



Local Girl Missing

Claire Douglas

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The old Victorian pier was once a thing of beauty. It's also where twenty-one-year-old Sophie Collier vanished eighteen years ago.

Francesca has spent the last twenty years haunted by the disappearance of her best friend. But when she receives a phone call from Sophie's brother saying that a body has been found, she knows she can't keep hiding from what happened. With her own secrets to keep, Francesca doesn't relish the idea of digging up the past or returning to Oldcliffe. But it is time to go back to where she grew up, and it looks like she isn't the only one there hiding truths.

Local Girl Missing Details

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From Reader Review Local Girl Missing for online ebook

Nicki says

The Sisters was one of my favourite books of last year and I admit I couldn't wait to see what Claire Douglas would follow it with and if it would be just as good. I needn't have worried Local Girl Missing is absolutely brilliant, very gripping, worth far more than five stars and I am very disappointed that I have finished reading it.

Frankie and Sophie have been best friends since primary school when Sophie moved to Frankie's school after Sophie, her Mum and Sophie's brother Daniel moved to Frankie's home town of Oldcliffe On Sea to get away from Sophie's violent father. One night twenty one year old Sophie vanishes leaving behind her trainer on the old delapidated pier. Now twenty years later Frankie gets a call from Daniel who says that a body has been found, reluctantly Frankie returns to their home town to help Daniel try to find out what happened to his sister. Soon after she starts receiving threatening letters, someone knows what happened on the pier that night and doesn't want the truth to be revealed.

The story is told in alternating chapters between present day Frankie and the past where Sophie is telling what happened in the months leading up to her disappearance. I liked and felt a lot of sympathy for Sophie and her brother Daniel but from the very beginning of the story I didn't like Frankie, it's hard to explain why without giving too much away. There is a mixed bag of other characters that Frankie and Sophie interacted with throughout the book, one who is so nasty and sleazy I hated every moment he appeared in the story. All the people in Oldcliffe have their secrets and you never know who is telling the truth and who Frankie and Daniel can trust.

It's a gripping, twisty story from the first word to the last, I didn't want the book to end, now I have to patiently wait and see what Claire Douglas comes up with for book 3.

Many thanks to Penguin UK Michael Joseph for an ARC of this book via netgalley

Laura says

I can't work out if I love the ending or hate it. I really enjoyed reading this book, it was twisty and unpredictable and had me on tenterhooks the whole time. Yet the ending was unexpected but felt a little implausible? Plus the explanation needs you to suspend disbelief....

Yet I still really liked reading this and thoroughly enjoyed the writing style. Can't wait for the next novel from Claire!

Rachel Hall says

Local Girl Missing is the second novel from author Claire Douglas whose first, The Sisters, received the Marie Claire Debut Novel Award in 2013. Despite the unprepossessing title which does nothing to whet the appetite, I was interested by the premise of a woman returning to her home town to confront the demons after her best friend went missing eighteen-years-ago. The discovery of twenty-one-year old Sophie Collier's

trainer quickly caused the public to lose interest in her disappearance, only to be replaced by a popular belief that a drunken Sophie was swept away by the Bristol Channel. Eighteen-years-later a somewhat reinvented Francesca Howe is contacted out of the blue by Sophie's older brother, Daniel, and she knows that this can only be for one reason. Human remains have been found, Daniel is due to identify them and he reveals something that was never spoken of before... that Sophie was jittery, anxious and told him that somebody was out to get her ahead of her last days. Having never told Frankie (as she was known as a teen), Daniel says the police dismissed his claims but he wants to discover and confront the truth surrounding his sisters demise.

