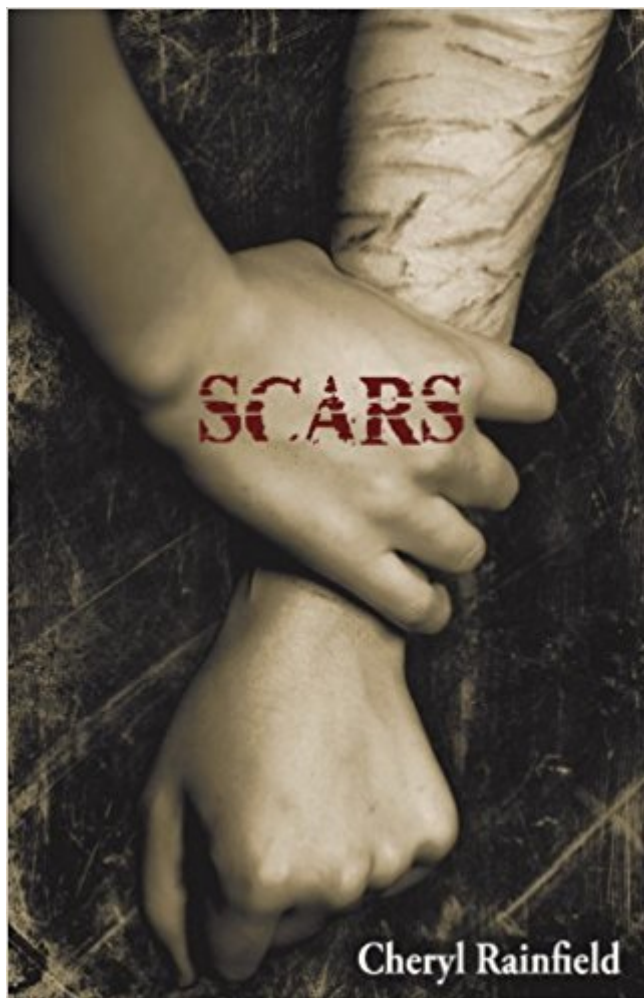


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# Scars



## Synopsis

Kendra, a sexual abuse survivor, cuts to cope with the pain, but she doesn't remember the identity of who abused her. Kendra makes a friend in Meghan, and falls in love with her. When Kendra's abuser starts threatening her, she must find a way to face her past and stop hurting herself--before it's too late.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up—Fifteen-year-old Kendra is being stalked by someone who wants her dead, and she is overwhelmed by the compulsion to cut herself. She is dealing with shadowy memories of sexual abuse from her early childhood and wonders why she cannot recall her rapist's face. Kendra is a tough, vulnerable, troubled teen, a survivor who will win readers' hearts as she struggles to deal with her life. While her biggest challenges may be extreme, there is much that any teen can relate to: frustration with a clueless mother, delight as her friendship with Meghan grows into love, and the struggle for identity and self-knowledge. Watching, guiding, and caring for this emerging young woman are three adults who offer emotional support rather than answers: a gay mentor, a therapist, and a teacher who knows true artistic talent when she sees it. Particularly well written are the scenes with Kendra's therapist; there's no miracle working here, just the long hard slog through pain and uncertainty. And when the revelation comes, there is no cardboard villain in the shadows, but rather a complex person whose cruelties and self-deceptions are believable and deeply sad. The excellent resource section covers widely respected books, Web

sites, organizations, and help lines for youth seeking information on extreme abuse, cutting, same-sex attraction, and dissociation. This book will be a particular comfort and source of insight for teens facing any of these challenges, but whatever their life experience, they will be on the edge of their seats, rooting for Kendra to unravel the mystery that shadows her life. This is one heck of a good book!

