

## The Boy Meets Girl Massacre

**Ainslie Hogarth**

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*This grisly and bizarre murder mystery is the perfect YA stepping stone to Stephen King.*

A washed-up detective contacts a movie producer for a meeting. He asks for money and presents the producer not with a script, but with the diary of Noelle Dixon, a teenager killed by a pickax to the head. Eight other bodies, all dead by pickax, smear against the floor of various parts of the same hotel in which Noelle was found. Improbably, this dead girl is the primary suspect in this unsolved case. The producer, thrilled with the bizarreness of the encounter, takes the diary, reads it, and adds his own annotations to those of the detective. This strange, incredibly grisly story will likely thrill teenagers and horrify their parents.

Sixteen-year-old Noelle decides to work at the Boy Meets Girl Hotel, the scene of a cannibalistic murder. In order to try to shake off the gloomy atmosphere of the place, Noelle writes down her thoughts in a diary, but the diary becomes terrifying in and of itself as long stretches appear in a hand that is not quite Noelle's, but not quite someone else's. These instances chronicle animal abuse and a host of other bizarre happenings and thoughts.

As a character, Noelle comes from a rough place. She must handle a father who is sick, demanding, lonely, and pathetic—all of his illness is located in the bowels, making him physically repulsive in addition to being endlessly needy. Noelle's friend Alf works with her and has a shy crush on her. Noelle comes to life in the diary with vivid writing and a kind of teenage thought process rife with swearing and ranting. She also has a terrible habit of picking at an increasingly raw spot on her head until it achieves the consistency of salsa.

The book relies on a great deal of grisly description in creating its horror, whether it is a pickax to the head or the blinding of a small cat. This is definitely not for the weak stomached. For teens not quite ready for Stephen King, this book makes a nice stepping stone.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (Fall 2015)

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