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*Randy L. Schmidt , Dionne Warwick (Foreword)*

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*Little Girl Blue* is an intimate profile of Karen Carpenter, a girl from a modest Connecticut upbringing who became a Southern California superstar.

Karen was the instantly recognizable lead singer of the Carpenters. The top-selling American musical act of the 1970s, they delivered the love songs that defined a generation. Karen's velvety voice on a string of 16 consecutive Top 20 hits from 1970 to 1976—including "Close to You," "We've Only Just Begun," "Rainy Days and Mondays," "Superstar," and "Hurting Each Other"—propelled the duo to worldwide stardom and record sales of more than 100 million. During their short musical career, the Carpenters released ten studio albums, toured more than 200 days a year, taped five television specials, and won three Grammys and an American Music Award.

But that's only a part of Karen's story. *Little Girl Blue* reveals Karen's heartbreaking struggles with her mother, brother, and husband; the intimate disclosures she made to her closest friends; her love for playing drums and her frustrated quest for solo stardom; and the ups and downs of her treatment for anorexia nervosa. After her shocking death at 32 years of age in 1983, she became the proverbial poster child for that disorder; but the other causes of her decline are laid bare for the first time in this moving account.

*Little Girl Blue* is Karen Carpenter's definitive biography, based on exclusive interviews with her innermost circle of girlfriends and nearly 100 others, including professional associates, childhood friends, and lovers. It tells a story as touching, warm, and involving as any of Karen's greatest songs.

## Little Girl Blue: The Life of Karen Carpenter Details

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# From Reader Review *Little Girl Blue: The Life of Karen Carpenter* for online ebook

## Faith says

Most Americans over the age of 25 (and some abroad) know of Karen Carpenter and her untimely passing due to complications of anorexia. I'd be willing to wager that almost every one of us has heard the uniquely rich, smooth timbre of her vocals on their local soft rock or oldies radio stations. But somewhat lesser known is the story behind the wholesome family image behind the Carpenters' smiling faces on their album covers.

In *Little Girl Blue*, Randy Schmidt details the lives of the siblings who comprised the pop duo that took the music industry by storm from the mid-60s to early 80s with their rich harmonies and soulful lyrics, from their working-class beginnings in southern Connecticut to their journey to California and across the globe. Karen, of course, is the main focus, but a probing eye is also cast on the rest of the Carpenter clan, notably gifted but troubled brother Richard and domineering mother Agnes. It is with these two that the story seems to take its saddest turns.

The real tragedy of Karen Carpenter's life as revealed in this book is not the fact that it was cut extremely short, nor the fact that her condition was so little understood at the time, nor the silencing of such an uncommonly beautiful voice (although any of these is tragic enough in itself), but rather that in her thirty-two years, Karen was never given the chance to fully blossom into her own as an artist or as a woman, and despite her fame and wealth never attained the one thing she yearned for most in life - someone to love her as well as she deserved. Instead, she was ill-used by some of the very people who were supposed to love her the most.

To be honest, I could have done without most of the more minute details of the Carpenters' record sales and commercial successes and failures - most of us are aware of their reputation as musicians. Still, the portrait of the woman behind what are perhaps radio's most recognizable female vocals as richly expressed by her closest friends and colleagues paints her as a witty, vivacious, generous soul who loved those closest to her fiercely and unreservedly. It's not difficult to imagine Karen as she would have been today - a doting mother (and perhaps grandmother) who would certainly have accomplished so many of the goals she pursued - acting, musicals,

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## Val Robson says

I wanted to give this book five stars as it is the first I've read that gives some genuine insight into what was going on in Karen Carpenter's life during the last 10-15 years of her life when she became famous as one half of The Carpenters brother and sister duo up to her untimely death in 1983.

Karen had the voice of an angel and yet seemed to have severe identity issues due to an overbearing, and at times, cruel mother. Her mother clearly favoured her son, Richard Carpenter, and yet so did Karen who hero-worshipped her older brother. This is such a complicated family dynamic that I suspect the public will never fully understand what life was like for them.

