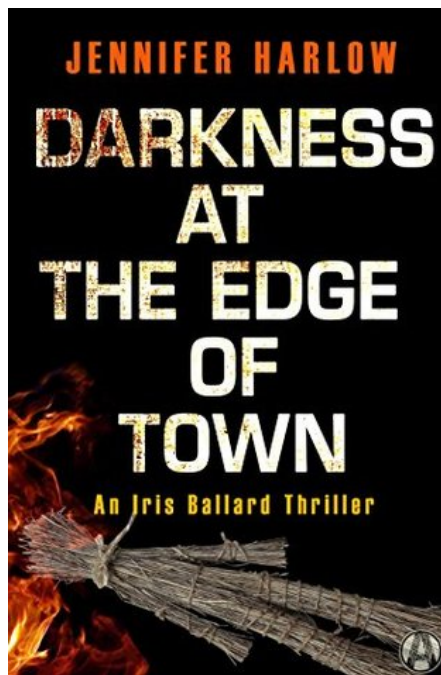




Darkness at the Edge of Town

Jennifer Harlow

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Darkness at the Edge of Town

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Darkness at the Edge of Town Jennifer Harlow

A complicated, charismatic forensic psychologist tries to rescue her brother from the clutches of a maniacal cult leader in this edge-of-your-seat psychological thriller from the author of *Beautiful Maids All in a Row*.

After catching an infamous serial killer, Dr. Iris Ballard has become a TV sensation. Exhausted from her appearances on the talk-show circuit, she's looking forward to some quality time with Luke Hudson, her former FBI partner and on-again, off-again lover. The last thing Iris wants is to get pulled back to her dying Rust Belt hometown, but after the frantic call from her mother, she doesn't have a choice.

Iris is a disgrace in Grey Mills, Pennsylvania, but her twin brother has gone and outdone her. Billy has abandoned his fiancée, drained their checking account, and quit his job to join a cult called the New Morning Movement. Expecting to find something sinister at play, Iris is eager to destroy the quixotic hold they have on her brother. And that means outwitting the cult's cunning, sadistic founder, Mathias Morning.

Iris has logic and reason on her side. But Mathias doesn't play by society's rules. Just as Iris begins to lose hope, her investigation leads her to cross path with the DEA. And now she needs to save Billy's life before they're both caught in the crossfire.

**Don't miss Jennifer Harlow's first electrifying Iris Ballard thriller:
BEAUTIFUL MAIDS ALL IN A ROW**

Darkness at the Edge of Town Details

Date : Published November 14th 2017 by Alibi

ISBN :

Author : Jennifer Harlow

Format : Kindle Edition

Genre : Thriller, Suspense

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From Reader Review Darkness at the Edge of Town for online ebook

Janet Robel says

A great psychological thriller! I couldn't put it down, nor did I want to. Iris Ballard is an awesome protagonist. I just loved this book. A strong heroine is exactly what Iris is and made for perfect bedtime reading.

When Iris receives a frantic call from her mother telling her to come home, she rushes home. Investigating her brother's disappearance is going to be tricky, but Dr. Iris Ballard is on the case. A hunky love interest complicates matters even more. I hope this series will continue to grow.

Brenda says

Dr Iris Ballard was enjoying the adulation which had come from catching the serial killer in her last case. But she was tired – she missed her dog and her “previous life”. When FBI agent Luke Hudson invited Iris to the symphony, she accepted – but it wasn't to be when she received a desperate call from her home town of Grey Mills in Pennsylvania to say her twin brother was missing.

Iris had no desire to return but felt she had no choice. She needed to find Billy and was sure she could do it in a couple of days – a week at most. But when Iris discovered the cult which was recruiting people in town, New Morning Movement, had engulfed Billy after he'd left his fiancé and cleared out her bank account, she knew her search would take longer to execute. The slick, evil ways of the founder captivated everyone – a typical cult.

When Iris suddenly found herself clashing with the DEA over the cult, she and Luke continued to try to extricate Billy. But danger of a huge magnitude was heading her way. Would she manage to save Billy – or was it too late for them all?