—Carolyn Lehman, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The scars that crisscross 15-year-old Kendra's arms are not for public consumption. Her cutting is kept secret from her parents, her friends, and even her beloved therapist. But things change when she meets Meghan, a classmate whose promiscuity with boys belies her budding romantic interest in Kendra. Like other books and movies on this topic, Kendra's story isn't really about cutting—she was sexually abused between the ages of 2 and 12, and the resulting trauma has blocked out her rapist's identity. What sets Rainfield's story apart is the stalking element: her rapist is still hounding her, giving her frightening reminders that she will be killed if she tells anyone the truth. Sophisticated readers may very well roll their eyes at melodramatic clichés ("It's only my utility knife that releases the screams inside me") but that same sense of overwhelming emotion might appeal to teens wrestling with similar issues. The book becomes most enjoyable near the end, when it makes an implausible hairpin turn into the realm of psychothriller. Rainfield's closing research guide is unusually extensive. Grades 8-11. --Daniel Kraus --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Scars is super intense, which you can probably tell from the description. On the first page, we're with Kendra during one of her therapy sessions. She was sexually abused for several years as a child, but it wasn't until six months ago that the memories emerged. She can see everything except for the face of the man who did these things to her, and to make matters worse, he's been following her. Aside from talking to her therapist in a safe space, the only way she knows how to deal with the onslaught of memories is to cut. Scars doesn't pull any punches. Kendra's cutting is described in detail: what it looks like, what she feels or doesn't feel, how she hides it. There's flashbacks of her abuse, which are heart-wrenching and disturbing. Then there's her paintings, which depict her feelings in dark tones that worry her mother. Although her mother's worry is more because those kind of paintings don't sell, and not over what's going on with her daughter. The mother-daughter

relationship also has a strong focus, because Kendra doesn't feel like she can talk to her mother about what's going on with her without being criticized or having her mother turn it into being about her. Or getting the whole "don't worry your father, don't make him look bad" speech. Horrible. While *Scars* is by no means a light or easy read, it's not all darkness. There is a very sweet romance between Kendra and the one person her age who she feels gets her. Meghan's life isn't all hugs and happiness either. She puts on this tough girl act, but Kendra sees her underneath that. Meghan also doesn't judge Kendra or push her to share more than she's ready for. Likewise, Kendra doesn't push Meghan about her home life although she makes it clear that she's there for her despite her own problems. They're just very sweet together. Of course, one of the main plot points is who abused Kendra. It's frustrating for her to be able to remember everything but his face, so everywhere she looks it could be him. I did figure out who it was early on, but that didn't change my reaction when it all came out. It really is sickening that he could do this to her, and his explanation...just ugh. I felt so sick. *Scars* is a very intense read. The only reason I didn't give it a full five stars was because I felt like it was too short and like some things were rushed. There is a lot of detail and depth here, but it felt rushed at the end. It was resolved too quickly and suddenly, even though Kendra has been dealing with this for months. I guess I just wanted more of Kendra's story, perhaps more of what happened afterward. Especially with her relationship with her mom, because as much as I hated that woman, I believed her totally off responses and hope she was able to put herself aside to really see her daughter.

The story begins with Kendra remembering what happened to her as a child. Problems at school and then home issues add to that, all culminating in a powerful climax. Cheryl Rainfield pushes Kendra to her absolute breaking point to fully explore the emotions she's experiencing. The release of those emotions and the choices she makes, are the whole focus of this book. Books with subjects like abuse and self harm are not necessarily as popular as other realistic fiction/contemporary books are, and the combination of issues in *Scar* adds to its intensity. The writing is excellent, especially when describing Kendra's needs and feelings. The need to cut and find release from the emotional pain is very well detailed, and is told on different levels so everybody can relate to her. I recommend this book for those that have an interest in exploring what goes on in a person's head when they are thinking of self harm. Kendra has moments of real breakthroughs, and great insight into her mind space is given throughout the story. I think it's an important read and well done.

I promise to be brutally honest with my opinion, but it should not be taken as fact. Any reader should read it for themselves, before they decide if this book has any merit or not. Do not judge this book biased solely on my opinion. If you do, you might miss out on a great read. You never know. It could happen.

