

Whistleblower

Kate Marchant

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In Kate Marchant's novel *Whistleblower*, a young journalist chases a story about a revered football coach's misconduct.

Laurel is a junior at Garland, a southern California college, who believes herself to be forgettable. *The Daily*, the newspaper she reports for, is restrained by its faculty supervision. But the choice between risking the paper's funding and investigating the truth is easy for Laurel. Her instincts prompt her to look into harassment allegations against Coach Vaughn. She uses social media to reach out to a woman with a story to tell, and she learns about the coach's drinking habits and an off-campus assault.

Then Laurel meets the team's popular quarterback, Bodie, who is genuine and good-looking. Her interview with him is pivotal. She is torn between her growing attraction to Bodie and her commitment to gathering the facts to break the story, while Bodie has sincere, conflicted responses to the fact that his mentor's reputation is unraveling. They come to a gradual, shared understanding of the situation over class group work and run-ins with each other; though they face frustrations, they're also enticed by the sweetness of their connection.

Football culture, game day fervor, and the alcohol-infused gatherings that surround both complicate matters. Meanwhile, the book's #MeToo themes are handled with measured outrage. Laurel and her fellow women reporters press forward despite their fears of repercussions—and Laurel's discomfort with the fact that the volatile situation puts her in the spotlight. Her friendship with a second-stringer on the team is a more upbeat feature.

With a potent message about standing against injustices, *Whistleblower* is an lively novel in which a college reporter and a football star confront a coach's secrets.

KAREN RIGBY (March / April 2023)

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