



From Where I Watch You

Shannon Grogan

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Sixteen-year-old Kara McKinley is about to realize her dream of becoming a professional baker. Beautifully designed and piped, her cookies are masterpieces, but also her ticket out of rainy Seattle—if she wins the upcoming national baking competition and its scholarship prize to culinary school in California. Kara can no longer stand the home where her family lived, laughed, and ultimately imploded after her mean-spirited big sister Kellen died in a drowning accident. Kara’s dad has since fled, and her mom has turned from a high-powered attorney into a nutty holy-rolling Christian fundamentalist peddling “Soul Soup” in the family café. All Kara has left are memories of better times.

But the past holds many secrets, and they come to light as Kara faces a secret terror. Someone is leaving her handwritten notes. Someone who knows exactly where she is and what’s she’s doing. As they lead her to piece together the events that preceded Kellen’s terrible, life-changing betrayal years before, she starts to catch glimpses of her dead sister: an unwelcome ghost in filthy Ugg boots. If Kara doesn’t figure out who her stalker is, and soon, she could lose everything. Her chance of escape. The boy she’s beginning to love and trust. Even her life.

From Where I Watch You Details

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From Reader Review From Where I Watch You for online ebook

Katy Upperman says

This book surprised me. I was expecting a sweet story about a baker girl (love baker girls!) who's getting some unsettling (though probably harmless) anonymous notes. While there were a few sweet moments between MC Kara and a very endearing boy, *From Where I Watch You* is a dark book that addresses serious issues with frank, compelling prose. Kara is struggling with her sister's death, her father's abandonment, and her mother's sudden and extreme turn to religion. She's got a stalker, she's scarred by a past incident that's keeping her from developing meaningful relationships, and she's trying to figure out how to get to a baking competition in San Francisco, one that will hopefully help her escape life in Seattle. On top of all this, Charlie, the boy she's loved for ages, has returned after a long absence. I know that sounds like a lot of story for one book, but it works. Shannon Grogan has crafted a gripping plot, and created a strong but sympathetic protagonist. Also, I've got to mention Noelle, who serves as something of an anti-BFF, something I don't see a lot of in YA. She's definitely flawed, but I think she's so well drawn and so different. If you're a fan of Courtney Summers and Trish Doller, I think you'll love *From Where I Watch You*. Recommend!

Cheryl says

There was just something about this book that captured my attention and won't let go. I could not stop reading this book. There was nothing too suspenseful about the story but the mystery surrounding Kara's stalker and her sister's death had me intrigued. Plus, everyone in this book was refreshing and interesting. From Kara to Charlie to Noelle and Kara's mother.

The author did keep me guessing as to the identity of Kara's stalker. Which I really liked because it kept me on my toes with excitement. Not going to say anymore on this as I don't want to give anything away. I can not wait to see what Shannon comes out with next. *From Where I Watch You* it looks like a best seller!

Cynthia (Bingeing On Books) says

I received this ARC from Edelweiss in exchange for my review.

I really thought food would be featured more prominently in this book. I was hoping anyway. I love food, especially cookies. But alas, Kara's baking was just a side not to a storyline about a stalker and a family still grieving. Oh, and there's a really bland kind of love triangle thrown in there too.

Kara wants to be a professional baker and she is dealing with the fact that someone keeps leaving threatening notes for her. The notes are everywhere: her school, her work, even her home. I kept reading this book because of the mystery behind who was sending the notes. But after reading for a while, I realized something: I was way more interested in finding out who the stalker was than Kara. I mean, she gets these notes and even though she is scared, she just goes on with her daily life . . . until she gets the next note. She never, ever gives a single thought as to who is stalking her. I am generally pretty clueless about these things, but I will say that the stalker's identity turned out to be a surprise. There was part of the mystery that I figured out early on, but the actual identity of the guy was surprise. But I thought the reasoning behind his

obsession with Kara and the stalking was actually pretty flimsy. It was kind of anti-climactic. It was also kind of stupid that Kara never told anyone about the notes. She came close SO MANY TIMES to telling her mom or her boyfriend or her teacher, but then she just wouldn't. Her reasons for not doing so were ridiculous. But yeah, she just wanted to ignore everything. Towards the end, when she realized part of the mystery, she still didn't tell anyone. She decided she could just take care of it by herself.