Coming at a time of emotional upheaval, unwilling to terminate a floundering relationship and trying to ignore her dad's stroke and ailing recovery, Frankie reluctantly revisits the down at heel town of Oldcliffe-on-Sea. The premise itself though doesn't make clear that Frankie and Sophie both had secrets of their own and the best friends are forever bound by one dramatic event in their lives... When Daniel moots his opinion that Sophie could have been intentionally pushed and killed that night, it falls to Frankie to choose whether to enlighten him or not as to the long held secret. Soon confronted by a series of threatening notes on her return to Oldcliffe-on-Sea, it seems that someone else knows this hidden secret and it holds the key to revealing just what did happen to Sophie Rose Collier. Readers learn of the actual events at approximately a quarter of the way through this novel, but attempts to disguise it are thinly veiled from the start. Frankie is left with little choice but to confide in Daniel as it becomes a matter of delicately seeing who knows the sworn secret and might therefore have had reason to murder Sophie. However, what quickly becomes clear is that Frankie can ill afford to trust anyone, even Daniel, after a series of unsettling incidents compound her fears.

Nearly two decades on from Sophie's presumed death, Fran Howe seems to live a charmed life with a three-storey Islington townhouse, a Range Rover and running the family hotel chain business with her parents semi-retired. Still as insecure as her teenage days she runs her life to precision and is the buttoned-up stiff-upper-lip woman who has tried to leave her past behind. Involved in an relationship with builder, Mike, that she knows is on the slide, with a divorce and failure to conceive along the way, neither the friends or lovers in her past have ever be told of Sophie, the best friend of her childhood days. Tightly wound Fran is all about making the right impression, and whilst she attests that Mike doesn't really have the emotional capacity to cope with her issues, I must say that I think much of that is due to her unwillingness to reveal her true nature. Fran is the character that I found most baffling, as she is at times clearly an unreliable narrator, simply choosing not to be open about things, at other times making blatantly contradictory decisions meaning everything seems like a subtle game of emotional blackmail and manipulation. I felt none the wiser of Frankie's true feelings for any of the male characters in *Local Girl Missing* as she seemed to change her mind as to who was her 'one true love' like the wind, but really simply seems to crave attention. Trawling back through the lives and loves of two girls with dreams of escaping their home town, Douglas serves up a tale of a bitchy female friendship. I think in modern day parlance the term *du jour* is 'frenemy' and most of the revelations revolve around the "who snogged who" variety of a YA novel.

A central focus for *Local Girl Missing* considers the class differences and the social divide that separated the comfortable and upwardly mobile Howe family from the rest of the cast. Clearly the subject of some enmity amongst her peers, the inherent differences and prevailing cultures of the working class estate dwelling teens are well observed and the grudges that are exhibited in twenty-one-year old Sophie's diary seem no less engrained in the town some eighteen-years later. The diary extracts from Sophie at the time of her 1997 disappearance were more believable than the delivery by Frankie, giving an insight into the home life and the sparky personality for which she was known. Frankie was a little bland and even at highly wrought emotional moments she never really demonstrated any passionate or charged dialogue.

Whilst this was an undemanding read and I never had a problem staying with the story, it never really exerted the 'grip' that is so essential with a psychological thriller and left me feeling fairly flat. Aimed at the lightweight end of the psychological thriller market I thought much more could have been made of the small town atmosphere because it never really felt sufficiently ominous or creepy to me. In saying that, I didn't trust a single character in Local Girl Missing which shows that it did achieve some of the unsettling suspense that Douglas intended, with credible suspicion jumping between characters. A mediocre novel which left a so-so impression on me, with a better ear for dialogue and more focus on creating characters whose motives are credible, Local Girl Missing could have been drastically improved. Admittedly, some of the twists were well disguised and a genuine surprise, but I felt that pretty early on I knew where this was headed and was proved correct. In conclusion, not a bad read by any means, Local Girl Missing easily holds the attention and got off to a promising start but the final twists detracted from my overall impression. As is so often the case, the necessity to go that extra mile and blow the whole thing out of the water undermines the solid work of Douglas up to that point.

Nigel says

Borderline 3 star really. Good premise for a story but simply unconvincing to me.

In full - I like the idea of this story. A local girl goes missing, apparently falling off the local (& closed) old pier and friends and family from the time go their own ways. Then 18 years later the girl's brother phones the girl's best to say that part of a body has been found wearing a trainer that was the same as the one she had on when last seen. The book is written in two voices in fairly simple language. Frankie, the best friend, is the voice of now and she returns to the old home town in the westcountry ostensibly to help the brother search for evidence relating to the disappearance. Sophie, the girl who disappeared, is the voice in the past and this is written in part in diary form. My initial reaction was that the writing ok though I wasn't really gripped by the story. It was obviously one of those books where secrets from the past would be gradually revealed. It is quite apparent early on in the book that both Frankie and Sophie knew & did things at the time which were "secrets" and that Frankie probably does not want the "truth" to come out.

