



Summary

In horror movies, the final girl is the one who's left standing when the credits roll. The one who fought back, defeated the killer, and avenged her friends. The one who emerges bloodied but victorious, a victim and a hero. But after the sirens fade and the audience moves on, what happens to her? Lynnette Tarkington is a real-life final girl who survived a massacre twenty-two years ago, and it has defined every day of her life since. And she's not alone. For more than a decade she's been meeting with five other actual final girls and their therapist in a support group for those who survived the unthinkable, putting their lives back together, piece by piece. That is until one of the women misses a meeting and Lynnette's worst fears are realized—someone knows about the group and is determined to take their lives apart again. But the thing about these final girls is that they have each other now, and no matter how bad the odds, how dark the night, how sharp the knife . . . they will never, ever give up.

Discussion Questions

1. If you had to use three words to describe Lynnette, what would they be? If she had to use three words to describe herself, what do you think they would be?
2. Dr. Carol wrote in her notes that “Lynnette’s coping mechanisms are extreme by any measure. Her behavior feels less like survivor’s guilt and more like an attempt to punish herself.” Do you agree with that statement?
3. Even though the support group is fracturing in the beginning of the book, all the members do come together as the danger against them grows. Each of the women has different strengths and weaknesses. What does each contribute to the survival of the group? Which final girl did you identify most strongly with and why?
4. In the excerpt we see of Adrienne’s speech, she writes, “What does it say about us that so much of the entertainment we consume is about killing women?” Why do you think the women-in-peril trope and slasher films have been so popular over the years and what does that say about our society?
5. In this book, Adrienne won a case that meant the women can profit off of the movies that glorify violence against them. How does that complicate their relationship to the films?

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Discussion Questions

6. Which twists in the book did you find the most shocking? Which ones did you see coming?
7. How much do you think Stephanie acted under her own will? How much blame do you think she deserves for her actions?
8. What kind of future do you see for the final girls? Also, after losing so much, does Dr. Carol become a new final girl now?

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About the Author

Grady Hendrix is an award-winning novelist and screenwriter living in New York City. He is the author of *Horrorstör*, *My Best Friend's Exorcism* (which was adapted into a feature film by Amazon Studios), *We Sold Our Souls*, and the New York Times bestseller *The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires* (currently being adapted into a TV series). Grady also authored the Bram Stoker Award-winning nonfiction book *Paperbacks from Hell*, a history of the horror paperback boom of the seventies and eighties, and his latest non-fiction book is *These Fists Break Bricks: How Kung Fu Movies Swept America and Changed the World*.

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Book reviews

Oyinkan Braithwaite

Library Journal

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Lynnette Tarkington is part of a small club of six young women who have survived terrible trauma. They are the real-life "final girls" whose friends and loved ones were killed by a maniac and who found the strength to fight back. Their lives have been immortalized in many of your favorite horror movies, but after the credits roll, the final girls live in constant fear. Told from Lynnette's paranoid point of view, Hendrix's (*My Best Friend's Exorcism*) latest features a group that begins to drift apart just as someone is trying to pick them off one by one. The story is fast-paced, well plotted, and full of twists, and Lynnette is the perfect imperfect final girl, a heroine readers want to root for despite her flaws. Hendrix's writing truly shines in the details, such as chapter titles phrased as sequels to the novel; none of these sequels is real, but their presence in the book allows its final girls to leap off the page and into the world. **VERDICT** Hendrix presents yet another thought-provoking, fun, and chilling winner with perfect timing, as the slasher novel seems to be trending. A great choice for fans of *Night of the Mannequins*, by Stephen Graham Jones, or *Clown in a Cornfield*, by Adam Cesare, but also for readers who loved the darkly humorous but intense psychological suspense of *My Sister, the Serial Killer*.