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J.C. Burke

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If you liked *Beautiful Malice* or *Mice* you'll be on the edge of your seat as you read *Pretty Girl*.

One girl's dead. One's in hospital. And another's just met the perfect guy . . .

Sarah the Sensible, that's what Sarah's year 12 jersey said. Sarah's studying law, living at Galston College on a scholarship, and happy to have found Wil, the ideal boyfriend. So why is Sarah dreaming about the boy she met in the laundry?

Paige Miss Popular was on Paige's jersey. She and Tallulah have been best friends forever. And thanks to Tallulah, they're the only freshmen to have been invited to the hottest party on campus. So why is Paige now a patient in a psychiatric ward? What happened to Paige between then and now that she's pretending she can't remember?

The truth will illuminate the darkness - but what if Sarah and Paige don't want to hear it?

Pretty Girl Details

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Author : J.C. Burke

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From Reader Review Pretty Girl for online ebook

Emma Eade says

This novel comes from the perspective of two friends, Sarah and Paige. At the start we discover that their friend Jess has died and Paige is in hospital. Throughout the novel we get hints about what could of happened to Jess and Paige. This novel is very well written and is easy to follow, it also leaves room for the reader to be able to figure out the mystery on their own. I highly recommend this book to anyone who gets bored while reading a novel because this one was very intriguing.

Norlin says

This is a story about acceptance, about wanting to belong, about finding your identity; something that every teenager goes through as they're growing up. A mystery cum teenage romance novel, the story is shared from two points of view - Sarah, a girl who is in an ivy league college on scholarship and Paige, someone who is privileged and popular.

With one death, one major accident resulting in Paige being hospitalised and admitted to a rehabilitation facility, and a mystery boy that both Sarah and Paige has fallen for, this story explores what each girl goes through while being in love with each boy. Both at different times.

It gives you an idea of what those from a privileged background is privy of compared to someone from the other side of the tracks. You also get to see how insecurity is rife in girls of that age and how they cope and get manipulated by the boys, who themselves are growing up.

It's an interesting "murder mystery", but I sort of could figure out who the killer was but I found the "why" more interesting. A must-read for those who want an easy yet entertaining read.

Kylie Lacovich (The Reading Cow) says

Pretty Girl is the first book of J.C. Burke's that I have read. It is written from two points of views - Sarah's and Paige's. Once I got into the flow of it, I really enjoyed it!

No, it's not a romance novel, although there is some romance throughout it. It's a suspense novel, and a good one! The storyline is focused around four friends and their lives and loves at college/uni.

Sarah is the odd one out in the group as she had a modest upbringing and isn't "genetically privileged" like her friends. She is smart, on a scholarship and has a great boyfriend.

Paige is popular and athletic. She's a diver. But something, or someone has landed her in a rehabilitation hospital.

I can't really say too much about Pretty Girls without spoiling it for other readers, but I will say this: there's friends, parties, guys, drugs, suspense and thrills! If you are looking for something out of the "romance"

genre for a change, I strongly suggest giving this a read!

I received an Advanced Reading Copy from Random House Australia Pty Ltd through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. *Pretty Girl* is due for publication on September 2, 2013.

Carla Ferro says

Disappointed because I could see the twist waaaaaaay before the book let you know. Quite frankly if you didn't work out who it was in the beginning, you've never read a book or used logic in your life. That's why I don't understand the high ratings!???? I read it until the end because 1) that's the person I am and need to finish a book once it's started and 2) I wanted to see how the girls worked it out once they snapped out of their stupidity.

Deborah says

With a number of young adult books under her belt, JC Burke draws on the interesting dynamics of families and friendships in her latest book, *Pretty Girl*. It was the first of Burke's books I've read, but certainly won't be the last. After my extensive research (yes, Googling Burke's slightly-out-of-date website as well as Random House's site) I note that the complexities of relationships appear to be a theme in her novels.

Pretty Girl features four friends (alliteration accidental, but it's now staying! ;-)). Although they survived high school with their friendship intact, their ties are being tested at University as each of the girls struggle to find their own identity and place in their new environment.