The reason that I am not giving it 5 stars is that there is just too much detail about every song considered and recorded with all of the associated musician and staff involved in each. I was reading the book in hardback

form so was constantly lost as there are so many people. It would be better to read on a Kindle where you can search for other instances of a person's name. My reading was frequently diverted as I looked people up in the index and on Google to try and work out where they fitted in. In the end I skimmed over a lot of the music stuff and just concentrated on the personal life of Karen and her good friends who helped to provide information for this book. Thanks goodness she had some good friends to provide some joy in contrast to being around her stressful family.

Richard Carpenter wasn't involved with the book but does not appear to have made any legal effort to oppose it. Tom Burris, Karen's husband for a brief period, does not come out well - in fact he comes across as badly as Karen's mother Agnes. However, Agnes is dead and Tom is legally unable to speak about the Carpenter family so we will never know their side of the story,

Karen's passing at the age of 32 was truly tragic - I have never heard a voice like hers. Thank you to Randy Schmidt for his terrific research in writing this as I think it is the closest we are going to get in understanding what a dysfunctional family Karen was born into and understanding why she died so young. I would hope that if this happened in 2018 her problems would be recognised quickly and that she would get professional help that seemed so lacking in the 1970s and 1980s as little was known about anorexia nervosa and related conditions.

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## **Susan Bailey says**

I am doing research on Anorexia Nervosa for a novel I plan on writing and instantly thought of Karen Carpenter as a place to start. Little Girl Blue turned into much more than just a book for research. Randy Schmidt revealed a life that was very sad. Here was a woman who supposedly had it all and yet had so little in the end. It is unfortunate that Schmidt could not talk to Karen herself but given the nature of anorexia, he wouldn't have gotten much out of her. Anorexics are masters at deception, denial and lying. It is an addiction not to food but to control over one's body, especially when that person has no control over anything else in their life.

I also regret that the family would not cooperate but from what I gathered in this book, they were in as much denial as Karen. No one truly understood the nature of this disease. The parents are dead, only Richard Carpenter survives.

Agnes Carpenter is shown to be a difficult, obsessive-compulsive and cold woman towards her daughter. She greatly favored her son at the expense of her daughter, never giving Karen the credit she deserved for the Carpenters' success. No matter how brilliantly Richard played the piano, chose songs or arranged them, it was the voice of Karen that sold them to the public. To Agnes, it was all about her darling boy achieving success. And Karen was locked into that formula whether she wanted it or not.

Most times Karen did want it, revering her brother as her mother did. But she was so locked in that she could not break out and lead an independent life. Two chapters in the book were especially heartbreaking. One dealt with Karen's desire to record a solo album, allowing her the ability to explore and expand her artistry. Richard at the time was hospitalized due to an addiction to quaaludes so Karen took the opportunity to fly to New York from their LA home to work with producer Phil Ramone. Ramone nurtured Karen in her exploration and together they made a worthy and personal recording. Karen received much encouragement from industry professionals and performers including Paul Simon, Billy Joel and Olivia Newton-John. The return home should have been triumphant but instead was devastating. Her family and her label utterly

rejected the album, threatened by its very existence. Fearing that Karen would not wish to resume work with Richard as the Carpenters, the entire family trashed her creation. Her label, A&M, was no more supportive. Agnes and Richard were particularly cruel. This proved to be the first nail in her coffin.

The second, which followed soon after, was her disastrous marriage to Tom Burris. Surprisingly he was accepted by her family when other men had not, but I believe it was because he was not in the industry and thus not deemed as a threat. They were so wrong. Burris ended up being a gold digger. He deceived Karen about a vasectomy he had had years earlier, telling her just before the wedding. Since having children was a top priority for her, Karen felt betrayed and wanted to cancel the wedding. Instead Agnes pressured her into marrying him for appearances sake, telling her that she had made her bed and now had to lie in it!

Second nail in the coffin.

Karen tried to seek help but it was on her terms. She never was able to truly let go and allow someone else to help. A poster child "good girl," she could give it all away but had an impossible time receiving love, affection and praise. She did not feel worthy of treatment.

Schmidt draws upon close friends and colleagues for the material in Little Girl Blue. Given the resources he had (and lack of access to family), he did a good job of bringing Karen's story to light.

Schmidt, a schoolteacher by day, is a huge Carpenters' fan who channeled his passion into a fan site for several years. Known for his meticulous the thorough research in the Carpenters fandom world, he earned the trust of Karen's closest associates and ended up writing a book that read like a novel. It was taut, poignant and objective.

