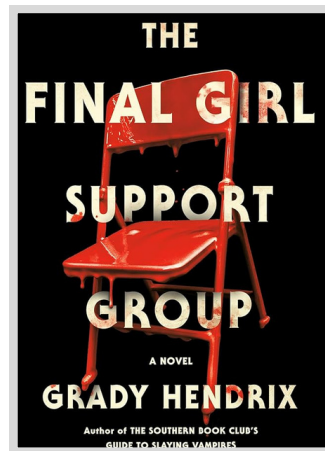


The Final Girl Support Group by Grady Hendrix



Summary

In horror movies, the final girls are the ones left standing when the credits roll. They made it through the worst night of their lives...but what happens after?

Lynnette Tarkington is a real-life final girl who survived a massacre. For more than a decade, she's been meeting with five other final girls and their therapist in a support group for those who survived the unthinkable, working to put their lives back together. Then one woman misses a meeting, and their worst fears are realized—someone knows about the group and is determined to rip their lives apart again, piece by piece.

But the thing about final girls is that no matter how bad the odds, how dark the night, how sharp the knife, they will never, ever give up.

Courtesy of Penguin Random House

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About the Author

Grady Hendrix writes fiction, also called "lies," and he writes non-fiction, which people sometimes accidentally pay him for. He is the author of *Horrorstör*, the only novel about a haunted Scandinavian furniture store you'll ever need. His novel *My Best Friend's Exorcism* is set in his hometown and is all about demonic possession, friendship, exorcism, and the Eighties. Still trying to prove himself to his family, he also wrote *Paperbacks from Hell*. It was so popular it won a Stoker Award, and while you may not know what that is, trust me when I say that it is a big, big deal. His next novel was *We Sold Our Souls*, which got selected as one of the best books of 2018 by *Library Journal*. His next book was the *New York Times* bestseller, *The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires*, once again set in the neighborhood where he grew up. Then he wrote his best-selling ode to slasher movies, *The Final Girl Support Group*, followed by *How To Sell a Haunted House*.

Grady Hendrix used to be a journalist, which means that he was completely irrelevant and could be killed and turned into food at any time. He is one of the founders of the New York Asian Film Festival, but he is not responsible for the bad parts of it. He is also not Asian. For years he was a regular film critic for the *New York Sun* but then it went out of business. He has written for *Playboy Magazine*, *Slate*, *The Village Voice*, the *New York Post*, *Film Comment*, and *Variety*. He has a hard time making up his mind. (edited for length)

Courtesy of the author's website gradyhendrix.com/about

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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?
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?

The Final Girl Support Group

by Grady Hendrix

Professional Review

Publisher's Weekly (04/07/21):

Starred Review Hendrix delivers a wildly entertaining romp through the conventions of horror's slasher film subgenre. The novel's title refers to a Los Angeles-based therapeutic support group for six "final girls"—survivors of mass-murderer rampages whose experiences inspired the splatter-film franchises that saturated horror cinema in the 1980s and '90s, earning them minor celebrity. When one of the six is murdered decades after she escaped her assailant, and others come under violent assault, Lynnette Tarkington—herself a survivor of the Silent Night Slayings of 1988—realizes that someone is trying to orchestrate an extravagant final girl finale. But is the killer a garden-variety homicidal maniac, an unhinged slasher-film superfan, or someone more intimately familiar with their group? Hendrix masterfully evokes the paranoid existences of his diverse cast in the aftermath of their traumatic ordeals, and he so explicitly details the massacres and fictional film sagas that grew out of them that readers may believe them to be real. The result is a wonderfully suspenseful and darkly comic novel that cleverly subverts popular culture.

Kirkus Reviews (05/04/21):

You have to give it to Hendrix for tapping into his deep knowledge of horror films and fiction to find a new angle on the tropes of terror with every outing. Here, Hendrix has zeroed in on the so-called "final girl," the sole survivor of a horrific massacre. This book is even more skin-crawling, as deeply paranoid Lynnette Tarkington (impaled on an antler trophy during her first unfortunate encounter years ago) reluctantly participates in group therapy sessions. Hendrix is deadly serious here while still warping the conventions of the genre, including the fact that some of the survivors have participated in graphic horror flicks depicting their very real traumas. The book is creepy enough on its face, but Hendrix's use of expedient narrative tools, including a laconic cowboy lawman, an overly eager journalist, and a host of archetypal serial killers, heightens the unease. After one member of this vigilant sisterhood is murdered, Lynnette becomes increasingly suspicious that the attacks are originating way too close to their inner circle. A bloody and grotesque but ultimately entertaining and inspiring take on horror movies, trauma, and self-determination. (edited for length)