



Everyday Psychokillers: A History for Girls

Lucy Corin

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In *Everyday Psychokillers* spectacular violence is the idiom of everyday life, a lurid extravaganza in which all those around the narrator seem vicarious participants. And at its center are the interchangeable young girls, thrilling to know themselves the object of so much desire and terror.

The narrative interweaves history, myth, rumor, and news with the experiences of a young girl living in the flatness of South Florida. Like Grace Paley's narrators, she is pensive and eager, hungry for experience but restrained. Into the sphere of her regard come a Ted Bundy reject, the God Osiris, a Caribbean slave turned pirate, a circus performer living in a box, broken horses, a Seminole chief in a swamp, and a murderous babysitter. What these preposterously commonplace figures all know is that murder is identity: "Of course what matters really is the psychokiller, what he's done, what he threatens to do. Of course to be the lucky one you have to be abducted in the first place. Without him, you wouldn't exist."

Everyday Psychokillers reaches to the edge of the psychoanalytical and jolts the reader back to daily life. The reader becomes the killer, the watcher, the person on the verge, hiding behind an everyday face.

Everyday Psychokillers: A History for Girls Details

Date : Published February 1st 2004 by Fiction Collective 2

ISBN : 9781573661126

Author : Lucy Corin

Format : Paperback 246 pages

Genre : Fiction, Novels, Feminism, Lgbt, Literary Fiction

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Erin says

ARC for review.

Corin nudges some boundaries of the idea of a "novel" here as it's really a loose mixture of incidents from our young narrator's life interspersed with some history about serial killers. Our narrator is a teenager living a hardscrabble life in Florida and Corin does a good job with both the setting (you can feel the oppressive humidity of the place and how it makes everything hazy and more difficult) and with the constantly shifting relationships between teenage girls ("intimacy and mutual betrayal at once"). She also captures the lack of confidence and the desperate wanting to belong, to be part of something, and I suppose that what Corin is saying that many of our most famous serial killers have a mentality that is similar to that of a teenage girl - I'm not sure she's wrong, but luckily most move on.

Somewhere out there there are younger women who will read this and feel like Corin is speaking directly to them and really gets them, saying all the things she wishes she had either the words or the strength to say - I just think I'm too old to be the proper audience for this book, but, trust me, she's out there.

Leslie says

Gorgeously written, this book belongs on a syllabus with another book I adore: Lynda Barry's *Cruddy*. A quote:

"I worry about innocence. I worry every time I find myself imagining someone as innocent, or as ever having been innocent. No one mentions innocence unless they mean to point out how something isn't anymore. To point to something and call it innocent is to suggest that it won't be for long, or it's so stupid nothing will ever get through, no matter how awful. No one says innocent unless they mean doomed."

Mark says

It's surprising difficult to describe this novel of stories, episodes from a childhood in florida matched with facts and fictions about serial killers and their victims. it's a psychological novel, i suppose, but it's not a thriller and it's not about damage and it's not about being afraid. to some extent it's about friendship and learning, the small personalities that colored the youth of the narrator for some unclear period while she lived in suburban florida. the stories are interlaced with sometimes obliquely related stories about serial killers that brought their crimes to same state.

so yes it's about murders (psychokillers, of course) and girls. and florida - gorgeous and poetic passages about the swamps, the weather, the people.

a wonderful and challenging book.

Marjolein says

READ IN ENGLISH

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I received a free copy of this book from the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review, thank you!

I was immediately intrigued by the title (and especially this A history for girls part). I really liked it and wanted to know what kind of story this would bring. The problem is however that even some days after finishing the book, I still don't know what I read...

Sure, there are psychokillers, all throughout the book. There are short stories around them, but I kind of lost what their connection to the bigger story was. I mean, it's not a collection of short stories, it's a novel after all. But the narrator's story didn't seem that important or at least I couldn't connect to it. I didn't know where that story was going or why. I don't even know how to describe it in a comprehensive way...

It won't come as a surprise when I say the main character felt a bit flat, I would have loved to get to know her a bit better. Because of course, there is a lot of violence in her neighborhood, but there just has to be more to her than that...

The writing was sometimes very beautiful, but at other moments a bit too poetic for my liking. I think there will definitely be people who really like this book, but it wasn't for me...

Paul says

Lucy Corin's a great writer, and this book has some great writing in it. I think the problem is it's written in chapters that are each their own short story, all of which pertain to the main narrative, have the same narrator, the same voice, etc, but some of which don't *really* relate and start to feel a little specious, and you sort of start to lose interest. The language also gets a bit abstract at times, a bit poetic, and, again, I think the narrative suffers, as does the formation of the protagonist's character, as a result. You don't *really* buy the whole thing as a narrative, you don't really have as much empathy for Corin's character(s) as you probably should in a 250 page novel. Still though, it's an excellent book, and the premise is pretty interesting, comparing psychokillers' inability to reach self-awareness within society, or else their inability to differentiate that self from that society, to the woman's struggle to form an identity (or, in this case, the girl's). The analysis of psychokillers, both conceptually and historically, seems very well-informed and integrated, i.e. Corin didn't just decide to throw in a bunch of passages about psychokillers to lend the book some drama. The conceit definitely came first, and it's really well executed. I just wish the novel itself, the narrative and its protagonist/narrator, were as well informed/executed. Read this, and then read her short story collection, *The Entire Predicament*, which is incredibly good.

