



by Tamara Bach  
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Children's & Young Adults'

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## Marian Images

### *Marienbilder*

#### review

*Marian Images* shares the thematic concerns and dramatic appeal of the popular British-American romantic comedy *Sliding Doors*, framed by scenarios which will resonate with young adult readers.

Mareike's mother Magda disappears on a Thursday. From the outset sixteen-year-old Mareike is sure that her mother will not be coming back. Her father Günther is numb and unemotional and as no one in the family seems to have any idea what to do they simply keep things quiet and carry on as normal. In its quest for the truth about Magda's disappearance, *Marian Images* tempts the reader with an array of simultaneous narrative possibilities.

The emptiness which Magda leaves behind has a profound effect on everyday life. School, work and friendships all lose their charm. Mareike is haunted by the likelihood that her mother's disappearance was carefully planned, suggested by the fact that Magda's car was left at the station and that her bank account was empty. In her loneliness Mareike begins to reinvent and retell the story of how her parents met and the kind of people they are. She imagines different versions of what happened on the day her mother left, experimenting with a range of possibilities that are interwoven with the perspectives of the various family members, and yet the truth remains out of reach.

Mareike's early sexual experiences are narrated in parallel with the story of her mother's first love. When Magda becomes pregnant at the age of eighteen it is a source of huge shame to her family and she

is hastily married to Günther, who is not the baby's father. Meanwhile Mareike's periods have stopped and it is possible that she too is pregnant. In one version of the story Mareike has a miscarriage, whereas in another she moves to a quiet village by the sea and has her child there. There are also several imagined reencounters between Mareike and her mother, although it seems likely that any reconciliation after Magda's devastating act of abandonment will only ever be provisional.

Tamara Bach's exciting new book offers an unusual take on universal themes of love and loss and is perfectly tailored for teen readers. Its sensual imagery and evocative language ensure that the characters in this rich novel are vividly brought to life within each fascinating shift of their stories.

## about the author

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