Darkness at the Edge of Town by Jennifer Harlow is the second in the Iris Ballard series and a gritty and intense thriller just like the first. But I found I didn't enjoy this one quite as much as *Beautiful Maids All in a Row*; continual repetition of phrases (“I didn't mean it, I didn't”; “I do feel for you, I do”) and the overuse of “smirk”. But that said, I'll read the next when it's released and recommend *Darkness at the Edge of Town*.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my digital ARC to read and review.

Sheyla ✍️ says

"I'm here if you need me, you know. Day, night, always, forever."

I read **Beautiful Maids All in a Row** just a few weeks back. I had these characters fresh in my mind and I was glad to be back in their world.

Dr. Iris Ballard survived her second encounter with a psychopath (barely) and this close encounter catapulted her back into notoriety. She has been asked to speak on many TV shows keeping her schedule super busy in the last few weeks. She's ready to relax and enjoy a date with Luke when her mother calls her begging her to come home. Her brother has joined a cult and Iris needs to come home and help save him.

At first, Iris is not sure that what her mother is saying is accurate since she has a tendency to take things out of proportion but she knows she will sleep better if she finds up what's really going on in her childhood home of Grey Mills, PA.

Going home is not easy on Iris. She and her twin brother Billy were called names growing up since they are both bastards. Their half-sister is responsible for most of the name calling. As a teenager, Iris made a decision that impacted her life and thanks to her half-sister, everyone found out. Yet, Iris won't back down. She's determined to know more about Mathias Morning, the guy in charge of the New Morning Movement.

In all honesty, cults really do scare me. They prey on vulnerable people. They know the right thing to say to attract people to their lair and then indoctrinate them. Sad, really.

I believe Jennifer Harlow did a great job portraying the way a cult works. She made me hate Mathias and I wanted Iris to bring him down. I felt sorry for Billy. He was so lost. He made HUGE mistakes but I still felt sorry for him.

Let's talk about (hottie) Luke Hudson. Oh my, he was amazing in this one too. I was devastated when he was not with Iris from the beginning but I understood why it was important for him to be away. **He melted my heart when he finally had that serious conversation with Iris. MELTED ME!**

What can I say about Iris that I haven't said before? She's an ex-addict (alcohol and pills) with some serious self-destructive issues. She knows her own weaknesses and at least is trying to help herself now. What no one can deny is that she knows how to profile very dangerous individuals and she's great at it. Faults and all, **she's a character that I won't forget anytime soon.**

Don't hesitate and buy Darkness at the Edge of Town. It's definitely worth it. A page-turner for sure. I do encourage readers to read **Beautiful Maids All in a Row** first to get the full spectrum.

I really wish the next one was out already. I hate waiting for a good book.

Cliffhanger: No

4/5 Fangs

A complimentary copy was provided by Random House Publishing Group- Alibi via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

MrsLeif's Two Fangs About It | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram

Kendall says

Darkness at the Edge of Town is a unique and addicting read!

Jennifer Harlow is an extremely talented author. She did it again folks! Be prepared to stay home from work, school, life... period to read this! Honestly, I enjoyed this book better than the first in the series.

Iris Ballard is at her PRIME in this novel. Iris is even more sexy, sassy, and bad ass! She is by far my favorite female detective in all of the books that I read (and trust me I read a lot of mystery/detective books). Iris had me in stitches laughing and I went back to re-read sections because she is that entertaining.

What I loved most about this book was the different storyline. As a reader, you see SO many storylines where the serial killer hunts down the main detective. This was NOT the case here! Props and kudos to Jennifer Harlow ;).

Iris gets a phone call from her mother begging her to come back to her home town in Grey Mills, Pennsylvania because her twin brother Billy has disappeared. Billy has left his fiancé and drained their bank accounts to join a mysterious cult. Iris tries to track her brother down and figure out if something is extremely dark and sinister going on with this so-called "cult"? Is Billy trapped in this cult and in danger? Or, is this a place of happiness and peace for Billy? Can, I just say how much cults fascinate me?! I LOVED this storyline!

