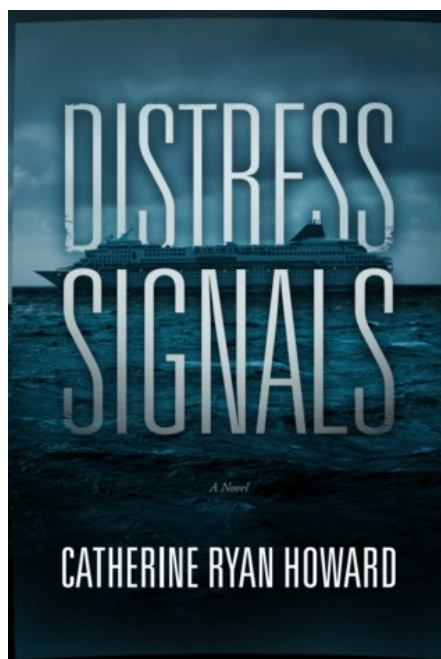




Distress Signals

Catherine Ryan Howard

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Catherine Ryan Howard

Distress Signals Catherine Ryan Howard

A debut thriller that channels *Gone Girl*, from the newest writer to watch, Catherine Ryan Howard

The day Adam Dunne's girlfriend, Sarah, fails to return from a Barcelona business trip, his perfect life begins to fall apart. Days later, the arrival of her passport and a note that reads "I'm sorry--S" sets off real alarm bells. He vows to do whatever it takes to find her.

Adam is puzzled when he connects Sarah to a cruise ship called the *Celebrate*--and to a woman, Estelle, who disappeared from the same ship in eerily similar circumstances almost exactly a year before.

To get answers, Adam must confront some difficult truths about his relationship with Sarah. He must do things of which he never thought himself capable. And he must try to outwit a predator who seems to have found the perfect hunting ground ...

Distress Signals Details

Date : Published February 2nd 2017 by Blackstone Publishing (first published May 5th 2016)

ISBN : 9781504757522

Author : Catherine Ryan Howard

Format : Hardcover 368 pages

Genre : Mystery, Thriller, Fiction, Mystery Thriller, Contemporary

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Download and Read Free Online Distress Signals Catherine Ryan Howard

From Reader Review Distress Signals for online ebook

Rachel Hall says

3.5 stars

Marketed with a tag line claiming to be "An Incredibly Gripping Psychological Thriller with a Twist You Won't See Coming", this debut thriller from Irish author Catherine Ryan Howard certainly lives up to the billing by virtue of it largely hanging on a little known element of maritime law. Opening with an intriguing prologue *Distress Signals* then segues into a was she taken or did she disappear thriller.. with thirty-year-old Adam Dunne always firmly one step behind the tail of his girlfriend of ten years, Sarah O'Connell. Having lived with his girlfriend for the last eight years and happily secure about their future together in the light of having brokered a deal to sell his first screenplay to a Hollywood studio (subject to re-writes and edits), Adam is feeling positive. Spending most Saturday nights with a takeaway and box set with occasional nights out with the girls, Sarah's supposed work conference in Barcelona leaves Adam, a notorious procrastinator, with the free time on his hands to complete his rewrites. Since dropping out of university Adam has dreamt of making it as a writer whilst Sarah has worked hard and funded their life together. Promising to pick her up from the airport on her return flight, the last Adam sees of his girlfriend is their final wave goodbye in the departure lounge. When he fails to make contact with Sarah despite seeing messages being read and not returned and comes to understand that Sarah has altered her appearance and intentionally deceived him, a showdown with best friends, Rose and Moorsey, break the bombshell news that Sarah has left Adam for another man. But Adam knows 'his' Sarah and is flabbergasted by her selfish behaviour, from failing to contact her elderly parents to pulling a sickie at work. Everything she seems to be wilfully indulging in is everything that Adam, the man she has spent the last ten years with, thought contrary to her very nature. Adam starts to worry that maybe Sarah's disappearing act is not all it appears.. could she be in danger and subject to duress?

