

Summary

STAY SEXY & DON'T GET MURDERED

Karen Kilgariff & Georgia Hardstark



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Summary of «Stay Sexy & Don't Get Murdered» by Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark

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From the true-crime podcast, *My Favorite Murder* hosts Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark share their insights on personal safety and teach readers how to not get murdered

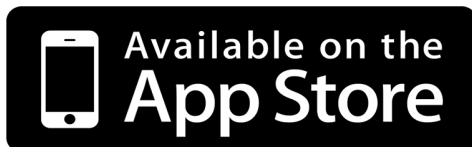


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Introduction

The true-crime comedy podcast *My Favorite Murder* hosted by Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark receives over 20 million listeners a month. Since beginning their true-crime podcast, Karen and Georgia have changed the way true crime is talked about by adding a comedic twist while always staying respectful of the victims they discuss.

Now, they have transferred over to the world of writing as they detail a how-to guide on how to not get murdered, mixed with personal stories from their past. With a mixture of true-crime, memoirs, and self-help advice, Karen and Georgia have created a book of stories that are sure to entertain while also teaching a lesson. From key phrases like “stay out of the forest” and “f**k politeness,” the girls encourage their listeners and readers to ditch social niceties and listen to your gut in uncomfortable situations, stating that many people find themselves getting into trouble when they avoid being rude.

Throughout their memoir, Georgia and Karen discuss their struggles with mental illness, eating disorders noting how these struggles have influenced how they view the world today. From beginning a podcast that has now turned into a success leading to sold-out shows and a book deal, you can now read the never-before-told stories about the hosts behind the successful and popular true-crime podcast.

Trigger Warnings: violence, sexual violence, death or dying, sexism, and misogyny.

Screw Politeness

Being a woman can be hard in society. Women sometimes find themselves in uncomfortable situations, but for fear of seeming rude, they act politely. This politeness? It can get women into trouble, sometimes even murdered which Karen and Georgia discuss in their podcast. Throughout this chapter, Georgia details an experience in which she should have stood up for herself and spoken out about something wrong and uncomfortable, but instead, she was polite because she didn't want to seem rude. So in this chapter, Georgia tells why you should f**k politeness and avoid getting murdered.

Growing up for Georgia Hardstark was difficult and is when her insecurities began to surface. She was self-conscious about her flat chest paired with her hyperactivity, this led Georgia to suffer from low self-esteem; however, she was able to find solace and acceptance when she discovered the underground feminist punk movement Riot Grrrl. Through Riot Grrrl, Georgia learned how to become an outspoken feminist ready to advocate for herself and the women of the world.

During this time, Georgia also learned the difference between kindness and remaining polite when getting taken advantage of. She realized the importance of advocating for herself and she details an experience where she fails to do just that...speak up.

While working as a waitress in Los Angeles after graduating from high school, Georgia was approached by a regular customer to model for his photography business. Lawrence, the customer, showed Georgia his portfolio and on the day of the photoshoot, Georgia put a little more effort into her appearance, wearing cute platform sandals and even putting on a bit of makeup. Upon meeting up with Lawrence, he suggested that they drive to the Santa Monica Mountains to get the most picturesque views for the shoot. Immediately Georgia felt uncomfortable, but she didn't want to disappoint him so she agreed.

Being a “murderino,” or someone that is a fan of true-crime and has an interest in murders, Georgia instantly felt that she was going to become a murder victim while traveling in the car with Lawrence, she knew in her gut that something wasn't right. And while they were on the top of the mountain, Georgia noticed the dead look in Lawrence's eyes that confirmed her suspicions about him were correct. She had every right to be afraid. But she continued to appease Lawrence and make him happy, even taking off her shirt when he asked her to for a picture.

Luckily, she did not become a murder victim that day, and Lawrence casually dropped her off in the parking lot where they had originally met. Georgia hopped out of the car and ran away as fast as she could. She felt ashamed for what she had done, for allowing an older gentleman to take topless photos of her. She knew it was wrong, but she realized that while she didn't speak up for herself at that time, she couldn't blame herself for what happened either. Georgia mentions that murder victims can't be blamed either, they aren't to blame when someone takes advantage of them, it is solely the fault of the predator.

Years later, Georgia found herself at a bar late at night when a man bought her a shot, blatantly ignoring Georgia's consistent refusal. Instead of accepting the shot, she poured it onto the floor right in front of him. Learning from her past, she no longer feels the need to be polite in the face

of predators and those that display a lack of respect and encourages murderers to feel the same when put in an uncomfortable situation.

