



## What Doesn't Kill Her

*Max Allan Collins*

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## **What Doesn't Kill Her** Max Allan Collins

Jordan Rivera was an ordinary kid with an ordinary family. Until a vicious killer took it all away from her, sparing her and leaving her broken. The murders destroyed something inside her and she spent ten long, silent years in an institution. Catching a glimpse of a news report about another ordinary family slain, Jordan breaks her silence. Now she's out, and she molds herself—body and mind—into an instrument of justice.

While a young detective pursues the case on his own, Jordan teams up with members of her Victims Support Group, people, like her, damaged by violent crime. They have their own stories of pain, heartache, and vengeance denied. With their help, Jordan will track down the killer before he can ravage any more lives. Her own life depends on it.

## **What Doesn't Kill Her Details**

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# From Reader Review What Doesn't Kill Her for online ebook

## Kate says

I was hoping for more, but it was all very predictable (I figured out the identity of the killer way too early) and the characters were wooden. I listened to it on audiobook, which helped me stick with it, but the narration made a lot of the characters sound annoying. I did like the murders and Jordan's Scooby group. It's a fast read, but I'd recommend it in print vs. audiobook.

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## Paula says

I received this book as an ARC from netgalley.com and I am happy to have had the opportunity.

This book was just okay for me. The building of suspense and the unveiling of the killer were very exciting. I had absolutely no idea who the killer would be and was shocked with the discovery. I did, however, have a few issues with the novel. First, although the idea of the support group members gathering together to catch a serial killer was interesting, I don't think it was very realistic. Keep in mind that some members of the group were institutionalized for years and Jordan (the main character) hadn't spoken for ten years. It's hard to believe that they would have had the organizational skills, emotional stability, or the technical skills to discover his identity. Now, add in the rookie detective working on his own time and you have a made for TV movie. Secondly, I think that once the identity of the killer was uncovered, the story wrapped up way too quickly. Lastly, I had a very hard time identifying with any of the characters (so much so that I often had to look back in the book to figure out who people were). So, I would have liked a bit more character development. Overall, not a bad read. If you are looking for a quick, easy mystery than this may be a good pick for you.

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## Chris says

*Disclaimer: I won a free copy of this book on GoodReads as a part of the First Reads giveaway program. I'd like to extend my thanks to GoodReads, the author, and the publisher.*

Wow. That was a thrill-ride. It is so great to pick up a book that does that, jumps right into it and hooks you from the first words. Then carries a story across the years and pages, building a great story surrounding the action. Then it throws you back into the action and doesn't let up.

There were probably a few minor issues with the structure of the plot and some of the character relationships, but I say that vaguely because it was easily overlooked as I rode along with the progress of the story. So yeah, it was a lot of fun and kept my interest start to finish. What more could I ask for?

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## Chuck Barksdale says

Jordan Rivera is left to survive by the killer of her parents and brother so she can tell his story. Jordan, who

is also raped, decides to stay completely silent for ten years in St. Dipna's Center, a premier Ohio mental health facility. When she hears of another family that is murdered in what she feels may be by the same killer, she breaks her silence and soon after leaves St. Dipna's. As part of her aftercare program, she joins St. Dipna's Victims Support Group where she finally begins to tell some of her story to the rest of the members.

Before the murder of her family, Jordan has a crush on Mark Pryor, the football team's kicker. Jordan wasn't interested in the quarterback the way most girls were, but preferred the more intelligent, less jock-like person that Mark was. Jordan's family was murdered before Jordan and Mark ever dated but unbeknownst to Jordan, Mark also had a crush on Jordan. His desire to become a policeman was mostly to find the murderers of Jordan's family. Soon after becoming a policeman, Mark became a detective and starts working on the cold case murders that had happened 10 years before. Once Jordan gets out Mark and Jordan get together but Jordan is no longer interested in Mark and all she's interested in is finding and maybe killing the murderer of her family. Both Mark and Jordan believe that the murderer is really a serial killer and others in the Support Group may also be victims of the same killer. Ultimately they work separately and together to try to find the killer before he kills again.

