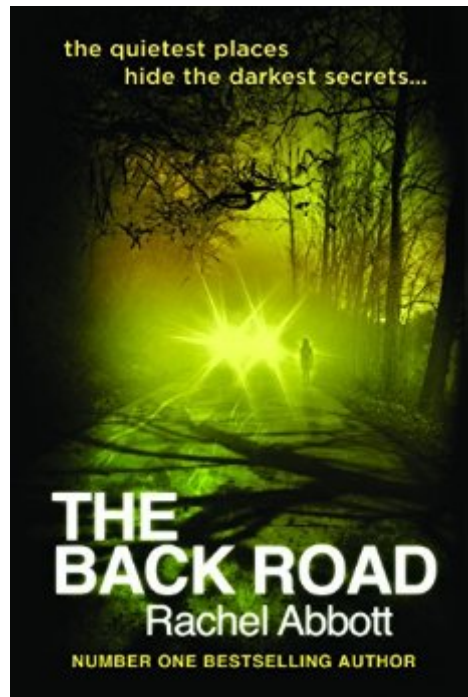


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The Back Road



Synopsis

From the author of the bestseller *Only the Innocent*. In a quiet country village, secrets abound. When a young girl, Abbie Campbell, is knocked over and left for dead on the back road of the village of Little Melham, waves of shock ripple through the small community and a chain of events, which threatens to expose long-kept secrets, is triggered. For Ellie Saunders, the truth about that night puts both her marriage and the safety of her children in jeopardy—she has to protect her family, no matter what the cost. And Ellie isn't the only one with something to hide. She and her sister Leo believe they have put their troubled childhood behind them, but Leo's quest for the truth reveals a terrible secret that has lain hidden for years. Ellie's neighbour, former detective Tom Douglas, has escaped to Little Melham in search of a quiet life, but finds himself drawn into the web of deceit as his every instinct tells him that what happened to young Abbie was far more than a tragic accident. In this gripping novel, the peaceful English countryside belies the horrible truths that lurk beneath the trimmed hedgerows, behind the closed doors of smart sitting rooms and within unspoken conversations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After a shocking prologue and first few chapters that promise a cutting edge story, *The Back Road* hurtles itself into a large group of well-to-do friends with "first world problems" getting together for a dinner party. The main characters, half-sisters Ellie and Leo, grew up together in what can best be described as an Evil Stepmother environment with Ellie getting all the attention, and all the inheritance. Leo consequently left her toxic childhood behind and established herself as a Life Coach with an Internet blog. Ellie stayed behind in their childhood home, married her sweetheart, Max, had twins, and occupies her days lavishly spending using her inheritance. Both sisters, while living very different lives and lifestyles, have remained close. Leo has hesitantly returned to their childhood home, Willow Farm, for Ellie's post-remodel housewarming party. Ellie's friends, wealthy couples with way too much money and too little interest in their own marriages, are not a likeable lot. Fiona doesn't like sex and Charles is away in London too often. Pat left his wife for Mimi, the barmaid, and no one likes Mimi. Gary is a total ass with a new Porsche who shows up at the party, his wife, Penny, in tears. Sean, the contractor who did the remodel, left his drunk of a wife at home. And Tom, a retired detective and new neighbor, seems to be the only normal attendee at the party. The main topic at the dinner party is the recent hit and run accident of a school-age girl, Abby. Left for dead on what is called the "back road", Abby is now unconscious, on a ventilator, and unable to talk. But, as almost every person at the table was driving the back road that night, and reminiscent of an Agatha Christie novel, the reader knows that someone at the party is the culprit.

I loved Rachel Abbot's thriller, *The Back Road* (Thomas & Mercer 2013). It's the story of two girls (Ellie and Leo) thrown together as siblings of a polygamist father. When Leo's mom dies, Ellie's mom is forced to raise both girls which she does in Leo's case with hate and anger, an attitude that gets even worse when the Dad disappears. Leo leaves as soon as she can manage it, returning to the house only after her step mother's death. Both sisters attempt to move on, but are haunted by a miasma of memories. Life refuses to be easy for them. By Chapter One, we know Ellie is being stalked by a man who thinks she loves him, His unwanted attentions begin to unravel the carefully constructed worlds both girls have created to protect themselves from their past. The story has lots of damaged good people, intrigue, the de rigeur damaged ex-cop and woman-who-swears-off-men-who-falls-for-handsome-ex-cop. It has enough sub-plots to keep even the most distractable reader entertained. But it took me a while to get to 'love it'. It starts powerfully, but depressing, with two unnamed girls hiding in a closet while their mum takes care of business in the bedroom. When one sister starts choking, the other decides it's better they are discovered than one of them dies. The next scene is with Ellie, paralyzed with fear over her stalker. Do you see what

I mean? Depressing, all of it. But, Rachel Abbot is a powerful writer, deft with words and a master at unpeeling the plot little by little. I kept reading. Soon, around page 100, despite my natural misgivings about change and new authors, I'd reached that literary tipping point where you either love a book or toss it. I was hooked and remained so for the balance of the 470 pages. Not to say Rachel Abbot was perfect in her delivery.

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