And.. I know your anxious to get an update on Iris and her off and on again lover Luke Hudson. OH my gosh can I just say how much I LOVE Luke Hudson. He is so sexy!! I just love his character.

I LOVED this book! I highly recommend this series. I would say to start from book one if you haven't because you will get a better understanding of storyline/characters of Luke and Iris.

Overall 5 stars for me on this book!

Thank you to Netgalley and Alibi for an ARC.
Expected publication date is November 14th, 2017.

Sarah Joint says

I would definitely recommend starting with the first Iris Ballard book if this one interests you. I read it, and I still found myself looking at reviews of the first to refresh my memory because I was getting lost. Unfortunately, I enjoyed the first one a lot more. I read a lot of novels in which the main character is an investigator of some sort, and I love getting to know them "outside of work". What their personal lives are like, who they love, who they lost, how they tick. This book was just a little too much of it. The case almost felt like an afterthought. If you're very interested in love lives and family situations, this is the book for you. **It's full of drama, will they or won't they, old grudges, and family secrets.** I just wasn't connecting with Iris as much as I did in the first book.

Iris has a lot going on... she's making rounds at talk shows, sitting down for interviews, and will soon write a book... all about catching a serial killer. All she wants to do is go home, get her dog, and relax. Her plans change when she gets a phone call from her mother. Her twin brother Billy has left his fiancé and cleaned out their bank account. He's gone to be with a group that seems to have the makings of a cult. Terrified for his well-being, the whole family wants Iris to come bring him back. **Grey Mills, PA may be her hometown, but it's not the home she wanted to go back to... though with her brother in danger, what choice does she have?**

Going home again means canceling plans with Luke, sexy FBI agent and her former lover. All to return to her dying hometown and get berated by her mother. Doesn't seem like a fair trade, but family is family and she's determined to bring Billy home. It won't be easy... she's not even sure exactly where he is. Reckless and without any other ideas, she decides to infiltrate the cult to try to get some inside information. Everyone seems to be happy and safe, but something just isn't right...

I'm going to give this one a 3.5. It kept me reading, but I could have done with a little more realism and a little less drama. Some of the dialogue also came across as a little stilted and unnatural. If the word "smirk" could be used less, I think that would be for the best. It's used ten times in one of the chapters and really started to bug me. However, the cult angle was intriguing and I thought the ending was done well! Recommended to fans of books with abrasive but determined women and some drama and romance.

I received an ARC of this book from Net Galley and Random House Publishing Group - Alibi, thank you! My review is honest and unbiased.

Denise says

"Most people aren't aware when a life-changing moment happens to them until time passes. The moments that form a person, define him or her, when everything changes."

Ex FBI profiler, Iris Ballard, always knows her "moments" almost as soon as they happen. She is on the talk show circuit after her most recent case made her a household name when she gets a call from her mother -- Iris's twin brother, Billy, has left his girlfriend, taken all their money, and ran off to join a cult. There's not much that Iris hates more than going back home, but off she goes to see if she can at least talk to Billy and figure out what's going on.

Grey Mills holds few good memories for Iris, but she did have a mentor at the Sheriff's Department from way back when before she left the town and never looked back. She wants to spend as little time at home with her psycho mom as possible, so she gets started right away. What she finds at the New Morning Movement chills her to the bone. But Billy seems happy and Iris is stunned to learn that he's married a fellow member and is going to be a father. When the cult leader, Mathias Morning, finds out that Iris is onto him, she must rely on her former partner, Agent Luke Hudson. Well, he's much more than her work colleague.

No more spoilers but there is plenty of action and romance in this second book of the series. I'd call it more of a drama than a suspense thriller, but it was fast-paced and entertaining. Iris is an interesting character, there's good backstory within in case you haven't read the first book, but I'd urge you to read these in order so you can see the changes that Iris goes through after all that happens to her. She's quite the complicated woman and she is well aware that she's not an easy woman to love.

Thank you to NetGalley and Alibi for the e-book ARC to read and review. I'll definitely want to catch book #3 when it comes out.

