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books

Grady Hendrix

THE
FINAL
GIRL
SUPPORT
GROUP

TITAN BOOKS

r/lastladies Posted by u/fu(bar)gate 17 months ago
LAST WORD ON FINAL GIRLS doc on youtube has 2.1 million views. WTF? Who cares about a bunch of grandmas with saggy necks. If one of them was hot okay I can understand but I'm so sick of hearing about them

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time wont be kind their 15 minutes were up 15 years ago

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I wish they would all disappear

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r/lastladies Posted by u/orchomenus 17 months ago
be patient remember viper hansen, ricky walker, and walter scroggs are in prison not dead people say dream king still out there one day people will totally forget about FGs then they will get what they deserve

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The Final Girl Support Group



I wake up, get out of bed, say good morning to my plant, unwrap a protein bar, and drink a liter of bottled water. I'm awake for five full minutes before remembering I might die today. When you get old, you get soft.

In the living room I stretch and do forty knee strikes, forty palm heel strikes, and side mountain climbers until sweat drips onto the concrete floor. I do elbow strikes until my shoulders burn, then I get on the treadmill, put the speed up to seven, and run until my thighs are on fire and my chest rasps, and then I run for five more minutes. I have to punish myself for forgetting exactly what the stakes are, especially today.

The bathroom door gets padlocked from the inside while I shower. I make up my bed to eliminate the temptation to crawl back in. I make tea, and it's not until the electric kettle clicks that I have my first panic attack of the day.

It's not a bad one, just a cramp in my chest that feels like a giant hand squeezing my lungs shut. I close my eyes and concentrate on relaxing the muscles lining my throat, on taking deep breaths, on pulling oxygen into the bottom of my lungs. After two and a half minutes I can breathe normally again and I open my eyes.

This apartment is the only place in the world where that's possible. A bedroom, a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom where, as long as I take reasonable precautions, I can close my eyes for two minutes. Out there in the world it's a nonstop murder party, and if I make the slightest mistake I'll wind up dead.

I go into the living room and turn on CNN to see what the body count is today, and from the very first image I know that the next twenty-four hours will be bad.

A live drone shot of a summer camp is buried beneath all the other junk CNN puts onscreen. It shows sedans and emergency vehicles clustered outside the cabins, men in white hazmat suits walking between the trees, yellow police tape blocking the road. They cut to recorded footage of the night before, blue lights flashing in the dark, and the slugline hits me in the gut: *Real Life Red Lake Tragedy Repeats*.

I turn on the sound and the story is exactly what I feared. Someone murdered six Camp Red Lake counselors who were shutting the place down for the season. They used a variety of weapons—hand scythe, power drill, bow and arrows, machete—and would have had a seventh victim except the last one, a sixteen-year-old girl the CNN chyron tells me is named Stephanie Fugate, shoved them out of the hayloft.

The killer hasn't been identified yet, but there's Stephanie onscreen in a class photo with her round face and clear skin, smiling through

her braces with a grin that breaks my heart. After last night, she'll never be that happy again. She's a final girl now.

You're watching a horror movie and the silent killer knocks off the stoner, the slut, the geek, the jock, and the deputy, and now he's chasing the virgin babysitter through the woods. She's the one who said they shouldn't party at this deserted summer camp, break into this abandoned lunatic asylum, skinny-dip in this isolated lake—especially since it's Halloween, or Thanksgiving, or Arbor Day, or whatever the anniversary is of those unsolved murders from way back. The killer's got a chainsaw/boat hook/butcher's knife and this girl's got zip: no upper body strength, no mass, no shotgun. All she's got is good cardio and an all-American face. Yet somehow she kills the killer, then stares numbly off into the middle distance, or collapses into the arms of the arriving police, or runs crying to her boyfriend, makes one last quip, lights one last cigarette, asks a final haunting question, gets taken off in an ambulance screaming and screaming like she's never going to stop.

Ever wonder what happens to those final girls? After the cops eliminate them as suspects, after the press releases their brace-faced, pizza-cheeked, bad-hair-day class photos that inevitably get included on the cover of the true crime book? After the candlelight vigils and the moments of silence, after someone plants the memorial shrub?

I know what happens to those girls. After the movie deals get signed, after the film franchise fails, after you realize that while everyone else was filling out college applications you were locked in a residential treatment program pretending you weren't scared of the dark. After the talk show circuit, after your third therapist just accepts that he's your Zoloft-dispensing machine and you

won't be making any breakthroughs on his watch, after you realize that the only interesting thing that'll ever happen to you happened when you were sixteen, after you stop going outside, after you start browsing locksmiths the way other women browse the windows of Tiffany's, after you've left town because you couldn't deal with the "Why not you?" looks from the parents of all your dead friends, after you've lost everything, been through the fire, started knowing your stalkers by their first names, after all that happens you wind up where I'm going today: in a church basement in Burbank, seated with your back to the wall, trying to hold the pieces of your life together.

We're an endangered species, for which I'm grateful. There are only six of us still around. It used to make me sad there weren't more of us out there, but we were creatures of the eighties and the world has moved on. They used to dust off the clip packages for our anniversaries or the occasional franchise reboot, but these days it's all oil spills and Wikileaks, the Tea Party and the Taliban. The six of us belong to another era. We're media invisible. We might as well not even exist.

As I turn off CNN I realize I miscounted. There are actually seven of us; I just don't like to think about Chrissy. No one does. Even mentioning her name can mess with your head because she's a traitor. So I take a minute, even though I only have three hours to get to group, and I take a deep breath and try to get my focus back.

