



Muertes pequeñas

Emma Flint, Beatriz Galán Echevarría (Translator)

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Elegida entre las diez mejores novelas negras de 2017 por los periódicos *The Guardian*, *The Wall Street Journal* y *The Irish Times*.

En Queens, en el mes julio de 1965, las calles arden con una ola de calor inmisericorde. Ruth Malone, una joven madre del barrio, descubre la puerta de la habitación de sus hijos abierta de par en par. Han desaparecido. Después de seguir las pesquisas, la policía hace un descubrimiento horripilante.

Pete Wonick, un periodista inexperto al cargo de cubrir su primer caso importante no puede evitar llegar a esas mismas conclusiones. Sin embargo, cuanto más tiempo pasa con Ruth, más se da cuenta de que la policía no es siempre honesta y de que las obsesiones personales de ciertos detectives pueden estar haciendo que la investigación vaya en la dirección equivocada. Wonick empieza a dudar de todo lo que creía que sabía. Además, Ruth Malone es fascinante, un reto y un misterio, pero ¿sería capaz de matar a sus propios hijos? Basada en hechos reales, *Muertes pequeñas* nos cuenta una historia de amor, moralidad y obsesión, al mismo tiempo que analiza la capacidad que tiene todo ser humano para el bien y el mal.

"Como el vapor que desprende la ciudad de Nueva York en un caluroso mes de julio, *Muertes pequeñas* desprende los aromas de la novela negra americana de los 60... Un debut fascinante."

Thriller del mes para *The Observer*

"Un sutil retrato de una mujer llevada al límite y de los hombres que la juzgan."

The Times Literary Supplement

"Hacía mucho que una novela no capturaba un tiempo y un lugar tan poderosamente como el debut imponente de Emma Flint."

Chicago Tribune

"Un logro fenomenal. *Muertes pequeñas* es uno de esos extraños logros: una novela negra psicológicamente bien construida, que hace que el corazón te late con rapidez, y que trasciende sin esfuerzo el género. Si creías que la ficción literaria no podía leerse de una sola sentada, te equivocabas."

Jeffrey Deaver

Muertes pequeñas Details

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From Reader Review Muertes pequeñas for online ebook

Blair says

I read this in one stretch, which I think was the best way for me to read it, not because I couldn't put it down, but because I could easily have lost interest if I hadn't committed to consuming it in a single gulp.

A much-hyped debut for 2017, *Little Deaths* opens on a woman in prison, and then tells us how she got there. Ruth Malone is a cocktail waitress who lives with her young children, Frankie and Cindy. One day, Ruth goes to check on her kids and discovers they are not in their bedroom; soon afterwards, they are both found dead. We learn about Ruth from her own point of view, and also that of Pete, a journalist who becomes fixated on the case and infatuated with the woman at its centre. This is quite a slow story, an unfolding of events rather than a web of lies and surprise twists. But the same question hangs over every scene. Did Ruth murder her children? And if she didn't, what happened?

What the plot reminded me of, more than anything, was the case of Amanda Knox – both the real story (fairly fresh in my mind because of the recent Netflix documentary) and the many fictionalised versions that came after it, chief among them *Cartwheel*, an excellent novel by Jennifer duBois. There is the same sense that Ruth is suspicious because she doesn't behave as a woman in her position 'should'. That her attractiveness in itself makes her untrustworthy. She doesn't cry; she goes shopping for a new dress the day after her daughter's body is found. She's always perfectly composed, fashionably dressed, made up. In the weeks and months after the crime, she goes out drinking and sleeps around. She seems almost nonchalant, and that angers women and disgusts men.