Stymied by the Guards and the Blue Wave cruise liner, *Celebrate*, that was Sarah's last known whereabouts, Adam refuses to give up his pursuit, but his online research and meeting with another husband, Peter Brazier, whose wife disappeared from the *Celebrate* exactly one year ago brings renewed hope. As Adam soon finds out, the Guards are not permitted to investigate, as any crime committed at sea falls under the jurisdiction of the police that govern the country in which the ship was registered, and in the case of the *Celebrate* this means Barbados. Whilst an American passenger would be the responsibility of the FBI for all other countries the former law applies and seeing as Peter's wife and Sarah were British and Irish respectively, the two men decide to go it alone.. As Adam and Peter unite to venture aboard the *Celebrate* are they prepared for a confrontation with a cruise ship serial killer?

I was fascinated by the hoops which Adam was forced to jump through on the way to reporting Sarah's disappearance and with the Garda seeing her behaviour as all wilfully contributing to alter her appearance and employed duplicitous behaviour in order to avoid detection. The bizarre array of tricks we play in an effort to impatiently wait for a communication all come into play, from a phone going straight to voicemail after having rung unanswered for days and the news that a text message has been delivered and read becoming mired with implications. The constant refreshes on all technological applications certainly heightens the tension in *Distress Signals* and ratchets up the suspense element for a cracking start.

A second thread runs alongside the Adam and Sarah mystery and involves Corinne Dupont, a French native and grey haired member of cabin staff aboard the *Celebrate* seeking a reunion with the son she lost contact with. Given the corresponding tale of Romain, a young boy with a history marred by misunderstanding whose mother ostracises him from the family, it isn't hard to see where this thread is leading. Readers first hear of Romi (Romain) as a young boy in 1989 and at various junctures his tale and misdemeanours are

relayed. Despite being equally moving, working out how it all links back to the main Adam and Sarah theme thread is a near impossibility. Whilst I did not find it hard to move between the two storylines, others may find this a hindrance as it interrupts the fascinating main Adam and Sarah plot.

At 350 pages Distress Signals seemed a little drawn out, overemphasising the idiosyncrasies of maritime law, and is probably best consumed at a relative pace for fear of forgetting the intricacies and hoops which Catherine Ryan Howard jumps through on route to the finale. Overall though, Distress Signals is a wonderfully immersive story with numerous twists and turns which will keep readers hooked. An enjoyable ride but all in all a convoluted affair which requires readers to follow a treacherous journey, riddled with convenient coincidences making the pay-off at conclusion underwhelming. However, it is certainly fun to suspend disbelief and it was the second half of the novel where the story floundered, losing credibility and ending in what felt a slightly rushed conclusion.

Margaret Madden says

Adam Dunne has turned a corner. After years of being a struggling writer, his script has piqued interest and it looks like his life is about to become everything he has dreamed of. He can't wait for his girlfriend, Sarah, to return from a business trip to Barcelona so the celebrations can begin in earnest. There is just one problem. He can't contact her. When she fails to arrive back on her planned flight, Adam realizes something is terribly wrong. Digging deeper, he discovers that she was not even meant to be on a work trip. It seems she had embarked on a cruise, and not alone either. A handwritten note arrives at Adam's home, attached to Sarah's passport, with the simple words "I'm sorry". Adam refuses to believe that Sarah has simply left him, and as the authorities are subject to 'at sea' restrictions, he begins his own investigation into Sarah's disappearance...

Catherine Ryan Howard's thriller debut is something special. She has taken the crime fiction genre and cleverly added an element of legal and procedural uncertainty. What happens when a crime is committed aboard a cruise ship, miles from land? What country has jurisdiction and is there a definitive person, or even state, to hold responsible for any wrong doing? These questions are addressed and answered as we travel alongside Adam on his quest for the truth. There are parallel stories intertwined throughout the novel, where the reader is treated to snippets of other lives and the atmosphere is taut and thrilling. The cruise ship, the *Celebrate*, is a character in itself. Its many bars, restaurants, swimming pools and staff quarters make for fine reading. The onboard politics are divulged whilst the secrets are hidden behind many doors and on many different levels. Surrounded by the ocean, the waves of intrigue gain momentum and the chapters lead the reader on a bumpy ride of climatic thrills. This is one of those books that has you thinking 'just one more chapter' at each sitting. A constant, thrilling pace is maintained throughout with no unnecessary padding and each chapter is equally as important as the last. There are red herrings, blind corners and a multitude of possible endings. Don't be overly confident that you have it all figured out, as each page brings more possibilities.