I think the basic idea for this story was a perfectly good one and the pace kept me reading. However I simply did not find any of the characters particularly believable, real or engaging. Equally I did find some of the things that occurred more than a little incredible at times. I do see that others will find this book more appealing but for me it felt rather lightweight and lacking the real tension and edginess I would like from something that should be a thriller.

Note - I received an advance digital copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair review

<http://viewson.org.uk/thriller/local-...>

Jasmine from How Useful It Is says

About: Local Girl Missing is a psychological thriller written by Claire Douglas. It will be published on 7/4/17 by Harper Paperbacks, an imprint of Harper Collins, 352 pages. The genres are fiction, psychological thriller, suspense, and mystery.

My Experience: I started reading Local Girl Missing on 5/30/17 and finished it on 6/5/17. This book is the best mystery I have read so far! I love everything about it. This book is so good that often I could not tear my eyes away. The story is very fascinating and it captures my attention completely. I love the ending and I couldn't guess the outcome. I love the organization of this novel and how the mystery unravels little by little.

In this book, readers will follow alternating point of views between Francesca (Frankie) Howe and Sophie (Soph) Collier, best friends for the longest time. They both live in Oldcliffe-on-Sea, a small town near Bristol. Frankie, an only child, came from a well-to-do family where her parents own a hotel in town. Sophie lives with her mom and older brother. They ran away from an ugly past. Frankie has beauty, money, and attention. Sophie likes to curl up in bed with her novels. As Frankie and Sophie's friendship blooms, they tend to fall for the same guy. There was a mystery surrounding a guy named Jason. Then almost two decades later, parts of Sophie's remains have surfaced and Sophie's older brother Daniel invited Frankie back to town to solve the mystery of Sophie's death. This novel is told in alternating point of views with Frankie in the present day and Sophie in the past leading up to her gone missing. Sophie is communicating to readers through her diary entries.

This thriller is beautifully written. I love the alternating point of views because it doesn't leave me in the dark as to what is going on. I don't fully know the details until the big reveal at the end, but I know enough to want to read more. I like how so many people can be suspects and I love that I couldn't guess who it was. All the characters are great players in this book. There is a lot going on and I enjoyed following the characters throughout and connecting the dots. I love a book with an epilogue and this book has it. I highly recommend everyone to read this book!

Pro: suspense, alternating POV, mystery, adrenaline rush, couldn't put down, page turner, fast paced, well-written, family, epilogue

Con: none

I rate it 5 stars!

***Disclaimer: Many thanks to the author Claire Douglas, publisher Harper, and Edelweiss for the opportunity to read and review. Please assure that my opinions are honest.

XOXO,

Jasmine at www.howusefulitis.wordpress.com for a detailed review

Miriam Smith says

I bought "Local Girl Missing" in Tesco for £2 when you purchased a daily newspaper and I have to say it was an excellent deal! I'd heard a lot about this book from online book clubs and was really looking forward to reading it.

It's atmospheric, dark and at times spooky and perfect for a lazy Sunday read or a sunny afternoon in the garden.

The story is told in the first person alternating between two best friends Francesca in the present time and the missing girl Sophie back in 1997 relating both of their accounts surrounding the mysterious disappearance of Sophie.

I did unfortunately work out most of the plot by half way through but this didn't stop me from enjoying the book and following the outcome. I was actually quite tearful at the end as I had endeared to Sophie and had a lot of empathy for her. I wasn't taken with any of the other characters but I don't think it mattered it certainly didn't stop me from enjoying the story any the less. It's well written, easy to follow and although a slow burner keeps you turning the pages until the ending when everything finally comes together.

I haven't read anything by the author Claire Douglas before but I'd be happy to read more by her in the future and will probably read her previous debut novel 'The Sisters' sometime too. 4 stars.

