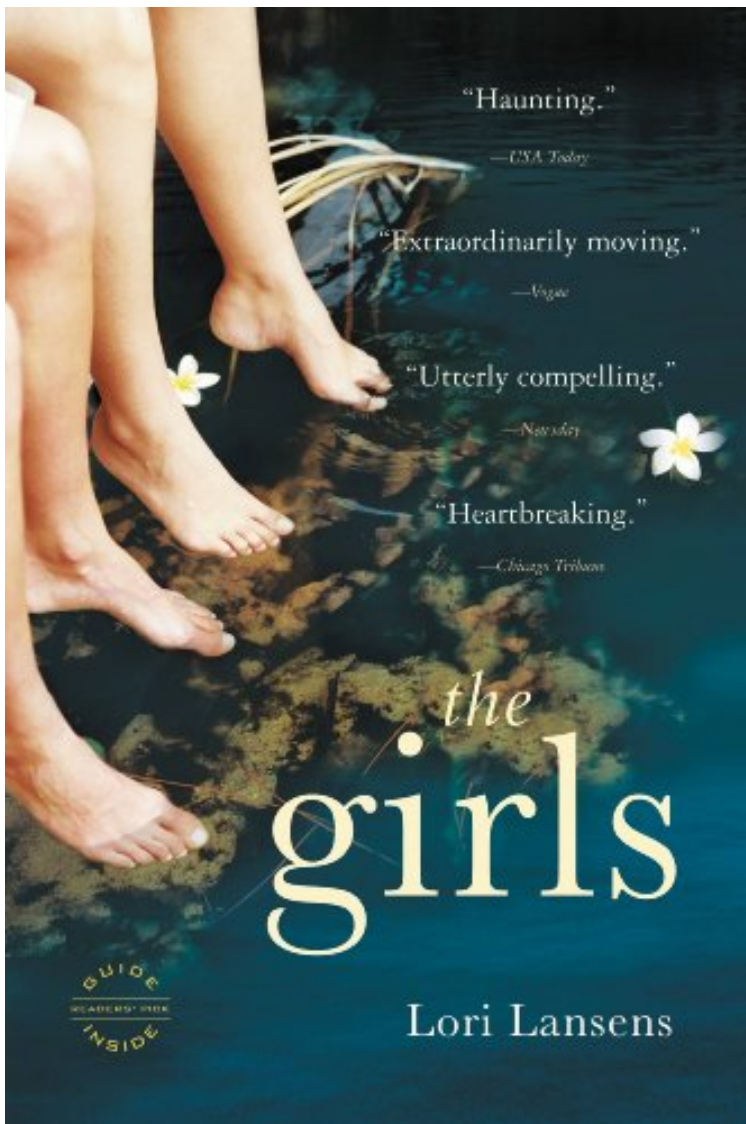


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The Girls: A Novel (English Edition)



Par Lori Lansens
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(Ebook pdf) The Girls: A Novel (English Edition)

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Description : Description du produitMeet Rose and Ruby: sisters, best friends, confidantes, and conjoined twins. Since their birth, Rose and Ruby Darlen have been known simply as "the girls." They make friends, fall in love, have jobs, love their parents, and follow their dreams. But the Darlens are special. Now nearing their 30th birthday, they are history's oldest craniopagus twins, joined at the head by a spot the size of a bread plate. When Rose, the bookish sister, sets out to write her autobiography, it inevitably becomes the story of her short but extraordinary life with Ruby, the beautiful one. From their awkward first steps--Ruby's arm curled around Rose's neck, her foreshortened legs wrapped around Rose's hips--to the friendships they gradually build for themselves in the small town of Leaford, this is the profoundly affecting chronicle of an incomparable life journey. As Rose and Ruby's story builds to an unforgettable conclusion, Lansens aims at the heart of human experience--the hardship of loss and struggles for independence, and the fundamental joy of simply living a life. This is a breathtaking novel, one that no reader will soon forget, a heartrending story

of love between sisters.