There is a strong sense of emotional detachment throughout the book, which means horrifying developments – the deaths of the children and the reveal of their killer – lack the impact they should have. Holding a character at arm's length from the reader is always a tricky balancing act (how's that for mixed metaphors), and here, Ruth's development suffers for it. We can't know *too* much about her, because then we'd know whether she did it, but I think we're supposed to sympathise with her. And it isn't that I *didn't* sympathise with her, exactly, but she always felt like a ghost. A blank space. A person you hear about second-hand from someone else. Not a full-colour, warts-and-all character leaping off the page, making you race through the book to find out whether she's vindicated in the end. (view spoiler)

For me, Pete's obsession was a really interesting angle: when we catch glimpses of him from other characters' perspectives, it becomes clear his fantasy of pursuing the truth is just that, and he is, in fact, basically stalking Ruth and becoming increasingly deluded. But Pete's story is mainly told from his own point of view, and there is little exploration of his motives.

Meanwhile, the most successful element of *Little Deaths* is its recreation of a gossipy working-class neighbourhood in 1960s Queens. I was very surprised to discover that Flint is British; the novel and its characters feel quintessentially American.

While this is a decent debut novel, I can't help but feel such an emotive premise should create the sort of story that provokes stronger reactions: a plot that moves you, characters to love or loathe. It's strong on atmosphere and period detail, but, like Ruth Malone, it has an emptiness at its heart.

I received an advance review copy of Little Deaths from the publisher through NetGalley.

Richard says

A difficult read in terms of the subject matter. The murder of two young children isn't always going to be an uplifting read. However, when the matter is treated with care and an original eye a fictional account can help us see our humanity and the frailties of life.

Ruth Malone is struggling in her relationship with the children's father so lives as a single mother, working long hours as a cocktail waitress to meet the needs of the household. Ruth is a woman first and therefore in her presentation she is always immaculate. Others will judge her, feeling she puts her needs before those of her kids, leaving her home a mess while looking her best and ready to entertain men.

Seen as promiscuous due to the 1960's setting in a working neighbourhood in New York.

The loss of her children as they go missing on her watch, and the ultimate tragedy of them being found dead breaks her and all see can hold on to is her appearance, something others fail to see for what it is as she seeks to overcome her grief and sense of guilt.

Ruth has several shady relationships in this story; a fine female friend and a strong mother but mostly a group of men attracted to her beauty but maintain their relationships for carnal pleasure. Nothing satisfies Ruth she just needs to be treated as special and loved; this appears to be how she viewed her darling children. In addition, the story is marked by a young journalist who over steps his professional boundaries as he is drawn to this femme fatale who he desires to save and be found innocent of murder. An old detective Devlin is convinced of her guilt and strives to build a case, waiting for Ruth to trip herself up or for her to confess and reveal who helped her in this horrendous crime and nature.

A compelling story that seeps into your reasoning and you never feel quite ready to give up on Ruth but despair that she must know more of what happened.

When she is finally arrested, and brought before a jury, no woman will sit in judgement as all are convinced of her guilty. As the evidence seems to be contrived to be against her and witnesses seem prepared to lie you wonder how far the journalist will go to save her. Did he uncover the truth among all his earlier interviews? Can his unnatural involvement and knowledge of the case find the salvation Ruth needs to avoid a guilty verdict?

Tense at times, beautifully constructed and written. You feel the despair of seeking the truth by the journalist. You become frustrated by Ruth's inability to help herself or speak the truth. You are not prepared for the shocks and the lengths others will go to in this case and trial.

Good courtroom drama, a wonderful sense of time and place. The writing has a rhythm that carries you along and belies the fact that this is a debut novel.

Purple Country Girl (Sandy) says

I won a copy of Little Deaths in a Goodreads Giveaway.

In the summer of 1965, Ruth Malone's two young children disappear from her apartment in Queens. Ruth and her husband, Frank, are separated and in the middle of a nasty custody battle for the children, Cindy and Frank, Jr. The police, a rather chauvinistic and narrow-minded lot, almost immediately suspect Ruth has either stashed the children somewhere to get back at her husband - or worse, she has killed them. Their

suspicions increase when they discover her trash is full of empty bottles of booze, then they find a suitcase hidden under her bed full of letters from various men. In their eyes, her sexy appearance and rather provocative wardrobe are especially damning. After the children are found dead, Ruth is basically witch-hunted by the police.