Incidentally, this novel reminded me, just because of subject matter and not because of any stylistic similarity, of the final incantation of "Brief Interviews With Hideous Men," the multifaceted story from

David Foster Wallace's eponymous novel/story collection. Which if you haven't read, you're kidding yourself, thinking you can just walk around all day, thinking you can go on living, not having read this book. Please.

M. says

"They say one main thing about psychokillers is they have no boundaries, they get mixed up with self and other, is the way they put it, they're so essentially self-loathing is the implication, that they're killing all signs of themselves and their various personal traumas. People say this, or hear each other say it, or say it to each other in the face of the news or the psychokiller flick, and they shake their heads and say it's simply monstrous, it's incomprehensible.

But it's hard to make anything of that when you feel it yourself: you feel no boundaries, you feel self and other, it feels incomprehensible, and even though it feels dangerous, it feels like empathy, and it feels like love.

It's hard not to see yourself as part of the species, and the species has divided the world into a food chain that's not about food, it's about the chain, it's about this perpetual looping serial cycle where you're consumed and consuming, you're beaten and beating, your eyes are swimming through pools of tears and the tears are swimming in the puddle of your eyes."

--

some absolutely breathtaking sentences in this novel, all the more so for their frequent violence.

a meditation on the psychokiller and sexual/gendered violence that (plot spoiler!) in a way rewrites the serial killer narrative by infusing the psychokiller/girl relationship with love and tenderness, a (female) character who "collects" girls in her mind out of desire/want but leaves them unharmed, fully animated, if "owned" in some way by her watching. that's a simplistic reading, though - there is a ton of psychological complexity to this narrator, and a bevy of innovative storytelling tactics on display.

Juli Rahel says

One of the first things that drew me in about this book was its rather interesting title. You don't often see a book about "psychokillers" advertised for girls. And then the synopsis was enough to set my mind upon reading it. And I found myself inexorably pulled into the novel, unable to put it down and strangely fascinated.

The narration of this novel is definitely one of its major advantages. It stays very true to its protagonist, who is never named, as she looks back on her life. Corin manages to capture the tone of a teenager who is sometimes strangely dismissive, obsessively interested and too dependent on others. She jumps from one experience to the other, which at times leaves the book feeling a little bit disjointed, but overall gives a good impression of life. Corin really shows how much of our lives depends on our contact with others, how they influence our lives and how sometimes they simply don't leave a mark. One of the most interesting things was Corin's attention to everyone's worry that they are different, or wrong. Is it bad that we are obsessed with our high-school friends and want to claim them for ourselves, thereby taking them away from others? And isn't that exclusivity of experience exactly what psychopaths are after?

As the synopsis states, the reader becomes the observer, the one who is hiding behind the bushes as peeking

into the lives of others. You want to take the characters away and ask them more questions, figure them out. Corin fills her book with fascinating characters, all of which seemed to be bound together by the extremities of their life. She really questions the pretense many people throw up that our life nowadays is protected from all danger, that our children are safe and remain untouched by the bad in the world. The fact that all the danger in the world comes from the people right next to us means that everyone encounters criminals, potential psychopaths and victims every day and most of the time nothing happens. We might even be those criminals or victims ourselves, sometimes without knowing it. *Everyday Psychokillers* throws up a lot of thoughts, many of which Corin leaves only partially-answered so the reader has something to figure out after finishing this book.

Corin's writing style keeps you on the edge of your seat. That is an over-used phrase if there ever was one, but it definitely applies to *Everyday Psychokillers*, not least of all because you're constantly wondering when it will all go wrong. How many encounters with danger can one person have before it all combusts? Without spoiling anything it can be said that the end is something you will not see coming and the way Corin leads up to it is very intriguing. I said in a review for a different book that I want to be challenged by what I read, want to be forced to think and question and doubt, and *Everyday Psychokillers* definitely managed to get me thinking. Throughout all of her questioning, Corin never forgets to just tell the story of a girl growing up. There is the sense that while being strangely abstract this novel is still very close to home and I think it gets most of its strength from that.

This novel does come with a warning, violence can be found in almost every chapter. However, it is never gratuitous or pointless and it serves its purpose. Corin writes this novel with a lot of passion and it infects the reader. If *Everyday Psychokillers* takes hold of you it will set you thinking and make you wonder. But it has to be your cup of tea.

Fernando Pérez Pérez says

I abandoned the book halfway through, because it is too irregular to compete with the prospect of better readings. To be fair, I will be moving to another book from the same author right away, since it is obvious that she can make you feel remorse for not paying attention to what she might say next, and that's interesting.

Nevertheless, in too many stretches there is a problem with the narrator's tempo, and the style goes from barely doing its job to brilliant -dwelling in tiring, unnecessary details for no discernible reason-.