This book is told in third person perspective of Jordan, Mark and the killer. Collins does a good job in making the transition and the reader is never confused. Of course, this is a way for Collins to give the reader a look into these characters and giving some clues along the way.

This review is based on a galley version of a book I received from NetGalley. I didn't notice any errors in the book that I read however.

I've read a few other books by Max Allan Collins, mostly from his Quarry series and this book is very different than the others I have read. The other books were more in the traditional mystery genre and not the thriller that this book is. Although I do enjoy thrillers, I don't read too many and prefer detective fiction, police procedurals and noir books mostly because of the often unbelievable nature of thrillers that is needed to keep the book moving. Although this book has a little of that at times it started to go in that direction and stopped which I thought was the right way to handle it.

I enjoyed this book and certainly recommend it to everyone interested in thrillers and in reading more books by Max Allan Collins. Of course, if you are expecting the book to be another Quarry or Nate Heller books such as I've read or likely some of the other books that Collins has written you may be disappointed.

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## **Bames says**

I received a copy of the book through NetGalley in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

The story is about a woman named Jordan Rivera. Ten years ago, a man entered her home and brutally murdered her family. The man then asked her to pose the bodies on a sofa and he took a "family photo" before he raped her and told her to tell his story. Jordan decided that she would not do what the monster asked and she refused to speak.

Jordan was then sent to St. Dimpna's which is an institution and she stayed there, not speaking, until she watches a news report on the television featuring a family being murdered in the same way. She then asks her doctor what it would take for her to be able to leave the institution.

Jordan decides to look for the man who murdered her family on her own. But she finds out that some of her other Victims of Violent Crime group members are also looking to find what they believe is a serial killer.

Mark is a police officer who swore to himself that he will look for the man who murdered Jordan's family. He is pretty sure that there is a serial killer at work who kills families but leaves one survivor. The killer has killed so many families in different areas. His victims appear random and not to have any commonalities -- which is how he has been able to avoid the radar of the FBI.

Mark then meets Jordana and her group mates to pool their resources together and try to find the killer.

What Doesn't Kill Her is a book that starts off very well. The story of how Jordan's family was killed is chilling and terrifying. The story is thrilling to a degree. The story begins to lose some of the level of thrill of the first chapter but proceeds well enough. There are twists and turns and the ending is very much unexpected. All in all, it is a good read.

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## **Kimberly Hicks says**

This novel fell into my email inbox through Bookbub. The cover looked intriguing and the title made me want to know more, and hell, after reading the synopsis, I was sold. But, unfortunately, that's where my excitement ends.

Jordan Rivera was doing what teenagers do—sitting in her room supposedly doing homework, while her mind wandered thinking about a boy, Mark Pryor. She was looking forward to what the future held for the two of them. Unfortunately, a rather tragic night ended Jordan's dream and damaged her psyche. A vicious psychotic intruder finds his way into the Rivera household savagely murdering anything that got in his way – which was Jordan's entire family. Jordan hears her mother's frantic scream for her to run, but Jordan doesn't take heed to the warning. How could she? So what does a teenager bearing witness to the sound of her family being murdered do? She hides under the bed. When the psychotic intruder comes for her, she's beyond terrified. What this lunatic advises Jordan to do afterward, took what little sanity she had left, completely away.

Not only did this murderer rip her family apart, but he ripped the very fabric of Jordan's soul and robbed her of the person she should have become. After that terrible night, Jordan withdrew from the world and ended up being in a mental hospital for ten years, and although that may not come as a surprise to some, what was even more astounding is while she was in that institution, she remained silent. She didn't speak to anyone for ten whole years. Of course, there was a reason why she remained silent, and it's not for what would appear to be obvious.