Zoe says

Full review to follow shortly closer to publication!

Julie says

Local Girl Missing by Claire Douglas is a 2017 Harper publication.

Eerie and tense-

Sophie and Frankie were best friends during their teenage years, until romantic entanglements came between them, but they eventually reconciled, and were trying to resume their friendship, but, one night, Sophie disappeared from the old Victorian, '*Oldcliffe-on-the-Sea*', pier. Her body was never recovered.... Until now.

When Frankie gets the call from Sophie's brother, Daniel, that his sister's remains have been found, he asks Frankie to come home and help him find out what happened to her all those years ago.

But, once Frankie arrives, settling into the often frigid apartment overlooking the same pier from which Sophie vanished, she begins to imagine she sees Sophie's ghost. As she and Daniel begin to dig into the past, Frankie finds herself the recipient of chilling notes, often pushed under her apartment door, taunting and threatening her.

Old friends and enemies all contribute a piece of the puzzle, and as revelations mount, motives become highly suspect.

I never knew who to believe or trust in this novel. The story shifts gear several times before the conclusion. That and the dual time line kept me off guard, so that I was never able to find a balance.

I have waited nearly a week to write this review, because I'm still trying to formulate my thoughts on this book.

On one hand the atmosphere is very creepy, with a possible supernatural element, and the uneasiness settled in for the duration, increasing as the story developed.

On the other hand, I had a hard time with the final twist, finding it a little far fetched, even though I did appreciate the irony of the situation.

The only other downside was just a coincidence. I'd just finished reading a book with a similar set up, so I considered putting this one aside for a while because of that, but then the story veered away from that theme and took on a whole new set of connotations, so I decided to stick with it.

Although there were a few small blips, at the end of the day, the book provided a few good chills, was cleverly paced, with plenty of atmosphere and twists, and a surprise ending. So, after thinking it over, and waffling back and forth, a little, I think this one deserves four stars.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Dual review with Swedish first and then English!

SWEDISH REVIEW

I Ung kvinna saknad får man läsa om hur Francesca åker tillbaka till Oldcliffe-on-Sea efter att fått ett samtal från en barndomskamrat om att kvarlevor av en kropp har hittats, men man får också parallellt följa det som hänt Sophie genom hennes dagboksanteckningar. Både den nutida handlingen och barndomsanteckningarna är intressanta att följa.

De bästa psykologiska thrillers är de som förbryllar, får en att tvivla på vad som pågår och misstro huvudkaraktären och alla andra karaktärer också givetvis. De ska även vara blad-vändare, gärna med korta kapitel som gör att man "skulle ju bara läsa ett kapitel till" istället blir till 2 timmar senare och en utläst bok.

Ung kvinna saknad har alla dessa element. Kanske inte så många överraskande vändningar, men boken har definitivt den paranoida känslan av att något är fel tack vare allt skumt som hänter Francesca. Om det är något jag gillar så är det när man börjar ifrågasätta huvudkaraktären, har hon rent mjöl i påsen, är hon galen, eller är något ute efter henne? Och, var hände egentligen med Sophie Coller arton år tidigare?

Claire Douglas har skrivit en lysande psykologisk thriller, det tog mig bara en dag att läsa klart den tack vare den intressanta och beroendeframkallande handlingen och jag ser fram emot att läsa hennes andra böcker.

Tack till Louise Bäckelin Förlag för recensionsexemplaret!

ENGLISH REVIEW

In Local Girl Missing, you can read about how Francesca returns to Oldcliffe-on-Sea after learning through a conversation with a childhood friend that a body has been found washed up at the pier where her best friend Sophie disappeared eighteen years ago. Parallelly in the book do we also learn what happened to Sophie through her diary notes. Both the present-day story and childhood notes are interesting to follow.

The best psychological thrillers are those that confuse, make one doubt what is going on and distrust the main character and all other characters of course. They are hopefully also page-turners, preferably with short chapters that turn "just one more chapter" into a binge reading marathon with the book done around midnight or later.

