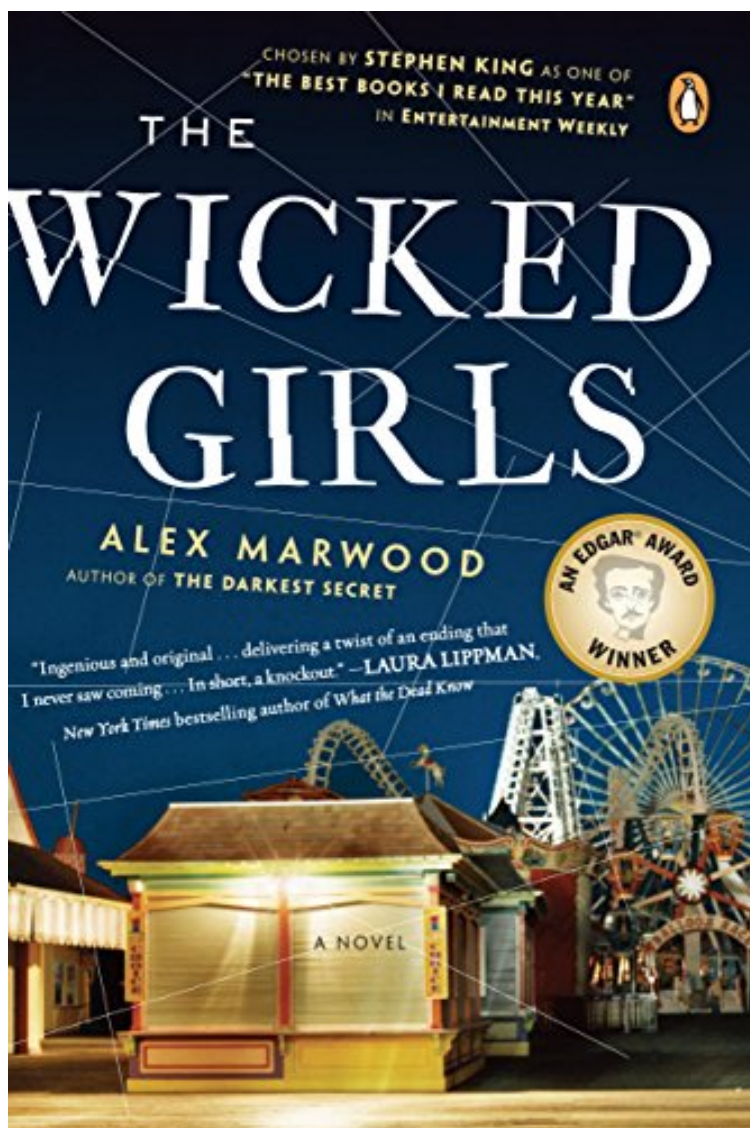


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# The Wicked Girls: A Novel



*Par Alex Marwood*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe suspense keeps the pages flying, but what sets this one apart is the palpable sense of onrushing doom. Stephen King, The Best Books I Read This Year,Entertainment WeeklyAlex Marwoods new book,The Darkest Secret, will be available from Penguin on August 30, 2016The Edgar Award-winning psychological thriller that asks the question: How well can you know anyone?On a fateful summer morning in 1986, two eleven-year-old girls meet for the first time. By the end of the day, they will both be charged with murder. Twenty-five years later, journalist Kirsty Lindsay is reporting on a series of sickening attacks on young female tourists in a seaside vacation town when her investigation leads her to interview carnival cleaner Amber Gordon. For Kirsty and Amber, its the first time theyve seen each other since that dark day so many years ago. Now with new, vastly different livesand unknowing families to protectwill they really be

able to keep their wicked secret hidden? Gripping and fast-paced, with an ending that will stay with you long after you've read it, *The Wicked Girl* stakes you to a thrillingly dark place you've never been before. Ideal for fans of Gillian Flynn, Liane Moriarty, and Tana French. From the Trade Paperback edition.