I hated how the author wrote Kara's mom. After the death of Kara's sister, her mom turned from being a high powered attorney into a super religious owner of a cafe. The way she was portrayed though was very neglectful and also a bit crazy. I mean, she thought her pea soup was a cure all for everything and that it was blessed by God. The only realistic thing about Kara's mom was how obsessed she was with knowing where Kara was at all times. It's not healthy, but I kind of get why she would be super intense about her safety. But I didn't understand why she ignored Kara all the time. That was a contradiction. But I also didn't like how Kara talked to her mom. She was either ignoring her mom or yelling at her. And Kara's dad was nonexistent.

Let's talk about Charlie, her boyfriend. He was a guy she apparently loved since 5th grade, despite the fact that they never went out and rarely spoke. He was out of town for a while and she noticed him again when he came back and started working at her mom's cafe. Their relationship was just boring and I really didn't understand what Charlie saw in Kara. They would kiss or get close, she would start a fight with him and yell and they wouldn't talk for days. Eventually, he would forgive her for yelling or whatever and the cycle would start all over again. But sure, they loved each other after two conversations, one fight, and one kiss. There was kind of a love triangle, but I didn't get it. She hadn't even started dating Charlie yet, but she felt guilty when she kissed this other guy. Oh the drama.

And what was the deal with the recipe steps sprinkled throughout the book? It was weird because they made absolutely no sense. I would be reading the story and then all of a sudden, there would be something like "Beat until fluffy" or something to that effect. I think maybe some of them separated the POV's we were looking at. The author went back and forth between the present and different scenes from Kara's childhood. The recipe steps were not cohesive and it would have the step that was obviously the end of a recipe, but then there would be another random step a chapter or so later. I really could have done without that. I also could have done without the scenes from Kara's childhood. I guess it was done to show what Kara's relationship with her sister was like, but that wasn't necessary either. Nothing was ever done with the steps of the recipe throughout the book and we didn't need the added information that Kellen hated her sister. It added nothing to the book. There were just so many parts of this book that were unnecessary. Was this book about grief? About letting go? About family? Or was it about a stalker? It was hard to tell.

Tandie says

YA mystery/suspense. Kara has a super dysfunctional family! Her older sister, Kellan, was probably mentally ill. She was a horrible bully and now everyone is even more messed up since her death. Kara receives notes from a stalker that get progressively disturbing. She tells no one and makes those kinds of decisions that the stupid girl in horror flicks makes. Forehead slap. Charlie was sweet and swoony, I hearted him at first read.

There were a lot of underdeveloped characters and loose threads. Where is Kara's father? The situation Charlie reveals about his family, um...what about that? The stalker goes from zero to psycho without enough story to make it feel real. What about a sexual predator that nobody even calls out? It gave me the yucks.

3 stars, could've been better. I actually enjoyed the childhood flashbacks a lot.

Ann Jacobus says

From Where I Watch You is a creepy, un-put-downable thriller that features a whole range of guys and girls that we and main character Kara are just not sure we can trust. The tension mounts and we root for Kara to not only realize her dreams of going away to become a French pastry chef, but to survive with her life!

Vicki says

This story is about Kara. Kara whose sister died, Kara whose dream is to become a baker, Kara whose parents divorced and her mom turned "holy roller," and Kara whose stalker leaves her threatening notes.

In this debut novel the author writes a good mystery and one that had me guessing throughout the story "whodunit." I never had a definitive answer until the stalker was revealed, but I was not surprised at who it was.

Kara's dream is to become a baker, so she sets out with or without support to get to a baking cookies contest. I was saddened that (view spoiler)

Kara had an unusual relationship with her sister, especially since her sister was dead. As Kara tells her story, she goes back and forth between being a young child playing with her sister, being a bit older and bickering and fighting with her sister (as teens often do), and at the end of the story after finding out some shocking news about her sister we see their relationship change once again.

Recommendation: I think this is a good mystery and a really good debut novel. I will definitely read another one if this author writes more!

Haddie Harper says

Oh man . . . What can I say other than I am shocked and dumbfounded . . . I have not watched or read *Pretty Little Liars*, nor do I intend to, but knowing that sort of theme was in this book intrigued me. I liked how it bounced between the present and the younger Kara years. Can't help liking Charlie when he steps in. Felt a little out of sorts because Kara's mother is indeed a wonderful character and I wish Kara did not see her that way. Other than that, I really enjoyed reading this book.

I own this book, and its signed! ♥

Fiona says

It was hauntingly good and most of the time had kept me gripping onto the book. It was complex in a

beautiful way that will surely will keep you guessing and breathless until the end.

Although it was an entertaining read and was worth the time to spend on reading it, my complaints were that the suspense/thriller vibe wasn't fully displayed well in a manner which most readers will actually look forward to. I was expecting it to be really suspenseful and fast-paced, but it was the opposite. Also there wasn't much of a character development in our main characters, especially Kara which had me really rolling my eyes all the time. The love story was okay, but not really that cuteness you might be expecting. It was damn crazy and complex that will leave your mind twisted.