Distress Signals is a brave and assertive fiction debut from this young Irish author. She writes with confidence, without facetiousness and has earned her place alongside some great crime fiction writers from this small island. Don't presume that it is a book just for females either. The cover is misleading. A male protagonist and sharp, snappy dialogue makes this ideal for fans of Harlan Coben, David Baldacci and James Patterson. I cannot think of a better book to grab for the summer holidays than this one. It has it all. From Cork to Barcelona and onto the vast oceans of a cruise company's well-travelled routes, this is a page-turner that should be packed in every suitcase this year. Just don't expect to dip in and out of it. It will grab you from the very start and you will lose all sense of reality while it's in your hands. Maybe buy two copies, as your spouse/partner/friend may feel a little left out? I promise they will be just as hooked as you will be...

Frances says

2.5* The first half of Distress Signals had all the elements of suspense, mystery, and was on its way to a four star review. However, with two sub plots the novel eventually became overly top-heavy, the ending anti-climatic and rushed. Many other readers have rated Distress Signals much higher and enjoyed it.

** Thank you to Blackstone Publisher and NetGalley for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for my honest review. **

Cphe says

There are two mystery/thriller elements running concurrently throughout this novel. A lot of the story takes place on the cruise ship "Celebrate". The first mystery involves a rather self centred writer Adam Dunne and his search for his missing girl friend Sarah who was last seen aboard the Celebrate.

The secondary mystery involves a mother and son and their dysfunctional relationship which is also resolved aboard the cruise ship.

The story is revealed through the three separate points of view, Adam and the mother and her son Rami. This gave the delivery a bit of a disjointed feel for this reader.

I really enjoyed the mystery involving Adam and Sarah, I thought it was well thought out and strangely believable. The "maritime law" aspect of the story made for interesting reading as well.

Overall I enjoyed this mystery/thriller the premise of the story was interesting.

Karen says

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/n...>

DISTRESS SIGNALS BY CATHERINE RYAN HOWARD

This Five Star Read was planted by the seed of the link I posted above. From an article of November, 11, 2011 printed in The Guardian an article called "Lost at Sea". The article is a true story in the above link. The author has written a fascinating book of fiction which she uses her creative license in Distress Signals. Exceptions are if you are a United States citizen the FBI will investigate if you are pushed overboard or a missing person while in international waters on a cruise ship. As in this novel as of this writing if you live anywhere else in the world and are missing from a cruise Maritime law takes effect. Wherever the cruise ship is registered and licensed for tax purposes is who will investigate whether it is Barbados or the Bahama's.

In this novel Sarah tells her boyfriend that she has to travel Barcelona for a conference. They are from Cork, Ireland. Adam and Sarah have been together for ten years. Just as Adam gets a meeting to sell his script in America, Sarah becomes tired of the relationship and sneaks off on a cruise with another man. She is

declared missing by Adam and her parents. They go to the Ireland authorities who tell them that Sarah is an adult and she has the right to willingly disappear. A person isn't technically missing unless there is some indication that harm has been done. Even then if you are British or in the novel from Ireland and you are pushed overboard or disappear you are subject to Maritime Law. The cruise ship that you go missing has to wait for the authorities from the country where the cruise ship is registered. In this novel it happens to be Barbados

By the time that a person is discovered missing, the cruise ship could be hundreds of miles from where you are lost at sea. Then investigators are dispatched in this case it was Barbados. There was a law passed in 1976, there was an environmental agreement called the Barcelona Convention, where no part of the Mediterranean Sea is classed as international waters. In practice the nations bordering it still lose their jurisdictional claims and responsibilities twenty-four miles off their coasts.