Ten years later has come from the day that Jordan's family was taken from her and she finally decides to speak out in her support group which was mandatory she attend while at the mental facility. She needs to get out of the hospital and reintroduce herself into society, if the world would have her. Her doctor assists her in doing just that—got her an apartment to live not too far from the hospital. Unbeknownst to Jordan, a guardian angel was shielding and guiding her throughout her tenure in the mental hospital—Mark Pryor, the young teenage boy she hoped to go to prom with when she was a teenager. He's all grown up and looking good and is a detective for the Cleveland Police Department. Because of what happened to the young girl he loved back in the day, inspired him to become a police officer just so he could aid Jordan whenever she was released from the hospital. The day finally comes and when the two of them meet up, you'd think it would be

bells and whistles and rockets shooting up in the sky, but the reception Mark received, was far from that. In fact, Jordan was extremely unkind to Mark, and for no apparent reason, although she wasn't aware she was in love with him.

This is where the story takes a turn for me. I understand that Jordan has been damaged mentally. I realize she became a mute because of it. I truly can identify that she'd be hard pressed to trust another human being again, after what happened to her family, but to lash out at the one person who has done everything within his power to protect you from that point on, I don't get that. In fact, Jordan's character really pissed me off. She was just plain nasty to Mark and not only him, but to several other characters and to me her attitude was way off base. Her anger is understandable and you'd think with all those doctors she was around trying to get her to open up about what happened to her would somehow begin to seep through. After all, she sat there for ten years listening to patients' horror stories and she felt pain and empathy for them, but had all this pent up anger about her family situation. And not only did she have anger issues, somewhere along the way, she taught herself how to do martial arts. Umm, oook? I don't know how one goes about teaching himself to do Karate, but I suppose anything is possible, right? I guess? Hmm!

For a woman who doesn't like human contact, she went out of her way to inflict pain on others whenever the moment struck her, which was often. So she, along with several other victims of family murders decide to do their own investigation, since the police were less than adequate and couldn't help decide whether their cases were committed by one deranged lost soul or a duo. Somehow this support group was made to appear as though they had more sense than the local police department. It was as if Mark Pryor and his coworkers were more or less the Keystone Cops, or so the story would have you believe. I don't know why, but the way Mark and the police department were portrayed pissed me off too. Here, you have a group of vulnerable, barely clinging to life type of victims, yet they are strong enough to take on an "alleged" murderer. I don't know the story just seemed a bit farfetched and not real enough. I didn't like the protagonist, and that's unfortunate because she received the most trauma. You're supposed to identify with her, and I do to a point, and then her attitude turned me completely off. I'm thinking, "Fool, these people are trying to help you," but she remained very standoffish.

One other thing that struck me as odd with this story is the depiction of characters. The author did an amazing job giving you great descriptions making you see exactly what they looked like, but what drove me crazy is the fact it was mentioned too many times. If you mention a character's race, which is perfectly fine, why is it every time that character is introduced into another scene, you have to continually mention the race of the character? How insulting is that to the reader. It's as if I wasn't paying attention the first time around. If you tell me in chapter two a police chief is African-American, there's certainly no need to continually remind us what color he is every time he pops up. If you just say who the character is by name, that should be sufficient enough, but that didn't appear to happen here. The character's race was almost mentioned each time he/she appeared and to me, I didn't get that.

Bottom line, I liked the story, but didn't care much for the main character. She was too much a victim, in my opinion. Her misguided anger struck me as odd and completely out of place. I think had her character grown more, perhaps I would have understood her better, but unfortunately, I didn't find much of that. What didn't kill her killed me by her lack of regard or respect for those trying to help her. Mello and June give this novel three stars. It wasn't a bad read—it just didn't suit our taste. You win some and you lose some. This story just didn't do it for us. It happens sometimes.

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## David Highton says

Not Max Allan Collins at his best - this standalone novel is very slow moving until the final third, contrasting with his tightly written hard-boiled books like the Quarry series. The final third does pick up the pace, but I did guess the end from quite a long way out.