♥Rachel♥ says

Darkness at the Edge of Town takes us back into the life of Iris Ballard not long after the events in the last book where she and her best friend and former FBI partner, Luke took down The Woodsman. Iris is just finishing on the talk-show circuit, and planning on spending a time with Luke when her mother calls begging

for Iris to come immediately and help get her twin brother, Billie, out of the clutches of some cult.

Iris, although not pleased, rushes back to her hometown, a town that holds many a bad memory, and discovers her brother has been going through some tough times, and is vulnerable. Just the kind of prey a manipulative cult leader like Mathias, the New Morningstar's charismatic leader, and his followers are in search of. Iris must put her natural talent and training as an FBI profiler to use, to stay one step ahead and outsmart Mathias. The more Iris finds out, the more she's worried for her brother.

I couldn't wait to get back to Iris and Luke after the events in **Beautiful Maids All in a Row**. It was clear that the feelings between Iris and Luke were finally going to come out soon. I had hopes that their unrequited love would go somewhere, as they've clearly been tortured by being apart. I think my biggest complaint with this installment is that there wasn't more Luke in the beginning, but boy-oh-boy was I thrilled with how things played out once he's fully in the picture again! Luke is everything I want in a man, or fictional hero! Totally devoted, protective, while fully confident and proud of Iris's abilities. They knew each other so well, had a wealth of history between them. The irresistible pull of attraction a palpable thing between them! I just love a friends-to-lovers sort of romance! The love between them was obvious to anyone looking, and yet each were hesitant to take the next step. I read with bated breath every interaction and crossed my fingers they wouldn't screw things up!

The romance isn't the only pull in this story. I was awed by Iris's skills in reading people, and treading in just the right way to get what she needed. It was unfortunate that others in law enforcement didn't always heed her advice here.

This is the second book in the series, and I don't recommend reading this as a standalone. The mystery/conflict part could be read and understood, but you'd miss the best part: the history and relationship between Luke and Iris. Their interactions and final outcome wouldn't mean as much without the first book for reference. I loved both books!

Initial impressions:

Loved, loved Luke!! Iris is pretty bad-ass and great, too, but I LOVED Luke!

A copy was kindly provided by Alibi via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

This review is also posted at The Readers Den.

Dianne says

My Rating: 3.5 Stars

She took down a brutal serial killer and was catapulted to fame, but it came at a cost. Now exhausted after doing the television interview circuit, all Iris wants is some quiet downtime with the man she considers her best friend, her former FBI partner, the handsome Luke Hudson. What she gets is a desperate phone call that sends her back into the bowels of her youth, the small town she could get far enough away from.

Her twin brother, Billy, the gentle soul to her hardscrabble personality is in trouble. Now she must infiltrate the cult he has joined after he turns his back on all he had, including a fiancée he has left high and dry. Can Iris outwit the charismatic cult leader and open her brother's eyes before his life goes down in a blaze of twisted glory?

DARKNESS AT THE EDGE OF TOWN by Jennifer Harlow is an emotional thriller that takes one

woman back to the town and family that shamed, humiliated and belittled her, all to protect the one person who stood in her shadows under the radar, but she thought loved her unconditionally. The raw and unbalanced animosity shown by her own mother was as gut-wrenching as was the treatment she received from others in her past that should have been on her side. Iris is damaged, she is self-destructive and only one man seems to see beyond her tough outer shell to the woman she is.

Readers beware, there is backstory here that is vital to know. I was invited to review this and would have passed had I known this was not a series standalone read. Fast paced, dark and emotionally clawing at-the-throat, the sometimes over-the-top outbursts made me want to commit several characters. That said, this is an edge-of-your-seat thriller! make sure to read book one first, hopefully, it will contain the answers to the past events that shaped this book.

I was invited to read an ARC edition from Alibi.

Series: Iris Ballard - Book 2

Publisher: Alibi (November 14, 2017)

Publication Date: November 14, 2017

Genre: Suspense

Page Count 360

Available from: Amazon | Barnes & Noble

For Reviews & More: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

Anne says

Within the first five minutes of reading this novel I realized I had a serious girl crush on Iris (and yes, I'm aware she's a fictional character)! She's incredibly smart, sexy, sassy, and acerbic--all qualities I admire in strong women.

