



The Furies

Katie Lowe

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In 1998, a sixteen-year-old girl is found dead on school property, dressed in white and posed on a swing, with no known cause of death. The novel opens with this image, as related to us by the narrator, Violet, looking back on the night it happened from the present day, before returning to relate the series of events leading up to the girl's murder.

After an accident involving her Dad and sister, Violet joins Elm Hollow Academy, a private girls school in a quiet coastal town, which has an unpleasant history as the site of famous 17th century witch trials. Violet quickly finds herself invited to become the fourth member of an advanced study group, alongside Robin, Grace, and Alex - led by their charismatic art teacher, Annabel.

While Annabel claims her classes aren't related to ancient rites and rituals - warning the girls off the topic, describing it as little more than mythology - the girls start to believe that magic is real, and that they can harness it. But when the body of a former member of the society - Robin's best friend, with whom Violet shares an uncanny resemblance - is found dead on campus nine months after she disappeared, Violet begins to wonder whether she can trust her friends, teachers, or even herself.

The Furies Details

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Author : Katie Lowe

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James Cross says

This book was blurbed as a successor to the Craft, and in parts this is true, but equally apt is a partial comparison to The Secret History. In reality though this book was very hard to quantify. The tale of a new girl to an existing group of three friends who meet in secret and are displaying an increasing interest in spells and rituals is almost a trope, but this mixes in a tragic home life for our main character Violet which provides some real pathos as she tries to navigate a private school environment. What follows could be a supernatural tale of spell driven revenge and self destruction involving the mysterious disappearance of Violets predecessor in her new group - before escalating to encompass revenge, domestic violence, abuse and murder. Equally though the book presents the idea that magic is nothing more than a shared delusion as a product of simmering frustration at the place of women in the world harnessing their sense of rage and injustice.

As someone who would have been approximately this age at this time, (late 1990's) and was brought up in a run down seaside town the nostalgia was very real. The teen feelings and behaviours rang true, as they made increasingly illogical, yet understandable, decisions. As an adult you can see an easy fix to a lot of the dramas and fraught situations they encounter, but their reactions were very appropriate (if heightened).

Where this book really worked for me was the previously mentioned exploration of the place of women. It explores the expectations on young women around sex, explores a violent home life for one of the girls and the wilful way everyone politely ignores it. Through unorthodox history lessons it explores the erasure of powerful women in myth and hints at the power that could be drawn from those we do know of. It also shows how delicate friendships can be during hormonal teenage years, and how quickly misunderstandings and resentments take hold.

The voice of the protagonist, Violet, is clear and distinct and the way in which she wastes her potential during the novel is both believable and frustrating.

If you're looking for an action packed explosive teen thriller with set pieces and supernatural whizzes and bangs, then this book is not for you. What you will discover is a careful study of the chaotic teen mind, an exploration of how friendship, loyalty and love can become sour and twisted, and an interesting study of what it shouldn't, yet does, mean to be a young woman today.

Very thought provoking.

Dannii Elle says

The Secret History meets Girls on Fire meets The Graces.

"It seems that women are doomed to two fates. It is our lot to either be seen as unpredictable and irrational mortals, maligned and repressed by the actions of men; or sacred beings, goddesses of higher realm, among the Fates and Furies."

The Furies is yet another YA novel that focuses on the potential toxicity of female friendships. Quite

honestly, those are all my buzzwords and I will devour anything on the topic, no matter how many seemingly similar novels appear on the shelves. This book, however, also had something far more sinister to offer the reader, that appeared in the prologue and framed the narrative with its horrifying imagery. And right from this initial scene of terror I was hooked!

Asides from the interplay involved in teen girl friendships, academic settings are another of my bookish buzzwords. An elite school is erected for these fictional creations that could draw its source from many real-world alternatives. The abundance and the pretension lured me into this world and when this veneer became scratched Lowe exposed the sinister history it tremulously resided upon. The historic abuse of women and the rumoured witchcraft of those females deemed unsavoury is not a new discovery, and yet what Lowe does with this most certainly is. She brings home the image of the witch and lets it rest and grow, unknown and yet right in the heart of the patriarchal regime that once condemned it to the outskirts.