When we 'meet' them, Paige is in hospital and at a loss to explain her near-drowning; Jess is dead - seemingly at her own hand; and the friendship between Sarah and Tallulah is in tatters as they struggle with guilt and unanswered questions.

The story unfolds via Paige and Sarah: Paige from her hospital bed, trying to regain memories of her accident; and Sarah, struggling with her own relationship as well as the death of one friend, hospitalisation of another and increasingly fractured relationship with the remaining member of their foursome.

I love a good mystery and this had me intrigued. Readers, privy to the minds of two of the friends, have an early insight into the supportive and occasionally sinister forces manipulating the girls and their relationships. The 'why' however, remains just that and I found myself knowing what was coming, but powerless to stop it.

The conclusion wasn't completely satisfactory to me as while the mystery is solved I still wondered a little about the 'why'. (Plus I like closure!) But more intriguing (and scary!) is... perhaps there's not always a 'why'.

Random House's *Pretty Girl* by JC Burke is due for release on 2 September 2013.

Review also posted in my blog: <http://www.debbish.com/books-literatu...>

St Stephen's C C says

One girl's dead. One's in hospital. And one has a secret. Paige, Sarah, Jess and Tallulah were best friends at school. Now they've begun university and are living together at college, but it's not turning out like it's meant to. Tallulah's partying too hard, Jess is being secretive, Paige is embarrassing herself with an unrequited crush, and Sarah's struggling to keep up with her wealthier friends. One night, Sarah saves Paige from drowning in the university swimming pool. Paige can't remember why she was there, and Sarah's too afraid to say what she thought she saw. Then Jess's body is found outside the college laundry. It's not until Sarah meets the gorgeous and charming Jonny that she can tell someone her suspicions. But what really did happen that night at the pool? And what connects Paige's accident with Jess's death? As Paige starts to piece together her memories, the most terrifying question becomes clear- could it be happening again?

Shelly says

Not so much a mystery, as I think it becomes fairly apparent who did it, but I enjoyed the suspense of watching the characters trying to work it out and I was definitely hooked. Sarah and Paige felt very real to me; they were well written and both relatable.

Kirsti says

Although I marked this as currently reading a few days ago, I only began it this afternoon. I've been playing pokémon! Anyway, I wasn't sure why I was putting off this book. The cover and the summary both were interesting, and after reading I'm glad I finally got into this book.

Now, there were a few sore points. Firstly, the changing POVs was hard to keep up with; it took me a long time to remember what was happening with each girl and their names. I also hated how insanely naive they all were. I mean come on, people! But I can't say any more without giving away the whole plot.

I did enjoy the writing, and the characters when I sorted them out. Even though I guessed the ending way too early, it was fun watching it get to the climax.

If you enjoy YA fiction and/or mysteries, then this one is for you! Four stars.

Bree T says

Sarah's year 12 jersey says Sarah the Sensible, because that's what she is. She's always been known as the sensible one, the one that organises things, the one that gets things done. As a scholarship student at an exclusive boarding school, Sarah always felt a little on the outer in the core group of 4 girls. They are all much wealthier than she is, much more confident and more reckless at times. She even has a term for them and the way that they act: the genetically privileged. Sarah is settled down with her boyfriend Will now that

they are all in their first year of university, things are changing. The group is falling apart.

Jess, whose jersey read Jess the Wannabe is dead, haven fallen from the roof of the residential college's laundry. And Paige, who was Paige the Brave is in a rehabilitation and psychiatric facility after Sarah found her at the bottom of the university pool. That leaves only Sarah the Sensible and Tallulah who is perhaps the wildest and most confident of all. Sarah feels as though her life is becoming something she doesn't even recognise and so is she. She finds that all she can think about is the handsome boy she met in the laundry. Soon he's all she wants to be with and she finds herself sacrificing everything, just for the chance.

What really happened to Paige that night and will she ever find the key to unlocking her stubborn memories? What happened to Jess – why was she on the roof and was it just an accident? Is someone Sarah knows behind all of this and can she be the one to figure it out before she ends up the victim of the next unfortunate accident?

