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By Erin Vincent

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This is Erin Vincent's gripping true story of how one moment tears a family apart and how love and strength come together to rebuild what was lost. *Grief Girl* will break your heart and then fill you with hope, time and time again.

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Editorial Review

Review

"After any death, there is bound to be searing anger as well as grief. In this amazing tale of woe, venality, treachery, larceny and plain old-fashioned abuse, Erin Vincent tells the story of her parents' death, and the harrowing Dickensian fallout which then ensued. GRIEF GIRL is a story of righteous indignation, bruising sorrow but a final triumph that has you cheering for this wonderful woman by the end."

-Carolyn See

"A gripping memoir . . . glimpses of humor amid tragedy make this a pageturner."—*School Library Journal*

"Any adolescent going through the grieving process will tearfully embrace her book."—*Booklist*

"Intimate, honest narrative."—*Publishers Weekly*

About the Author

Erin Vincent has worked as a journalist, a fashion designer, a theater actress, a photographer's assistant, a tailor to the stars, and a bartender, and has served meat pies and mushy peas late at night from a roadside van in Sydney. She now spends her days (and nights) as a writer and a youth counselor. Erin divides her time between her hometown of Sydney, Australia, and Los Angeles. She lives with her artist husband, Adam Knott (aka Adam James K), a one-eyed goldfish named Reginald, and a sweet little cat named Foofee. Sadly, her beloved pet crab Charlie died after sticking around long enough to help her get through the writing of *Grief Girl*. RIP, Charlie.

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October 23, 1983

It's getting late and Mum and Dad aren't back yet. They said they'd be home before dark. So where are they?

I should be happy. Even though I'm fourteen, I've never been allowed to stay alone for more than a few hours, and tonight I've got the whole house to myself. I can blast my music, watch whatever I want on TV, raid the refrigerator. But something doesn't feel right.

This isn't like Mum. She's the kind of mother who'll call and tell me the car has broken down or she's caught up talking to someone, or that she and Dad have stopped for something to eat. She's the kind of mother who worries too much and calls too often.

Maybe I misunderstood. Maybe they said they'd be late?

No, I remember Mum walking over to me on the sofa at lunchtime, kissing me and saying they'd definitely be home before dark.

They were going to visit Nanny's grave in the country, dropping my little brother, Trent, off at Evelyn's house on the way.

So where are they? It's seven o'clock already.

I'll call Evelyn. She's Mum's best friend. "Hi, it's Erin. Have Mum and Dad come to pick up Trent?"

"Not yet. So I get some extra time with him. He's so sweet!"

"Good," I say, distracted. "Um, Evelyn? I'm worried."

But Evelyn tells me not to be. "They probably just got held up, Erin. I'll have them call you as soon as they get here."

"Okay. Thanks."

I hang up. Maybe I am overreacting. Mum says I'm a worrywart, but it's her fault. She's the one always going on about wanting to die before us kids. Now she's got me thinking the worst.

Maybe I should do my tapestry to take my mind off things. I've just learned embroidery, and I'm surprising Mum with a tapestry for Christmas. I know it's kind of geeky, but I can't help it. I love how the picture emerges with each stitch. When it comes to her birthday and Christmas, Mum always says, "Just make me something, darling." But I never do.

My sister, Tracy, rolled her eyes when she found out. "You're such a dork. Why do you have to sit around reading all the time? And now tapestry? You're hopeless." Tracy is four years older than I am. We're very different. She says I'm the biggest nerd there is. But I wish she were here now. She's been at her best friend's house all day; they were going clubbing tonight.

It's officially dark. I can see all the neighborhood lights on through our sheer green and cream striped curtains. I probably should get up and turn some lights on besides the reading lamp next to me, but I can't move. I don't know why, I just can't. It's like I'm stuck on the living room sofa.

Just keep stitching and stop it with the stupid thoughts.

I figure if I'm here doing this for Mum, she'll be all right, it will keep her safe. I won't look up. I won't even raise my head. I'll position myself so I can't even see the mirrors behind Dad's bar or the black hole that was the dining room half an hour ago or the kitchen with the echo of the humming fridge making it all seem even emptier. I've never noticed that hum before. Why is it that things sound louder in the dark?

It's eight o'clock. Why haven't my parents called? They should have been home hours ago. Where are they? Where could they be? What if something bad has happened to them? What if they've been in a car accident? What if—

The phone rings. Thank God.

"Mum?"

"Erin! Is this Erin Vincent?" asks a woman's voice I don't recognize.

My stomach sinks. It's not Mum. I'd better get this woman off quick in case my parents try to call.

“There’s been an accident. Your parents have been in an accident!” the woman cries.

I hold the phone tight, trying to process what she’s saying. “What? Who is this?”

“Don’t worry. I’m a nurse—I’m here with them. Your dad told me to call you.”

“I don’t understand. What about Mum? What’s go- ing on?”

“The ambulance just left, it’s on the way to Liverpool Hospital.”

“But you said you were a nurse,” I say, confused. “Aren’t you there now?”

“I’m here at the side of the road. I just happened to drive past.”

“Please! What’s happened? What’s going on? Who are you?” I beg.

“Look, that’s all I know. I’m sorry. Call Liverpool Hospital.”

“Wait! Don’t hang up.”

She’s hung up! You can’t say that and just hang up!

This isn’t happening. This isn’t happening. This isn’t happening.

It was just a prank call. That’s it. But how did that woman get our number, and how did she know Mum and Dad aren’t home? How did she know my name?

Oh no. God, no! Please, God, no.