Staying Healthy

Throughout recent years, the concept of self-care has gained traction around the internet. With an increase in violence and suicide, people are starting to realize the importance of taking care of themselves, both mentally and physically. Some companies are now even offering “mental-health days” for employees who need to take a day off and recover and focus on their mental health. Karen Kilgariff agrees with focusing on self-care, but also believes that self-care involves taking responsibility for your problems and surrounding yourself with supportive friends and therapists.

Before beginning a successful podcast, Karen was working a full-time job where she found herself in a vicious cycle of blaming her colleagues for problems that she never took responsibility for. Surrounded by gossip and victim-blaming, Karen realized she was in a toxic environment, and that the toxicity was from her own inability to accept blame. She decided to find a therapist to help her address the issue and her therapist told her something that she wasn't expecting, something that many of us might experience. She told her that Karen was depending on too many people to be her friend. She overshared with colleagues that would listen and she should reserve these conversations for a few close friends. She should make her circle smaller with people that she knows she can trust.

This lesson eventually hit home when she was out to lunch with a friend. While she was venting to her friend Laura about her toxic relationship with a narcissistic man who would never love her back, Laura eventually snapped. You see, Karen had been complaining about this relationship for months, and she often complained to Laura who patiently listened, but this time it was too much and Laura had had enough. Laura flat-out told Karen that she needed to give up on this relationship and move on, that it wasn't healthy.

At that moment, Karen had an epiphany. This is the kind of friendship that her therapist was talking about, people that you can trust to tell you the truth even if it's hard to hear. Since then, Karen has realized that friendships are important for your mental health and those true friends will tell you the hard truth even when you don't want to hear it. If you need a more professional perspective, therapists are a great way to dig deeper into your underlying problems and there is no shame in seeking professional help.

A Lesson in Shoplifting

While Karen learned the importance of friendships later in life, Georgia learned the importance of close friends and family when she was 13-years-old and found herself getting caught shoplifting at the local mall. Despite being caught breaking the law, the experience offered insight into how important it is to rely on families for support and comfort.

Georgia grew up with a single mother, so she didn't enjoy many luxuries since her mother's income could hardly pay the bills. She wore hand-me-downs from relatives and felt resentment as she entered her teenage years and longed to have the clothing and jewelry that she felt she deserved. She wanted to take control of what she owned, so she turned into a rebellious teenager who began shoplifting G-string, pricey shampoo, boxes of Marlboro Red cigarettes, and a Red Hot Chili Peppers cassette tape.

But one day when she was shopping at Charlotte Russe with her friend Meg, Georgia noticed a suspicious woman staring at her as she stuffed a pair of cheap earrings into her pockets. As Georgia was whispering to Meg that they should make a run for it, the woman grabbed Georgia by the arm and took her into the back of the store while Meg escaped without getting caught. Sure, stealing a pair of earrings is just petty theft, but it wasn't the police that scared her, it was her parents.

She avoided calling her mother who she knew would torture her with a long lecture and an embarrassing spanking, so she called her father instead who was much easier on her and her siblings. When her father came to pick her up, they both cried. Luckily, the security guard allowed them to leave without pressing charges, only giving her father a bill for the earrings plus a security charge and a small penalty. While the situation could've been worse, Georgia learned an important lesson that if she was ever in trouble, she could always rely on her father to help her out. This lesson translated later in life when she realized that friends and family support one another even when they make irresponsible mistakes.

A True Crime Obsession Sparks Friendship

How many times do you bond with a stranger over a common interest? This happens all the time, but often these bonds are short-lived and might only result in an interesting conversation. How many times are these bonds over a topic as morbid as murder? Well, for the hosts of *My Favorite Murder*, that's exactly the topic they bonded over at a Halloween party in 2015. But before we discuss how they met, let's discuss how Georgia's interest in true crime began as early as the 1980s.

After watching *Pet Semetary*, Georgia became fascinated with Stephen King and began reading his books such as *Christine* and *The Dead Zone*. She quickly realized she loved the feeling of suspense and fear that she got when reading these kinds of books. She made the transition from fiction to non-fiction when she picked up *The Stranger Beside Me*, a biography about serial killer Ted Bundy written by Ted's friend Ann Rule. Immediately, she became fascinated by real-life true crime stories and became a "murderino," the term coined by the *My Favorite Murder* Facebook fan page for those that have an obsession for all things true crime.

Over the years, she realized that her obsession went further than just watching TV shows with the members of her family like *Unsolved Mysteries* and *America's Most Wanted*. Georgia found herself digging deeper into her passion by reading autopsy reports and analyzing blood splatter patterns, and quickly realized that people weren't as interested as she was and found her obsession to be unpleasant and even disconcerting. She began interviewing new people she met by gauging their interest and looking for hints of interest in her obsession, hints like being interested in *Law and Order* or *CSI*.

