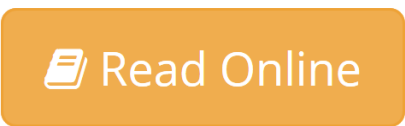


The Night Sister: A Novel

By Jennifer McMahon



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The latest novel from *New York Times* best-selling author Jennifer McMahon is an atmospheric, gripping, and suspenseful tale that probes the bond between sisters and the peril of keeping secrets.

Once the thriving attraction of rural Vermont, the Tower Motel now stands in disrepair, alive only in the memories of Amy, Piper, and Piper's kid sister, Margot. The three played there as girls until the day that their games uncovered something dark and twisted in the motel's past, something that ruined their friendship forever.

Now adult, Piper and Margot have tried to forget what they found that fateful summer, but their lives are upended when Piper receives a panicked midnight call from Margot, with news of a horrific crime for which Amy stands accused. Suddenly, Margot and Piper are forced to relive the time that they found the suitcase that once belonged to Silvie Slater, the aunt that Amy claimed had run away to Hollywood to live out her dream of becoming Hitchcock's next blonde bombshell leading lady. As Margot and Piper investigate, a cleverly woven plot unfolds—revealing the story of Sylvie and Rose, two other sisters who lived at the motel during its 1950s heyday. Each believed the other to be something truly monstrous, but only one carries the secret that would haunt the generations to come.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Chilling.... A powerful story of childhood friendship and sisterhood.... Dark and compelling.”

—*BookPage*

“McMahon manages to turn Vermont’s verdant, picturesque scenery into the backdrop for some truly unnerving plots.... [and] such issues as sibling rivalry, forgiveness, family legacies and unconditional love.”

—*Bookreporter*

“A modern-day Grimm’s tale.” —*Curled Up With a Good Book*

Praise for Jennifer McMahon and *The Winter People*

“One of the year’s most chilling novels . . . melds the mystery genre with the supernatural for a psychological thriller that’s as scary as it is enthralling.” —*The Miami Herald*

“Crisp, mysterious and scary. . . . Reminiscent of Stephen King.” —*USA Today*

“McMahon has developed a subgenre of psychological mysteries . . . in creepily seductive settings.”

—*Booklist* (starred review)

“Gives readers just what they want from a good thriller: can’t-put-it-down, stay-up-until-dawn reading.”

—*Bookpage*

“McMahon’s gift is the deliciously twisty way she subverts all of your expectations, keeping you guessing with wry wit and feverish chills.” —*People*

“A hauntingly beautiful read.” —Oprah.com

About the Author

JENNIFER McMAHON is the *New York Times* bestselling author of six suspense novels, including *The Winter People*, *The One I Left Behind*, *Island of Lost Girls*, and *Promise Not to Tell*. She lives in Vermont with her partner and their daughter. Visit her at www.jennifer-mcmahon.com.

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Amy

Amy’s heart hammers, and her skin is slick with sweat.

Focus, she tells herself.

Don't think about the thing in the tower.

Amy knows that if she thinks too hard about it, she won't be able to do what needs to be done.

She looks down at the photo, the old black-and-white print she's kept for almost thirty years, hidden away in the drawer of her bedside table. It's been handled so much that it's cracked and faded, one of the corners torn.

In it, her mother, Rose, and her Aunt Sylvie are young girls, wearing crisp summer dresses as they stand in front of a sign that says *World Famous London Chicken Circus*. Each girl clutches a worried-looking hen, but that's where the similarities end. Amy's mother is wearing a scowl beneath tired eyes, her hair dark and unkempt, while Sylvie is radiant, the one who was going to grow up and go to Hollywood. Her blond hair is movie-star perfect, her eyes shining.

Someone had scrawled a date on the back: June, 1955. If only Amy could travel back in time, talk to those two girls, warn them what was coming. Warn them that one day, it would all lead to this moment: Amy alone and out of options, on the verge of doing something terrible.

She bites her lip and wonders what people will say about her once she's gone.

That she was broken inside, a woman with a screw loose (Aren't all women like that, really? Little time bombs waiting? Especially women like her—surviving on monthly boxes from the food pantry, dressing her children in ragged, second-hand clothes that never quite fit.)

What went wrong? they will whisper to each other while fondling artichokes and avocados in the produce aisle of the grocery store.

What kind of monster was she? they might ask after a few glasses of wine as they sit in tidy living rooms, gathered for book club.

But these people know nothing of true monsters. They will never have to make the choices Amy has made.

The fluorescent lights in the kitchen buzz and flicker. Amy takes a deep breath, looks out the kitchen window. Beyond the gravel driveway, past the two ruined motel buildings with their sagging, swaybacked roofs, the tower leans precariously. Made of cement and stone, it was built by her grandfather all those years ago as a gift for her grandmother Charlotte. Her own Tower of London.

Amy thinks, as she often does, of that long ago summer when she was twelve. Of Piper and Margot and the day they found the suitcase; of how after that, nothing was ever the same.

Where was Piper now? Out in California somewhere, surrounded by palm trees and glamorous people, living a life Amy couldn't even imagine. Amy suddenly longs to talk to her, to confide in her and ask for forgiveness, to say, "Don't you see this is what I have to do?"

She thinks that Piper and Margot might understand if she could tell them the whole story, starting with the suitcase and working forward.

But mostly, what she wishes, is that she could find a way to warn them.

She glances at the old photo in her hand, takes a black marker from a kitchen drawer, and hastily writes a message along the bottom, over the chickens and patterned summer dresses. Then she tucks the photograph into her back pocket and goes to the window.

The clock on the stove says 12:15 am.

Down at the tower, a shadow lurches from the open doorway.

She's out of time.

Moving into the hallway, she latches the deadbolt on the front door (silly, really—a locked door will do no good), then stops at the closet and grabs her grandfather's old Winchester. Rifle in hand, she climbs the stairs, the same stairs she's climbed her whole life. She thinks she can hear young Piper and Margot following behind her, whispering, warning her, telling her—as they did all those years ago—to forget all about it, that there is no 29th room.

Amy takes each step slowly, willing herself not to run, to stay calm and not wake her family. What would Mark think if he woke up and found his wife creeping up the steps with a gun? Poor, sweet, clueless Mark—perhaps she should have told him the motel's secrets? But no. It was better to protect him from it all as best she could.

The scarred wood beneath her feet creaks and she thinks of the rhyme her grandmother taught her:

*When Death comes knocking on your door, you'll think you've seen his face before.
When he comes creeping up your stairs, you'll know him from your dark nightmares.
And if you hold up a mirror, you shall see,
That he is you and you are he.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christi Potter:

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Bruce Benedict:

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Mary Jacobs:

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