

Book Review: We Are All Guilty Here
By Karin Slaughter

I decided to give Karin Slaughter's latest novel "We Are All Guilty Here" a shot because the promo sounded interesting and listed the book as North Falls #1. In other words, it's the first book in what will likely be a three- or four-book series. I figured, might as well get in on the ground floor.

Unfortunately, I don't plan on riding this elevator to the top.

I should point out that most reviewers rated this book a 4 or 5. This is an outlier review.

The setting is North Falls, a small town in Georgia. During a July 4th fireworks display, two teenage girls – Madison and Cheyenne – disappear. It's a traumatic situation for everyone in town, but especially for Officer Emmy Clifton because one of the missing girls is the daughter of Emmy's best friend, Hannah. And earlier in the evening Emmy, following a public argument with her alcoholic loser husband, turned Madison away when the teen wanted to speak with her.

The pace is solid and the story interesting for the first 149 pages. But then the narrative fast-forwards 12 years, and the tempo slows to a crawl. There's a ton of family drama surrounding Emmy, as well as a couple of interesting twists, that kept me from closing up shop early. But the biggest issue is the repetitive nature of the scenes, such as the painfully nuanced interrogations of suspects. Those drag on forever, and I'd have a lot of money if I had a nickel for every time Emmy's father, Sheriff Gerald Clifton, sat her down and said, "What do we know? What do we think we know?"

And so on.

The plot twists, while interesting, and certainly indicative of just how messed up Emmy's family history is, got to the point where they seemed too unbelievable. Where, as a reader, you might roll your eyes and mumble, "Give me a break."

The ending is anticlimactic, with far too much time spent helping the reader put all the pieces together. In my opinion, if we can't do that on our own from the periodic breadcrumbs that *should* be scattered about, then the author hasn't done a very good job weaving together all the threads.

I would like to say I'm looking forward to the next book in the North Falls series, but that's not the case. Just 2-1/2 stars from me, mostly on the strength of the opening 149 pages. Maybe it would have been better as a short story.