

Revenge of the Sluts

Natalie Walton

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In *Revenge of the Sluts*, Natalie Walton's ambitious young adult novel, a modern-day Nancy Drew takes on high school sexual harassment.

An anonymous email with nude photographs of seven girls goes out to the student body of St. Joseph's High School. Eden, the high-achieving executive editor of the school's newspaper, investigates, despite the roadblocks put up by unsympathetic students and the school's staff, who want to bury "Nudegate" in order to avoid a scandal. When additional emails are implied, Eden acts to avenge the victims of the "The Slut Squad," rather than acquiescing to mounting pressure to stay silent.

Sexual harassment is an accessible topic within the novel, wherein the difficulties that young women face are made clear from multiple perspectives. Bystanders like Eden seek the truth to help the victims, while the judgmental student body takes sides and plays the blame game. Eden's romantic interest, John, helps Eden to infiltrate the athletic clique, where braggadocio leads to red herrings. The accused girls display moral antipathies that belie their own fears. Their psychological traumas are front and center as they battle a system that's invested in protecting institutions, rather than victimized people.

The novel is driven by its shared, individualized perspectives about the harassment. It emphasizes tensions between Eden, the victims in the Slut Squad, and the institutions of authority that suffer from moral indecision—all authentic features.

The young adult novel *Revenge of the Sluts* is sensitive in approaching its charged topic; it is likely to start introspective conversations about sexual harassment among teenagers.

NANCY POWELL (January / February 2021)

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