Anyway, those weaknesses didn't become much of a hindrance, because the pacing really mattered to me. It was still able to progress gradually from being really so-slow-it-made-me-sleep to wow-this-is-making-my-pulse-race. Lol!

I recommend this book to anyone who is up to reading something light suspense. It was a complex, multi-layered story and well worth spending time to read.

Teodora says

What...just...happened?? This book has so many different plot lines, that all connect at the end, but can be confusing at the start. Cooking, stalking, sisters death, and a deep dark secret. Yes at times it was muddled and could've been clearer but I still enjoyed this none the less. The stalking, what a bloody creep. I did consider it might be that guy, but I do have to admit he was the last suspect on my list. It does play with your mind, and there are many other people who could've been too. The sister thing was just sad. To know the details after and actually what happened, was just so depressing. That she actually isn't such a prick that Kara makes you think she is. And seriously screw off you prick, for now she can never redeem herself, god damn it makes me angry.

Overall this is a great book, and really holds your attention. I'd recommend this to anyone who likes stalker books (and cooking), really keeps you thinking.

Kelly Gunderman says

Check out this and my other reviews on my blog, Here's to Happy Endings!

When I first heard about this book and saw the really pretty cover and the creepy title (that pretty much says a lot about what this book is about), I was excited to read it. While I do find it difficult to come across a good YA thriller, I keep looking, hoping to find one that's really good! While it wasn't the best book I've read this year, From Where I Watch You definitely had its good parts and the creepy factor was pretty high up there.

When I first started reading this book, I honestly wasn't sure if I was going to enjoy it. It didn't really seem to grab my attention that much, and it started off a little bit slow. But after the first few chapters (which are adorably set up as steps in cooking baking - different and cute), I was hooked.

From Where I Watch You starts off with Kara sitting in her Home Economics class, baking cookies while being stared at by the ghost of her dead sister, Kellen. Yep. That's right. Sounds like a positive beginning for a book, right? Her Home Ec teacher informs her of a cookie decorating contest being held in San Francisco,

in which first prize is a scholarship to a pastry school that Kara longs to attend (her mother won't let her go, because she refuses to let Kara go that far away after the death of Kara's older sister, Kellen). So this competition is Kara's one shot at getting to go to the school of her dreams.

While Kara is terrified of going to this competition, and even though her mother forbids her from going, she plans on it, anyway. While this is the main story line, there are other things going on in Kara's world that are hindering her ability to focus on the contest. For one, her crush on a guy from college, Hayden. Another is the return of her old crush, Charlie, who went away for a while and recently returned to the area and got a job in Kara's mom's restaurant as a dishwasher. The third? Kara is receiving creepy stalker notes from someone who clearly knows all about her - her work schedule, when she is at home, school, and what she does in her free time. Oh, yeah, and she sees her dead sister everywhere.

So between dealing with boy drama between Hayden and Charlie, she is also trying to figure out who is sending her these creepy notes. She doesn't want to bring her mom in on the notes, because then she figures her mom will put her foot down about the competition for sure. So she tries to figure it out on her own.

At the end of the chapters, there are flashbacks into parts of Kara's life - such as what happened to her when she was 13, and also how things were between her and Kellen when they were little girls. These are important to the story, and they really add some depth to it.

Without giving away any spoilers, I have to say that the way that Kara handled some of the things in her life was kind of questionable. The event that occurred when Kara was thirteen, for example, should have been handled differently, in my opinion, but at the same time, I guess I can see why she handled things the way that she did.

The other problem I had with this book was that the ending seemed a little rushed. The entire book was leading up to an ending that should have taken more than one paragraph to play out. But honestly, I didn't see it coming, so it really surprised me (yay, I love when endings surprise me!).

If you like YA thrillers, then I would recommend this one. It has a lot of interesting elements in the story, and it's original!

Note: I received an ARC copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Tonyalee says

See this review and more on my blog, [Lilybloombooks](http://lilybloombooks.com)

My Take:

I have no shame in admitting that it was the cover of *From Where I Watch You* that caught my eye. Of course, my love for anything mystery/thriller/suspense related is what pushed me to request and buy. I am so glad I did!

From Where I Watch You has many elements to the story. We have a stalker. Hallucinations. Romance. The death of her sister, moving and the new life style her mom has adopted. Ultimately, a girl dealing with SO much. Not to mention her deep desire to move away and attend a top rated culinary school. But the execution was spot on; weaving all the elements beautifully.

