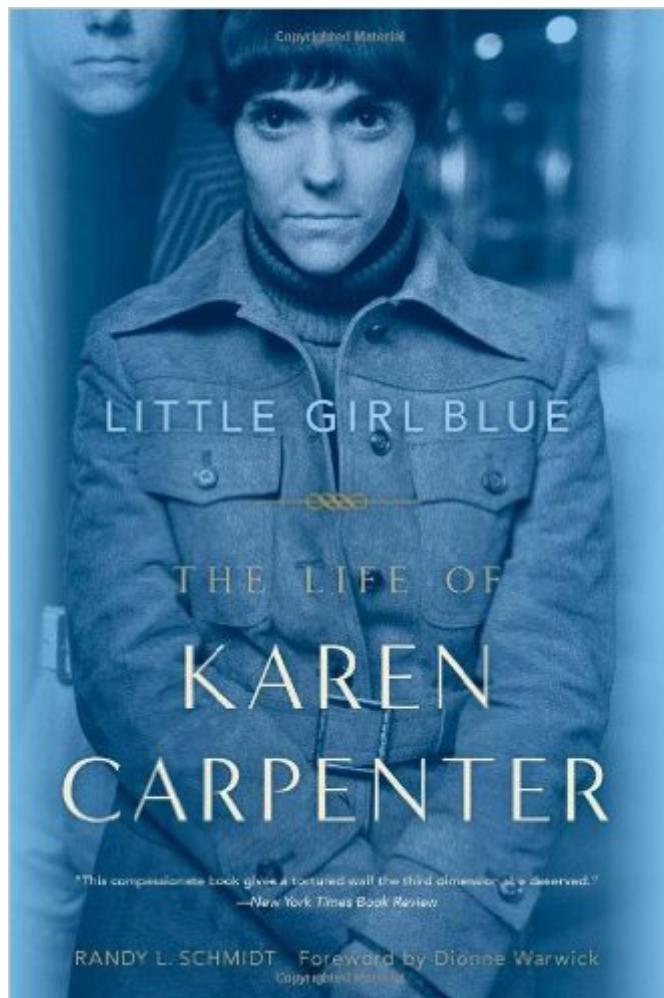


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Little Girl Blue: The Life Of Karen Carpenter



Synopsis

Little Girl Blue is an intimate profile of Karen Carpenter, a girl from a modest Connecticut upbringing who became a Southern California superstar. Karen was the instantly recognizable lead singer of the Carpenters. The top-selling American musical act of the 1970s, they delivered the love songs that defined a generation. Little Girl Blue reveals Karen's heartbreaking struggles with her mother, brother, and husband; the intimate disclosures she made to her closest friends; her love for playing drums and her frustrated quest for solo stardom; and the ups and downs of her treatment for anorexia nervosa. After her shocking death at 32 years of age in 1983, she became the proverbial poster child for that disorder; but the other causes of her decline are laid bare for the first time in this moving account. Little Girl Blue is Karen Carpenter's definitive biography, based on exclusive interviews with her innermost circle of girlfriends and nearly 100 others, including childhood friends, professional associates, and lovers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've been a Carpenters fan since age eight when I could hear "Close to You" coming through my older cousin's ear piece on her transistor AM radio. Next came drum lessons in grade five. Karen was my idol and my sisters and I devoured her LPs and cassettes like food groups while learning the art of precise harmonies in the process. So, news of this latest and wonderful biography had me champing at the bit as soon as I heard about its release. I could not put this book down. And this did not necessarily serve my sleep well (note to self: do not expect to have a good night's sleep if you read such haunting books). It is a heart wrenching tale of heartbreak, control issues, deceit, and the

complete misunderstanding of a soul so old and so sensitive that I could not get through this painfully honest biography without a lot of Kleenex. To literally slowly kill yourself from self-starvation/anorexia nervosa is a tragedy, but when you read about WHY and HOW it happened to this one of a kind talent, you will want to go out and purchase a ouija board to contact and tell off her mother, Agnes, who was such a bitch and so insensitive and controlling that she made Joan Crawford look like Carol Brady. Karen had no one on her side when it came to her family; all control freaks (except her pacifist father). She was shoved to the back of the line more often than not and was, despite being at the forefront of the Carpenters with that gorgeous voice, placed and kept firmly in the shadow of her older brother, Richard ("The talented one," says Agnes). Mom would see to that. We find out in her sad story, however, that Karen DID have some very trusted and supportive friends and I am so happy that we are FINALLY hearing their side of the story.

Having previously read Ray Coleman's authorized biography on The Carpenters, *The Carpenters: The Untold Story : An Authorized Biography*, I came away with the sense there was much more to the story of Karen Carpenter that was not being told. Previous to Coleman's book, there was the made for tv movie "The Karen Carpenter Story", which obviously was heavily edited by the Carpenter family. Neither gave conclusive, definitive reasons why America's musical sweetheart, Karen Carpenter, died of complications due to anorexia at the young age of 32 in 1983. This thoroughly detailed book by Randy Schmidt unveils the long-hidden reasons behind Karen Carpenter's untimely death. Schmidt wrote this book without interference from Richard Carpenter, so he has complete journalistic freedom to tell the entire story. Richard Carpenter does not contribute to this book (no comments, no interviews), and made no attempt to thwart Mr. Schmidt or censor him in any way. The painful truth of Karen Carpenter is told here. In the foreward, Mr. Schmidt explains how previous attempts to tell the Karen Carpenter story were stymied by the Carpenter family, specifically Richard Carpenter, in an attempt to subdue an unfavorable light on Karen's mother, Agnes. Understandibly, Mr. Carpenter was protecting his mother, and he disagrees with the view that Agnes Carpenter was a dominant factor in Karen's anorexia. Richard suggests that Karen's anorexia was perhaps genetic in origin, and it would have surfaced whether Karen was a music superstar or "housewife". Perhaps this is true.

During their heyday from 1970 - 1976, the Carpenters, or more specifically their image, were often derided as bland, vanilla and uninteresting. Many people who considered themselves hip in the 70s would rarely admit to owning a Carpenters record or even liking them (considering the millions of

records sold, many of those who publicly dismissed the group probably had their albums hidden at home.) But Karen Carpenter's sudden and unexpected death at the age of 32 in 1983 belatedly let the world know that the Carpenters had a much more complicated story than the wholesome images presented by press releases and interviews had let on. As a result, many critics began to revise their opinions about the group's work. Ray Coleman's 1994 authorized biography offered some insights into the Carpenter story as it revealed some criticism of both Richard and mother Agnes, who even through editing came across to readers as difficult. But many complained that the family's participation in Coleman's book hindered the author from telling Karen's full story. In the new book, *Little Girl Blue*, Randy Schmidt appears to benefit from Richard's refusal to work with him. That, coupled with the death of Agnes in 1996, seems to have allowed Carpenter associates to speak more freely about their observations of the family. Schmidt also manages to provide perspectives of people missing from Coleman's book. Although she has a relatively small role in the book, I was fascinated that Schmidt interviewed Florine Elie, the family's longtime housekeeper. As a result of these new interviews, readers get a fuller (and sadder) understanding of Karen. Twenty-seven years after her death, she comes across as a much more complex person than was represented during her lifetime.

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