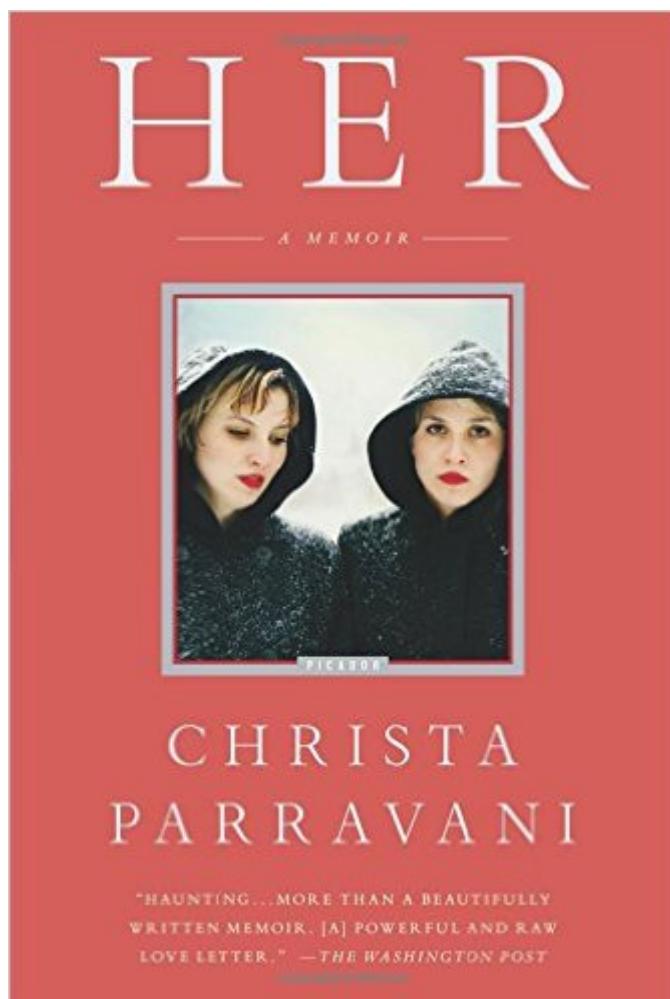


The book was found

Her: A Memoir



Synopsis

Wall Street Journal, "Favorite Books of the Year 2013" Cosmopolitan, "Best Books of the Year for Women" Library Journal, "Best Books of 2013" Salon, "Best Books of 2013" "Haunting... more than a beautifully written memoir. [A] powerful and raw love letter." • The Washington Post A BLAZINGLY PASSIONATE MEMOIR OF IDENTITY AND LOVE: WHEN A CHARISMATIC AND TROUBLED YOUNG WOMAN DIES TRAGICALLY, HER IDENTICAL TWIN MUST STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE Christa Parravani and her identical twin, Cara, were linked by a bond that went beyond siblinghood, beyond sisterhood, beyond friendship. Raised up from poverty by a determined single mother, the gifted and beautiful twins were able to create a private haven of splendor and merriment between themselves and then earn their way to a prestigious college and to careers as artists (a photographer and a writer, respectively) and to young marriages. But, haunted by childhood experiences with father figures and further damaged by being raped as a young adult, Cara veered off the path to robust work and life and into depression, drugs and a shocking early death. A few years after Cara was gone, Christa read that when an identical twin dies, regardless of the cause, 50 percent of the time the surviving twin dies within two years; and this shocking statistic rang true to her. "Flip a coin," she thought, "those were my chances of survival." First, Christa fought to stop her sister's downward spiral; suddenly, she was struggling to keep herself alive. Beautifully written, mesmerizingly rich and true, Christa Parravani's account of being left, one half of a whole, and of her desperate, ultimately triumphant struggle for survival is informative, heart-wrenching and unforgettably beautiful.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (252 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Once again I find myself struggling with the "star" rating system required for these reviews. It is a very similar problem to the thumbs up "like" system used on Facebook. When something posted is very important but very grim, to say "like" seems rather inappropriate. Christa Parravani's searing memoir focused on the brutal rape, subsequent personality dissolution and drug addiction, and eventual death of her twin Cara is heart rending to begin with. Christa's near self-destruction in the aftermath is even more so. This story is brilliantly told and completely absorbing, but not for the squeamish. It is also horrifying to contemplate the types of abuse, both in the childhood and subsequent adult lives of Cara and Christa, which set the stage for the tragedies they experienced and their reactions to these events. I only occasionally comment on the cover design of books, because in general I don't believe they really reflect the content effectively. However, since the cover here is in fact one of Christa's own photographs of herself and Cara, I find it brilliant and powerful. It causes me to wish that perhaps there were a few more of these images included in the text itself. Still, Christa's word images are as sharp and vivid as her photography must be. Some parts of the story seemed to me to be disoriented and confusing, but I decided that this was probably an honest representation of the author's mental state at the time. It is likely a reflection of my own perspective that I was concerned about such things as the sequencing of various overseas trips and hospitalizations, or the encounters with various boyfriends or lovers. In any event, this is a book that I'm glad to have had the opportunity to read.

HER is a tragic story of identical twins torn apart first by a rape and then by death. This is a surprisingly intimate memoir. Christa Parravani isn't keeping many secrets, and the line between herself and her sister Cara is almost nonexistent. She shares deeply personal information about both of them in equal measures. Excerpts from Cara's private writings are scattered throughout the book, including her written account of the rape that destroyed her. The author's twin sister Cara was a vivacious, mischievous, confident young woman. She expected good things to happen to her, so much so that when she entered the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes, she tied balloons to their mailbox so Ed McMahon would be able to find their house when she won. Everything changed for Cara in her early twenties, when she was raped in such a hideous way that she lost her former self completely. She turned to drug abuse and other risky behaviors, and died five years later from an accidental overdose. Having an identical twin is about as close as you can get to having a second

self. Christa and Cara were even closer than most identical twins. They slept back to back in the same bed all through childhood, roomed together in college, and even invaded each other's marriages with a sort of jealous possessiveness. When Christa lost Cara, she could not tolerate being twinless. She set off on a self-destructive path similar to Cara's, starving herself down to 85 lbs. and becoming addicted to pills. There's not a lot of joy here, but Christa Parravani's writing is remarkably clear-eyed and balanced. She shares the depths of her despair and self-abuse without straying into melodrama or assigning blame.

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