



The Pact: A Love Story

By Jodi Picoult

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From Jodi Picoult, one of the most powerful writers in contemporary fiction, comes a riveting, timely, heartbreaking, and terrifying novel of families in anguish -- and friendships ripped apart by inconceivable violence. Until the phone calls came at 3:00 a.m. on a November morning, the Golds and their neighbors, the Hartes, had been inseparable. It was no surprise to anyone when their teenage children, Chris and Emily, began showing signs that their relationship was moving beyond that of lifelong friends. But now seventeen-year-old Emily has been shot to death by her beloved and devoted Chris as part of an apparent suicide pact -- leaving two devastated families stranded in the dark and dense predawn, desperate for answers about an unthinkable act and the children they never really knew.

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The Pact: A Love Story By Jodi Picoult Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Teenage suicide is the provocative topic that Picoult plumbs, with mixed results, in her fifth novel. Popular high-school swimming star Chris Harte and talented artist Em Gold bonded as infants; their parents have been next-door neighbors and best friends for 18 years. When they fall in love, everyone is ecstatic. Everyone, it turns out, except for Em, who finds that sex with Chris feels almost incestuous. Her emotional turmoil, compounded by pregnancy, which she keeps secret, leads to depression, despair and a desire for suicide, and she insists that Chris prove his love by pulling the trigger. The gun is fired in the first paragraph, and so the book opens with a jolt of adrenaline. But Picoult stumbles in delineating both sets of parents' responses to the tragedy. Unconvincing behavior and dialogue inappropriate to the situation (plus, most importantly, the fact that the parents fail to discuss crucial topics) never touch the essence of bereavement and thus destroy credibility. Picoult redeems herself in flashbacks that reveal the two marital relationships and the personalities of both couples; and she sensitively explores the question of how well parents can ever know their children. After Chris is accused of murder and jailed, the narrative acquires impressive authenticity and suspense, with even the minor characters evoked with Picoult's keen eye for telling detail. The courtroom scenes (reminiscent of Picoult's 1996 novel, *Mercy*), are taut and well paced. Readers may remain unconvinced, however, that an intelligent young man like Chris would not have sought some help rather than respond to his lover's desperate request. Literary Guild and Doubleday Book Club selections; foreign rights sold in Germany, France, Poland and Norway.
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From [Booklist](#)

Picoult is a writer of high energy and conviction who has, in her fifth novel, brought to life a cast of subtly drawn characters caught up in a tragedy as timeless and resonant as those of the Greeks or Shakespeare. That is not to say that Picoult is anything but accessible; in fact, this psychologically shrewd tale is as suspenseful as any best-selling legal thriller. The Hartes and the Golds, professional folk living next door in an affluent New Hampshire town, are close friends, and their children, the Hartes' son, Chris, and Emily Gold, were born just weeks apart. Inseparable all through childhood, they slipped from the haven of intimate friendship into the tempestuous realm of love in high school, a transition their parents fully expected and welcomed. But Emily is secretly appalled by the incestuous nature of her relationship with Chris, and when she discovers that she is pregnant, she can imagine only one solution: suicide. Chris is with her when she dies and is consequently charged with her murder. As Picoult takes us through the nightmare that follows, examining each character's struggle with guilt and sorrow, she forges a finely honed, commanding, and cathartic drama. *Donna Seaman*

From Kirkus Reviews

In this brooding fourth novel, Picoult (*Picture Perfect*, 1995, etc.) creates an affecting study of obsession, loss, and some of the more wrenching varieties of guilt. It all begins with a failed suicide pact between two teenagers: Emily Gold dies, but the precise motivations behind her death remain obscure. And who pulled the trigger? Her boyfriend Chris Harte, who survives because of having fainted apparently before he could kill himself, seems unwilling to offer an explanation. Zipping back and forth through time, the story traces the growth of the long, complex relationship between the kids. When the two families first settle down next to each other, the Hartes and Golds seem meant for each other: Both families are upper-class New Englanders; both the husbands are doctors; both the wives are pregnant and so in a sense the pairing of Chris and Emily takes place even before their birth. Eventually, they sleep in the same bassinet, go on to develop their own secret language, accompany each other everywhere and, when they become adolescents, are inevitably drawn into a fervid romance. While it seems inconceivable that Chris could have killed Emily, a preponderance of forensic evidence suggests that it just may be. On his 18th birthday, Chris is hauled off to

jail and the perfect harmony between the families instantly dissolves. Melanie Gold, unable to accept the notion that her perfect daughter could have been suicidal, focuses her anger on the murderer next door, and, emotionally, James Harte disinherits his son, who's now a liability to the doctor's prestigious career. Chris himself, saddled with a hot-shot lawyer more interested in building a case than in hearing the truth, sinks into despair. The trial scenes, alternating rapid-fire testimony with flashbacks to the actual suicide, are particularly powerful, and what Chris finally says when he takes the stand comes, thanks to Picoult's skill, as a considerable surprise. A moving story, mingling elements of mystery with sensitive exploration of a tragic subject. (Author tour) -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Amy Lewis:

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