. I've never been a fan of cornfields and for sure not after reading this book. Missing children is always a tough subject and happens way too often in the real world. Drug labs and dog fights also find their place in this book.

I'm calling this book a murder light and romance light, with slight tinges of angst, but nothing to really write about. Books play a big factor all around in this novel :)

3.5 stars with a thumb up - for a slightly entertaining read, just not my type actually. I do at times find it difficult reading a new author to me after reading a great author, so maybe I haven't given this novel enough credit.

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### **Maggie61 says**

I really wish we could give half stars, I would give this one 3 1/2.

I found this improbable number of disasters she found herself in a little tedious. She no sooner got rescued from one peril and then was right into another.

Storyline was good. I figured out the who, but not the why and was a little disappointed when it all came to light, seemed a bit of a letdown.

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### **Elaine says**

It took me a couple of chapters to get into this book but once I did, I thoroughly enjoyed it. As a young girl, Tess was kidnapped from outside her home. She was lucky enough to get away but cannot remember a thing about her ordeal. Now, as a grown woman, she has to return to her childhood home to sell it following the death of her mother, and finds that young girls are still going missing. Her childhood best friend, Gabe, is now sheriff and needs her help to find these girls if they are still alive. If only Tess could remember, she could provide the clues he needs.

It is a very good crime read, in a very creepy small town America setting. There are plenty of suspects revealed throughout the book, which does twist and turn enough to keep you guessing. I have to admit I did guess who was responsible a little way before it was revealed in the book, but not for the reasons stated in the book – my mind was on a different track entirely! The story is very readable, moves at a good pace towards an exciting climax. Many thanks to the publishers for the advance review copy.

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### **Allison says**

Shattered Secrets is the first romantic suspense I've read in awhile. The plot sounded great and the reviews were promising. I had high hopes for it. Unfortunately, I did not think it lived up to the hype. I felt that the story was rushed and poorly written. I never felt invested in the characters or the town. I also found the dialogue stilted. Basically, there was no flow to this book. There were parts of the story that had no bearing on the story line whatsoever and others that didn't get fully explained. Maybe that happens in the next two books of the series, but I won't be reading them.

I thought the story had a lot of potential and that the author tried to surprise the reader with who the bad guy was. Maybe if the writing had been better I wouldn't have seen it coming. Sadly, I did. That is why I'm giving this book one star.

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### **Andrea Corley says**

Although I did feel like this moved a little slow, I did enjoy listening to *Shattered Secrets* and will continue on with the series at some point!

This had good, strong characters and a solid story. I like the fact that Tess doesn't give up and keeps going despite everything that is against her!

I must say that in the end, the story was quite surprising and took a bit more of a different turn than I expected! Karen Harper really threw some stuff out there, which I appreciated!

Overall, I enjoyed this book and am please with reading it!

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### **Pamela says**

I really enjoyed this book. I enjoy Karen Harper as an author. This book concerned child kidnapping cases, and I was not thrilled that it was children , but it really showed very little about any suffering, so I soon warmed to the story. Tess as she liked to be called now, returns to a small town in Ohio, to sell her mother's home. She had been kidnapped as a small child, in that same town, and clearly still shows PTSD .I love that the author can use something as simple as a cornfield ,to cause fear, since it sits so close to the house, and she was kidnapped from those fields. Letting us peek through her mind, opened a doorway to her night terrors, and fears. Gabe had been the sheriff's son watching over her, and her sisters. that day, but instead of listening to him, she had hidden in the cornfield, and not answered his calls. He is now the sheriff. Another young girl had disappeared after her return, and her parents had divorced, and her mom, and sister's relocated to Michigan. Once settled into the old house people who remember her being taken ,want to ask questions. The problem is she has no memory of the events. She leans toward Gabe, as more weird occurrences happen. I did not find this strange, since he was one person who was an adult, in the town ,who she knew had not taken her. He still carried the guilt, as more children were taken, one he suspected by her own father ,during. an ugly divorce, and custody battle. She tries to help out and open her mind to smells, and sounds. She gets herself in dangerous situations, for a various. set of her own reasoning, and inability to remember. Several in the town wish her to leave, when another child goes missing on the eve of her own kidnapping. The sheriff brings in extra help, and a detective that worked her case comes in to help. I must say there was a lot going on in the town surrounded by hills, woods, and cornfields. Dog fighting rings, a wandering meth lab, a religious cult with a creepy leader, that has swayed her cousin, and family to join. The atmosphere in the book, and tension keeps you reading . I like that she ,and Gabe were attracted, but no over sexuality in this book, since he was quite busy. I guess who the kidnapper was, but I could not figure out the why exactly, and when I touched on that for a possibility let it go. The final chapters were very exciting, and I liked the way it ended. There was a nice creep factor to it. I did not give it a five simply because they were hunting down criminals, but failed to look at things from a small child,'s point of view. Other people thought some of the things , left to frighten Tess were juvenile, but really perfect since they took her right back to her fears from her childhood trauma. She was trying so hard to keep control over. Plus it was near Halloween, and scarecrow, and other items added to the story. I gave it a strong four plus..Good read.

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### **Toni says**

Can't wait to read the next cold creek story. Liked the characters. New type of criminal.

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