



# Stranger Things

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**Stranger Things** Erin Healy

**In the burnt-out hollow, a house of dark secrets and an eerie beauty beckon.**

Serena Diaz's life is imploding. A troubled student has accused the young biology teacher of sexual misconduct, cutting off her promising career just as it was starting to blossom. But that's just the beginning of Serena's problems.

When a therapeutic walk in the woods leads her to a ruined house overtaken by criminals, Serena is assaulted and finds herself witness to the senseless murder of the one man who tries to help her.

Hurled into a world of false accusations and hounded by the press, Serena must confront evil itself to unravel the mysterious visions—and terrifying danger—that pursue her. But she can't ignore the most haunting question: Why would a mysterious stranger give his life to save hers?

The answer, if she can find it, will point the way to her freedom from evil men in a lascivious trade.

“With her typical flair and eloquence, Healy takes readers through an incredible journey that will leave you thinking long after the last page closes.” —Lifeisstory.com

“Healy's latest is thought-provoking and engaging, and becomes even more so as the story progresses. The author uses courageous characters to address the sex trade crisis. Themes of hope and redemption are seamlessly woven with spiritual elements and a touch of the supernatural.” —*RT Book Reviews*, 4 stars

## Stranger Things Details

Date : Published January 7th 2014 by Thomas Nelson (first published December 31st 2013)

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Author : Erin Healy

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Genre : Christian Fiction, Fiction, Christian, Suspense

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# From Reader Review Stranger Things for online ebook

## Martha says

Good suspense and interesting twists with supernatural edges. I liked the characters and the struggles against the sinister leaders of a human trafficking ring. The story moved well and kept me engaged. My Rating 4.5.

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## Christian Fiction Addiction says

Soon into Serena's rewarding career as a biology teacher, the unthinkable happens: a student accuses her of a heinous act. After being confronted with the accusations, Serena flees to the nearby hills to spend time in nature, trying to find reprieve before the media storm hits. But things take a darker turn still when she stumbles upon criminals hiding in the ruins of a house, and she witnesses the murder of a man who steps in between Serena and certain death. Desperate to clear her name and also to uncover the truth of why the man was murdered, Serena must find the courage to confront evil, though it may cost her very life.

Erin Healey's latest offering provides a thrilling read that pulses with suspense while mining the depths of human depravity through the exploration of human trafficking. The plot is intense, with tension that only builds as the story progresses. Although there are a number of key characters that readers will meet, the way that the author introduces them into the story makes it easy to keep track of them. I loved the main character of Serena as she finds herself caught in a web of deceit that seemed all too possible to happen to someone in real life. The other characters are also well-formed, whether the good or the bad, and as such Healy has expertly balanced plot and character development. Indeed, the story was difficult to put down, and was both frightening and inspiring at the same time.

Although faith is an element of the novel, and hints of supernatural are wonderfully explored, the characters do not seem to have a clear encounter with the person of Christ himself, something I feel may have added to the story. However, there is much within the pages of the book that points to the saving and redemptive power of God, and I love the way the characters encounter more than our eyes can see. As Serena's father said so eloquently, "There are places in the world where you will encounter things so real that you will be surprised others don't have the identical experience. But then you will realize that the clarity given you is a gift from God. Perhaps this gift is just for you, maybe it will also touch the lives of others". Reading "Strangers Things" may just cause you to look at the world around you differently and realize your own calling that God has placed on your life!

I strongly recommend this well-written book and award it 4.5 out of 5 stars.

Book has been provided courtesy of the publisher, Thomas Nelson, and the Booksneeze program, for the purposes of this unbiased review.

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## Trisha says

Erin Healy's latest novel is spellbinding. The novel expounds upon the concept of "thin places" between the

natural and supernatural world. As Serena's world is turned upside down when she is accused of sexual misconduct she quickly discovers that "Reality is both more and less than it seems." When a stranger dies in her stead, she is thrown into a world where human flesh is currency and lives are expendable. A captivating story of the power of hope and redemption.

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## **Sojourner says**

Stranger Things by Erin Healy is a hauntingly beautiful supernatural thriller, which deals with sex trafficking and the thin places in one's life. It is a heart-pounding novel of suspense and hope through which the reader will be able to delve deeper into one's being and the vast humanity, posing searching questions about life, purpose, existence and spirituality.

One thread of the story that flows all through-out is the issue of human trafficking in the form of sex trafficking. It is an important issue as it is the third-fastest growing illegal industry worldwide. It is just behind drugs and weapons. Whatever our opinion may be about sex trafficking, it is to be remembered that it is a modern form of captivity, totally despicable and horrifyingly destructive. It is both vicious and loathsome.