One thing I want to mention that I appreciated about *From Where I Watch You*, we see Kara dealing with all of these things while being stalked. The book doesn't STOP and focus on the stalker, but rather incorporates it into the story. We see day-to-day struggles with her mom, best friend and the budding romance as well, all the while, having that fear nagging Kara about who to trust and who her stalker is. It was pure perfection.

Another aspect that I loved were the flashbacks. Something happened to Kara the summer before her Freshman year of high school, mere months before her sister died, and while I had an idea about what happened, I didn't have all the details. We also see OLDER flashbacks with Kara and her sister, to help us really understand why Kara felt the way she did about Kellan. I admit, her sister was not a nice person but it felt like she was trying to change, and her time ran out before she could. But alas, not the point.

While the romance doesn't play a HUGE part in the story -- it's important for many reasons. None I want to discuss because, spoilers. I will say though, that I enjoyed their time together and glad things worked out the way it did. ;)

Now on the stalker. Have you ever picked the person, but then change your mind again and again? That is what I did. I wasn't shocked by WHO it was, but the WHY. Things really fall into place in the end and I was beyond floored.

Overall - If you couldn't tell, I loved *From Where I Watch You*. It's a creepy yet engaging story that will have you turning the pages well into the night. Highly recommend!

I received this book for free from The Publisher via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Aditi says

"There is a fine line between serendipity and stalking."

----David Coleman, an English sports commentator and TV presenter

Shannon Grogan, an American author, pens her debut YA thriller, *From Where I Watch You*, that unfolds a delicious story of about a young teenager with a passion for baking being stalked like crazy, that not only leaves her on a dangerous trail to find the identity of her stalker but also intrigues her to find out more about her dead elder sister's tragic death.

Synopsis:

Sixteen-year-old Kara McKinley is about to realize her dream of becoming a professional baker. Beautifully designed and piped, her cookies are masterpieces, but also her ticket out of rainy Seattle—if she wins the upcoming national baking competition and its scholarship prize to culinary school in California. Kara can no longer stand the home where her family lived, laughed, and ultimately imploded after her mean-spirited big sister Kellen died in a drowning accident. Kara's dad has since fled, and her mom has turned from a high-powered attorney into a nutty holy-rolling Christian fundamentalist peddling "Soul Soup" in the family café. All Kara has left are memories of better times.

But the past holds many secrets, and they come to light as Kara faces a secret terror. Someone is leaving her handwritten notes. Someone who knows exactly where she is and what's she's doing. As they lead her to piece together the events that preceded Kellen's terrible, life-changing betrayal years before, she starts to catch glimpses of her dead sister: an unwelcome ghost in filthy Ugg boots. If Kara doesn't figure out who her stalker is, and soon, she could lose everything. Her chance of escape. The boy she's beginning to love and trust. Even her life.

Kara, a high school teenager, has a passion for baking pastries, so much so that she wants to pursue her college degree from the world's best pastry school. Kara is a girl who loves to keep things to herself, despite having a best friend, and after her sister's death, that not only shook up her whole family but also her, she is trying hard to get herself out of her hometown, not only because of her die-hard-Jesus-follower mother, but because of the fact that someone is leaving her handwritten notes thus forcing her to confront her terrible secret from her past. But before it's too late, Kara decides to find out the real identity of her stalker. Will she be able to find out the truth?

Shannon's debut book, in short, is an exciting as well as gripping read and the book might not have done any justice in the genre of proper YA thriller, but it surely managed to creep me out most of the times. The story began with a slower pace that focuses on Kara's goals to win a pastry competition while dealing with the ghost of her dead elder sister as well as with some creepy stalker notes. The story shuttles between the past and the present - the past which reflects Kara's childhood with her sister and the event that changed her life forever and the present which reflects Kara's teenage days spent dealing with love, crushes, stalker notes, baking, her dead sister's ghost. The story gathers momentum just when the author pulls her readers into the threshold of Kara's life.

The characters are intricately and perfectly etched out from real life characters highlighting their real problems, their flaws and their ambitions. Kara is an inspiring YA heroine who like every other 17-year old wants to own her problems all by herself. The supporting cast is also quite well-developed.

The writing style of the author is fantastic and the way the author engaged the minds of her readers with Kara's life is really brilliant. There are lots of parts of the book which gives a creepy feeling to the whole setting thus making the story quite enthralling. There is a bit of love drama or rather say a love triangle where Kara is torn between Charlie, her childhood pal, and Hayden, her college-boy-crush. The emotions poured into the story are quite apt as well as has the power to make the readers feel it.