After suffering guilt over killing a madman and recovering from an alcohol and pill addiction, she is called back to her hometown when her twin brother has abandoned his fiancée and joined a cult. This is one big dysfunctional family with flawed characters but whose love we see lurking beneath the surface. With the help of FBI friend (and sometimes boyfriend) Luke, Iris tries to infiltrate the cult and winds up realizing just how dangerous these people really are. While I usually race through thrillers to get to the end, I found myself reading more slowly to savor the humor and enjoy the ride! I do hope there are more Iris Ballard books in this series!

Evelyn says

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for an arc of this book in exchange for an honest review.

After catching and killing a serial killer called The Shepherd, forensic psychologist Dr. Iris Ballard has become a media sensation and has a contract to write a book. But her mother calls to tell her that her twin brother, whom she hasn't really kept in touch with, is in trouble so Iris returns to her hometown of Grey Mills, PA, to help. There she learns Billy's fiancé Gia recently had a miscarriage and he has drained their accounts and joined a mysterious commune. When Iris pretends to be "Carol," a lost soul looking for help in order to find Billy, things go downhill quickly and soon the FBI and DEA are accusing Iris of interfering with a federal investigation. Knowing that the group leader is a dangerous psychopath, Iris enlists the help of her

former partner Luke to try and save Billy before the Feds strike.

Second in the series, *Darkness at the Edge of Town*, is a suspenseful read you won't want to put down. Iris is a quirky, complex character with lots of personal as well as professional issues and we learn much more about why she is the way she is. Although this second book could be read as a stand alone, reading the first book in the series will help you understand why Iris is the way she is. I look forward to Iris's next adventure.

Maureen Carden says

Dr Iris Ballard has had a very tough few years, involving widowhood, alcoholism, drug addiction, and severe physical injury to both her and to her best friend and former partner Luke Hudson. But she has come out of it and in the process has become a media star with a million dollar book contract. What she doesn't have is her husband, her career with the FBI, a lover, or a decent relationship with most of her family.

But it is her family that calls her home to Grey Mills, Pa because her twin brother, Billy, has done his fiancée wrong by deserting her, stealing from her and betraying her. To cap it all off he has joined a cult, which has resulted in the frantic phone call from Iris's mother demanding she come home to do something.

Iris is a great character, so full of contradictions, such a mess, but so strong and so smart.

She is loyal to her friend Luke and to the Sheriff who with his department supported her career in law enforcement, As for most others, including the family she seems to have so little regard for, they just warrant an occasional phone call. Iris is not even sure if she remembered to send her twin a birthday card. But then Iris is devastated when Billy brings home unwanted truths about her neglect of her family and friends.

I like Harlow's story of Billy's entry into a cult, and Iris' almost seduction into the same cult. But then cults wouldn't exist if they didn't answer some deep hidden needs in their adherents.

Luke is such a fabulous guy, deeply in love with Iris, but she is such a mess that she can't admit her feelings and instead pretty much treats him like crap.

A major complaint and it is costing at least one star, I go off on a book if I see the word smirk or grin used more than once or twice in a book. This book had a never-ending supply of smirks. Everyone smirked. I think I saw smirks four or five times on a single page. Aren't editors supposed to prevent such solecisms? I'm not the only reviewer who was extremely annoyed by all of the smirking going around. A guy should only smirk if he has black brylcreemed hair. As for women, never, or maybe if she is a really cheap blond. This is a really exciting story and fascinating in explanations of how cults work, how they are so able to entice the most vulnerable to join.

Iris does show considerable personal growth, although it comes at great cost in realizing her years of selfishness and neglect.

Thank you to NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for a fair and hones review.

Wendy says

Loved It!

Darkness At The Edge Of Town is the 2nd book in Jennifer Harlow's "Iris Ballard" series. It was intriguing, page turning and the perfect sequel to her 1st book "Beautiful Maids All In A Row".

Dr. Iris Ballard is a brilliant, but damaged ex-FBI profiler with a degree in forensic psychology.

