

# The Crime Cafe with Karin Slaughter

Presented By:



**Debbi:** Hi, everyone. I'm thrilled to have with me as my guest today an award-winning, best-selling crime fiction author who writes two series and several standalone novels. One of her standalones, *Pieces of Her*, has been adapted into an eight-episode series for Netflix starring Toni Collette. It's my pleasure to welcome my guest, Karin Slaughter. Hi Karin, how are you?

**Karin:** I'm great. Thank you.

**Debbi:** Well, I'm really pleased and happy to have you with me here today. It really is a thrill. I have to ask you about your two series. What was it that inspired you to write two series set there in your, I believe, home state of Georgia?

**Karin:** Yes. I love Georgia, and especially when I started out before the movie industry came here and people realized it was not a horrible backwoods area. I really felt like an ambassador writing about the state and the New South, particularly Atlanta, which is incredibly diverse and a wonderful place to live. So, I just wanted to write what I knew, which was the South, but I think you should also write what you want to know about, and I wanted to know about crime and what it does to people and communities and small towns and large towns, and how it really affects us all in the same way, at the same basic level.

**Debbi:** Yes, it's really interesting to listen to different writers talk about what inspires them to write about crime in particular, but that's a great reason. *Pieces of Her* is set in a small beach resort in Georgia and starts off with a bang, I have to say, or perhaps a squish. That's all I'll say about that, but just tell us a little bit about the story.

**Karin:** Well, it's very basic structure. Obviously, it's a thriller, so there's lots of twists and turns and that sort of thing. But I really think of it as kind of a love story about a mom and a daughter learning who they are, because the squish that happens at the very beginning of the story makes Andy look at her mother in a very different way. She's 31 years old. She's kind of floundering. She's saddled with student loan debt. She's not really happy with her life, and she has this idea of her mother that completely changes. I think we all, as we get older, go through that kind of transition where we are like, wow, I didn't know my mom and my dad had a life before I was born and they did things. Maybe they tried drugs or maybe they went disco dancing, or had a secret marriage or whatever. So we

realize they are actual people. And of course, because of the squish, Andy realizes very immediately that her mom isn't this small-town speech therapist, that she's really kind of a badass

**Debbi:** Talk about an inciting incident! How did the deal with Netflix come about? Was it something your publishers sought out, or was it the other way around?

**Karin:** No, that's through my agents. I have a wonderful film agent who's really into my stuff, and it started with a phone call with Charlotte Stoudt, who is the show runner/ head writer on the show/ creator, all of those things. And then I had a conversation with Bruna Papandrea who is just amazing. She's done a ton of different shows like *Big Little Lies* and *Nine Perfect Strangers*. She's really good at adapting books, particularly women's stories. And so, they got together and just created this really wonderful pitch that Netflix was instantly excited about. And my agent later told me don't ever expect it to happen this easily ever again. This is just all the stars aligning, but I have to say it's been an incredibly pleasant experience. I was prepared for all these horror stories where terrible things would happen, but everybody's been fantastic.

**Debbi:** I think that's true now. I think the business has changed quite a bit and it's not quite as horrible as people used to make it out to be.

**Karin:** Yeah. And you know, maybe *Me Too* has something to do with that, cause people are aware that they can't necessarily get away with being jerks anymore.

**Debbi:** Exactly!

**Karin:** But honestly, Netflix is amazing. When the pandemic hit, they completely were on board with moving everything to Australia. It was a really nimble situation and they rose to the occasion.

**Debbi:** That's really fantastic. Were you involved in a lot of the adaptation in terms of providing input or things like that?

**Karin:** Oh yeah. Yes and no. I was asked about character motivation, and why did you write this and what about this setting and that sort of thing, so I felt very included. Of course, casting stuff they told me about and they really kept me updated and in the loop on things. Now I will say, a lot of my book *Pieces of Her* has Andy just sitting in a car driving and thinking

thoughts and that's not riveting screen time, so of course they had to make changes, but the real essence of the characters is there. I've seen a couple of episodes already, and between Toni Collette and Bella Heathcote, they've just done an exceptional job.

**Debbi:** I can imagine. I mean, I love Toni Collette.

**Karin:** She's amazing.

**Debbi:** Yes. It's great. I'm so happy for you. It's funny, I was reading in the intro to your first book about how people would ask you why you write such strong women characters, and then I noticed it was dated 2020 and that you were still getting those questions. I think the real question is why do we keep getting asked questions like this?

