


by Charlotte Gneuß
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Fiction

🏆 Longlisted for the German Book Prize 2023

🏆 Jürgen Ponto-Preis 2023

🏆 finalist for the 'aspekte' prize for the best German-language literary debut of the year 2023

We are delighted that this book has now been published in English translation.

# Gittersee

*Gittersee*

## review

Charlotte Gneuß's literary thriller is set in the former East Germany, in the Dresden suburb of Gittersee – a gripping debut from a new talent on the German literary scene.

The novel tells the story of sixteen-year-old Karin Köhler's recruitment as a Stasi informer, following the defection of her boyfriend Paul to the West. Gneuß brings to life an oppressive regime while showing that the people who lived under it still had agency. The book explores Karin's life as a rebellious teenager with more than her fair share of adult responsibility.

Karin lives with her grandmother, parents, and little sister, and is visited one night by two Stasi officers, Wickwalz and Hamm. She is taken to the police station to give a statement. Through flashbacks we learn how Karin saw Paul stashing money in his motorbike before leaving for Czechoslovakia, where he said he was going to a festival. Karin was supposed to join him and his friend Rühle, but at the last minute she was held back by her conscience: she is her sister's main carer and feels she cannot leave the little girl.

Karin's only confidante is her school friend, Marie. Marie parrots the Party line about capitalism, but Karin is less convinced. Wickwalz recruits Karin as an IM to find out what happened to Paul. As time goes on, Karin is increasingly attached to Wickwalz, confiding in him about the breakdown of her parents' marriage and her father's

drinking. Karin becomes embroiled in a confusing web of misleading information about Paul's whereabouts.

Karin sees Paul's friend Rühle; he says he is being followed by the Stasi and that he has something to tell her. As he opens up to her, Karin starts to wonder whether he and Marie are also working for the Stasi. Karin tries to stop him talking because she knows she will have to repeat it all to Wickwalz. Unsure who she can trust, she has to navigate tense situations in which her double life threatens to unravel. Events are revealed gradually, and sometimes revised in flashback, as if Karin doesn't know whether to trust the reader with the whole truth.

The tension and lack of trust between the characters is thrillingly developed throughout *Gittersee*, and combines with Gneuß's sparkling prose to make for a breathtaking read.

Find out more here:
https://www.fischerverlage.de/verlag/rights/book/charlotte-gneuss-gittersee-9783103970883

## about the author

Charlotte Gneuss was born in Ludwigsburg in 1992, and studied social work in Dresden, creative writing in Leipzig and writing for the stage in Berlin. She has published her work in literary magazines, is a guest writer for Zeit Online, and has been invited to literary workshops by the Jürgen Ponto Foundation and the Kölner Schmiede. She is also the winner of the Leonhard Frank Scholarship for New Drama and the editor of the anthology Glückwunsch [Congratulations], published by Hanser Berlin. Gneuss' work repeatedly returns to the GDR – the reality and utopia of the country where her parents grew up, but which no longer exists.

## rights information

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