Pretty Girl explores a number of themes but there is a strong focus on changing friendships as people negotiate change in their lives. Sarah, Paige, Jess and Tallulah were close friends in high school, despite their differences. They were fiercely loyal to each other and kept each other's secrets (via a catch cry of "how long is a piece of string?") but now that they are all into their first year of university the strain is beginning to show. And now, two tragic events have fractured the core group of four: Paige almost drowned in the university pool and no one knows how it happened. She's a professional diver and strong swimmer and wasn't depressed or unhappy. Her parents have a secret they are keeping from her until they believe that she is strong enough to deal with it. While Paige was recovering, Jess's body was found. She either fell or jumped from the laundry roof but like Paige, she showed no signs of depression and although she was reckless, being up there made little sense. When her toxicology results come back, something immediately shows up as odd. Sarah begins to suspect foul play in both incidents and she even has a suspect in mind but now she needs to gather the evidence, unaware of how much danger she is putting herself in by poking around instead of taking her concerns to the authorities.

Although this is a great premise, I feel as though it lets itself down in ways by spelling things out too clearly for the reader. Its immediately obvious what has happened very early on and it's extremely easy to put everything together way before it is revealed so that when it is revealed it feels as though it's all very old information. Because of that, it seems to take a long time for everything to come out and be resolved because the reader has known it for so long. I wish it had been a little more subtle, a little more clever, in particular with the use of names the villain chooses. Despite this, Burke manages to keep the story moving along by switching the narrative between Sarah and Paige, Sarah dealing with what has happened and trying to find out why and Paige trying to regain the use of her memory and work out exactly what happened to her. I enjoyed Paige's narrative the most as she struggled to unlock her damaged mind and gain the strength she needed to deal with the trauma locked within. It was a stronger story and it was skilfully played out. Paige needed to slowly come to terms with what she couldn't deal with remembering. Sarah's story was a little bit blinkered and it began to get frustrating towards the end, because she had seen what she needed to see to help her see the truth but she was so fixated on something that she wouldn't allow herself to.

I feel as though there should've been a stronger motivation behind everything that happened as well because during the dramatic conclusion, motivations were revealed and they seemed a bit weak and lacklustre. A strong suspense novel should really contain a motivation that even if the reader can't identify with or understand, it should still seem powerful, something that would cause someone to act in ways that are not normal or regular. Unfortunately this book never really gave me that feeling, it seemed really quite random and lacking. That area of the story definitely needed more work.

Pretty Girl had some strengths and some weaknesses. The relationships and the depiction of teenage girls entering a time of change is a definite strength, as is the portrayal of Sarah feeling outcast from even her own friends. However the plot is far to simply figured out which lessens what should be a very powerful impact.

Zeinab Ahmadian says

My scale: 75%

plot: This book is about four friends Sarah Paige Talulah and Jess they all went to high school together and now go to university together. Then one day Sarah finds Paige at the bottom of a pool and a few days later Jess is found dead. These three girls must now deal with the death of their friend as well as a sinister figure in their lives that may strike again

characters: Sarah: is known as the sensible one and is the only one of the friends who isn't rich

Paige: is brave and is a diver she is also the least experienced in terms of a relationship.

Talulah: is fun and a party girl who is the pretty one of the group

Jess: was known as the wannabe and tried to be like Talulah.

setting: this is set in Australia at a university called Galston College where a lot of rich kids go to uni.

Writing: the writing was alright I liked the dual point of view but the third person dialect made it hard to understand who was speaking sometimes.

overall enjoyment: I thought this book was okay the story was good but I thought the characters were gullible and sometimes stupid at points. I also guessed the antagonist pretty early on so I wasn't shocked. overall it was a good read but not that good of a thriller or mystery.

The Basic Bookworm says

The full review is available on The Basic Bookworm

Pretty Girl by J. C. Burke is a young adult novel that incorporates thriller, mystery and a hint of romance to create a hair-raising plot that makes teenagers think twice about trusting strangers. I am familiar with Burke's work, as I have studied *The Story of Tom Brennan* as part of my final high school English exam. I enjoyed the realistic plots that are central to Burke's novels; however I did not enjoy this book as much as I had hoped.