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## Adrianna says

I do not remember the last time I read a mystery/thriller, so I was pleasantly surprised by Max Allan Collins' *What Doesn't Kill Her*. The book starts off with a gruesome crime that kept me riveted until the end. I highly recommend that you do not read this book late at night like I did. It not only kept me from sleep as I tried to solve the mystery, but it also caused nightmares. Collins' writing is vivid and realistic, so I often felt like I was with Jordan Rivera and her friends. I was part of the crime solving team.

Jordan Rivera was a strong protagonist. I liked that she was a badass heroine who was a survivor. Despite a terrible tragedy and violation to her body, she uses her anger to not only help herself but others who were victims of similar psychopaths. She relies on herself first and foremost. There are hints of a romance, but they do not overwhelm the progression of the story. The hope for a normal life, or at least a normal relationship, are kept in the shadows of possibility because the book is not about that. It is about vigilante revenge and discovering the truth behind a madman's motive to murder.

Jordan has a hodgepodge of supporting characters in her quest for vengeance. She meets them at her Victim's Support Group. Afterward, they go to a local coffeeshop to sleuth as they try to hunt down the perpetrators of their respective crimes. They quickly find commonalities in their own stories of pain. Are they hunting a serial killer that connects them in ways they cannot even image? You will need to read the book to find out!

Mark Pryor is the young high school almost sweetheart to Jordan. He never forgot what the monster did to Jordan's family, and now he hunts the same person as she does, although he is restricted by the law. The dynamics between the friends is riveting and even a little humorous. Despite their ten-year absence from each other, they connect on a deeper level. One of my favorite scenes is when Mark becomes an unofficial honorary member of their Victim Support Group. Their sleuth group reads like an adult version of Scooby Doo. Their different theorizing and personal investigations quickly lead them to new insights about what really happened.

The killer is an active character in the book. There are numerous chapters where the point of view switches to the killer's. The thoughts are italicized, and the reasons behind the killer's crimes left me reeling in horror. The final scene between the killer and Jordan is not one to miss. She trained the past ten years for such a confrontation, and author Max Allan Collins foreshadows what this confrontation will be like when Jordan takes down three muggers near her apartment complex. Let's just say that she is a capable fighter.

As for the reveal, I was about 75% of the way through the book before I finally guessed the identity of the killer and fully grasped the insane reasoning that justified all the actions perpetrated against others. I like it when mysteries are not easily solved, so this book succeeded for that stringent requirement.

The ending was bittersweet. I both loved and hated it. There is not enough closure for comfort, but there is still hope. Despite its darkness, *What Doesn't Kill Her* offers the reader hope that people can come back from

broken spaces.

Overall, this novel would adapt well as a Hollywood film. I look forward to reading more by Max Allan Collins. If you are lucky enough to pick up this book, which is actually a very quick read, you will not be disappointed. It has mystery, horror, suspense, action, and even a little romance. It delivered a punch from the first chapter to the very last that will surely leave you breathless.

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### **Victoria says**

I think what disappointed me so much about this novel is the disparity between the strength of its first chapter and the steep decline over the following twenty chapters. The first chapter with its sheer terror, gritty violence and nail-biting tension sets the stage for a page-turning title. Unfortunately, nowhere else does the book live up to this amazing potential displayed. Like its clichéd title, the book feels a bit like an immature idea of a serial killer book with trite and overplayed lines, ridiculously bad police-work and an overall melodramatic flair. It lacks all of the energy and authenticity present in its first chapter.

It feels like even television shows have more research behind their so obviously Hollywood-ized police-work than this - where unsolved murder cases have bullets that have never been analyzed, where government-issued state IDs cannot be searched for a photograph, and a woman institutionalized for ten years emerges as a lean, mean kung fu master. Jordan Rivera, the main character, is so far from feeling like a real person that it is laughable. From her potty mouth to her ludicrous physical prowess (she takes down two armed muggers with only her bike chain), Jordan feels more cartoonish than realistic.