Local Girl Missing has all these elements. Perhaps not so many surprising twists, but the book definitely has

the paranoid feeling that makes you think something is wrong thanks to all the things that happen to Francesca. If it's something I like it's when you start to question the main character, is she really so innocent, is she mad or is someone really out to get her? And, what really happened to Sophie Collier eighteen years earlier?

Claire Douglas has written an excellent psychological thriller, it only took me one day to finish it thanks to the interesting and addictive story and I look forward to reading her other books.

Tack till Louise Bäckelin Förlag för recensionsexemplaret!

Louise Wilson says

Twenty one year old Sophie Collier had vanished. The only thing she left behind was a trainer on an old pier. Her friend Francesca was broken hearted.

A body has now been found and Francesca has come back to the seaside town she's tried to forget.

Francesca wishes she had not returned as everywhere she goes there are ghosts from her past.

Will the truth about what happened to Sophie finally be solved?

I loved this book.

I would like to thank Net Galley, Penguin UK -Michael Joseph and the author Clare Douglas for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Susan says

Francesca Howe is a wealthy businesswoman when we first meet her. She lives in a nice house, in London, and helps run her parents hotel business. She is also in a rather dead end relationship and so, when the past intrudes on the present, she is convinced to return to Oldcliffe-on-Sea, the small seaside town where she grew up.

Francesca (or 'Frankie' as she was known as a teenager) receives a call from Daniel, the brother of her childhood friend, Sophie. In 1997, Sophie went missing – all that was found was one of her trainers, left on the old pier where Frankie and her friends often went to spend time. Now, a body has been found which is believed to be Sophie's, and Daniel asks Frankie to return home and help him find out what really happened all those years ago. Was Sophie's disappearance a tragic accident, or was it murder?

I really struggled with this novel. It should have been just the type of crime story I enjoy, but I found the writing style difficult. We wade through so many clichés and metaphors that it reads like a creative writing exercise at times, rather than a novel by an experienced author. As Frankie returns to Oldcliffe, it soon becomes apparent that there is a secret that Frankie and Sophie shared. Threatening notes are put through the door of the apartment where she is staying and she feels as though she is under threat.

This is a novel of secrets, of the past catching up with you, and of characters who do not turn out to be what you expect. Somehow, though, it just fell very flat for me. I cannot say that I either connected with any of the characters, or had any belief in the plot by the end of the novel. I have not read the previous novel by this author, but I know it was a huge success. If you enjoyed her first book, then you may well enjoy this, but I must be honest and say it did not work for me.

Roman Clodia says

I like books that explore small-town secrets and for most of this book I was on-board with where it was going: then it takes a downward turn and ends with one of the most ludicrous 'twists' ever, one that had me giggling out loud at the ridiculousness of it.

Douglas conjures up the atmosphere of a slightly seedy seaside town well, and there are some unexpected twists that took me pleasantly by surprise. But, gosh, that ending! No spoilers, of course, but we do have to suspend a massive amount of disbelief to swallow this... So a good start and middle but the ending lost stars from me for pure unbelievability.

Emily Catherine says

Apparently I am in the minority here in thinking this book is dreadful! The writing was clunky and ridden with clichés, the characters were unlikeable and the 'twist' at the end was so obvious I was surprised and disappointed that it wasn't a red herring.

Just a taste of the prose that had me raising my eyebrows:

"The hot guy who was with Frankie last week is called Leon McNamara. He's half Irish, like me, but with chocolate-brown hair and the most amazing blue eyes I've ever seen. They are the exact same colour as my indigo Levi 501s."

"...the sleet like cold lips kissing my face"

"Does he really need my help to uncover the truth about your disappearance after all this time? Or does he want me here because I remind him of all that we had?"

And all that we lost."

I also felt there were lots of plot points which didn't add up. Why would Frankie remember someone posting her the dog tags if she sent them to herself? Why did Mia know a crying baby would be an effective scare tactic if she didn't know about the miscarriages? Did remains actually wash up on the beach? Why would the police just accept the absolutely mental and improbable story offered by Daniel et al and there be no consequences for faking a death?

Ah this book is ridiculous! I half read, half skimmed through it in one setting and feel I left some of my brain behind with it.