My heart’s pounding so hard and fast I feel like it’s becoming dislodged from my chest. The threads holding it in place have broken and it’s just bouncing around in there.

What do I do?

I pray. Please, God. Don’t let them be dead. I’m begging you. I’ll do anything. I’ll sing hymns and hand out pamphlets at the mall, I’ll watch religious TV. I’ll keep you constantly in my thoughts. Just let them have broken legs or arms or something. I know I had that terrible thought last week, but that was just a stupid orphan daydream. Don’t all kids think stuff like that?

It’s quiet and dark, but I don’t want to put the lights on. My eyes have adjusted and I can see all around me, but it’s like someone turned the brightness down on the TV. I’m standing between the dining room and the kitchen. In this light, Mum’s expensive wood dining table and maroon-velvet-cushioned chairs look like something out of an old English movie. The copper hood above the stove belongs in the servants’ kitchen, where they pluck chickens and stir pots of stew over an open fire.

I need to move. I can’t stand still.

I’m walking around the house in circles, around and around and around, faster and faster, until each room becomes a blur. They’re dead. Mum’s dead. No, what am I saying? She can’t be.

She made my lunch today.

I've got to call the hospital. Breathe deeply and think straight. Be strong.

I wish I knew where Tracy was. She's at a nightclub, but which one? Probably better I don't know. Why make her panic too?

These stupid flimsy phone book pages won't turn quickly enough. I'm scared to dial the number but I know I have to. Okay, it's ringing. They're not dead, they're not dead, they're—

"Good evening, Liverpool Hospital," a man answers.

"Oh . . . so this is Liverpool Hospital?" I say, my voice shaky.

"Yes."

"Um, how do I find out if someone's been taken there recently? Tonight, I mean."

"I'll put you through."

"They're okay, they're okay, they're okay," I chant.

"Admissions," says a chirpy voice.

"Hello, I need to find out about two people taken there tonight."

"Names?"

"Ronald and Beverly Vincent."

"You'll need to talk a bit slower," she says. "What are their names?"

"Vincent, Ronald . . . and Beverly Vincent."

Just saying their names makes me want to cry, but I'm not going to.

"Hang on. I'll check."

Please, God. Please. She's going to come back with good news.

She's back. "There's no one been admitted by those names."

"Are you sure? I was told they were going there."

"I'm positive. They're not here."

Is that good or bad? Another dial tone. She's hung up.

Please, God, don't let them be dead. Where are they? Mum, Dad, come home.

I need to get out of here. Maybe someone else will know what to do. I'll call Auntie Connie, our neighbor. She's not really my aunt, but on my street all the kids call the adults Auntie and Uncle. It would feel strange to call them anything else. Mr. and Mrs. just aren't enough.

Auntie Connie, Uncle Steele, and their kids, Theo, Venise, and Peter, are our closest friends in the neighborhood. They're Greek. Going to their house is like visiting a country within a country, a little bit of Greece just up the road. Having meals there is like going to a Greek restaurant (not that I've ever been to one). We eat with the TV tuned to the Greek Variety Hour. Lots of flashing lights and Greek singers and dancers. Venise, Theo, and Peter hate it. I love it.

My hands feel clammy on the phone. Stupid phone.

Theo answers. He's a couple of years older than I am. He's the nicest boy I know. Last year I had the biggest crush on him, but I'm over it now. I tell him what's happened. I'm crying. He tells me his parents are out but that I can come over and wait with him.

I turn off the reading light. Dad will be angry if I leave a light on. I get my keys and lock the front door.

It's a hot and windy Australian summer night. The kind of night in horror movies where bad things happen. But nothing bad would happen on our happy street. It's a cul-de-sac, with lots of kids. We skateboard, have water balloon fights, and ride go-carts down the hill. There's hardly ever traffic, so we never have to worry about being run over in the street, which is a big relief for Mum.

We live in Beverly Hills, thirty minutes from the center of Sydney. It's nothing like the Beverly Hills in America that I see on TV. My Beverly Hills has no rich people. My Beverly Hills has redbrick houses, eucalyptus trees, and Toyotas, not Porsches. I'm going to make it to the real Beverly Hills one day and become a movie star. But in the meantime, the other kids and I perform on the back of Dad's work truck, parked in the street outside our house. We live at number six, which is a lucky number, Mum says.

Please let us be lucky tonight.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sandra McLean:

What do you regarding book? It is not important along? Or just adding material if you want something to explain what yours problem? How about your spare time? Or are you busy man or woman? If you don't have spare time to do others business, it is make one feel bored faster. And you have free time? What did you do? Every person has many questions above. They must answer that question due to the fact just their can do that will. It said that about guide. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this particular Grief Girl: My True Story to read.

Rosalie Cox:

Reading can be called imagination hangout, why? Because when you are reading a book particularly book entitled Grief Girl: My True Story your thoughts will drift away through every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unfamiliar for but surely will end up your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a book then become one contact form conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get ahead of. The Grief Girl: My True Story giving you a different experience more than blown away your thoughts but also giving you useful information for your better life in this era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning a casino game. Do you want to try this extraordinary wasting spare time activity?

Wilma Tovar:

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Robert Poulin:

What is your hobby? Have you heard that will question when you got college students? We believe that that issue was given by teacher with their students. Many kinds of hobby, All people has different hobby. And you also know that little person similar to reading or as reading become their hobby. You have to know that reading is very important along with book as to be the matter. Book is important thing to add you knowledge, except your personal teacher or lecturer. You discover good news or update concerning something by book. Different categories of books that can you choose to use be your object. One of them is Grief Girl: My True Story.

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