As a singer, I loved reading the description of Karen's voice by industry professionals and had no idea she sang so softly as her voice sounds so full and big on the recordings. I have always enjoyed listening to her singing through headphones because the subtle nature of her phrasing and interpretation would otherwise be missed. Her singing is effortless, nearly perfect and yet tinged with melancholy.

If you are a fan of the Carpenters, I highly recommend this book. With regards to my research, it aided me greatly and was a good first choice, ushering me into more reading on the subject of anorexia.

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## **Madeline Jackfruit says**

Karen Carpenter gave me one of those stardusted, historic evenings that you remember for the rest of your life. A moment where you find joy in the new and gain divine inspiration. With a happy explosion of fireworks, I was marked by a significant empathy towards Karen Carpenter and a new consciousness of the depth of her life and her music. I also developed a new awareness on how to listen to music and the tenderness that can sometimes require. And this was afforded to me by Todd Haynes.

On a rather dismal San Francisco Saturday night in 1989, I looked for something that could get a punk rock kid like me out of the house and into some fun--for not much money. A roommate read something about a film with an all Barbie doll cast playing at the Castro, and after that who really cared about the subject matter, right?

I grumbled something about how stupid, pointless and bourgeois The Carpenters were, either during the bus

ride or during dinner, and probably again as I took my seat in the theater, no doubt folding my arms across my chest and waiting to be impressed. Initially, during the first few minutes of the film, there were several laughs from the audience, but after the novelty wore off, the story took hold, and offered an illuminating depiction of Carpenter's relationship with her parents, her brother, her friends and her lovers, and how every bit of self-empowerment was directly or indirectly stolen from her. Her disease was very easy to comprehend under the circumstances. I sat on the edge of my seat, shocked, agog, crying, laughing, singing, reeling. My friend and I got a bottle of wine after the movie and sang Carpenter's songs all night long.

That film is now banned thanks to Richard Carpenter, who claims that it was all about song rights, not his salacious, unsupportive, pill-popping portrayal. The same reason he gave for putting the kibosh on the made-for-TV movie sharing the same name as the Haynes film, *The Karen Carpenter Story*, this one starring Cynthia Gibb. I guess you can't blame him; it's all he's got. And he (like his beloved sister) has MAJOR CONTROL ISSUES.

It turns out that Mr. Schmidt has been a large influence on most I've read or seen on Karen Carpenter. He was the editor of *Yesterday Once More: Memories of the Carpenters and Their Music*. He served as creative consultant for several documentaries on The Carpenters, including those for E! *True Hollywood Story*, A&E's *Biography*, and VH1's *Behind the Music*. Schmidt has become an authority on The Carpenters and has offered much insight, particularly when compared to the authorized bio by Ray Coleman: a worthless, aspartame-sweet candy stick of fly dung, *The Carpenters: The Untold Story* is happily now out of print, and was about as revealing as a flannel nightgown.

As important as Schmidt's decades of Carpenters research is the rope-a-dope 1-2 of Richard Carpenter refusing to be involved (whew!) and Agnes, Karen's insensitive and controlling bitch of a mother, finally buying the farm. These happy facts have given Schmidt more freedom and more opportunity than any other Carpenters biographer in history and sets the bar pretty doggone high.

Does Schmidt deliver? Sort of. This is indeed the most enlightening bio on Carpenter thus far. There is much more detail regarding Karen's marriage contained within *Little Girl Blue* than you will find elsewhere. Agnes Carpenter's legendarily horrendous treatment of her daughter is now presented with exactness and legitimacy, and Schmidt seems to write freely and with relief as he describes scenario after heartbreaking scenario of the oppression and abuse inflicted by her.

I believe there was much more abuse of Karen Carpenter than just her neglect and bulldozement, and I believe that there are many people who know about it. Much more darkness, much more scandal and degradation. As justice for Karen, I hope to read all about one day. I was hoping that this would be the book. Sadly, it is not, and because of that, I feel let down by Schmidt, who I can only imagine knows more about the Carpenter family than anyone else on Earth. That chilling tome will have to wait until after Richard's death, I suppose. If everyone who can attest to the abuse isn't dead themselves. That being said, *Little Girl Blue* is a thoughtful, well-researched and unapologetic defense of Karen Carpenter, put together with extreme care. Its only shortcoming is that it is inhibited, much like Karen herself.