The girl is dead. She doesn't need to go near her to see that. Chinless, sightless, rag-doll dead. Wearing a striped tank top and a tube skirt; both have gathered around her waist, puppy-fat breasts and white thighs reflected in the mirrors, back, back, back to infinity. Amber is not looking directly at the body. She's nowhere near, in fact. She's cleaned the mirror maze so often that she knows its tricks and turns, the way a figure at the far end of the building can seem, when you enter, to be standing right in front of you. Or in the case of the dead girl half lying, her head and shoulders pressed against the wall. Amber grips the door frame, struggles to breathe. Oh shit, she thinks. Why did I have to find her? She can't be more than seventeen. The mottled face the mouth half open as though she is trying, one more time, to take a breath still has traces of unformed childhood around the jaw. Blonde hair, blown and flicked up. Giant hoop earrings. Eyes made huge by half a pot of electric-blue eyeshadow, glitter gel spangling the naked décolletage. Platform boots, improbable in the angles they form with the mirrored floor. She's been at Stardust, thinks Amber. Saturday. It's Seventies night at Stardust. She feels sick. Glances behind her through the open door and sees that the concourse is empty. As though all her colleagues have dropped off the edge of the world. She steps inside and closes the door to block out the light. Doesn't want anyone else to see. Not yet. Not while shock has ripped her mask away. Thank God I'm wearing rubber gloves, she thinks nonsensically. She has cleaned the place every night for the past three years and, however careful she is, her fingerprints will be all over it. Let alone the prints of half the visitors who've passed through since this time last night. They try to keep the smudges down by handing out disposable plastic gloves on the door, but you can't actually force someone to wear them; can't police the interior 24/7. Innfinityland is the only attraction Amber cleans herself, since her promotion. The place makes everyone uneasy, as though they are afraid that they will get lost and never find their way back, or that the mirrors themselves are infected with ghosts. Too many times the work, which needs to be autistically methodical, has been rushed and skimped, and smears have remained; and in a place like this, a single smear becomes an infinite number, the original hard to track down if you're not working your way through, fingertip by fingertip, glass by glass. She decided long ago that it was easiest simply to do it herself. Wishes fervently now that she hadn't. The girl has green eyes, like Amber's own. Her handbag mock-croc has fallen open and scattered poignant remnants of plans made, hopes cherished. A lipstick, a bottle of JLo, a pink phone with a metallic charm shaped like a stiletto court shoe . . . breezy statements of identity, turned tawdry beneath their owners glassy stare. There is no blood. Just the impression of squeezing fingers livid on her neck. This is the third one this year, Amber thinks. It can't be a coincidence. Two is coincidence; three is . . . oh, you poor child. Amber is cold to the bone, though the night is warm. She edges her way forward slowly, like an old person, one shaking hand supporting her against the mirrors as she moves. As she advances, new reflections cross her sight line: a million corpses strewn across a hall of infinite size. Then suddenly, herself. Face white, eyes large, mouth a thin line. Standing above the body like Lady Macbeth. What were you going to do? Touch her? The thought freezes her to the spot. She's not been thinking. Shock has turned her into a creature of instinct, an automaton. Has made her forgetful. What are you doing? You can't be involved. You can't. Anonymous. You're meant to be anonymous. Get involved, they'll work it out. Who you are. And once they know who you are she feels panic start up inside. The edgy tingle, the queasy itch. Familiar, never far from the surface. She needs to decide quickly. I can't be the one to find her. She begins to back away. Feels her way back to the entrance. The dead girl gazes at infinity. Damn you, Amber thinks, suddenly angry. Why did you have to get yourself killed here? What are you even doing here, anyway? It's been closed for hours. The parks been closed for hours. She catches her own thoughts and lets out a barking, ironic laugh. Shit, she says out loud. Oh God, what am I meant to do? Go and find help. Do what anyone would do, Amber. Go out there and act the way you feel: shocked and scared. No one's going to ask questions. There's someone killing girls in this town, but it doesn't mean they'll recognise who you are. But they'll take your photo. You know what the press are like. Anything to fill their pages; details to make up for lack of facts. You'll be all over the papers as the woman who found the body. I can't do this. Someone tries the entrance door, the sudden noise of the handle turning uselessly making her jump. She hears Jackie and Moses: Jackie chattering and flirting, Moses responding in monosyllables, but the smile clear in his voice. She's always in here, says Jackie. After tea break. Amber? You in there? The doors locked! Amber holds her breath, afraid that even the sound of her exhalation will call to them. Oh God, what do I do? I've got to get out of here. Cmon, says Jackie. Let's try the back. Maybe she's taking a break. Sure, says

Moses. That's it, there's no escape now. She hears their footsteps recede down the steps as they walk off towards the entrance to the service alley. Two minutes before they get here, maybe. She can't get away, can't undo the moment of discovery. She straightens up, steps over the girl's marionette legs and hurries to the emergency exit hidden behind the black curtain beyond. Best they find her out on the steps, out in the fresh air, throwing up. *Revue de presse* The suspense keeps the pages flying, but what sets this one apart is the palpable sense of onrushing doom. Stephen King, *The Best Books I Read This Year*, *Entertainment Weekly* Harrowing. . . . While the received wisdom on violence committed by children seems to be that some people just are born evil, Marwood makes a strong case that these crimes are more likely rooted in poverty, abuse and parental abandonment. Marilyn Stasio, *The New York Times Book* The swirling mass of perceptions and happenings behind the main drama of Kirsty and Ambers past crime is what makes *The Wicked Girls* more than a plot-driven mystery novel. (Not that it isn't also that; Marwood sacrifices no speed, no engaging details or cliffhangers for the sake of the book's spiky undercurrent.) *The Rumpus* In addition to being an excellent intelligent dark thriller in the vein of Gillian Flynn, *The Wicked Girls* presents an intriguing insiders account of salacious British tabloid journalism. *BoingBoing* [Alex] Marwood is equally at home with terrifying, potentially violent scenes and quieter ones revealing the tensions of work and family life. She is also adept at depicting the subtle and not so subtle ways differences in class shape the lives of the girls and the women they've become. *Columbus Dispatch* The pacing is whip-smart. . . . *The Wicked Girls* makes a compelling novel not easily forgotten. *South Florida Sun Sentinel* Riveting from first page to last. . . . A suspenseful, buzz-worthy novel. *Kirkus* (starred review) If Tana French and Gillian Flynn stayed up all night telling stories at an abandoned amusement park, this is awfully close to what they might come up with. *Booklist* (starred review) *The Wicked Girls* is ingenious and original a novel that surprises and rewards its readers, delivering a twist of an ending that I never saw coming, then realized it was the only ending that could truly satisfy. Real, chilling, true to its world and its characters. In short, a knock-out. Laura Lippman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *And When She Was Good* and *What the Dead Know* *The Wicked Girls* is utterly compelling. Its psychologically rich, complex and masterfully plotted. I couldn't put it down, even when I sensed it was taking me somewhere very dark indeed. I can't wait to see what Alex Marwood comes up with next. Jojo Moyes, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Me Before You* and *After You*