Now, let's get to that Halloween party in 2015. While at a party in Los Angeles, Georgia overheard a woman telling the story of a car accident that she had previously witnessed. Preferring something less gruesome, many people quickly left the conversation leaving an opportunity for Georgia to approach the woman and ask her about all the grisly details. They soon began discussing more than just the car accident and found themselves discussing the HBO television series *The Staircase*, which details the trial of a man who murdered his wife. Following their hours-long conversation, the two bonded over their true crime obsession and planned to meet up for lunch soon.

Bonding over murder? Sounds crazy, right? But that's exactly what happened between Georgia and Karen. The bond sparked the beginning of the podcast *My Favorite Murder*, which has led to sold-out shows, book deals, and millions of listeners to bond with over their passion for true crime.

Diagnosis Doesn't Mean Disaster

Depression. Anxiety. Bi-Polar Disorder. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. PTSD. There is a multitude of mental illnesses that people suffer from every day, and becoming diagnosed with a mental illness can be scary. There's a stigma and people wonder if others will treat them differently if they share their mental health struggles. People assume that they will be seen as weak or unworthy and experience a new kind of discrimination. But Georgia and Karen are here to discuss why diagnosis doesn't mean disaster, it's a first step in healing yourself and coping with your mental illness.

Throughout her life of therapy, Georgia has learned some important lessons about receiving a mental health diagnosis. Having been going to therapy since the young age of six, Georgia has been diagnosed with ADHD, anxiety, depression, and OCD. But even though she has received all these diagnoses, she realizes that it is important to put a label on mental illness for a variety of reasons and that a diagnosis does not mean disaster.

A diagnosis is simply a generalized label for symptoms, and are necessary to begin taking the first steps in healing yourself. If you know exactly what is going on inside your head, you can take the proper steps to cope and deal with those symptoms. For instance, Georgia knows that she suffers from ADHD so she has sought a therapist to help her cope with her symptoms so that she can prevent the illness from affecting her daily life, her career, and her relationships. Secondly, Georgia explains that a diagnosis is necessary for insurance companies to cover the cost of treatment; however, a diagnosis isn't everything, and anyone can benefit from seeking therapy whether they have a mental illness diagnosis or not.

For instance, Georgia sought the help of a life coach to help her overcome her lazy tendencies. She hated herself for not being motivated to do the things she loves like writing or going to the gym. In fact, this is something we all might relate to and struggle with on a daily basis. How many times do you tell yourself you're going to go to the gym, and then never find the motivation to make it? Well, Georgia benefited from a life coach in helping her overcome this lack of motivation. But through her experience, she realized she didn't need to find the motivation to do the things she loved, she simply just needed to show up. Basically, she didn't need to feel like her best self to do things. Even if she didn't feel like going to the gym that day, she would have to at least show-up and put in some effort once she was there.

However, it's not just about going to a therapist and talking about your problems, it's also about finding the right therapist. It's important to find a therapist that you connect with and can sometimes take a lot of trial and error. So, be patient and don't be scared to leave one therapist to find someone else that you connect with more.

Karen's Journey to Becoming a Comedian

Growing up, Karen, like many girls, struggled with an eating disorder and found herself working at a frozen yogurt shop that only exacerbated her toxic relationship with food. She later found herself working in retail and realizing that working a minimum wage job wouldn't sustain the kind of lifestyle that she was longing for. However, the many jobs that Karen worked throughout the years helped her learn her passion for comedy and realize that personal safety means being able to pay your bills and feed yourself with your own job.

Throughout high school, all the cool girls worked at the yogurt shop, so naturally, Karen got a job there as well. During this time, Karen was struggling with an eating disorder that caused her to binge eat to deal with the stresses of being a teenager, but since the cool girls worked there, she didn't realize that working with sugary yogurt might become detrimental to her mental health.

One day when Karen was working a slow day, she decided to enjoy a cup of frozen yogurt while enjoying a book since there weren't any customers to serve at the time. Being an employee, their boss, Thelma, encouraged employees to eat the product to be able to better help the customers. Well, it wasn't until Karen was enjoying her third cup of frozen yogurt that Thelma snapped at Karen and told her to get back to work. Of course, Karen realized she was overeating, but she was more surprised at the reaction from Thelma. Now, she is mortified by her actions that day, but being a teenager, she couldn't see Thelma's perspective at the time. Eventually, Karen was fired for inappropriate conduct when she carved her initials into the store's fudge. Though she was embarrassed for being the only one of her friends to become fired from the yogurt shop, she felt freedom and relief when she realized she didn't have to work around sugary foods anymore.