1. Strong Main Character/ Female Heroine: Kendra is a teenager going through hell. She has been raped multiple times by an unknown rapist and fills horrified once she starts to remember. She cuts herself to get rid of the overwhelming pain that she feels. To me, Kendra is truly strong. She could kill herself and not have to deal with the pain anymore. She is not a coward or suicidal. She wants to live, but she wants to live life happy, not depressed and scared. She empowers herself with help from the people who love and support her and she grows stronger to the point where she fights back. She gets her life slowly back under her control and learns to live without cutting, although she still cuts sometimes. Kendra is a real eye-opener to me. It scares me to think that I could have been like her. I could have cut to release the pain I felt over being abandoned by my parents, but unlike Kendra I sought the route of exercise anorexia. So, I never got to the skinniness that most people get to, but I was thirty pounds underweight and that really woke me up when I could start seeing the columns on my spine. \*(shivers\* Like Kendra, it takes years to get over the trauma and the disorders that come with them. It is hard for me to tell anyone that I used to have an eating disorder...that I still do, because you never truly recover. I am still around ten to fifteen pounds underweight. It took me two years to eat a single slice of pizza and now I can have two or three. I still feel the need to exercise like crazy, but I living and loving my life. I still have pain....It never really goes away and Kendra helped me to see that I am truly not alone. 5 out of 5 stars

2. Strong Minor Characters: Megan has an abusive mother, but can still find the strength to love Kendra. So, I am not into the lesbian relationship, but I realize that the emphasis was not on that. It was on the loving relationship between the two girls. Who cares that they love each other? I don't. I am totally fine reading about their love and how it develops. It made this story REAL, because not EVERY girl falls in love with a guy and I'm cool with that. I can totally relate to Kendra and her mother's relationship. My relationship to my own mother mirrors her, except more so if you can imagine it. The relationship did seem real, although a bit forced. I love the art teacher and Caroline! They were definite mother figures in the book and it makes me so happy that she had them in her life. I also looked to my teachers as mother figures for myself, especially since I have a mother who never wanted to be my mother. Sandy is an amazingly real character. Out of all the minor characters, I thought he was the second realist character in the book. His relation with Kendra was smooth and flawless. I quite enjoyed reading about all of them. 4 out of 5 stars

3. The Setting: The author creates a beautifully vivid place, where dreams, nightmares, and reality are blurred; a place

where a bump in the night could be the last thing that you hear. The setting is chilling and heart-wrenching. It is written in such descriptive detail that it is almost too painful to read. I have to warn my fellow readers; do not read this book with a faint heart for this book will surely rip it out. It contains mature elements that should not be looked over lightly. The author can write a good realistic story with realistic details and places, because she has been in similar shoes. It brings realism into the story. 5 out of 5 stars4. The Plot: The story really brought me to my knees. I cried out many tears and nights of sobbing with this book. It brought out so much contained pain in myself and helped me bring it to the surface and let it out. The book held my hand as I cried, just like Kendra did with Megan in the park. It opened up such emotion in me that I had to take little breaks from the book. It had so much heartbreak in it, but so much empowerment, too. When Kendra was happy, my heart soared for her and myself and when she was hurt and depressed, I shared those bouts of misery with her as well. This book is like nothing I have ever read before. It was breathtaking and breath-giving. I have nothing, but positive things to say about this book, not because I can relate to it, although that is a part of it. I can relate to it, because it is beautifully as well as accurately written. This book will haunt me for quite some time. I will definitely read more from this author. 5 out of 5 starsI think I have discovered a new genre that people might be into. I am definitely into this kind of genre and I will get my hands on as many books like this as I can and I will be reviewing them here. I believe that the books we read reflect something about ourselves and what we want to believe in. I like to escape from reality, but sometimes, it is refreshing to read a good dose of fiction reality, because then, you can comfort yourself knowing that the story is not real....But for someone out there in the world, this story is all too real.

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