It is scary that this really is based on the link that begins my review. I loved this book. I read the article from the above link. My apologies in advance if when you click on the above link and it does not take you to the November 11, 2011 article Lost at Sea that was printed in The Guardian, please type in what I have attempted as a link to the Guardian. Type in your search engine the above URL address that appears at the top of my review. For more information go to www.InternationalCruiseVictims.org

Thank you to Net Galley, Catherine Ryan Howard and Blackstone Publishing for providing me with my digital copy for a fair and honest review..

Kate~Bibliophile Book Club says

I started Distress Signals and within the first 13 pages I was grabbed hook, line and sinker (see what I did there!). This book was just brilliant! Once I started reading, I didn't want to stop!!! I loved everything about it to be honest. The writing style makes the book easy to read, and the story flows well. Distress Signals is about Adam and Sarah, who are living happily together, with Sarah working while Adam is working on his script for his agent. Sarah is to go to Barcelona for a conference and doesn't return, and when Adam gets her passport in the post with a note attached he thinks something has happened. What ensues is a chaotic search for Sarah. This in turn raises more questions about what was really going on in their relationship. It leads Adam far from home and into danger.

I'm useless at describing what happens in books, this is why I let the blurb do the talking usually!!!:)

I loved this book as it switched between present and past, but the reader didn't know where the past was going to figure in the book. I have to be honest, the glimpses into the past made me feel really uncomfortable reading them. The subject matter is rather sensitive at times I think! However, once everything was pieced together, I almost felt like banging my head for not realising!!!! Catherine Ryan Howard has written a great novel in Distress Signals. It is a tense, fast read with a really great story.

Sue says

DISTRESS SIGNALS is the brilliant debut thriller from Catherine Ryan Howard, a Cork-born writer. This is a murder/mystery story taking place on a cruise ship. I really enjoyed this novel and was fully immersed in the story. Keep this author on the radar!

The day Adam Dunne's girlfriend, Sarah, fails to return from a Barcelona business trip, his perfect life begins to fall apart. Days later, the arrival of her passport and a note that reads "I'm sorry--S" sets off real alarm

bells. He vows to do whatever it takes to find her.

Adam is puzzled when he connects Sarah to a cruise ship called the Celebrate--and to a woman, Estelle, who disappeared from the same ship in eerily similar circumstances almost exactly a year before.

Adam, a writer of screenplays for movies and Sarah, his girlfriend, who works in recruitment have lived together for about eight years. Currently Sarah was in Barcelona on work, a conference...but something was wrong...was she so busy that in two days she hadn't contacted Adam.

Adam is frantic! Why isn't she returning his calls or emails? Nobody will believe that something bad has happened to her as it was not in her nature to act this way. Lots of questions that need answering.

To get answers, Adam must confront some difficult truths about his relationship with Sarah. He must do things of which he never thought himself capable. And he must try to outwit a predator who seems to have found the perfect hunting ground ...

There is more than one story line to the overall plot, with many characters, but no trouble to follow. Everything comes together in the end. And the ending was a definite surprise...and not one I saw coming!

After reading this novel, I am sure that I will never be boarding a cruise ship...or at least with a more informed mindset.

I highly recommend this debut novel. Looking forward to reading more from this author.

Many thanks to Blackstone Publishing and NetGalley for supplying a copy of Catherine Ryan Howard's "Distress Signals".

Linda Strong says

What a terrific story! DISTRESS SIGNALS is a compelling murder mystery wrapped up in the cruise industry. After all, if you want to kill someone, what better place? Do the deed and throw the body overboard in the dark of night. By the time the passenger is reported missing, the ship is many miles away.

There are different stories being told that somehow manage to dovetail together seamlessly. One is Adam ... his girlfriend disappeared on a cruise ship. The other is a mother, a crew member of the same cruise ship, looking for her not very loved adult son.

There are many characters, but easy to follow. Full of surprises, there are major twists toward the end that changes everything you thought you knew. Incredible writing ... I am fairly positive that I will never be boarding a cruise ship.