Ruth does herself no favors by remaining a cold, unemotional woman. She is trailed night and day by police who find her buying a new dress, right after little Cindy's body is discovered, to be proof of her guilt. Who cares that she may have been purchasing a decent dress for Cindy's service. Her every move is watched, noted and criticized. She continues visiting bars, drinking and flirting with men, all the while policemen are in the bar observing her. When Ruth is out of the public eye, she does break down and reveal her devastation and you can't help but be affected by her heartbreak.

Ruth's POV and that of a young tabloid reporter named Pete Wonicke are used by Flint to tell the story. Desperate to find his place at the paper, Pete manages to get himself assigned to the Malone story when it initially comes in as a case of two missing children. Throughout the book, Pete really proves to be the weakest link. He's a terrible reporter and an annoying character. He jumps on board the Ruth is guilty bandwagon but then rather abruptly decides she's innocent. I think his lust for her is a big part of his changing his tune. I found him irritating throughout the book, especially as he becomes increasingly infatuated with Ruth.

At first, I could not put Little Deaths down. Flint has created a very atmospheric novel with some well-written characters, unique - and mostly unlikeable. There is a sense of urgency in the beginning during the frantic search for the children. After their bodies are found, it still kept my attention as we learn more about Ruth and as the police pursuit of her ramps up. It's hard not to get angry with the way they treat her as well as with their assumption that she's guilty because they do not approve of her lifestyle. Unfortunately, it does start to drag and it becomes a bit of a chore to read. There is long passage of telling not showing with Pete and Ruth's friend Gina (pretty much her only female friend). It's quite a long passage of her telling Pete all about Ruth and when they first met. After that point, I felt my attention drifting and I don't feel the book every picked up that initial momentum again.

Based on the real life case of Alice Crimmins, who was accused of murdering her two young children in 1965, Little Deaths is well-written and intriguing. Unfortunately, as I turned the pages, my connection to these characters started to dwindle more and more, almost detaching me from them completely. I wanted to smack Ruth much of the time and wanted Pete to just go away. I don't feel the full potential of this story was achieved but I think Flint is a talented writer and I would read another book by her.

Ann Marie (Lit•Wit•Wine•Dine) says

You read this and all of my reviews at Lit.Wit.Wine.Dine

I was so excited to begin this book. I knew that it was based on a true story but it was one I was unfamiliar with. I made the conscious decision not to do any research on the case prior to reading this fictionalized version.

As you can probably tell from my rating, I had several problems with the book. The first is that it was really quite boring. It just dragged on until the very last chapters. There were several points at which I almost gave up but I kept on in the hopes that things would pick up. I was truly surprised when it did not. This is, after

all, a book about the murder of two children. What I'm sure made for a very compelling news story simply didn't translate well into a novel for me.

The second problem I had was related to the way the mother of the children, Ruth Malone, was described in the book. It is often mentioned that she teased her hair, wore too much make-up (her mouth was referred to as "sticky" with lipstick), dressed provocatively, wore cheap perfume, smoked, drank, etc. The picture I conjured in my head was one of a cheap-looking, garishly made-up woman. And that would have been fine except for the way men seemed to react to her. There was no man who didn't immediately fall under her spell. They were falling all over themselves to get to her. Especially Pete Wonicke, the rookie newspaper reporter assigned to her case. After a while I was just like c'mon, really?? As it turns out, Alice Crimmins, the woman who was the actual murder suspect in the murder of her two children, was actually quite beautiful. I'm not sure why the author chose to exaggerate these characteristics to the extend she did. Ultimately, it made Ruth's character less believable to me.

Both the Alice Crimmins and Ruth Malone were judged to be guilty in the court of public opinion and this was one part of the book that I thought worked well and seemed very realistic. It brought to mind the cases of Susan Smith and Casey Anthony, both of which I followed closely at the time of their trials.

Though this book was a disappointment to me, I would not dismiss Emma Flint as an author. In fairness, I like *the way* she wrote. I just didn't happen to like *what* she wrote in this book.