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## **Janet says**

Gosh, I wanted to love this book because I love Karen Carpenter. But I can only review what I read, and what I read was not that great. I didn't think the author did a good job of evoking the time period or the music

scene of the 70s. He did give me statistics about record sales and concert appearances until my eyes began to roll back in my head from boredom.

There were interesting sections of the book. I was engaged by the glimpses you catch of how Karen Carpenter evolved as an artist and the scenes that portrayed the way the members of the Carpenter family interacted. Also, the section towards the end on the "treatment" she received for her eating disorder was revealing (and enraging).

My final gripe: the overall style of the book reminded me of a certain type of group Christmas card letter---the kind where the tone is oddly superficial and you can tell the writer is working hard to appear upbeat. Information is being conveyed, you know what events have taken place, but you don't feel any closer to anything true after you've read it.

One bonus of reading this book---you can't help but pull out anything you own by the Carpenters and playing it. And fall in love with Karen Carpenter's voice all over again.

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### **Jean Marie Angelo says**

Karen Carpenter was a star at age 22, a has-been at age 30, and gone at age 32. No book or movie, until *Little Girl Blue*, has come close to telling the whole story. I love good music journalism, so I really thank the author for doing such a thorough job. Dozens of articles, t.v. appearances, and concert books are cited.

I remember seeing Karen Carpenter on television when I was 12, and seeing her in concert a year later. A woman drummer singing lead in a band. This was groundbreaking in 1972. This was year before women even played lead guitar in rock. She and her brother introduced a softer rock sound, and produced some wonderful songs in the early years. Her alto and interpretation were never better on *Superstar* and *Rainy Days and Mondays*.

Then things got off track. Brother Richard insisted on reproducing their winning sound on album after album. A brilliant arranger, he couldn't resist overproducing, at times. A&M Records did not know how to package this sound, and, instead, played up an all-American image. Goofy album covers with soft focus photos and hearts and flowers did them no favors. By the time Karen was doing songs like "Sing," her fate was sealed. It leaves you wondering how the woman who could be so mournful on the jazzy, "This Masquerade," could be the same one singing some of the forgettable ditties that wound up on the albums.

She deserved better in life. Her voice is unique and unforgettable, but some of the material never matched her abilities.

She struggled with anorexia nervosa for eight years before dying in 1983. She always considered herself a drummer first, a singer second. Still, in 1975, a revamp of their stage show required her to come out behind the drum kit and take center stage. She was terrified. The author posits that this key change is one of the things that led to the eating disorder. She was no longer a musician/singer, but the front man in the spotlight. It didn't help that her mother was cold and critical, no matter what she sang, how much she weighed, or who she dated.

The book points to instances of how the mom really saw Richard as the star and praised him openly and often. Reportedly, her mother never told Karen she had a good voice. She initially objected to Karen playing

the drums. They weren't "suitable" for a young lady. Obviously, she was as out of touch as some of the others that surrounded Karen. Can we even imagine a "Carpenters" without Karen's voice? By the mid-1970s her brother's addiction to prescription meds also impacted family dynamics.

In the late 70s, Carpenter record sales were down. While Richard was recuperating and taking time off, Karen took on a solo project — an album to be produced by Phil Ramone. The A&M producers arranged it. Ramone was producer for Billy Joel and Paul Simon, among other mega-star musicians. He suggested that Karen allow herself to grow up, musically. She worked for a year on 20 cuts, some with dance beats, some with sensual lyrics. The author lets us in on some great music trivia, like the fact that Paul Simon, Billy Joel, and his backup band, came by the studio to help with some song tracks, and encourage her. And the fact that John Lennon stopped Karen on the way into a restaurant and told her she had a fantastic voice.

In 1979, when she played the project for brother Richard and A&M producers, including Herb Alpert, she received no praise. Just silence. According to the author, it was one more event that helped to kill her. Richard and her mother were never really behind the solo project, anyway. The Carpenters might be over should the solo album be a runaway success. Richard and company told Karen that the record didn't have any obvious "hits." Privately, he is reported to have told her the album was, "shit."