So in a nutshell, this book is a page-turner and has been kept closer to reality with its story line. And if you love baking, then this book is a must read for you.

Verdict: *If you love appealing YA thrillers, then do give it a read.*

Courtesy: *Thanks to the author, Shannon Grogan, for giving me an opportunity to read and review her book.*

Marci Curtis says

Bold, haunting, and beautifully written. An absolutely stunning debut. Five massive stars!

Chana says

#1 Lesson: If you are being stalked, tell someone!! Right now! Don't wait for the right moment, whatever that means.

That being said, I don't remember the teen years being like this. Kara's decisions and conversations were unusual, to say the least; she didn't tell anyone she was being stalked, she went to California (from Seattle) to participate in a baking contest without her mother's permission just leaving a note, she behaves in a dangerous way with older boys she isn't interested in resulting in some inappropriate and scary sexual situations and ignores and is unkind to the boy she likes, she has a ballistic mental reaction when the results of the baking competition are announced, she hallucinates blood and teeth in her bowl of flour, butter and eggs, she sees her dead sister everywhere.

She avoids a serious mental health evaluation by cleaning her mother's restaurant (hard physical labor) and by baking (concentration on something other than her own floundering mind).

I think the book is supposed to be a moralistic tale for young Christian girls. It tells us pretty clearly to avoid premarital sex and potentially dangerous sexual situations, to look beyond a person's exterior, to work hard, to respect and honor parents and accept their discipline. It does this by having Kara bend these rules and then we see the consequences. Kellen, Kara's older dead sister, broke the rules pretty badly and didn't confide in anyone about her stalker and look what happened to her!

Basically, stay off the streets and out of the arms of boys, keep away from marijuana, listen to your mother, and even if you don't like to pray, clean and bake to steady your mind and keep your thoughts wholesome.

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten! My copy was an ARC I got from Amazon Vine.

Diversity Rating: 0 – What Diversity?

Racial-Ethnic: 0

QUILTBAG: 0

Disability: 0

Intersectionality: 0

30th verse, same as the first: tell me there's a stalker in a book and I'm in no matter how questionable the rest of it sounds. But there was nothing questionable-sounding about From Where I Watch You anyway because it just sounded like my kind of book. A teenage girl with a passion for baking she plans to turn into a career? ABSOLUTELY. Stalkers too? SHUT UP AND TAKE MY MONEY. Grogan's debut novel won't satisfy your sweet tooth, though. It's a deceptively dark little book that might bring readers to tears.

I'm unfortunately used to seeing the leads in YA novels have no real hobbies or anything similar that plays a major role in their characterization. Kara is not one of those characters. Her love of baking and desire to get

into the best school for it in order to get away from her mother comprise a major part of the novel's two plots (the other being the stalker, of course) as well as her characterization, and the two plots work well in tandem. Sadly, our lives aren't novels and don't focus entirely on a stalker when they enter our lives. We still have our jobs or school or whatever else. It just makes everything harder as our stalker starts to poison our lives and keep us from enjoying what we love or doing what we need to.

(Not speaking from personal experience, BTW. I just do a lot of research on stalking and its effects on the stalked as a hobby.)

While reading it, one particular subplot detailing Kara's past infatuation with Nick, the best friend of her sister Kellen's boyfriend, actually forced me to put the book down because I started crying too hard. It made me start asking myself questions we shouldn't have to ask. For instance, why don't we listen to girls or just do something when we hear allegations of sexual abuse/assault? Why do we pressure girls to act like thirteen-year-old Kara did toward Nick? As a child, I performed heterosexuality to an extreme degree because it's what I was taught I had to do. I was a girl. Therefore, I had to like boys. I didn't break out of that trap and figure out my own sexual orientation until I was seventeen. Grogan's handling of the entire issue is spot-on perfect.

The two bits that aren't spot-on relate to Kara's mother and her visions of her sister. Kara's mom's fundie Christian characterization gets a teensy bit of nuance, but it's still very cartoonish and feels unnecessary. There are quite a few other ways to show why Kara would want to get away from her mother without relying on a tired stereotype. Similarly unnecessary are Kara's visions of Kellen's "ghost." I see them more as hallucinations she never gets treatment for, but it's more of a jarring magical realistic touch that has no place in what is otherwise a straight contemporary novel.

If Shannon Grogan has plans to publish more novels, I'm in. Once *From Where I Watch You* is properly released, I'll need a copy for my own shelf and you know I'll be pushing it on my friends (with the proper warnings, of course; triggering my best friends isn't on my to-do list and I can do other things to land myself a comfy spot in hell).