Fictionophile says

Frankie and Sophie were best friends from early childhood.

Sophie Collier came to Oldcliffe-On-Sea with her mother and brother when they ran away from Sophie's abusive father. Francesca (Frankie) Howe lived with her affluent mother and father in the seaside hotel that they ran. Frankie had never had a close relationship with her mother and preferred the company and attention of her dad, Alistair Howe. The beautiful, entitled, and popular Frankie took the less popular and plain Sophie under her wing and the girls were best friends throughout their childhood and adolescence.

Sophie spent a lot of time at Frankie's parents pink hotel and came to be fond of Frankie's Dad. Fatherless, she craved a male role model in her life and Frankie's Dad was always kind to her, letting her borrow books from him etc. When they are sixteen, both girls develop a crush on the same handsome local boy, Jason.

Frankie and Sophie hold a dark secret about a devastating event that happened when they were just sixteen.

When she was just twenty-one years old, in early September of 1997 Sophie died after she fell from the town's decrepit Victorian pier - taking her secret with her...

"Can you convince yourself to believe your own lies?"

Eighteen years have passed since that fateful September and Frankie runs her family's successful hotel business, now located in London. She has put her life back in Oldcliffe-On-Sea behind her and proceeded with her life - until she gets a phone call from Sophie's brother, Daniel. They have found some human remains and are going to test them to see if it is Sophie. Daniel wants Frankie to accompany him when he goes to identify the remains and to help him discover what really happened to his beloved sister. Against her better judgement, Frankie agrees - partly because her current relationship is not working and she craves a little space to think.

"Maybe you can never really escape your past."

Her return to the seaside town brings about a series of events and meetings with people from her youth. Also, her youthful attraction to Sophie's brother Daniel seems to have blossomed into an even more powerful emotion. Then... disturbing notes are delivered to where Frankie is staying:

Has someone discovered the secret from Frankie and Sophie's past?

Then, Frankie begins to see Sophie. Is she imagining things now?

"This place isn't good for me. Too many memories, too many ghosts."

Written via two narratives alternating in perspective between Frankie's present and Sophie's past, this psychological thriller kept me riveted throughout. This is a novel of the often complicated dynamic of female friendships and the destructive nature of lies bred by secrecy. Recommended to all who enjoy a thriller with strong characterization and who don't object to an unreliable narrator.

Joanne Robertson says

I read The Sisters by Claire Douglas last year and while I enjoyed it I hadn't found much to rave about in it....unlike Local Girl Missing which I have just this moment finished and thought it was stunning!

Told in two timeframes, we first meet Francesca when she has a phone call to say that her best friend, who went missing 18 years ago, has been round-up body has been washed ashore. She is devastated and goes back home to be with Sophie's brother Daniel while they await an official identification. Then we swing back in time 18 years to Sophie, who has arrived back home after studying at uni and is back working and socialising with best friend Frankie. Back in the present, we know from the start that Frankie is hiding a secret that she shared with Sophie but someone else seems ready to taunt Frankie with it now she's back home. But as we get to uncover some uncomfortable home truths in both stories, will Sophie's killer be brought to justice?

I just loved the seaside town setting here. Having lived in one myself, I know that cold and empty feeling they have out of season, when all the tourists have gone home and half the town shops close until next summer. Claire Douglas takes this and adds in a whole load of suspects who would want to hurt Sophie and a narrator with a few psychological problems of her own, to send our brains spinning into overdrive trying to work out what happened all those years ago. I found I didn't want to get too attached to any of the characters as I really didn't know who to trust! I found it very easy to visualise the area and the people that Claire was writing about and for that reason I think it would make a brilliant tv drama, it's just the sort of plot that keeps you gripped and on the edge of your seat so I think it would translate well to the small screen.

I've read a lot of books with similar themes recently but this one definitely stood out for me. I think that it benefits from the "Broadchurch" effect as that's what it reminded me of. Not the story but because the setting of a small seaside holiday town, out of season and full of interesting characters with secrets to keep, really turns this into a first rate dark and atmospheric psychological suspense. Highly recommended.

I received a copy of this book via netgalley in return for an unbiased review.