Highly recommended!

Chelsea Humphrey says

So this first blipped on my radar back when non-US folks had access for this book, and I remember feeling so jealous and thinking “Ba-humbug! I needed this book yesterday you turds!” Thankfully the author is about as awesome as they come and heard my pleas, having a very early copy shipped my way. How did I repay her? By reading it way later than was acceptable, and for that I send my sincerest apologies. While I may be late to the party, I’m definitely on the bandwagon of feeling this book was the best cruise ship thriller I have ever read. There were many unique parts to this story, and while it had a slow burn in the beginning, it began to take off at a soaring speed once the initial details were set up.

*“Evil was a Hollywood creation. Violence was what happened in foreign places fifteen minutes into “Six One News”-so called because, here in Ireland, the evening news started a minute late so the bells of Angelus could be played on national TV. Bad stuff happened to **other** people, in **other** places, all of them far, far away from here.”*

Right off the bat the author addresses issues of privilege and how different it is for those of us who obtain that privilege, as we never have to feel the realness of everyday violence and terror like a majority of the world. I was initially wary of the characters; neither Sarah nor Adam are particularly likable in the beginning, but as the story takes shape and progresses, the character of Adam grows and progresses too. If I’m honest, the character of Sarah changes and grows as well. What began for me as not wanting to connect with two whiny, grown children formed into a real interest and anxious following of people subject to multiple tragedies. I know this isn’t the entire focus of the story; in fact, most would say “this is a thriller, not literary fiction!”, but I found it endearing and encouraging that a book could contain such relatable characters while keeping up the compulsive readability and excitement to earn the term “psychological thriller”.

I found once the pacing picked up, it didn’t let go until the final pages were turned. Lately I’ve found myself reading a slew of really great mysteries and thrillers that were exciting but also predictable. This was a book I thought I had figured out from early on, before I read the first page to be exact; however, I’m pleased to say that I had none of the plot figured out. There were so many various threads that all came together in the end which made this a twisty read, and while the twists and turns were very exciting and fresh, the entire worth of the book wasn’t weighted on that one aspect. I also greatly appreciated the time and research Ryan-Howard put into this story; while it is fiction, it is very realistic and abides by the current maritime laws we have in the real world. I loved reading her note in the end regarding the research she put in and would be very excited to read an interview with more information on how she incorporated not only these facts, but organizations we all can invest in to help make cruise ships a safer place with a heavier hand of justice for every passenger. Highly recommended to thriller fans, especially those who, like me, are always looking for a good cruise ship themed read. I am beyond excited to see what Catherine decides to write next, as it likely will also be filled with in-depth research translated into an exciting, fictional read.

***Many thanks to the author and publisher for my copy; it was a pleasure to provide an honest, unbiased review.**

**** I couldn’t find a good place to insert this, but there is a narrative from the past that contains some graphic content that may be disturbing for some readers involving violence toward a child. These scenes were necessary and not added for shock value.**

Trish at Between My Lines says

This review was originally posted on [Between My Lines]

Green Giants is my feature where I share some of my favourite books by Irish Authors. I’m passionate

about Irish Authors, as they supply us with an entertaining and exciting mix of books, so hopefully you will find something new to try. Today I'm featuring **Distress Signals by Catherine Ryan Howard** which intrigued and confounded me .

Distress Signals kicks off with a girl who fails to return from a work trip and then sidelines us with a note saying 'I'm sorry'. Before we know it we are floundering blindly through an intriguing mystery.

First line of Distress Signals by Catherine Ryan Howard

"I jump before I decide I'm going to."

My thoughts on Distress Signals by Catherine Ryan Howard

This page-turning mystery perplexed and fascinated me. The main character Adam can't understand what happened to his girlfriend and in his attempts to track her down; he discovers things about Sarah that make no sense to him. I loved his confusion as it mirrored mine.

Location, Location!

The setting jumps from Cork, Ireland to a luxurious cruise ship, Celebrate that set off from Barcelona. Both settings described lively locations and oozed atmosphere. I loved the Cork setting in particular as I know it so well. Adam writes screenplays and has finally landed his first contract. I loved the glimpses into his working life as it felt authentic . I feel certain that the sheer hard slog represents the experiences of many would be authors.