While not being ordered to shelve the album, Karen knew what was expected of her. She decided to not release it. She focused instead on her personal life and reuniting with brother Richard for another album. Her failed marriage in the early 1980s, brought more crushing grief and more spiral into anorexia. She hit bottom, and finally sought help for her eating disorder. She weighed 80 pounds. This is a fascinating and sorrowful part of the story. Like any story about addiction, the reader is left with so many, "what ifs." What if she had sought a different therapist? What if they knew then what we know know about eating disorders? What if her brother could have simply supported her in recovery? Reportedly, he told Karen she was going about treatment in "all the wrong ways."

Denial runs deep. For years after she died, Richard Carpenter did all he could to protect his aging parents from any criticism and to try to cast his sister in the best light. He could speak about the heartbreak of anorexia, but couldn't admit that, perhaps, some of the family dysfunction played a part. She would have been an anorexic if she had never been a singer and was an unknown housewife, he told the press.

He closed down projects, he insisted on editorial control of any books or movies written about her. It could be seen as an act of love, but many found it to be stifling and controlling — that kind of controlling behavior that leads to silent addictions and secret eating disorders. It took years, but Richard did start to slowly open up on some points. While the author of *Little Girl Blue* was not granted an interview with Richard, he did get to interview many from the old back-up band, producers, and home staff.

In 1996, 13 years after it was produced, Richard Carpenter finally allowed his sister's solo album to be released. In issuing the project he dismissed years earlier, he called Phil Ramone's wife to ask if Karen wrote any notes or dedications. She did, said "Itchy" Ramone. It read, "Dedicated to my brother Richard with all my heart."

Richard Carpenter reportedly wept.

For any reader who has made it this far into my review, I suggest you do yourself a favor. Search online for any footage of Karen Carpenter's drum solos. Look for clips from the early days — before the anorexia. Look for the Karen who was a normal-sized woman with the silky voice. I did this the past week. She looks vibrant and blissful. Sources in the book say Karen was never happier than when she was drumming and



singing. It shows.

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### **Lisa Brandt says**

Karen Carpenter's pure and expressive voice belied a virtually unloved young woman whose life was dominated by a family who took every opportunity to diminish her contribution to The Carpenters. This book is very thorough, well-written and difficult to put down. If you ask most people about Karen they will say "she died from anorexia" but it was much more complicated than that. Her closest friends gave rare interviews for this book and shared Karen's triumphs and tragedies and the effect that her high-strung Mother had on her. Had Karen become ill even five years later, the medical community would have been much more aware of how to treat her condition. This is a great book for anyone who's curious about what led to silencing one of the most beautiful singing voices the world has ever heard.

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### **Ann says**

Don't let my rating fool you--I'm glad I read this book. But it was just ok. The writer has clearly done a great deal of thorough research. Unfortunately, he lacks a gift for storytelling. He also seems not to know which details to include and which to leave out. When reading the biography of a vibrant woman with amazing musical talent who died tragically at a young age of a frightening illness, I don't expect to be told the names and background connections of all the backing musicians who helped record all The Carpenters albums. The book is simply too full of specifics that don't open up our understanding of Karen.

I don't feel Schmidt has found the answers which his author's note suggests he sought in this project. But how could he? Does the author reveal to us some sense of her? Yes. Some. But the author seems to have worked so hard to keep himself out of it that at some points, his recitation of events and details seems colder than necessary. He draws no conclusions--he has simply (and copiously) gathered and disseminated. Is this the job of a biographer? I don't know.

I don't think I'm alone in wanting to pin blame on someone for the Karen Carpenter tragedy, but I can't.

Like I said, I'm glad I read this.

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### **angie says**

I don't know the exact reason why, almost 30 years later, Karen Carpenter's death still leaves me sad whenever I hear a song of hers on the radio or my iPod shuffle. From all accounts written about her, from everything friends of hers have said, Karen was a very fun and funny woman...kind, super talented and a genuine person. That's probably a major part of it.

But the way she died and how it eventually came to overshadow (in some ways, at least) her amazing voice and musical legacy...somehow that makes it all the more tragic.

In his heartfelt and touchingly sincere book *Little Girl Blue: The Life of Karen Carpenter*, Randy L. Schmidt gives the lovely singer what very few writers before him have: the ability to be taken seriously, free

from any gaudy tabloid fanfare.

Schmidt's deep admiration for her is apparent, but so is his keen knack for attacking the story with a warm yet still objective approach.