Adrienne's going to be a mess. Camp Red Lake was where it happened to her, but she bought the place later and turned it into a retreat for victims of violence, mostly survivors of school shootings and kids who got away from their kidnappers. This hits her where

she lives. At least it'll give us something new to talk about besides whatever old business we're still arguing over today.

When I can't put it off any longer, I get ready to head out. Group is the only time I leave this apartment except to go to the mailbox place across the street once a week, to check my escape routes once a month, and my biweekly trips to the corner store for supplies. I don't like risk. My hair is short because long hair can get grabbed. I wear running shoes in case I have to move. I don't wear loose clothing.

I inventory my pockets: keys, money, phone, weapons. I stopped carrying a firearm on public transport after an incident a couple of years back, but I have pepper spray, a box cutter in my right front pocket, and a razor blade taped to my left ankle. I don't wear headphones, I don't wear sunglasses, I make sure my jacket is tight so there's nothing to snag, and then I say good-bye to my plant, take a deep breath, step out of my apartment, and face a world that wants me dead.

FINAL GIRL SUPPORT GROUP

Notes by Dr. Carol Elliott

Session No. 188

September 2010

ATTENDING

Marilyn Torres

Adrienne Butler

Dani Shipman

Lynnette Tarkington

Heather DeLuca

Julia Campbell

Pre-session notes: Surprised to see that this month marks the 16th anniversary of regular group sessions. Facilitating this group falls outside my normal workload, but these women have been my patients in one way or another longer than my children have been alive.

Sad to note that years of strong rapport and good group cohesion has fallen off over the past twelve months. Recent sessions marked by crosstalk, incessant argumentation over minor matters, and relentless interpersonal criticism. Adrienne remains practically a co-facilitator, constantly modeling effective behavior, but Marilyn and Dani seem restless and irritable. Heather's attention-seeking and improvisational approach to recovery cause constant conflict. Lynnette's hyperarousal seems unimproved.

What remaining purpose does group serve after all this time? Who will be the first to terminate? Should I take steps to bring this to an end myself?

The Final Girl Support Group II



A cotton ball sheep says, *Jesus Loves Ewe!*
A trio of very skinny ghosts rising from the grave proclaim,
Ghosts are scary . . . but not the Holy Ghost!

He is Risen! shouts a multicolored tangle of Magic Marker scribbles.

That one gives me pause. All of us in group have a complicated relationship with the idea of resurrection.

We should be sitting in a circle, but the five of us sit in a ragged C because none of us will ever put her back to a door again. Dani has her arms crossed, legs spread, sitting cowboy stoic in front of a wall of orange-and-black construction paper jack-o'-lanterns and hissing cats. She's the last person on earth who needs a reminder that Halloween is coming.

Marilyn has her legs crossed, Starbucks in one hand, new purse in her lap because she won't let it touch the floor. She told Julia it cost \$1,135, but I don't believe her. You can't charge that much for a faux

purse, and Marilyn would never let leather touch her skin.

“It’s hard for me to focus if I haven’t eaten,” Heather is saying in her never-ending, I-haven’t-slept-since-1988 monologue, leaning forward, hands flapping around. “Because of my low blood sugar.”

Apparently, today’s argument will be about snacks.

Julia sits in her wheelchair, clearly bored, drumming her fingers on her wheels, wearing an ironic *World’s Greatest Dad* T-shirt, staring at a large, wrinkled drawing of a flying man with his arms held straight out at his sides that reads, “Jeshus is sad dead alive.”

I used to think it was weird that we met surrounded by Sunday school art, but now it’s become the first thing I look at every month after checking my sightlines and my exits. Not because the artistic self-expression of a bunch of potential murder victims interests me in the slightest. I’m looking for warning signs: pictures of exploding guns and bloody knives, boys drawing themselves as neckless monsters with triangle fangs tearing their parents in half. I’m looking for signs that one of these kids will grow up to be my enemy, to be another one of the monsters that tried to kill us all.

“If you ate before group,” Dr. Carol suggests, “maybe that would help?”

Dr. Carol, the only one in the room who can bring herself to put her back to the door, sits in the mouth of the C, like she has for the past sixteen years, posture perfect, pen poised, notepad resting on one knee, treating Heather’s snack obsession with the same care and concern she applies to everything we say.

“That’s off my schedule,” Heather says. “As a recovering addict, maintaining a schedule is important to my sobriety and I have to leave the home early because, you know, the cops took my license

and I haven't gotten it back yet, so it takes me longer to get here because I think it's important not to be late. Adrienne doesn't have that same level of consideration, apparently."

"I'm sure Adrienne has a good reason for why she's running behind," Dr. Carol says.

"I'll be surprised if Adrienne shows up at all," Julia says. Clearly she saw CNN, too. "Has anyone talked to her? I tried to call but it went to voicemail."

"I imagine she's turned her phone off," Marilyn says, then makes a face like she smells shit. "The press."

Marilyn refused to do any press conferences or give anyone an exclusive after her crisis, arousing the wrath of every reporter in America, and then she married into a mega-rich politically active Republican family, so she's gotten it the worst over the years, but we all know the feeling. The phone that never stops ringing until you finally pull it out of the wall; the reporter you've never seen who calls you by your first name and pretends to have gone to high school with you so convincingly you start to believe them; a distant cousin showing up at the hospital, all full of concern, with a tape recorder spinning inside her bag next to a check from the *National Enquirer*.

"I don't think it's appropriate to discuss Adrienne's situation with anyone but Adrienne," Dr. Carol says. "I'm sure we'll talk about it when she gets here. In the meantime: How do people feel about Heather's concerns?"

There's an awkward moment as we all wait to see if anyone's going to take the bait, but no one does. We're final girls. We're good at escaping traps.