Adams's logical mind impressed me too. As a writer, he is adept at research. So when Sarah vanishes, he draws on the internet to try to retrace her steps and to figure out the hows and the whys. I never understand why more people don't do this in crime fiction, as it's an obvious starting point for me.

I couldn't connect the dots!

For the majority of the book I was puzzled. I couldn't make all the characters and the plotlines fit together into a clear picture. I love when the suspense is held as all too often I guess the plot and it's so much more satisfying to spend the book speculating. Or in the case of this one, I was lost at sea and paddling around in circles but making zero progress!

The author explains Maritime Law which makes the setting at sea so much scarier. In fact I no longer think of cruise ships as relaxing locations. Now they seem far more sinister and not so appealing! But then again if I won a free one, I would take my chances!

Overall this is a well written début novel that establishes Catherine Ryan Howard as a suspense writer worth

watching.

Who should read Distress Signals by Catherine Ryan Howard?

I'd highly recommend this to you if you like layered suspense novels and a mystery to keep you reading late into the night. Fans of Ruth Ware, Liz Nugent and Linwood Barclay should also appreciate this one.

Liz Barnsley says

Distress Signals is the perfect storm (yes I really did that) when it comes to psychological thrillers, of which I read an awful lot (sometimes a truly AWFUL lot) this genre being the one exploding everywhere for quite some time now – so to bring to that something that is entirely intelligent, brilliantly plotted throughout and engaging to the point of genius is quite a feat. Hmm.

So with Distress Signals (and trust me you couldn't pay me a million pounds to get on a cruise ship right now) we have Adam whose girlfriend has disappeared into thin air. Unable to convince anyone that something awful has happened and with no hope of official investigation, he takes it upon himself to find out the truth...risking an emerging career and almost everything else to do so.

With a sharp eye towards character and plotting, Catherine Ryan Howard takes you around the houses, overseas and back again, weaving a twisty tale of relationships gone wrong, secrets hidden and opportunities lost. Beautifully constructed, a web of intrigue with an atmospheric and often downright creepy tone, several strands come together to form a really addictive whole. What I particularly liked about it and what made it stand out for me was the completely cohesive plot – the little nuances, the clever distractions, the colliding of several different events, so that you keep turning those pages to find out the outcome, which may end up surprising you utterly. Its just damned clever and if there was one talent I wish I had, its this one. Sadly no, so you writers will have to keep writing them and I'll just have to keep finding them.

This reminded me in sense and feeling of Day Four from Sarah Lotz – the cruise ship element of course feeding into that rather random comparison seeing as how Day Four is fantasy and Distress Signals is very very firmly set in reality , but its the atmospheric sense I'm talking about. That thing where you know there is something just around the corner but you can't QUITE see what it is, that right there is what makes a psychological thriller crackle and pop. Distress Signals crackled and popped more than a whole boxful of Rice Crispies and is a lot more delicious to boot.

(Oh and just on a personal note – I see on Amazon that this book apparently has a “Twist you wont see coming” – PLEASE stop it publicity bods really. Let people enjoy the read, not spend the entirety looking for a twist that may or may not ultimately satisfy. Distress Signals really, the whole THING is a twist. In that its blinking good and the author didn't need to use any ridiculously unlikely plot devices to achieve that.)

Loved it. Highly Recommended.

Joanne Robertson says

I was so glad that I didn't go on a cruise for my summer holidays this year after reading Distress Signals!

Lounging by a hotel pool seemed a much better idea especially after watching a few programmes recently about cruise liners-i really had absolutely no idea how big they really were! It was also a shock to find out just how much goes on behind the scenes of a big and successful cruise ship. And here Catherine Ryan Howard has created a complex mystery based around what has become a very popular holiday for all ages in recent years.