Very few biographies have been written about Karen Carpenter, but of the ones that have been this is the one to read, the one that lays the story down without making it sound like a VH1 Behind the Music special.

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### **Desiree Guery says**

I'm a big fan of Karen Carpenter and have always been interested in her life. Of course, trying to read about it is difficult because the Carpenter family is so guarded. The author did a good job at bringing you into Karen's world, but got a little too technical on Carpenter songs, producers and recording history. I want to know more about her illness, and less about how many times they recorded "Ticket to Ride" and where, and how well it sold.

One of the most telling signs of Karen's descent into anorexia was her fainting on stage in Las Vegas. This got a fleeting mention as if there was no importance at all, but I would think that collapsing on stage was very frightening and embarrassing, and would deserve more than a sentence. However, this is the best book I've read which shares details of her life unbiased and uncensored.

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### **Al says**

I can recall where I was when I first heard Karen Carpenter's voice (on a school bus in 9th grade; she was singing "Ticket to Ride). And I remember the only time I saw her in person (at a concert where my seat was so far up all I could see of her was her arm banging a drum). So reading Schmidt's biography brought back a lot of fond memories. Both close and casual fans will appreciate the insights on her career and personal struggles. This is no mere collection of press and fan accounts; Schmidt conducted revealing interviews with nearly all of her friends and musician colleagues, including Paul Williams, Olivia Newton-John and producer Phil Ramone. Given her early death from complications related to anorexia, the author gives a balanced accounting of the factors that led to her eating disorder and problems with self image. Even with the eventual outcome known to the reader from the beginning, Schmidt doesn't allow the sadness to overcome his narrative. The book completely covers the meteoric rise of the Carpenters, especially their excitement and eventual exhaustion from a grueling concert schedule during the early years of their success. A discography at the end has all of their records including the later compilations and Karen Carpenter's delayed release solo album from 1982. The disappointment in the shelving of that solo effort played, according to Schmidt, a critical role in Karen Carpenter's emotional collapse as did a failed marriage. Schmidt's book is well written and referenced; it's a cut above the usual celebrity biography.

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### **Laura says**

I knew this was going to be sad, but I didn't expect to feel quite so bereft, even in advance of the dark turn

her story takes. She comes off as a genuine and goofy kid, and so so startlingly talented. You really want to go back in time and befriend her and change the trajectory somehow. All the feels. All the sorrows. Read it and go listen to Solitaire. Over and over.

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## **Val Shameless ?? Steamy Reads ?? says**

### **3.5 Stars**

*CUP COUNT: Two mugs of coffee (so far)...  
...to offset last night's three glasses of Angeline Pinot Noir.*

(Go [HERE](#) for the story behind the Cup Count)

As I've said before, aside from romance I really enjoy biographies, especially music biographies. I always find it fascinating to read the stories and lives that fueled my favorite songs and bands.

Music is, after all, the soundtrack to our lives.

That said, I must admit that I am actually not a huge fan of The Carpenters music.

I AM, however, a fan of Karen Carpenter's voice and I do like a handful of their songs.

Also, I have always been very intrigued by Karen being that I also struggled with Anorexia from about age 14 to my early 20's.

Now, I was NEVER as a severe a case as Karen; however, I definitely shared a lot the behaviors she practiced, many of which are outlined in this book, e.g., extreme food deprivation, stimulant abuse, laxative abuse, and chronic overexercising.

Now, keep in mind that eating disorders never truly "go away." Not gonna lie, when this book got to the end and they discussed her abuse of ipecac, a small back alley part of my brain said, "Man, that sounds handy. I wish I would have thought of that."

So yeah, while I do consider myself to be more "normal" (whatever that is) these days, I definitely still struggle with this shit sometimes.

But anyway.

Karen.

Poor, poor, Karen.

Her mother, Agnes, seriously sounded like the most domineering troll of a woman to ever grace Downey. Not only did she attempt - and pretty much succeed - in controlling every aspect of Karen - and Richard's to an extent - life, she also perpetuated the expectation within the family that Richard came first.

In all ways.

His musical talent was seen as being better, more important, and more worth cultivating.

Which I must admit irritated me as it sounds like Richard never even composed anything original for them to record, but rather, would lift songs and melodies from other songs and composers - even from a commercial jingle on one occasion.

Even when The Carpenters became THE Carpenters - and Karen their front woman - she was still taught that she was merely a backup singer in the concert of her own life.