One of the positives of this book was the character development. It was realistic, and well-paced. In the beginning, Sarah was sensible and obedient, yet after meeting Jonny, she began to change — becoming reckless and outright passionate. Paige appeared to be afraid and shy, yet developed into a brave and strong young lady. Tallulah was introduced as the 'wild child' of the group, always partying and taking drugs. Yet, as the story progresses, she becomes the loyal, compassionate friend. I believe that character development plays a significant role in novels, so I'm glad that Burke made it obvious from the beginning.

The plot was incredibly relatable, especially since it was set in Australia. There were the little things, such as pastoral care and not being able to have nicknames on year 12 jerseys, that I found to be relatable. However,

the concept of ‘stranger danger’, resentment for the economically privileged, and the trauma that follows a series of accidents is to be expected from people who have experienced such ordeals. As I’ve mentioned previously, realistic plots are central to Burke’s novels. For example, *The Story of Tom Brennan* focused on issues including incarceration, drink driving and relationships. Relatable plots make the book more interesting, and allows readers to easily imagine the situation, which is another aspect of writing that I look for when reading.

My favourite character was Sarah, as she was relatable. She was sensible, responsible and obedient. She did have her flaws, those of which bothered me. Like Paige and Tallulah, Sarah was gullible, and at times, cringe-worthy. She was so slow to piece together the puzzle! I could understand the reason behind Paige’s slowness, but Sarah could be described as a bit dopey. How could she not see that Jonny looked similar to Harry, or that he called her ‘pretty girl’ for a reason?

Emma?? (Bookishfix) says

This is one of those books where you start and can’t stop, when you do you can’t stop thinking about what’s going to happen next.

This book is based in college so yes; sex, drugs and partying take place.

Paige, Sarah, Jess and Tallulah have been friends since highschool now moving onto college together. Strange accidents begin to occur when first Paige, an excellent diver is rescued by Sarah from the bottom of the pool, then Jess turns up dead having jumped from the laundry rooftop. Is there a connection? Did Sarah really see who she thought she saw that night?

We read this book from two point of views, Paige’s and Sarah’s.

Little tricky to get the hang of at first but so good once you get into it. I also realised that when something happened to Paige or she remembers something important, something will occur with Sarah and vice versa.

Although I worked out what happened before it even did, I enjoyed this. You can piece it together by taking note of even the smallest statement in conversations with other characters and make a connection later on when another piece of the puzzle is revealed.

I really loved this book, easy to read and you certainly don’t want to put it down until you have all the pieces to this puzzle.

Carson says

This book was really really good. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

My only fault would be that in the first 40 or so pages the third person makes it very hard to connect with the story. It does, however, pick up from there.

The story itself is split between two of the main characters perspectives; Sarah the Sensible and Paige the Brave. I liked this because in parts it created a sense of foreshadowing in the story. Paige would remember something just as Sarah is about to make a mistake. This makes it quite exhilarating to read.

Oh and one other thing I didn’t like for most of the book was Tallulah’s character. She was so annoying!

When she softens toward the end it improves greatly.

Overall, a good read. It made me realise how easy it is for everything in life to change, how even if you take precautions trouble can still be unavoidable.

Victoria Streeton-Cook says

Very predictable to the point which I could tell what was going to happen a quarter of the way through and just ended up skipping to the end

Aussie bookworm says

I have had this book on my TBR list since last year, I seem to be in the minority here on not liking this book. I nearly gave up a few times, but I must say I was curious on how it ended, so I kept pushing through with it until I finished. This narration is in two different point of views between the characters of Paige and Sarah and although they have different personalities I kept forgetting whose voice is whose and I find that extremely frustrating. I did enjoy the mystery part of the story and It is the only part of this story that kept me reading. I guess you will just have to read it for yourself and form your own opinion but unfortunately this one was not for me.