In Stranger Things, Erin Healy introduces the concept of "thin places" which could be baffling to many readers. According to the Celtic traditional definition, a thin place is a physical location in the world where the division between physical and spiritual realities falls away, a place where we can see the greater truth of our existence. Erin Healy uses the term "thin place" to define moments when a person experiences a sharpened spiritual awareness about what's really going on in one's life. In Stranger Things, a thin place is a physical location, a burned-out house in a sparse terrain, where Serena discovers her purpose. "There are places in the world where you will encounter things so real that you will be surprised others don't have an identical experience," Serena's father tells her. "But then you will realize that the clarity given to you is a gift from God. Perhaps this gift is just for you, maybe also it will touch the lives of others."

Stranger Things is a fast-paced and compelling novel that tells the story of Serena Diaz, a former school-teacher who has been accused of sexual misconduct with a student. She's innocent, but that matters little. Told not to leave town, she takes a walk in the woods which unwittingly draws her deeper into a mystery. When she comes across an abandoned house it was full of people she had never seen before. Having witnessed what was going on, Serena's life was on the line. But in the nick of time she was saved by a mysterious person who sacrificed his life for hers. Serena manages to escape.

Stranger Things will captivate you with its unique storyline and Erin Healy's fine writing. It is a book not to be missed. Nothing is stranger than Stranger Things!

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## **Rachel L says**

It was ok. Took me 3 months to finish it cuz I kept putting it down. Anyway it was eye opening in the issues it addressed.

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## **Natalie says**

Took a while to get into, but once I did, it was a great read! Mysterious and enthralling. Well done!

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## **Ian says**

This is my new favourite Erin Healy novel. It has all the hallmarks of what we've come to expect from Healy: gripping suspense, characters grappling with their external world but also with what's in their heart, and an insider's perspective of the "thin places" where the natural and supernatural intersect. However, added to this novel is an especially powerful story line drawing the reader into the dark sinister world of human trafficking.

The novel starts fast and doesn't let up. Healy's descriptive powers make this novel a highly visual experience. We get multiple points of view which I enjoyed as it enlightened the experience in my mind.

The story demonstrates how human trafficking is able to proliferate due to systematic abuse, deceit and corruption. For much of the novel we're not exactly sure whether the heroes are actually villains and vice-versa. As the story unfolds the layers gradually peel away to reveal some very courageous people and sinister bad guys.

Serena Diaz and Amber Larsen are two very gutsy women, both survivors of this heinous industry, and marvelously crafted. They are drawn together, coincidentally, by Amber's brother, Christopher. Embedded in both ladies is his passion and energy to rescue those in need and shine light in the darkness of the industry that has played such a role in their lives since their youth.

The bad guys are creepy in their arrogance, abuse of power and complete disregard for the lives of the many they destroy. Healy reveals the far-reaching tentacles of structured corruption that pervades the industry.

This is an effortless read that was hard to put down and I was sad it ended.

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## **Tonya says**

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--My thoughts. Read this book with a caution that only if you can handle it. Healy really hammers topics that are taboo in a lot of circles and ones that people feel uncomfortable with. But need to be talked about. I loved this book. Human trafficking is around us, and yet everyone avoids it. Your sister, your daughter, possibly your mother, wife but let's not talk about it.

Read it, pass it on. Discuss it. Make it a topic everyone should talk about. We shouldn't ignore it. It is not going to go away.

I received a copy of this book from Goodreads first read program in exchange for my honest opinion.

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## **Pamela says**

Sadly and horrifically, Human Trafficking is a multibillion-dollar, global industry. It has become a widespread epidemic. Women and children are bought and sold as sex slaves - not just exist in third-world countries - but right here in the United States as well. My heart breaks for these victims.

*"The best way to save these young women . . . was to prevent them from being taken in the first place. Abroad, girls were lured away from home and out of poverty with the promise of well-paying jobs. Here in the United States, where fewer people lived on the brink of starvation, targeted girls were often those living in emotional poverty. They weren't promised a paycheck, but the comfort, security, and kindness of a man who seemed to understand their pain and know the way around it."*

I commend Erin Healy for taking on such an important, controversial topic within the Christian fiction industry. Time and chance happens to everyone. No one is exempt from tragedy.

This wasn't an easy read emotionally, but it was enlightening and relevant. I greatly appreciate Healy's decorum with both content and language. No graphic sexual content or expletives were used. Rather than drumming up suspense with cheap shock-and-awe tactics, she built the story with fierce subtleties and gripping nuances that kept me rapidly turning pages.

Christians - really all people from all religions and walks of life - we need to open our eyes and stop being quick to pass judgment so as to help these young women and children. At the very least, we must pray for these enslaved, tortured, brutalized victims. And we need to educate ourselves as to how the industry operates luring, preening, targeting, preying on the most vulnerable in our society - often in plain sight and in middle/upper class neighborhoods. The lawyer next door, the business man in Rotary Club, or the high school heartthrob who mows your lawn, just might not be the upright characters they portray themselves to be . . . And your moody, misunderstood teenage daughter/granddaughter just might be considered an easy mark and their next target.