Adam Dunne has been with his girlfriend for nearly 10 years. He has been trying to make it as a scriptwriter and is actually on the brink of his big breakthrough. All it needs is a rewrite, his agent is on his case, and a large cheque will be deposited in his bank account. His dreams will have come true! But what about his dependable girlfriend Sarah? Her job means that she is off to Barcelona for a few days. Adam isn't worried when she isn't in contact much, it's work and she will be busy. But when he goes to collect her from the airport, she isn't there and seems to have disappeared into thin air. Adam won't leave any stone unturned until he finds out what has happened to her and the trail leads him to a large cruise liner...the Celebrate.

I really loved Adam!!! He was just your typical Mr Dependable, stuck in his social routine, not reading any of the signs that were pretty obvious when he looked back on them. He thinks the money he makes will solve all his problems and he and Sarah will live happily ever after. But a different Adam emerges when Sarah goes missing and he physically can't rest until he finds out what happens to her.

The author has really done a brilliant job of creating a storyline here that is based on factual accounts of things that have happened on cruise liners. I found it absolutely fascinating especially how maritime law works which seems a rather bizarre way of solving crimes that happen at sea. It really was an ingenious way to involve her characters into the plot, which was a twisty journey to find out what had happened not just to Sarah but also others who had disappeared under mysterious circumstances. I was totally behind Adam all the way even though the prologue shows us a side of him that doesn't seem to tie with the person we meet at the beginning. The three viewpoints keep us guessing how all the threads of the story will come together and I have to admit that I thought I knew where this was going BUT I wasn't as clever as I thought I was!

This is a great debut from an author who really seems to have an in-depth understanding of today's traveller and I thought it was thoroughly well researched so that the plot flowed with ease. The pace never flagged and I was totally caught up in the plight of Adam as he searched to find out the truth.

Highly recommended!

Karen says

4.5*

Adam and Sarah have been together for over 10 years. Adam's ambition is to be a writer and whilst he has been pursuing this dream Sarah has been the breadwinner. It's been a struggle but finally life is looking better. Adam has a film studio interested in his script but it needs some editing. Sarah tells him that she has to go to Barcelona for a work conference for a few days, instead of going with her Adam stays home to work. He sees her off at the airport, goes home and waits for Sarah to contact him, and waits.....and waits.

It is actually quite believable that you wouldn't be too alarmed for a day or so - you'd tell yourself that Sarah might have lost her phone, or it's out of charge. It's a little surprising that she can't get in contact at all but maybe she really is genuinely so busy at this conference. Its only as the days pass that Adam becomes increasingly more concerned. He then discovers something that completely rocks his world.

Distress Signals is Catherine Ryan Howard's debut thriller and it really is very different. For one thing, a cruise ship is a major character in the story. In-between the main chapters of Adam's efforts to find Sarah, we hear the story of a young French boy, Romain and follow him through the late 1980/early 1990s. There is something quite sad but disturbing about him and I wondered how he connected to the story?

As well as the thriller element, the book gives insight into the life of a crew member on a cruise ship. One such crew member featuring here is Corinne, one of the cabin attendants. She is older than many of her colleagues and you can feel her weariness through the pages. As a cruise passenger, I've seen at first-hand how hard the crew work and what long hours they do and so I had a great deal of sympathy for Corinne. However there is a mystery surrounding her which adds another element of suspense to the story and again, her connection will keep you wondering. One very interesting fact included in the story which I wasn't aware of, was concerning the maritime law and international waters – any investigation into a death or disappearance on a ship is the responsibility of the country where the ship is registered unless an American citizen is involved and then the FBI automatically has jurisdiction. In this story, the cruise company, Blue Wave, take full advantage of this maritime law and do their very best to best to hush up any incidents.

The reader can feel Adam's frustration with the lack of assistance from the Irish Garda. Because Sarah was an adult she was not considered to be 'at risk' and the feeling was that she had chosen to disappear. Even when they were faced with evidence showing that there were suspicious circumstances, not much help was forthcoming and it was down to Adam to make his own investigations. I liked Adam. He was an unremarkable man caught up in a remarkable set of circumstances and his efforts put the Garda to shame.

