



For readers of *Hidden Valley Road* and *Patient H.M.*, a harrowing exploration of violence against children and its psychological and political consequences, from the author of *The Unfit Heiress*.

PRAISE FOR *GIRLS AND THEIR MONSTERS*

"In *Girls and Their Monsters*, Audrey Clare Farley embraces the complexity of mental health and human relationships. In her hands, the story of the Genain quadruplets is at once disturbing and heartening."

—Josh Levin, award-winning author
of *The Queen*

"[A] powerful but unsettling tale. . . Farley tightly interweaves the quadruplets' lives with the story of America's fraught relationship with mental illness. Haunting and impactful, this story does not leave the mind easily."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"*Girls and Their Monsters* is both an intimate and compassionate portrait of girls growing up under the constant gaze of media, doctors and government agencies, and a well-researched analysis of a nation in the grip of social illness. . . This book is brilliant and riveting."

—Grace M. Cho, author of *National Book Award Finalist, Tastes Like War*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) Farley writes that the story of the Morlok quadruplets is that “of a society professing great concern for its children, while actually exploiting them.” How does this characterization of American culture endure today? What, if anything, has changed?

2) As noted in the prologue, some of the NIMH researchers, including Rosenthal, kept in touch with the sisters out of “genuine concern,” while others moved on. If the quadruplets’ situation was so evidently troubling, why do you think the investigators did not do more for them while or after compiling *The Genain Quadruplets*?

3) Experts ponder whether Sadie’s lack of sex education affected her temperament as an adult. More recently, experts have found a correlation between ignorance of sex and increased risk of sexual abuse. If you had comprehensive sex education, how do you think you would’ve been affected by growing up in a household like Sadie’s? If you did not, how do you believe the lack affected you, if at all?

4) Carl’s belligerence, drunk driving, and cheating are generally overlooked by those surrounding the Morloks. Why, do you suppose? Do you think men today are held more accountable for bad behavior?

5) This book is rife with instances of femininity being weaponized against the women at the center of this story. Helen, for instance, is said to be animal-like and forcibly operated upon. But ideals of masculinity also constrain men, such as Carl and J. Edgar Hoover. Do you feel burdened by sex-gender norms? If so, how?

6) Farley repeatedly underscores the connections between the era’s purity culture and its notions of white supremacy. How could one connect sexual and racial anxieties in today’s political climate? What is the role of religion in stoking—or undermining—these hybrid panics?

7) Farley describes whiteness as a potent but mostly unacknowledged mythology. It shapes lives and institutions while pretending not to exist. How has this or another "invisible" ideology shaped your life?

8) Many researchers latched onto the idea of schizophrenogenic mothers. What do you think that says about their attitudes towards mothers more generally? How can you see these attitudes reflected in Sadie's life, and perhaps in the lives of mothers you know?

9) Did the Morloks' story affect your opinion of mental illness and its treatment? In what ways do societal stigmas or commitments to apolitical medicine plague individuals today? How do these affect outcomes, and how might our institutions be adapted to better care for people?

10) Farley dedicates a chapter each to Sadie and Carl, exploring their experiences in childhood and young adulthood, and the ways these may have influenced their psyches and parenting habits. How are your own parents products of their time and parentage? Does this context guide how you think of them?

11) In the final pages of the book, Farley describes the joy the Morlok sisters were able to find despite their circumstances. What lessons do you take from their perseverance?

12) Did you feel particularly drawn to one of the quadruplets? Which one, and why?