Presentation de l'auteur
In Lansens's second novel, readers come to know Rose and Ruby, 29-year-old conjoined twins. When one of the girls decides to write her autobiography, the distinct personalities of the two emerge to reveal their contradictory longing for independence and their unwavering togetherness. Extra Ruby me—I have never looked into my sisters eyes. I have never bathed alone. I have never stood in the grass at night and raised my arms to a beguiling moon. I've never used an airplane bathroom. Or worn a hat. Or been kissed like that. I've never driven a car. Or slept through the night. Never a private talk. Or solo walk. I've never climbed a tree. Or faded into a crowd. So many things I've never done, but oh, how I've been loved. And, if such things were to be, I'd live a thousand lives as me, to be loved so exponentially. My sister, Ruby, and I, by mishap or miracle, having intended to divide from a single fertilized egg, remained joined instead, by a spot the size of a bread plate on the sides of our twin heads. We were known to the world medical community as the oldest surviving craniopagus twins (we are twenty-nine years old) and to millions around the globe, those whose interest in people like us is more than just passing, as conjoined craniopagus twins Rose and Ruby Darlen of Baldoon County. We've been called many things: freaks, horrors, monsters, devils, witches, retards, wonders, marvels. To most, we were a curiosity. In small-town Leaford, where we live and work, we were just The Girls. Raise your right hand. Press the base of your palm to the lobe of your right ear. Cover your ear and fan out your fingers that's where my sister and I are affixed, our faces not quite side by side, our skulls fused together in a circular pattern running up the temple and curving around the frontal lobe. If you glance at us, you might think we were two women embracing, leaning against the other—the way sisters do. Ruby and I are identical twins and would be identical looking, having high foreheads like our mother and wide, full mouths, except that Ruby's face is arranged quite nicely (in fact, Ruby is very beautiful), whereas my features are misshapen and frankly grotesque. My right eye slants steeply towards the place my right ear would have been if my sister's head had not grown there instead. My nose is longer than Ruby's, one nostril wider than the other, pulled to the right of my brown slanted eye. My lower jaw shifts to the left, slurring my speech and giving a husky quality to my voice. Patches of eczema rouge my cheeks, while Ruby's complexion is fair and flawless. Our scalps marry in the middle of our conjoined heads, but my frizzy hair has a glint of auburn, while my sister is a swingy brunette. Ruby has a deep cleft in her chin, which people find endearing. I'm five feet five inches tall. When we were born, my limbs were symmetrical, in proportion to my body. Presently, my right leg is a full three inches shorter than my left, my spine compressed, my right hip cocked, and all because I have carried my sister like an infant, since I was a baby myself, Ruby's tiny thighs astride my hip, my arm supporting her posterior, her arm forever around my neck. Ruby is my sister. And strangely, undeniably, my child. There is some discomfort in our conjoinment. Ruby and I experience mild to severe neck, jaw, and shoulder pain, for which we take physiotherapy three times a week. The strain on my body is constant, as I bear Ruby's weight, as I tote Ruby on my hip, as I struggle to turn Ruby over in our bed or perch on my stool beside the toilet for what seems like hours. (Ruby has a multitude of bowel and urinary tract problems.) We are challenged, certainly, and uncomfortable, sometimes, but neither Ruby nor I would describe our conjoinment as painful. It's difficult to explain our locomotion as conjoined twins or how it developed from birth using grunts and gestures and what I suppose must be telepathy. There are days when, like a normal person, we're clumsy and uncoordinated. We have less natural symbiosis when one of us (usually Ruby) is sick, but mostly our dance is a smooth one. We hate doing things in unison, such as answering yes or no at the same time. We never finish each other's sentences. We can't shake our heads at once or nod (and wouldn't if we could see above). We have an unspoken, even unconscious, system of checks and balances to determine who'll lead the way at any given moment. There is conflict. There is compromise. Ruby and I share a common blood supply. My blood flows normally in the left side of my brain, but the blood in my right (the connected side) flows to my sister's left, and vice versa for her. It's estimated that we share a web of one hundred veins as well as our skull bones. Our cerebral tissue is fully enmeshed, our vascular systems snarled like briar bushes, but our brains themselves are separate and functioning. Our thoughts are distinctly our own. Our selves have struggled fiercely to be unique and, in fact, were more different than most identical twins. I like sports, but I'm also bookish, while Ruby is girly and prefers television. When Ruby is tired, I'm hardly ever ready for bed. We're rarely hungry together and our tastes are poles apart: I prefer spicy fare, while my sister has a disturbing fondness for eggs. Ruby believes in God and ghosts and reincarnation. (Ruby won't speculate on her next incarnation though, as if imagining something different from what she is now would betray us

both.) I believe the best the dead can hope for is to be conjured from time to time, through a note of haunting music or a passage in a book. I've never set eyes on my sister, except in mirror images and photographs, but I know Rubys gestures as my own, through the movement of her muscles and bone. I love my sister as I love myself. I hate her that way too. This is the story of my life. I'm calling it *Autobiography of a Conjoined Twin*. But since my sister claims that it can't technically (technically is Rubys current favourite word) be considered an autobiography and is opposed to my telling what she considers our story, I have agreed that she should write some chapters from her point of view. I will strive to tell my story honestly, allowing that my truth will be coloured a shade different from my sisters and acknowledging that it's sometimes necessary for the writer to connect the dots.

From the Hardcover edition. From *Publishers Weekly* Conjoined twins Rose and Ruby Darlen are linked at the side of the head, with separate brains and bodies. Born in a small town outside Toronto in the midst of a tornado and abandoned by their unwed teenage mother two weeks later, the girls are cared for by Aunt Lovey, a nurse who refuses to see them as deformed or even disabled. She raises them in Leaford, Ontario, where, at age 29, Rose, the more verbal and bookish twin, begins writing their story. i.e., this novel, which begins, "I have never looked into my sister's eyes." Showing both linguistic skill and a gift for observation, Lansens's Rose evokes country life, including descriptions of corn and crows, and their neighbors Mrs. Merkel, who lost her only son in the tornado, and Frankie Foyle, who takes the twins' virginity. Rose shares her darkest memory (public humiliation during a visit to their Slovakian-born Uncle Stash's hometown) and her deepest regret, while Ruby, the prettier, more practical twin, who writes at her sister's insistence, offers critical details, such as what prompted Rose to write their life story. Through their alternating narratives, Lansens captures a contradictory longing for independence and togetherness that transcends the book's enormous conceit. (May 2) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.