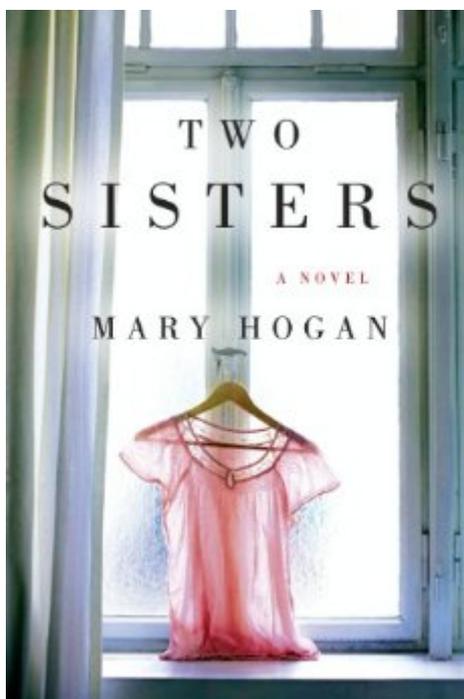


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# Two Sisters: A Novel



## Synopsis

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 Sullivan 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Sunday is Muriel Sullivant's favorite day. It is a day off from her work as a casting assistant (a job that is decidedly unglamorous but has the bonus of a best friend/boss named Joanie). She has a Guy Fieri "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives" marathon awaiting her pleasure on television. She also has a gigantic bucket of her favorite popcorn to fortify herself while she watches. As she settles into the gloriousness of this day-off Nirvana, her phone rings. Believing it must be Joanie wanting to compare notes on the "Triple D" shows, she answers and is devastated to hear her older sister, Pia, informing her that she will be by to visit after mass. Ominously, Pia adds, "We have to talk." Muriel's heart sinks. So much for a perfect, peaceful Sunday. Muriel dashes off to buy food her sister might approve of while bracing herself for Pia's usual onslaught of criticism about Muriel's figure, home, wardrobe, singleness, lack of church attendance, and/or diet. Of course, she has no clue as to what kind of snacks Pia might actually deign to eat. Already and as usual, Muriel feels like a Yeti in imagined comparison to slender, leggy, blonde Pia. Their mother, Lidia, has made no secret of the fact that she thinks Pia is marvelous, while Muriel, an unwanted third child, has always been a huge disappointment. When Pia arrives at Muriel's apartment, pale and breathless from the four-story climb, she seems as usual at first. Then she begins to act in an untypical manner, tying her own beautiful silk scarf around Muriel's neck. It isn't surprising that she refuses Muriel's offerings of food, instead insisting she will take her sister to a "fabulous" restaurant for lunch. Muriel is not thrilled at the idea of dressing up in the white dress Pia picks out for her.

Two Sisters a novel of secrets, a family broken and the absence of love, a story of loss and letting go. A portrait of a muted dysfunctional family and the end results. I found this story emotionally heavy. It breaks down a family and the division it causes one member more than others - Muriel. A few surprises added to the narrative. Hogan did a wonderful job introducing us to the family and its members. The numerous issues were slowly revealed with emotional build up felt by the reader. Muriel is the centerpiece of this story, sadly she suffers the brunt of her family's troubles. The secrets, deception running amok in this family really took a toll on all the members, again Muriel felt the biggest blow. Three main characters drive the story. Lidia - mother, this woman is a piece of work. Favoring Pia, not involved at all with her son Logan, and undeniable resentment and hostility openly demonstrated and felt by Muriel - the third child and an unwelcome surprise. Pia - you feel for her, terminal cancer, she regrets her treatment towards Muriel, as a reader you also note she is a product of her mother's influence. You find yourself excusing her but still harboring bitterness due to her affronts towards her sister. Muriel is a compelling character. The story basically revolves around her. She never comes across as a victim, whiney or plays the pity card. You find Muriel

acutely aware of her resented place in the family and she always holds hope her mother will love her at some point. Her wounds are deep, and you know the treatment or lack of treatment has left numerous scars deeper than we realize. Muriel is a good hearted person, unbelievably strong, has a tight grip on reality and retains her dignity and turns the other cheek in the face of those unkind to her.

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