Exhausted and recovering from trauma after catching a serial killer she receives a frantic call from her mother. Iris's twin brother Billy has joined a cult called the New Morning Movement. She returns to Grey Mills, Pennsylvania (her hometown) to try and rescue her brother from the clutches of the cunning and

sadistic cult leader Mathias Morning.

Iris's former FBI partner and on-again, off-again lover, Luke Hudson, joins her in Grey Mills. Together they try to extricate Billy as they clash with the DEA.

A gritty, emotional and intense thriller that I highly recommend be read after "Beautiful Maids All In A Row".

Thank you to NetGalley and Alibi for an arc of this novel in exchange for my honest review.

Selene says

3.75 stars

This novel was ripe with *delicious* family drama and I ate it all up like a mouthwatering treat! Iris was able to let some venomous words from others slide down her back while still letting her humorous quips loose, but there were parts within this story where she was emotionally fragile and it showed. Although it was an interesting turn to observe Iris slumming it in her hometown and away from her comfort zone, I actually enjoyed Beautiful Maids All In A Row *much more*.

Minor Issues?

? Faye and Iris had a lifetime of disconnect, misunderstandings, and anger between them, but all of it was remedied during one particular conversation. It was strange and too conveniently wrapped up after such an exhausting and dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship.

? Iris's miraculous recovery from drug addiction was *lightly* touched upon and not really believable but that didn't take away from the heart of this story.

? Luke's dialogue with Iris was too cheesy in some parts. He was a very likable character but sort of bland, too.

The romance component was lumped in towards the end and I didn't mind that it wasn't the focal point of the story. I also loved that Mathias was a worthy opponent and one Iris couldn't easily squash with her shoe or with her FBI contacts. Overall, this was a good story, but something was missing *for me* while other areas felt rushed.

***NetGalley ARC kindly provided by Random House Publishing Group - Alibi in exchange for an honest review.**

Meredith says

Loved it!

4.5 stars

If you like kick-ass heroines, read this series!

While *Darkness at the Edge of Town* can be read as a standalone, I highly recommend you read book one, *Beautiful Maids All in Row*, before you read this.

Former FBI profiler, Irish Ballard, finally seems to be in a good place. She is recovering from the events that plagued her for the past two years, and seems to have kicked her addiction to pills and alcohol. After taking down a notorious serial killer, she has become famous and is making rounds on the talk show circuit. Everything seems to be falling into place, until her mother calls alerting her that her twin brother, Billy, is in danger.

Iris returns to Pennsylvania to rescue her brother who has joined a cult. Iris infiltrates the crazy cult and puts herself in danger. Pretty soon Luke, her best friend and former partner, is beside her side to help her take down the cult leaders.

This is a fast-paced, action packed, suspenseful page turner! There's so much I loved about this book: I loved Iris's interactions with her grandparents, her acerbic wit, and of course her dynamic with Luke! I cannot wait for book three!

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Liz says

This book is the second in a series but I haven't read the first. It doesn't work particularly well as a stand alone. Yes, the author gives you the background on the heroine, Dr. Iris Ballard, but I always felt somewhat behind the eight ball.

Here, she returns to her hometown to rescue her twin brother from a cult. Iris wasn't a popular girl during high school, far from it. Returning to her hometown comes with all the attending issues of reliving what made her teenage years hell. She also has serious problems with her mom, who is bipolar and possibly also has borderline personality disorder with narcissistic tendencies.

I had problems with this book at the beginning. Iris has spent the last few months doing every talk show known to man (because of the killer she took down in book one) but we're supposed to believe she has no problem going incognito into the cult. I also just couldn't get into Iris' relationship with Luke. In fact, the conversations between them feel positively contrived.

It took me until the halfway point to start to appreciate Iris. Not until she loses a round against Mathias did I start to appreciate her and her predicament.

Harlow does a good job writing about the cult, their ability to draw people in and the appeal. Your sympathy really goes out to those so needy that they're drawn in.

The second half of the book is much better than the first half. It moves at a good clip and keeps you interested.

My thanks to netgalley and Random House - Alibi for an advance copy of this book.