The author writes confidently, her characters are believable and her writing style generally is very readable. The various threads to the story are suspenseful in their own right and all the way through I was trying to guess how they tied in. I thought I had worked it out but then another twist would appear and throw me off course. Every time I had to put the book down, I was keen to get back to it which for me, always makes for an enjoyable read. For a debut thriller this was very good indeed and I would certainly like to read more by Catherine Ryan Howard.

My thanks to the publisher Corvus for the paperback copy to review.

Amy says

All of my reviews can be found on www.noveltgossip.com

This opened with my favorite type of prologue, just enough to get you curious about what lead to a dramatic event, but leaves enough to the imagination that you're still utterly clueless.

Adam and Sarah have been together ten years, and things are going well for them. Or are they really? Adam has finally sold his script to a Hollywood production company and they finally have more breathing room financially. Then Sarah heads Barcelona for a work conference and never disembarks from the plane home. Suddenly, Adam realizes that there are things he doesn't know about his girlfriend. When he seeks help, the local Garda are unconcerned and feel he has nothing to worry about. He has no choice but to take matters into his own hands and unwittingly finds himself in grave danger.

Psychological thrillers are, dare I say it? My favorite genre, I read them every chance I get. This one is a standout and one I can highly recommend for fans of the genre. There are several perspectives; Adam as he searches for Sarah, Corinne, a woman who works on the Celebrate, and Romain, though his are mostly told in flashbacks starting in the nineties. Corinne's sections made sense as there was an obvious connection to

Adam and Sarah, but I drove myself crazy trying to figure out how Romain would tie in. When all these storylines are finally weaved together it's incredible, Ryan Howard truly knows how to craft a complex plot. I felt a bit like Adam must have as I was trying to fit puzzle pieces together, like I was missing something obvious, but what?!

Apparently a cruise ship is the perfect place to commit a crime as maritime law makes things very muddled and confusing. Jurisdictions are murky and most times, heads are turned as it's easier to avoid the headache. Being made aware of this by the author added an extra layer of tension as the story unfolded, and it was already on the suspenseful side to begin with. I'm so appreciative of a tragic ending, but also one that is able to shock and awe me, and this one managed to do both. It also broke my heart, if you've read this, you'll know exactly what I mean. What a remarkable debut, I'll be watching Catherine Ryan Howard's career closely.

Book of Secrets says

As I was listening to Catherine Ryan Howard's nerve-racking debut thriller, I kept wondering if the book was sold in cruise ship gift shops. If so — eek! Nothing like adding some paranoia to your vacation! Seriously though, *DISTRESS SIGNALS* was an amazing read. There are many layers to this complex mystery, and the characters really stand out.

When Adam Dunne's girlfriend Sarah doesn't return from a business trip, he manages to track her last whereabouts to a Mediterranean cruise ship called the *Celebrate*. Was she the victim of foul play, or did she decide to disappear on her own? The cruise ship company is less than helpful, and Adam soon discovers that these ships are like their own little cutoff worlds. Maritime law can be a tricky and frustrating thing. When Adam learns of another woman's disappearance on the same ship a year earlier, he ends up on the *Celebrate* himself to search for answers.

I enjoyed this book very much. It felt realistic as to what someone would go through to find a missing loved one. Nice build up of tension watching Adam goes through the steps, and trying to figure out how the other characters connect with Sarah's disappearance. I loved as the layers unfolded, leading up to a surprising twist that changed everything. *DISTRESS SIGNALS* is going on my 2017 favorites list!

Audiobook • 11 hrs, 42 mins • Narrators: Alan Smyth, Bronson Pinchot, Suzanne Toren

Wonderful performances all-around for the audio version of *DISTRESS SIGNALS*. Alan Smyth was the voice of Adam, and he did a great job conveying Adam's desperation and confusion during his search for Sarah. To avoid spoilers, I don't want to go into detail about Bronson Pinchot's and Suzanne Toren's characters, but I will say that their performances were spot-on too, capturing their characters' nuances. I'd highly recommend giving this book a listen!

Disclosure: I received a copy of this audiobook from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.
