



Two Sisters: A Novel

By Mary Hogan

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Two Sisters: A Novel By Mary Hogan

Mary Hogan's powerful and poignant debut novel about two sisters—opposites in every way—plus their mother and the secrets and lies that define them all.

One family, two sisters, a lifetime of secrets . . .

The third child in a family that wanted only two, Muriel Sullivant has always been an outsider. Short, dark-haired and round, she worships her beautiful blonde sister, Pia, and envies the close bond she shares with their mother, Lidia. Growing up in their shadow, Muriel believes that if she keeps all their secrets—and she knows plenty, outsiders always do—they will love her, too.

But that was a long time ago. Now an adult, Muriel has accepted the disappointments in her life. With her fourth-floor walk-up apartment and entry-level New York City job, she never will measure up to Pia and her wealthy husband, their daughter, and their suburban Connecticut dream home. Muriel would like nothing better than to avoid her judgmental family altogether. One thing she does quite well.

Until the day Pia shows up to visit and share devastating news that Muriel knows she cannot tell—a secret that will force her to come to terms with the past and help her see her life and her family in unexpected new ways.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Author One-on-One: Adriana Trigiani and Mary Hogan



Adriana Trigiani is beloved by millions of readers around the world for her hilarious and heartwarming novels.

Adriana Trigiani: Throughout *Two Sisters*, Muriel seems accepting of her position as least favorite child behind her brother and especially her sister. Where did Muriel's capacity to forgive both her mother and sister come from?

Mary Hogan: Muriel just wants to be loved. Like all kids—and everyone else! She especially longs to be loved by her mom, of course. And it breaks my heart to know that young Muriel feels as though Lidia's coolness towards her is her fault. By the time she's grown, however, I view Muriel's outlook more as survival than forgiveness. She understands that she can't let her mother muck up her emotions any longer. It's too exhausting! She begins to accept herself.

For me, the ugly confrontation toward the end of the book between Muriel and her mother is the beautiful moment in which Muriel finally becomes an adult.

AT: You began your career writing young adult fiction. How did you make the transition from writing for teens to writing for adults?

MH: What I loved most about writing for teens was the abundance of firsts: first love, first kiss, first heartbreak. The pages practically reeked of hormonal drama. Writing for adults feels more grounded, somehow. The emotions are more embedded. There's more subtlety. Plus, you get to see how those early firsts effect later life.

For me, the secret to capturing both teen and adult voices is to not stray too far from who I really am: a Muriel. An adult who vividly remembers her first kiss. A sister who lost her sister. A child who grew up in a family full of secrets. If I can manage to stay true to myself—while I become other people in print—I believe

I'll be able to connect to other Muriels, Pias and, yes, even Lidas out there.

AT: I know you have been through some personal family tragedies similar to those the Sullivant sisters experience. How did your own family history influence *Two Sisters*?

MH: Ah, yes...sigh. The "Pia" in my life was my sister, Diane. I began writing *Two Sisters* two weeks after she passed away from breast cancer. I was awash in sadness, hurt, confusion. Diane made a decision to die quietly, without saying goodbye to anyone. Her death was a shock; it felt like a stab wound in my heart. How could she leave me like that? Hadn't she loved me?

I know it sounds crazy that a family member could hide something as big as the final stages of terminal cancer, but Diane did. Her husband and daughter knew, because they lived with her. But the rest of us were in the dark. I now know that denial is a cataract—it blinds you to the truth that's in front of your face. Though my sister lived in California and I live in New York, I saw her a few months before she died and never noticed how sick she looked. I feel terribly guilty about that.

After Diane's funeral, with tears sheeting down my face, I wrote down every detail I could remember about her illness, things she'd told me, signs I'd seen but denied, tidbits her husband had mentioned over the years. I knew she had cancer, but I had always believed her when she said she was, "Fine." That word. Fine. It haunts me. Why didn't I dig further?

Writing down everything I could remember and reconstruct about the final days of my sister's life was my way of trying to understand her, and trying to forgive myself. Those cathartic days at the computer would later become Chapter Twenty-Two of *Two Sisters*

From [Booklist](#)

YA novelist Hogan ventures into adult fiction with this novel about a family weighed down by festering secrets and resentments. Twenty-three-year-old Muriel Sullivant is a Broadway casting assistant in Manhattan, but she's still riddled by the same insecurities that plagued her as a child: namely, that her mother favored her older sister, Pia, over her and she'll never be the kind of sister that glamorous, elegant Pia wanted. Her life in her small city apartment couldn't be more different than Pia's existence in Connecticut with her adoring husband and daughter. When Pia calls Muriel out of the blue and wants to visit her, Muriel dreads it, expecting only judgment and disappointment. But when Pia arrives, her behavior is decidedly out of character, and Muriel finally learns why: Pia has been stricken with metastatic breast cancer. Pia implores Muriel to keep her diagnosis from their mother, and Muriel reluctantly consents, not anticipating the fallout that will lead to the revelation of even more family secrets. Book clubs will find much to discuss in this fraught, fascinating family drama. --Kristine Huntley

Review

"Book clubs will find much to discuss in this fraught, fascinating family drama." ---Booklist

Users Review

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