If able to look aside the book's general absurdities, the plot itself is entertaining enough. It holds a few surprises (though certainly not the identity of the killer). Cleveland residents, however, will most likely take offense to the manner in which their city is portrayed - the police force is a joke, and apparently in a city with nearly 400,000 residents, there is only one support group for victims of violent crimes. And that fact means that coincidence isn't the driving force in this plot... With hackneyed dialogue and shallow characters, this serial killer novel hardly stands out - it may not be the worst thriller out there, but it is far from the top of the list, either. Except maybe for most ridiculous. The book ends with some pretty serious holes, but to be honest, even if those holes were filled, it wouldn't change my opinion of the book.

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### **Benjamin Thomas says**

I've been wanting to try a novel by Max Allan Collins for several years now and when I won this in a Goodreads giveaway, I finally had my chance. The author has quite a prolific and varied output of private eye novels, thrillers, graphic novels, comics, TV and movie tie-ins, film criticism, song-writing, and even cozy mystery novels that he writes with his wife, Barbara Collins. He is also famously completing a number of Mike Hammer novels begun by the late Mickey Spillane.

This particular novel is a nice, tight, stand-alone thriller novel. Jordan Rivera is a survivor of a home invasion that resulted in the murders of her parents and brother. The trauma of that event and her subsequent rape by the intruder leaves her in a state of mental anguish and for the following ten years she speaks not a word. The meat of the novel takes place after those ten years as Jordan leaves the mental institution intent on tracking down the perpetrator of her personal horror story. She teams up with other survivors and a rookie



detective named Mark who pick up on some vague theories that their stories are connected and, in fact, begin to think that there is a serial killer at large.

The story is fairly fast paced and the pages turned quickly for me; an easy style that allowed me to get to know the characters quite well and early on. The intriguing thing for me was the nature of the serial killings. Usually law enforcement has clues, patterns, etc. that link the killings in some bizarre way but in this case there are no easily discernible patterns. So much so that the cops don't connect the dots at all and it is up to the survivors to piece together the hidden pattern that is really there.

I did have a couple of minor quibbles. For me the identity of the bad guy was evident very early on, way before the big reveal. A couple of early clues were just a bit too strong I suppose and several red herrings only served to make the characters look foolish. I also thought some of the interaction between Jordan and Mark was a bit forced, in an unrealistic way. Overall, I suspect this is not the author's best work but nevertheless I felt it to be a nice fun read in the thriller genre and I will definitely be pursuing more of Collins' work.

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## **Sherry Martin says**

### **I didn't want to put it down**

I was captivated almost from the first page. A young girl named Jordan survives an attack on her family and vows NOT to tell the murder's story as that is what he wants. She remains quiet for 10 years until a news story makes her start thinking about this monster, and the other families who may also be victims of his. She vows to find and stop him, but he is more cunning than she or the police know. There are many twists in this story, and I only figured out "who dunnit" shortly before the rookie detective does. It ended fairly well, except you don't know if a certain character survives an attack. Of course this could leave you wanting more....I just don't see where the story could go from there, (where it ended.) Enjoyed the story very much.

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## **Lisa Wilcox says**

Collins just keep getting better and better!

Collins, along with collaborator Matthew Clemens, always delivers a well written tale with a few twists and turns. What Doesn't kill Her is among their best. Smoothly written, fast-paced, with a few kinks here and there -- what more could I ask?

Jordan is a victim of a violent crime determined to be anything but a victim. She has an interesting version of closure in mind, and pursues it relentlessly. She collects an interesting group of minions to help her with her quest. The journey is as good as the end.

If you enjoy crime fiction, this is a must read. If you don't generally read that genre, you might want to try this one -- it will surprise you!