This is a novel ripe with sensual and sexual undertones that tainted every scene with an atmospheric foreboding that disallowed any facet to be taken at face value. The suspense mounts incrementally and ensures the reader is hooked to every word, as myth and history begin to collide with reality. Nothing can be trusted. All will be revealed. And in the wake of this discovery the reader will be left reeling.

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review, Thank you to th author, Katie Lowe, and the publisher, Harper Collins, for this opportunity.

Nicole says

Poor Violet's past isn't the best. Her mum drinks to forget so Violet is lucky to get a sponsored scholarship to the university at the edge of their town. This is where she becomes slightly obsessed with 3 girls who walk carefree about the grounds.

Violet looks like a student who went missing a month before, she shrugs this off when the feisty haired & manipulative Robin befriends her.

Teenage angst, bad decisions & the suggestion of witchcraft means th is take is heading for disaster.

The old such elm in the grounds is being cut down, a body is discovered, will the Dean suspect the 4 friends had anything to do with the missing girl? Jealousy & suspicion mix with despair & rumours.

With the gift of hindsight one of the survivors reflects on what might have been, accepting her part, but never totally accepting, it seems, of her toxic part in the relationship. A fateful tale I thought ended satisfyingly well.

Liz Barnsley says

I LOVED this. Without doubt the best book I've read featuring toxic female friendship since "Girls on Fire" – The Furies is haunting, evocative and sits in your head, that underlying sense of menace and anticipation resonates throughout.

Violet desperately wants friendship, even as she tells herself she doesn't need it, so when she is befriended by the enigmatic and edgy Robin and drawn into a circle of secrets and lies, she will do anything to protect it. Darkness and obsession, fatal ties and dangerous magic make for an utter page turner of a literary novel, with some beautiful writing and intelligent layered nuance.

The Furies is both observational and insightful, as Violet tells the tale of this fascinating group, of both love

and hate, random happiness and sudden horror. Katie Lowe uses cutting edge prose to draw the reader into Violet's world then doesn't allow you to look away, it is utterly gripping from the vivid opening to the melancholy finish.

Absolutely excellent.

Highly Recommended.

Janet Brown says

Urgh this book was SO frustrating because it was so close to being absolutely brilliant.

insert Tyra Banks "I was rooting for you" GIF

The opening is stunning, the description of a dead girl on a swing, dewdrops glittering in her hair, delicate silver chains binding her wrists is totally gripping and achieving a beautifully elegiac tone as Violet, our narrator, reflects back from a distance of 20 years.

It's when the narrative switches to the past, to tell the story of how the girl got there, that things weaken.

Because although crammed with so much good stuff - from feminist perspectives of the Greek myths, to the history of witchcraft and witch trials - the fatal flaw is that the characters just aren't that interesting.

So, for various reasons Violet washes up at an exclusive girls' private school, the evocatively-named Elm Hollow Academy, and immediately falls in with a gang of mysterious and glamorous girls. Or, we're told that they're mysterious and glamorous but (and herein lies the problem), they're just... not. At no point is this allure demonstrated to the reader; instead Robin, Alex and Grace come across as ciphers straight from teen-movie central casting. Equally, there's no tension or build-up to Violet becoming friends with them: she thinks they look cool, they ask her to go for coffee, and bang, instant best mates. This speed of set-up is necessary because there is so much action packed into the latter half of the book, mostly because there are so many villains on whom the girls, emboldened by their membership of a secret society at school, decide to get revenge.

The Secret History, by which The Furies is clearly influenced, is so successful partly because it revolves around a single crime which is all the more terrible for its senselessness. Lowe could have done with taking a leaf from Tarrt's book (no pun intended!) and choosing one storyline, one element of revenge, to focus on more closely. Because while the central message (best summed up as 'men are trash, and women have suffered for millennia because of that') certainly resonates with me, the narrative felt too scattered to do it justice.

Siobhan says

The Furies is a dark literary thriller about friendship and the artistic history of female power and revenge. After an accident claims the lives of her father and sister, Violet ends up at a private girls' school for her A Levels, Elm Hollow Academy. It has a grisly history of witchcraft and Violet isn't sure she cares about being there, but then she's drawn into the world of Robin, a charismatic girl with red hair, and her friends Grace

and Alex. Together they take extra classes with Annabel, an art teacher who follows the tradition of teaching a few students about mythology, art, and literature. The strange power she describes starts to sound like it could be real, and just when it does, the body of a missing former student and member of Annabel's study group is found on campus.