It wasn't until Karen was working at Gap, that she realized that she needed to do something to change the course of her life. Low-wage jobs weren't enough to pay her bills and feed herself, she couldn't even afford the clothes that she was forced to sell. Her animosity towards her job worsened when she realized she must pretend to be cheery and helpful when she desperately hated her job and needed a way out. She was exhausted and poor. She decided to quit her job at Gap and focused her energy on finding more stand-up gigs. Of course, this all paid off for Karen as she went on to have a successful stand-up comedy career.

Karen and Georgia stress that when it comes to personal safety, or "how to not get murdered," then you need to be able to provide for yourself by paying your bills and feeding yourself. Personal safety also goes deeper than just providing for yourself though, it also means being healthy mentally. Having a healthy mind means seeking out help when needed, and switching jobs when you find yourself unhappy or in a toxic work environment.

Stop Victim Blaming

From the beginning of *My Favorite Murder*, Karen and Georgia planned on talking about true crime while also teaching listeners how to not get murdered. They wanted to teach, especially women, how to protect themselves and offered advice they learned through covering specific cases in each episode, advice like don't get into cars with strangers. However, Karen and Georgia began to receive criticism saying that their advice is a form of victim-blaming. In other words, their advice implies that the victim should be blamed for getting into a car with a stranger.

Victim blaming happens all the time. An example of victim-blaming occurred during a case in South Carolina where a college student was murdered by her Uber driver after being picked up in the early hours of the morning outside a bar. Not only was the victim drunk, but she also failed to check the license plate of the Uber that picked her up. It turns out that she got into the wrong car, and was subsequently murdered by a man who took the opportunity to rape and kill a young female student who mistakenly got into his car. The victim was blamed for being drunk and for not checking the license plate of the car that she got into. Uber released statements saying riders should double-check the license plate and ask the driver to tell you your name before getting into the car. Basically, don't get into cars with strangers...unless that stranger is your real Uber driver.

Well, Georgia and Karen took the criticism to heart and sought out how to shift the conversation and their approach to true crime. They looked into a case they covered in Toronto to explain the concept of victim-blaming in further detail. Back in 1987, Toronto's Scarborough district experienced a series of violent attacks and rapes against women as they disembarked the buses late at night. Toronto's police searched for the perpetrator for months but continuously failed to come up with any suspects.

Eventually, at a press conference about how the city planned to continue to approach the situation, the local constable announced that women were to blame for taking the bus so early in the morning. He expressed that when traveling during those hours, women can't expect to be protected from people such as rapists and murderers. Just a month later, a member of the municipal council proposed a curfew just for women to help solve the "problem."

During this time, the mother of Karen's friend Paul was living in Scarborough and found herself in an eerie situation one morning when she was going for a swim at the pool of her apartment complex. She became increasingly nervous as the man was walking around the pool, watching her. Luckily, the man quickly disappeared once a group of parents arrived with their children. She would eventually see that man again, on her television screen, when the local news covered the story of the Scarborough Rapist being arrested.

It turns out that the same man was a serial killer who had been torturing, raping and killing victims over the course of six years. That day at the pool, Paul's mother had been doing nothing wrong. She had simply been going about her daily business and was lucky that she didn't become another victim of the Scarborough Rapist. But had she become a victim, would she be to blame? She wasn't walking around in the early hours of the morning, she wasn't getting into cars with strangers, and she certainly wasn't drinking or on drugs. But, why does society blame those

that do? Paul's mother was living her life that day at the pool as were the women who got off the bus late at night, neither of which should be blamed for the actions of another. If they became the targets of a murderer or rapist, it is never the victim's fault, but that of the perpetrator.

Karen realized that she had been victim-blaming, and through the criticism of their listeners, Karen and Georgia decided to change the way they approach giving advice for not getting murdered. Instead of suggesting ways in which women can protect themselves, it's more important to discuss the warning signs of a perpetrator including identifying typical behaviors and actions of a murderer. Their tagline for staying safe? Stay sexy & don't get murdered.

Final Summary

Throughout their lives, Karen and Georgia have had their ups and downs and have learned many lessons along the way. Their latest success, the *My Favorite Murder* podcast, has taught them an increasingly important lesson in today's society. By sharing stories of true crime and teaching listeners how not to get murdered, Karen and Georgia realized it's simply not enough to offer advice like not getting into cars with strangers. In fact, Karen and Georgia now realize how that advice is a form of victim-blaming and instead offer advice on how to identify the warning signs of someone with ill intentions.

They have also realized how important it is to seek help when falling into a dark place, and how relationships with friends and family are important for improving your mental health. While perpetrators typically suffer from a form of mental illness, it's important to know the warning signs of mental illness in the people around you as well within yourself. The topic of true-crime can easily be connected to that of mental illness and throughout their memoirs, Georgia and Karen discuss their own struggles with mental illness and suggest seeking help to heal your brain and mind. At the end of the day, stay sexy and don't get murdered.



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