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## Robert says

Dude,

Don't mess with Jordan Rivera. Who is she? You ignorant piece of shit, she's the one that left me with a broken arm and spitting up teeth like I was a water fountain in the middle of Central Park. She went psycho on me after I tried to take her wallet, and you, you unconscious bastard, left me behind. I don't care if you were flattened within an inch of your life. This was your goddamned idea in the first place. Of course you didn't know she had a three-foot chain, and that she knew karate and shit, but if you want to live longer than twenty-two years, you need to take this kind of shit into account, or next time I'm going to leave you on the pavement, instead of dragging you away with your tail between your legs. I took a risk being your friend, and I had no clue it would put me in the fucking hospital.

You need to actually do some reconnaissance next time. What does that mean? You need to actually scout these chicks out, and if you find out she takes self-defense classes, then just step off. I ain't in the mood to look like no damn fool, just so you can score some blow for some damn ho who won't even let you see her naked with the lights on. This shit is important. You need to recognize that chicks like her with a glint in her eye and a warning that escapes her lips are fucking serious. She's as serious as that dumb ho is about making a baby. And if you want to help populate the universe, instead of pushing up pansies, you will do the research, or maybe next time I'll pound your stupid ass into the pavement. And maybe I'll do it in front of the ho. Then your manhood will shrivel up to the size of a raisin, you know right where it belongs.

By the way, she's getting a little long in the teeth. Maybe you should trade her in for a new model, before she secures you at the hip and falsifies one of them pregnancy tests, or maybe she grabs ahold of your sperm while you're unawares. I can't do all the thinking for you. I didn't take no SATs. Hell, I didn't even graduate high school.

Hell, now that I think a little more on it, I'm not even sure why we **were** friends in the first place. I'll just leave this on your bed, and I'm getting the hell away from you. You're like that cancerous growth my Uncle Bob used to complain about. I think it might have been on his big toe, and they zapped that shit out, just like I zapped out your sorry ass.

Sincerely,

The Other Mugger

I received this book for free through NetGalley.

Cross-posted at Robert's Reads

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## Mike (the Paladin) says

She goes from the agony of wondering if the boy she likes might be interested in her to the hell of having her entire family murdered by a lunatic who then rapes her. He leaves her alive telling her that she's to tell everyone his story.

No she won't.

Jordan Rivera is a pretty normal girl until her world is shattered.

This isn't a bad read. I went 4 stars on it. While it might not reach the top echelons of "my" 4 star reads it's still a story that will hold the interest as you follow Jordan through her personal hell.

We're again treading some familiar ground here. If you've read much/many novels you're going to recognize these characters. From our heroine to our killer they could pretty much come from "Characters are Us".  
(view spoiler).

So...while there's some things familiar here it's still a good story, not the best of the year but certainly not the worst. I like it enough that if Mr. Collins follows it up I more than likely pick up the sequel and see what happens. (view spoiler).

I can recommend this one.

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## **Randy says**

Over the year since I first discovered his work, Max Allan Collins has become one of my favorite writers. He seems to do everything well: thrillers, straight crime, his tie-ins, non-fiction. It doesn't matter.

WHAT DOESN'T KILL HER deals with a serial killer, not a new subject to be sure. But even here, Mr. Collins throws a different twist. First off, he's not even suspected by the police.

There is one though.

Jordan Rivera was sixteen when her parents and older brother were brutally murdered by a man who forces himself into their home. She's forced to move the bodies of her family together for pictures, then the man rapes and says he wants her to tell his story.

For ten years Jordan lives in a hospital without speaking one word. Until that day she see a report on TV that a family had been brutally murdered and she knows he's still out there.

She speaks up then and is soon out with plans to find him. Somehow. Part of her release is she attend a support group for people like her: those with whole families slain. She realizes, or intuits, something else. They are all victims of the same killer and they want her to help find this monster.

Also a young cop is working the case with the same thoughts. He knew Jordan, and liked her back in school, but like most young males was terrified to approach her. It's what drove him to become a cop, what happened to her family.

Mr. Collins does a good job sprinkling clues throughout the novel as both the group and the young cop close in. Unknown to them, the killer was closing in on them as well.

Another winner from a fine writer.

Worth checking out.

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