The short pieces without title that glue together the stories into a consistent narrative are the more interesting parts by far, and would have made a very good book if they been the rule throughout the "novel". For instance:

"They say, scientists even, that every thought makes a path through your brain, that your brain is a map of what's happened to it. You think and think and patterns are worn like dear trails through the forest. The deepest marks are the thoughts you repeat. It's that physical. Enough intersecting ideas can make a pit.

A person who is psychotic cannot tell an idea from a memory, an image from an object. The world is both blurred and shattered, unboxed, unbound, and strewn. This terrifies the brain. A terrified brain can make sense of anything"

Maybe, as a reader, this brain wasn't frightened enough by the disturbing daintiness of the themes concocted

along the way. The inventive approach and goals set by Lucy Corin merit certain praise, albeit -sadly- within these pages they aren't sufficiently met.

Tricia M.S. says

This one left me a little scattered, just like the bouncing around the storyline did. It was a bit problematic for me. I really did want to like this book, as I do like a lot of true crimes stories. But it was too disjointed and it changed points of view on a dime with each chapter. I really wished that the author had taken the time to smooth out the characters and combined some of the chapters together. I believe that it would have benefited the book greatly. I am going to be generous in give this book two stars out of five. I don't think it would be one that I would recommend to anyone.

** I received this ARC book through Net Gallery in exchange for my honest opinion rather it be good, bad or indifferent. So as always understand that this is my opinion and doesn't reflect on anyone associated with the printing of this book.**

Jonathan says

Very good - reminded me at times of a slightly more fucked-up Joy Williams.

Maxwell Howard says

Set in Florida, Lucy Corin's debut novel (Everyday Psychokillers: A History For Girls) follows the life of a girl surrounded by the threat of far-off, but ever encroaching violence. Within this book, the most terrifying element is Corin's thematic conclusion; that we are all capable of violence, the intense passion of the everyday psychokiller.

Through the ever present stories surrounding Corin's narrator, an assortment of girls come of age near the Florida swamps, noting the mythic violence of serial killers like Ted Bundy and their persistent connection to Egyptian arcana. As the novel progresses, the narrator slowing comes into detailed focus, her mother works at a failing horse stable, her uncle exhibiting violent tendencies, and a number of her classmates and friends moving to Miami Beach to sell Quaaludes to beach vagrants. From the opening chapter "Venus," two girls view the armless statue Venus de Milo – an event that prompts Rosmarie Waldrop to note that "dismemberment is the basic fact of the world they grow up in, a world feeding on stories of rape, kidnapping, murder." When the novel comes to its close, the protagonist has grown up and moved to the unspecified Midwest suburb while revealing a potential, but untapped violence of her own. Working within these themes, Corin's novel presents a picture of the violent world and its distinct ancientness. Corin's writing skirts a line between academic and novelistic, but has trouble finding its center in either style. While her writing comes with the occasional burst of illumination, there are noticeable points of the novel which the narrative plods on, over the same territory of violent ideas which discerning readers have had a handle on from novel's early moments. Reading this novel, the reviewer is struck with moments of clarity while also attempting to find a discernable plot arc, of which there seems to be little. In many ways, this novel could

and might perform with greater effect as being framed as a short story collection on account of the lack of overarching plot.

Corin's work is a novel full of glimmering moments and insights, but a work feeling incomplete. In the end, Corin is a writer interesting enough to look forward to in future works despite a number of lacking moments in *Everyday Psychokillers*.

Sabrina Gutierrez says

This is the second time I have attempted to read Lucy Corin's work. Both times I've struggled. *Everyday Psychokillers* went over a little bit easier, as I actually finished this one. Corin is a talented writer, that I don't deny. However, her stream-of-consciousness prose can be daunting. The title of the book led me to expect some interesting insight to serial killers and psychopaths. However, it is more of a short story collection about a young girl's realization of the world's dangers, both within others and herself. Strung through the narrative are references to history, myths, art, true crime, and even a little pop culture. It had its moments for me, as there were lines or paragraphs that really resonated. Overall, though, I just didn't connect with it as much as I had anticipated.

I wouldn't say I don't recommend reading it. I found it intriguing enough to continue through to the end. I think the best way to experience this book is to just completely immerse yourself in where it's going without worrying about finding a place to anchor along the way.

Michael says

One of my favorite books ever. A treasure!

Debra Blasi says

Lucy kicks ass.

flannery says

http://twitter.com/_FloridaMan

"Mean, the word itself, means run-down, stunted. Mean means mean. Huts and shacks. Brain stem responses. But it does not come down to raw stupidity. I didn't think of it in so many words, but I know I felt meanness connected to that place. The school, the town, the rumors of the city, the whole notion of the whole state seemed to conjure meanness. Right about that time, someone in Chicago was putting cyanide in Tylenol, so someone in Miami started putting antifreeze in mouthwash. But it's not a particularly bad place, where I lived. Mostly, it's just more obviously bad than other places. It's the kind of place where people take flying

lessons before they hijack a plane. Mostly, we didn't have much money, and it's not that money keeps people from doing mean things to each other, but if you have money it's a lot easier to shut yourself off in a castle, and it's a lot easier to feel safe from other people's pain, which is the great majority of it anyway, other people's pain, no matter who or where you were."