She was never allowed to be independent or come into to her own as a woman; in fact, all her friends and colleagues interviewed for this book described her as being childlike in many ways - which is actually a hallmark of people suffering with Anorexia.

Her environment and her domineering mother and brother never allowed her to think for herself or act according to her own wants and desires. Every decision - or lack of decision - she made was based on the wants of her family and her need to not disappoint them.

Any relationship outside the family seemed to be treated as a threat to the family and, as such, pretty much any love interest Karen had was treated and attacked like a cancer. The only man who did manage to break through ended up being a complete fraud who only wanted Karen for her money.

Further, both Karen and Richard seemed to live a life that was stifled by the wholesome image they - ironically - worked tirelessly to cultivate.

In short, despite all her fame and opportunities, Karen seemed to live a very sad and lonely life. When not being held back by her own family she was held hostage by her Anorexia.

And being that I understand *exactly* how it feels to be a unhappy prisoner to your own mind and body, I felt extremely bad for her.

All in all, I really enjoyed this book.

As always, I rate biographies not according to the events of the person's life, but rather, how readable and entertaining I find the book to be.

That said, this book contained a lot of information I found to be dull and superfluous.

I really don't give a shit about the identity of the backup drummer who sat in on this album or that single.

And I really wish the author has focused more on the end of her life and how that all played out.

Still, this was a fascinating read that made me want to more closely listen to some Carpenter tunes. Maybe.

Find me at:

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## Rebecca McNutt says

In an era where we're finally starting to realize what a toll fat-shaming and societal pressure can take on people, popular 1970's singer Karen Carpenter's story is more important and timely than ever. Ironically I don't think Carpenter was ever overweight, but coupled with her ongoing family feud between herself and her mother, she developed anorexia and bulimia and died at a young age, much to the shock of both her family and fans.

*Little Girl Blue* is not just a pop culture story about music and the rise to super-stardom, it's also about the struggles of feeling alone in spite of everything. Capturing all the vibe of the 1970's era alongside the story itself, it's an impressive biography that's able to tell an important tale without dramatizing it, exploiting it or mocking it. I enjoyed reading it; it has me now looking around in my dad's vinyl collection for his '45 of the Carpenters song "We've Only Just Begun". :)

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## Linda Lipko says

How refreshing it is to read a biography that is honestly written with no intent or end product of sensationalism.

The Carpenters were at the top of the charts in the 1970's. *We've Only Just Begun* was standard wedding music. Karen's voice was perfect in pitch, and while many did not confess to embracing the duo, their songs were exceedingly popular and well known with 16 consecutive top 20 songs from 1970-1976.

This is the sad and tragic story of Karen Carpenter who died at the age of 32 from self imposed starvation.

Traveling more than 200 days a year, producing back - back albums, behind the smiles was a heap of sadness.

Stretched to the limit of physical endurance, the Carpenters attempted to continue to ride the merry go round and grab the brass ring on a perpetual spin that escalated till they were going so fast, they were flung from the carousel.

Told from the perspective of close friends who knew her well, Karen's sadness is brought to the forefront as the reader learns of a very dominating, controlling, unemotional mother, a brother who loved her dearly, but struggled with jealousy when it was her voice and not his compositions that defined the group.

Beginning a down ward spiral, Karen at first lost weight until it became an uncontrollable eight year obsession. A flippant, passing comment in a review noted she was chubby and this then led to her death.

Consuming no food and injecting cocktails of diuretics, large quantities of laxatives and, in order to speed her metabolism, she consumed many tablets per day of the prescription drug synthroid, Karen was not able to stop her dangerous obsession.

When she made a very bad choice of a husband, it was the beginning of the end for her.

So little was known about anorexia during Karen's plummet to a skeletal 83 pounds. Under the treatment of

an "expert", she was hospitalized and intravenously fed. Rapidly, she gained 30 pounds.

When she returned home, her psychiatrist believed she had kicked the habit of an obsession and addiction to laxatives. Little did he know that she was swallowing bottles of an over-the-counter vomiting inducing chemical called ipecac.

Consumption of ipecac, combined with years of abuse, damaged her heart.

Poignantly, her final recording session of a beautiful song titled Now, was done in just one take. It was perfect, with no need for correction

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXvjVh...>

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