**Karin:** Well, actually, I said to one interviewer, when you ask Lee Child why Jack Reacher is such a strong man, then I'll tell you why I write about strong women. I think part of it is a lot of women's stories were told through the male perspective, and so their way of making their hero really strong was to have the woman need him and for her to be weak. Lee with Reacher is a perfect example of that. Reacher doesn't meet weak women. They are strong; they fight shoulder to shoulder with him and that is so much more sexy to read about, that dynamic as a woman.

**Debbi:** Absolutely.

**Karin:** And so I make sure. Omari Hardwick who in the show plays Laura's ex-husband, he's just an amazing guy. I think one thing that they really captured was the importance of, if you have a strong woman, you need a man who respects that and who can hold his own. So that's what I've always strived to do in my books and I'm really pleased to see they interpreted that on screen.

**Debbi:** Fantastic. Well, I look forward to seeing this because I have Netflix, so, all right. Let's see, I wanted to ask you about Save The Libraries because I thought that was such a cool thing you did. What inspired you to create Save The Libraries?

**Karin:** I started it in 2008 at the economic downturn because a lot of municipalities and state governments were looking to cut budgets and they looked in the wrong place, which is libraries. I mean, libraries were more needed during those times than any other time, and we've seen

this in the pandemic. Even though the buildings are closed, they're providing hotspots, letting people borrow laptops, making sure kids have access to the internet so they could do virtual schooling. Even sending out school buses with hotspots so they have access to the internet. So I wanted to give back to libraries.

When I was a kid, that was the most important thing in my life was being able to go to that library every Saturday and get books. The librarians would take like trash like *Lace* out of my hands and gimme Flannery O'Connor. I still love *Lace*—don't get me wrong—but it was really life changing to have access to all different kinds of readings, and to be in a small Georgia town and see role models, women as role models in these novels. And people traveling in other countries and other cultures was really eye-opening to me.

**Debbi:** Amen to all of that. Who are your favorite writers? Who inspires you?

**Karin:** Well, I'd have to say Flannery O'Connor was my first inspiration and that's mostly because I lived in a very small South Georgia town and I was really weird because I loved to read these dark twisted stories. And I wrote really dark stories, mostly about my older sisters being murdered. They were revenge fantasies, but everyone just told me I was weird and you have to change. You have to conform. They knew I wanted to be a writer. Oh, you'll never be a writer if you write that stuff, and I read Flannery O'Connor. I was like, oh my God! Everybody has been lying to me all these years. She was very strange in a wonderful way. She lived in a small South Georgia town. She traveled the world talking about her short stories and her novel and she taught classes and she was celebrated. And so that's why representation is so important. To see that someone had done that before me was really kind of like a grant of permission to do the same thing.

**Debbi:** Absolutely. What advice would you give to someone who's interested in writing as a career?

**Karin:** I would say read. And it seems really like a basic thing, but you have to think of your mind as a muscle you have to keep exercising, and reading tells you how to be a writer. If you read a bad book, why is it bad? Why don't you like it? What do you like about it? What's working? How can you incorporate that in your own writing? So reading is just a fundamental step toward being a good writer, but also writing, which

seems again like a basic thing. Just sit down and write. Stop talking about it. Stop thinking about it. Set the kitchen timer for 30 minutes. Sit down and start writing and do that every day, cause that's the really hard part about being a writer is sitting your butt in that seat and doing the work.

**Debbi:** Yes, absolutely. So true. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

**Karin:** Well, I just really hope people enjoy watching *Pieces of Her*. I'm super pleased with it. I hope they enjoy it as much as I did.

**Debbi:** I have to tell you, it looks really, really promising based on what I'm reading in the book.

**Karin:** That's great.

**Debbi:** I can't wait to see it and best of luck with it. Thank you so much for being here. I just want to thank you for that.

**Karin:** My pleasure.

**Debbi:** Okay. So, what I'll say to everyone listening is thank you so much for listening or watching on YouTube, as the case may be. And if you haven't heard about the Crime Cafe publications, they are on sale at all major retailers, including that one—Amazon, I think it's called. Yeah, that's right, Amazon. So, you can buy the Crime Cafe 9-Book Set or Short Story Anthology at any major online retailer. On that note, please come back in a week when our next guest will be Josh Cybulski. And, in the meantime, take care and happy reading.