*"By the time [she] was fourteen and emerging from the all-consuming dramas of middle school, she felt like a person gone missing and presumed dead by her family. Not literally, of course, but in every way that mattered."*

Overall, the story was intensely good and held my attention. Four stars, in and of itself - but there were a few issues pulling it back to three. I wasn't overly onboard with the supernatural elements of the story. Not that such things (visions and supernatural appearances) are impossible or purely fantastical. And not that I don't enjoy fantasy/supernatural embellished fiction. Rather, in this instance, it was the construct that didn't work for me. The elements weren't woven into the story subtly or seamlessly. More than once I was a bit confused as to what was "visionary" and what was real-time. And time sequencing wasn't always clear. To say more would give away key plot points. So I'll just say, Stranger Things is well worth the read . . . but with a bit of grace and patience in mind.

THREE \*\*\* Edgy, Contemporary Christian-Suspense-Fiction Worth Reading \*\*\*\* STARS

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### **Kim says**

I think I finished this Friday. this is one of those books that I just kept plugging along with, but I'm sure in a bit I'll forget about it. I was confused a lot, and there was just so much going on. I wasn't a huge fan of it

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### **Pat says**

The horror of women captured, mistreated, abused & sold as sex slaves and the evil people involved. People who harm, kill & destroy and leave a trail fraught with unbelievable sorrow, sadness and horror.

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### **Edward Arrington says**

As the title says, there are "stranger things" that go on around us every day that we don't even know about. The book is not overtly Christian as in people praying and sharing their faith, but there is more of an undercurrent of living out the faith and trying to help the fallen. I thought it was symbolic that the man who stepped in between Serena and the gunman and took the bullet on her behalf was named Christopher. With some of the strange things going on, I started to wonder if he might actually turn up alive.

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### **Bill says**

(Full disclosure: I received a free copy of this book as part of a Goodreads give-away)

After seeing the gazillion four and five –star ratings for this book I am clearly in the minority, cutting across the grain with a three star rating. While the story was interesting, entertaining, suspenseful and intricate, tackling the very serious and significant subject of human trafficking in the United States, ambivalence, superficiality, water strider aptly describe my feelings towards this story.

Yeah, water strider. You know those black spider-like insects that glide upon the surface tension of the water of local lakes and ponds. Just like a strider, I felt forever suspended on the surface of this story, never allowed to dive deep into the story plot or into the hearts, minds and emotions of any of the characters. I felt at arm's length all the time with minimal emotional engagement to any of the players. I never felt assaulted by anxiety or tension during this read by the serious subject matter behind the story plot, the abhorrent behavior of the sex traffickers, the violence perpetrated onto the victims of sexual slavery or the murder of one of the main characters.

Not that I didn't want to – this book should have kept me up at night worrying about the people I met in this story. But I was never allowed to fully understand them and develop an emotional investment in their well-being, safety and success. I wanted to know so much more about everyone in this story but only received a superficial, perfunctory glimpse into their emotional and ethical compositions. For me deep, articulate character development is the glue that binds a story. The glue was seriously lacking in this tale.

Understand that I couldn't wait to get back into the book each time I put it down but it never inflicted angst, anticipation or emotional hooks into me like a true page turner.

On a very positive note, the story did prompt me to do some research. I was appalled to learn that human sex trafficking generates about \$95 billion annually in the United States, according to The Covering House, a nonprofit organization that seeks to provide refuge and restoration for girls who have experienced sexual exploitation or sexual trafficking. Approximately 300,000 children are at risk of being prostituted in the United States with the average age of entry into prostitution for a child victim in the United States between 13-14 years old. A pimp can earn up to \$150,000-\$200,000 per child each year and the average pimp has 4 to 6 girls. One in three teens on the street will be lured toward prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.

According to The Covering House, traffickers, or pimps, often use methods such as threats, coercion, abduction, fraud, deceit, and deception to lure victims into the sex industry and to keep them under their control. Sex trafficking in the U.S. is largely operating within the bounds of the general sex industry and as such, has been able to silently infiltrate our society disguised within a variety of venues such as online escort services, pornography, street prostitution, strip clubs, massage parlors, truck stops, & residential brothels.

Truly sobering statistics and this is in the United States of America. Imagine the horrors endured by young girls in less affluent and under developed parts of the world!

While I expected so much more out of this work of fiction, I am thankful for the education and awareness of the modern day slavery that stills exist in our nation today.

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### **Perrienne says**

I really wanted to like this book, but the subject matter is TOUGH.....human trafficking for the sex slave trade. I gave it 3 stars because this book could potentially help someone who has been in this situation or who counsels these victims. I tried reading it once before and could not finish it. I had to push through and get it read, but it was a strange book with many twists & turns that I couldn't follow. Plus the subject matter was quite difficult. Also it is labeled Christian/Fiction/Suspense. I wouldn't put it in the Christian category.

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## **Jerry says**

An eye-opening look at the abhorrent practice that is human trafficking. Heartbreaking, but appropriately so.

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