2.5 stars

Thanks to Hachette Books for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Diane S ? says

3.5 Ruth Malone wakes up one morning and finds her two young children gone, their bedroom door hooked from the outside. Did this woman, separated from her husband, get rid of her children? The detective on the case is positive she is guilty. After all there were all those liquor bottles found in her department, most of her neighbors believe she is guilty, her lack of tears is enough proof.

A young woman judged guilty because of her lifestyle, her demeanor, her attention to her own grooming, her visits to bars and the men she brought home. Judged guilty by all, except for a few. We read about this happening all the time, people judged guilty only based on appearances, police determined to get a guilty verdict at all costs. I think that is why this book worked so, well for me, I found it believable, real. Emotionally raw, intense. Well written, for the most part well plotted. A few things bothered me, but for the most part well done.

ARC from publisher.

Hannah Greendale says

Click here to watch a video review of this book on my channel, *From Beginning to Bookend*.

It is 1965 in Queens, New York and Ruth Malone - single mother, cocktail waitress, and purveyor of sexual pleasures - discovers that her two small children have gone missing from her apartment. Swayed by neighborhood gossip, the discovery of letters from various men found in Ruth's apartment, and a large bag of empty liquor bottles discovered in her trash can, Sergeant Devlin immediately assumes she's guilty. When police make a horrifying discovery about Ruth's children, her position as a prime suspect in the case is solidified. Meanwhile, Peter Wonicke - tabloid reporter for the *Herald* - is looking for a big story to make his career. He inserts himself in the investigation and uncovers evidence vital to the case, but his fixation with Ruth clouds his judgement, and the truth is at risk of staying undisclosed forever.

Little Deaths is a literary crime thriller with intrigue and deceptive characters, but its shining feature is superb writing. Descriptions of even the simplest things - the application of makeup, the touch of a child's fingertips, a bite of food swallowed by a grieving mother - are both sensory and poetic.

She felt her daughter's eyes on her, stroking her powdered cheeks, her sooty lashes, the sticky cupid's bow of her lips. Felt those tiny fingers like kisses, patting her skin, tugging and twisting her hair.

She swallowed coffee and the nibbled corners of things and they were bitter through the grief-taste that lay thick on her tongue. Voices were muffled, finding their way down through the weight of her grief, and her throat was choked with it.

Sexual desire is portrayed in subtle yet alluring ways, a testament to the butterfly touch of an author who can convey deep desire with few words.

As he watched her, Ruth lowered her gaze. Moistened her lip with the tip of her pink tongue. Crossed her legs.

He imagined his own name on her lips. He saw her neat white teeth flash as she formed the long-ee sound, and then heard the noise of her tongue stuck in against the roof of her mouth. Like the smallest, softest kiss.

Though Ruth is a rough character - sympathetic for her agonizing and unfair circumstances, but unlikeable for neglecting to feed her whimpering dog - she redeems herself as a woman who holds fast to her role as a mother. She does her best to care for her children and, when they are gone, she clings to her memories of them. Moments where her attachment to her children is conveyed are painful and hard-hitting.

She stretched out a hand but Devlin was suddenly there, pulling her back. Forbidding her to touch. She opened her mouth, but the flies and the heat and the smell and the sudden awareness that this was the hair she had shampooed and combed and braided for four years made everything go dark for a moment.

While not overly suspenseful, the author drops a trail of breadcrumbs - in the form of tiny inconsistencies in character testimonies and the unrelenting sense that Ruth had means, motive, and opportunity - that will keep readers turning pages. *Little Deaths* makes for a satisfying debut novel.

This book is a work of fiction but is based on a true story. Readers interested in learning more about the case that inspired the author to write *Little Deaths* are encouraged (by the author in her Acknowledgements page) to check out The Alice Crimmins Case by Kenneth Gross and Ordeal by Trial by George Carpozi Jr.

Mandy says

This fictional story is based on a true case, the Alice Crimmins case.

The year is 1965 and Ruth Malone finds her children missing from their bedroom. The police are convinced from the beginning that she has hurt the children, and begin to build a case against her.