This is *The Secret History* crossed with a girls' school in the 90s and a sharp gothic edge. It follows a classic kind of structure for stories about a group in an isolated environment (here, a private school in a run down seaside town), with the narrator lonely and easily obsessed with their new friends. The narrative style is distinctive, causing purposeful confusion at times as Violet narrates with hindsight and leaving elements ambiguous. Notably, the witchcraft history—and the apparent summoning of the Furies of Greek mythology—is more of an inspiration and catalyst than the entire plot, and the story itself follows the tangles of friendship, violence, and revenge.

Violet and Robin's friendship is crucial and well-written, tinged by Violet's perspective and her lack of self-awareness around it. Grace and Alex are also great characters, though it is a little frustrating that Violet often ignores them in favour of Robin, meaning they don't get as much exploration as they could. Otherwise, Violet's single-mindedness works well to create an atmosphere in which she doesn't notice much else going on outside of their circle, intoxicated by what they're doing and by drink and drugs.

The Furies may seem at first like it could be a young adult novel about toxic friendships, it turns into something much darker, in which the academic view of the teacher is essentially turned into reality by the students who aren't so captivated by the art and literature as by the meaning. This gives it a different edge to other reference-laden literary thrillers, as it is the drinking, dancing, and revenge that means most to the teenage protagonists. This is a book that fans of *The Secret History*, *Heathers*, and the new Netflix reboot of *Sabrina* (preferably of all three) will likely devour.

Samm says

Did not finish, very boring!

Sharon says

My friend Kate (Bibliophile Book Club) was kind enough to lend me her review copy of this one, knowing how much of a sucker I am for anything involving witchcraft or teen cults.

It didn't disappoint - opening with a rather gruesome death, we follow Violet and her group of frenemies as they become obsessed with magic and believing magic is real (I mean - who didn't have a witch phase). Comparisons to *The Craft* are unavoidable, there are similarities, but the book reads like a fond hat tip to the cult film rather than a retelling or rip off.

I flew threw this one, it's a stunning book and one for your shelf if you've ever wondered if that luck spell could really work.

Imie says

Thank you so much HarperCollins for sending this my way!

The Furies is a hauntingly beautiful novel that captures the coming-of-age of a group of girls with fire in their hearts but manages to put a violent disturbing twist on the story that leaves you pouring over the pages to find out what happens next.

The story follows Violet as she moves to a new school and becomes fascinated with a group of three girls who are part of a secret class held by the art history teacher. The school has a history of witchcraft, and the girls all have dark secrets, which all merge together through this friendship.

Lowe manages to explore witchcraft, female vengeance, and philosophy (that is obviously well researched) all the while holding the reader in her grasp through a fast-paced thrilling plot that leaves you on the edge of your seat.

This gorgeous novel is definitely for fans of The Secret History, If We Were Villains and The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina. It's spell-binding!

Emma says

As an exploration of girls gone bad, this does a decent job, but it feels like an echo. It's been done before and better. Definitely more The Craft than The Secret History, the book struggled to hit the depth of character or theme necessary for it to be truly absorbing. The characters were light: Violet's voice held little attraction, overwhelmed by the darker threads of her new best friend, Robin, and the others are straight out of every teen drama you've ever seen/read. The problem is that it's just not that engaging, nothing explored to the necessary extent to give it real feeling, with actions lacking genuine motivations, consequences, or validity.

It nevertheless had some wonderfully pointed discussions about the danger of female power as told through mythic, literary, and artistic representation. As a huge fan of women in Greek tragedy, these parts spoke to me. Honestly, the secret society part was thrilling- if I had the opportunity to join, I wouldn't have been mucking around with witchcraft and murder, I would have been too busy reading. These moments are layered through the narrative, seemingly to explain or even incite the action, a whole history of female revenge with this as only the latest incarnation. It's not entirely convincing but my interest in the subject made me love these flashes regardless.

There's so much potential in the writing here that I wanted to see more, and will read the author's next offering when it comes, but this just didn't hit the spot.

ARC via Netgalley
