



by Julia Pustet
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Fiction

All Very Bad

Alles Ganz Schlimm

review

Julia Pustet's debut novel is a chilling, sharply observed, and unsettlingly funny exploration of sex work, female friendship, betrayal, and the disorienting grey zones between power and vulnerability. 'All Very Bad' will appeal to readers of Brittany Newell's novel about sex work in San Francisco, 'Soft Core', as well as fans of feminist autofiction, queer narratives, and transgressive fiction by authors such as Torrey Peters, Lisa Taddeo, and Melissa Broder.

Told through the acerbic, deeply introspective voice of Susanne, the novel delves into the contradictions of contemporary womanhood and the emotional aftershocks of being silenced, betrayed, and misrepresented, particularly by those who claim to be allies.

At the core of the novel is Susanne's volatile relationship with Stella, a charismatic and ethically ambiguous woman within her feminist social circle. Their bond is intense and contradictory, laced with admiration, competition, and resentment. When Susanne writes a raw account of her experiences as a sex worker, describing her dealings with clients and coworkers, and the blurred lines between empowerment and exploitation, Stella steals the manuscript, publishes it under her own name, and becomes a media sensation. The fallout from this betrayal reverberates through Susanne's relationships and her sense of self, culminating in Stella's suicide and the confused, conflicted aftermath.

The novel moves fluidly between timelines, including Susanne's childhood, her fraught family dynamics, her time working in a brothel, and the events surrounding Stella's act of plagiarism and death. The result is a fragmented narrative that mirrors the internal disarray of its narrator. There is particular brilliance in how Pustet captures small, psychologically loaded interactions: a seemingly banal conversation with a former friend turns insidiously cruel; a moment of support in a brothel becomes unexpectedly tender. These moments resist moral binaries, portraying emotional life as complex, contradictory, and often quietly devastating.

Susanne is a narrator who is clear-eyed but not self-righteous. She doesn't ask to be liked; she asks to be listened to. Her relationships are messy, her choices conflicted, and her loyalty to harmful people painfully believable.

The novel's themes of authorship, consent, trauma, and self-erasure feel urgent and relevant, especially in feminist spaces grappling with internal contradictions. 'All Very Bad' is a bold, emotionally complex debut with real crossover potential for English-language readers: intimate, raw, and painfully relevant.

Find out more:

<https://www.haymonverlag.at/produkt/alles-ganz-schlimm/>

press quotes

Reading ,'All very bad' is like driving a bit too fast along empty, rain-soaked roads listening to loud music and smoking cigarette after cigarette, breakneck and melancholy all at the same time (just like life).

Ronya Othmann

Julia Pustet's intricate social novel has a painfully clear awareness of one thing: criticism is just a test of love. And so she finds, even in the harshest sucker punches dealt by circumstance, that which has always been lacking in Germany: the delicate freedom of left-wing melancholy.

Jonathan Guggenberger

Once you've read this book, your own life doesn't seem anywhere near as bad as it did. Thank you!

Svea Mausolf

about the author



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Julia Pustet is an author, musician and lifelong anti-fascist. She writes on social media about intersectionality, feminism and left-wing anti-Semitism. After numerous publications, including in Kaput magazine, her emotional and powerful debut novel 'Alles ganz schlimm' will be published in September 2025.

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