This book is written in third person throughout, and the reader gets Ruth's perspective, as well as a reporter, Pete, who is assigned to cover the story.

When I first heard about this book, I was excited to read it. Then when it first came out, some of the reviews were not so good, so I lowered my expectations.

I think that I liked it better because of this. The first third or so of this story is good. I was interested from the beginning, which is from Ruth's point of view. I was intrigued by Ruth, interested in her side of the story.

The reporter, Pete, not so much. I found him a little lame, and I found my interest waning as the book went along. I also found the ending predictable, I'm afraid.

I did like the writing style, and would read more from this author, I think.

Susan says

It is 1965 and a sweltering summer in Queens, New York. Ruth Malone is a young mother to five year old Frankie and four year old Cindy. Recently separated from her husband, also called Frankie, Ruth raises eyebrows in her neighbourhood. Unlike the other mothers, who stand around the stoops gossiping in drab housedresses, Ruth is always well put together. The clack of her heels is a familiar sound. She laughs too loudly, drinks too much and is a little too fond of male company.

Ruth is tired of her life and her marriage. She wants a better job than her current one, waitressing. The heat irritates her and so, sometimes, do her children – especially Frankie, who looks up to his father and tends to push against the boundaries. Still, Ruth knows that Frankie wants custody of Frankie and Cindy, and so she attempts to clean her apartment – slinging empty bottles in the trash. At night, she often leaves the children alone; to walk the dog or to see men. However, life goes along as usual until, one morning, Ruth awakes to find the children gone...

Based on a true story, this is an excellent literary crime novel. Author Emma Flint paints a portrait of that time, and place, perfectly. You can feel the heat, the limitations that Ruth feels and, most of all, the judgement. For when the children go missing, the police look askance at the empty liquor bottles and the letters from men and draw the conclusion that Ruth is implicated in her children's disappearance. As time goes on, all Ruth knows is to pull herself together, to paint her face and present a face to the world – even if she is crumbling inside. However, her lack of obvious emotion and grief, is simply seen as more evidence of her guilt.

This story is also told from the point of view of Pete Wonicke, a young journalist who needs a break, a story. When he gets the chance to take the Malone case, he has to decide whether to write a story that sells, or write what he believes to be the truth. I really thought this was a wonderfully written novel and I think it says a lot

about what the public expect to see and how judgemental they can be when expectations are not met. Although set in the mid-Sixties this is a very relevant book, which you can easily relate to more modern cases and the easy, judgemental attitudes of social media. At the end of this novel, Emma Flint outlines her next novel – I, for one, will be keen to read it.

Fuchsia Groan says

Queens, Nueva York. Verano de 1965.

Frankie, de 5 años, y Cindy, de 4, desaparecen una noche. Su madre descubre que no están en sus camas cuando va a despertarlos por la mañana. La búsqueda termina al poco tiempo de la peor de las maneras posibles, pero no hay pistas, las investigaciones no parecen llevar a ningún sitio y el foco se pone sobre la madre, Ruth Malone.

la madre... bueno, ella es distinta.

Maquillaje, ropa y tal. No tiene el aspecto de una mujer que acaba de perder a sus hijos. También trabaja de noche. Tiene dos niños pequeños y es camarera en no sé qué puto bar.

Y eso no es todo. La mujer tenía una maleta llena de cartas en su habitación. Cartas de hombres. No solo de su esposo, sino de muchos otros más.

...una mujer así... bueno, ¿quién sabe lo que podría hacer realmente?

Y así, a través de los chismorreos, rumores e indicios que parecen demostrar que Ruth no es una “buena madre” se va construyendo al culpable, al igual que se hizo en el caso real en el que se basa la novela, el caso de Alice Crimmins, independientemente de que fuese o no culpable, quién sabe. Más que una novela negra al uso, es una buena descripción de la hipocresía, de la caza que tantas veces se hace desde la opinión pública hacia la persona, fundamentalmente mujer, que no se adapta a lo socialmente aceptable.

Peter Boyle says

This story felt *very* familiar to me. Maybe it's because it is the tenth work of fiction inspired by the infamous Alice Crimmins case. Or maybe it's the fact that every character was a cliché, every twist seemed telegraphed. I just felt like I'd read it all before.

Ruth Malone is a struggling cocktail waitress in 1960s Queens, recently estranged from her husband Frank. One sweltering July night, her two children go missing from their beds. And when their battered bodies are found a few days later, the ensuing murder investigation becomes the hot topic on every New Yorker's lips. The public quickly make up their minds about the identity of the guilty party - with her late-night carousing and long string of lovers, Mrs Malone is not society's idea of a perfect mother. But one young journalist sees something special in Ruth, and will not rest until he proves her innocence.

Every stock aspect of the noir novel is present in Little Deaths: the flame-haired femme fatale, the hard-nosed detective, the rookie reporter chasing his first major scoop. The plot features precious few surprises until the ending, which seemed quite improbable to me. Flint does deserve praise for capturing the social disapproval and media frenzy surrounding a woman who is tried for her lifestyle as much as her children's deaths. But overall this book feels like a stale entry in the literary crime genre, and is best avoided.

Emma says

Ruth: mother of two missing children, drinker, whore.

She is not the usual picture of grief, instead composed in the day, let loose at night. Unlikeable. Gossip worthy. People think she did it, especially Detective Devlin, desperate to convict her despite the lack of evidence. But is she guilty of murder? Or guilty of failing to live up to the male standard of female behaviour in 1965 New York? She's too free, too sexual, too alien to these men unless she performs her role as mother or slut. Even the plucky reporter hoping to save her from the world, and from herself, wants to force her into a male-defined role. Flint is staggeringly good here, sharp with her characterisation; Ruth is both distant from the reader and laid bare. It's just as hard to read about the way she is dismissed or blamed as it is to spend time in her head, she's real and she's messy.

And yet that keen commentary is then overwhelmed by the sheer improbability and ridiculousness of the ongoing plot. It falls into cliche and madness. I ended up skimming whole pages of the painfully hard to read, ridiculously obsessive reporter, then the denouement felt shoved in at the end. The book started at 5 and finished at an average 3.

?Karen says

The story is a heartbreakingly one. A single mother of two wakes up to find her kids are gone and no clue what happened to them, that is until both turn up dead at different times. Ruth has had so many men in her life and has been drinking so much, it's possible she can't think clearly and can't trust anyone. She is thought guilty based on her attractive appearance, her aloofness to other housewives, her occupation as a cocktail waitress, her reputation for bringing men home. Poor example of a mother maybe but didn't she love those kids with all her being?

One of the men interested in her is a rookie newspaper reporter who can't let the story go until he finds that one incredible clue that will help prove Ruth's innocence. He uncovers police shenanigans and a possible ex-boyfriend who could have done it. He will do *anything* to help her. The book starts with Ruth in prison, so how's that going to come about?

This was just a bit of a slow starter for me but gets pretty intense during the investigation and trial. Then there's a Holy Sh!* ending I for one did not see coming. An excellent debut. I was given an ARC copy by a friend (Diane). :D

Liz Barnsley says

For me, Little Deaths was a marvel of a novel. Poignant, thought provoking, beautifully written and engaging, also randomly rage inducing – I went through a spectrum of emotions reading Ruth’s story and at the end I was wrung out.

Also, warning: Will cause google mania as you look up the case that Emma Flint took her inspiration from. That is also extraordinarily fascinating. I have today purchased her recommended book on the subject.

Little Deaths starts with a tragedy – two missing children. I don’t think its really a spoiler to say there is not a happy ending for the tiny ones – what follows is a multi layered, insightful and scarily authentic dig around the court of public opinion, the influence of the press and the dogged determination of a police investigation headed up by an obsessed detective.

Set in Queens, New York in the Summer of 1965 Emma Flint brings that time, that place, to beautiful, occasionally awful, always vivid life. You will see and hear it, find focus in the community surrounding Ruth as she faces every mothers worst nightmare. Ripples going outwards, infecting and affecting so many lives, this novel shows you all the nuances, those places inbetween, it was gripping, utterly gripping from the very first page. That did not go away.

I think it should be noted that in this reviewers opinion if you are expecting a psychological thriller, a “whodunnit” then you won’t get that. Whilst there is resolution in a sense, whilst there is an element of “Did she Didn’t she” that is the peripheral of Little Deaths. Whilst still intriguing on that level the heart of it is in the characters, their influences, a snapshot of a time, a place, a judgement that one would hope we as a society would have left behind us now. We have not though as the cases glaring at us from todays headlines prove all the time.

I’m back to Little Deaths is a marvel of a novel. Literary crime with a dash of eloquence and a story rooted in the truths we don’t like to think about.

Highly Recommended

Wendy Darling says

2.5 stars The first third of this book was so engrossing. A woman is accused of murdering her two children-- but Ruth is not your typical mother, and she will not garner the usual sympathy, because she's always perfectly made up and she drinks in excess and she takes a lot of lovers and she's--gasp--a cocktail waitress. I was interested in this portrait of a woman who is judged so harshly by her outward appearance; for some women, careful clothes and makeup are armor used to mask what's going on inside, even during the most stressful times.

But that is pretty much the only thought-provoking idea to come out of this. I have no idea what happened, except that the last two thirds of this character study got derailed by an ineffectual, not-very-bright, off-putting journalist and a **terribly inept mystery** that is littered with uninteresting people with half-hearted motivations and very little conviction. (Not to mention a couple of pretty spectacular info-dump interviews shoe-horned in late in the game.) There are a few brief moments when you catch a glimpse of what this book

could have been through Ruth's private grief, but they come early on and are quickly forgotten. The kids' brutal (though non-explicit) murders barely register, because they're merely props like everything else.

In the end, what's clearly meant to be an examination of slut-shaming and a challenge of feminine ideals still misses the mark; it doesn't really go anywhere, and both the characters and the reader leave the book unchanged. A huge miss as a suspense novel and **a missed opportunity as both character study and as feminist commentary.**

Amy says

All of my reviews can be found on www.novelgossip.com

This book caught my eye immediately for several reasons. First, the cover is so striking in its simplicity, then the blurb is intriguing, I love that it takes place in the sixties, it's one of my favorite eras. After I received my copy I discovered that the author was inspired by a real case and that was just the icing on the cake for me. I haven't read a true crime novel for quite some time, but the idea of reading a book with truthful elements was so interesting to me.

Ruth Malone is living her worst nightmare, both of her young children went missing and then were discovered days later murdered. Unfortunately for her, she's the easy target for the police and her community as she's different from her neighbors. She's a party girl, she drinks more than is considered to be acceptable, is promiscuous and is estranged from her husband, Frank. She dresses provocatively and takes pride in her appearance and the worst part is that she doesn't behave the way people assume a grieving mother would. Devlin is the cop working the case and he presumes she is guilty on the very night Frankie and Cindy go missing. Everything about Ruth and the person she is was frowned upon in the sixties and it was interesting to think that not much has changed as far as how many women are still judged based on the way they look today.

Pete Woinecke is a rookie reporter who manages to nab this story and though he has very little direct interaction with Ruth he falls under her spell and develops an obsession with her. He believes she is guilty in the beginning but as he continues to search for answers, he wavers and wonders if she may be innocent after all. I had a similar experience as one minute I would be sure she was innocent, then the next things would flip as she said or did something that made me shake my head.

The ending of this one was dramatic and unexpected and you do find out what really happened to the Malone children, but there is no real sense of justice being served. This made it all the more honest and true to life as in reality, things are often left messy and unfinished.

This isn't your traditional mystery/thriller type novel, it's deeper than that, it has the vibe of literary fiction and I was reminded of Tana French minus the density of her work. Every word that Flint wrote serves a purpose and the result is a powerful and profound read, she's a genuinely talented writer and storyteller.
