

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin white lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and polygons. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

# The Price of Salt

Written by Patricia Highsmith

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Published by sanmarco-sf

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# The Price of Salt

By Patricia Highsmith

## The Price Of Everything

Arguably Patricia Highsmith's finest, *The Price of Salt* is the story of Therese Belivet, a stage designer trapped in a department-store day job, whose salvation arrives one day in the form of Carol Aird, an alluring suburban housewife in the throes of a divorce. They fall in love and set out across the United States, pursued by a private investigator who eventually blackmails Carol into a choice between her daughter and her lover. With this reissue, *The Price of Salt* may finally be recognized as a major twentieth-century American novel.

Slinky 1950's couture, lesbian chic, unfiltered cigarettes and bottomless highballs have reappeared in the American zeitgeist and perhaps that style cycle is responsible for this sleek creature finally clawing its way out of confinement. It saddens me to think this book has been stuffed into a musty box labeled "lesbian romance" and left to molder for over fifty years.

It is a dark and forceful account of erotic obsession. It is a terrifying fairy tale told beside a phalanx of glass-eyed dolls. Slinky 1950's couture, lesbian chic, unfiltered cigarettes and bottomless highballs have reappeared in the American zeitgeist and perhaps that style cycle is responsible for this sleek creature finally clawing its way out of confinement. It saddens me to think this book has been stuffed into a musty box labeled "lesbian romance" and left to molder for over fifty years.

It is a dark and forceful account of erotic obsession. It is a terrifying fairy tale told beside a phalanx of glass-eyed dolls. It picks you up in the middle of a tantrum and plops you down in a theater set where the beautiful sparkling ice queen feeds you oranges and warm milk and then tucks you into bed without a kiss. It is the sunlit long drive when you had mommy all to yourself and you sat in the front seat and she told you how much she loved you and you knew you were her favorite. It is perfectly reasonable to believe that Nabokov's imagination was shaped by this book.

I'll never look eyes with a stranger again without wisps of this story seeping up under my mental doors and floating into awareness. Perhaps the novel's pivotal, transformative energy is the real reason why so many were so eager to slip it into a box with a reductive label and stow it away in our collective attic.

...more

## The Price Of Salt

Ok. I have Feelings about this book. And there might be some spoilery things, but no more than I was spoiled before reading it, so...it's probably not too bad.

I spent a large part of this being depressed because Carol's a total dick to Therese most of the time. HOWEVER. Omg the ending. Basically the last 20 or so pages. Awesome. And who doesn't love a road trip book? Because this is two ladies in love WHO ROAD TRIP IT. In the '50s. In America. Like Lolita, but less child-rapey. (I would like thi

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Highsmith has an afterword in the edition I read, that she wrote in '89, saying (among other things, of course): "Prior to this book, homosexuals male and female in American novels had had to pay for their deviation by cutting their wrists, drowning themselves in a swimming pool, or by switching to heterosexuality (so it was stated), or by collapsingâ€”alone and miserable and shunnedâ€”into a depression equal to hell."

So THANK YOU, HIGHSMITH, for starting the trend of fixing that. And in the totally repressive year of 1953! So awesome. ...more

UPDATED, December 3, 2015: Just saw Carol, the Todd Haynes film adaptation starring Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara. Gorgeous looking, and very faithful to the book. The cinematographer captures the era beautifully, and Haynes plays a lot with windows and reflections in an effective way. Therese's profession has been changed from budding set designer to budding photographer, which works well for a visual medium. The two leads are terrific, and Mara particularly makes you understand this character

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Published in 1952 under the pen name Claire Morgan, this book by the author of the Ripley novels and

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## The Price of Salt

Strangers On A Train chronicles the love between 19-year-old set designer Therese and the wealthier, older and more worldly suburban mom Carol.

The lesbian plot might feel slightly tame today, and Therese comes across as overly passive (Highsmith addresses this in the afterward). But the novel, Highsmith's second, is well-structured, sensitively written (at times it's almost claustrophobic in its details) and an intriguing portrait of 50s repression and conformity.

Furthermore, the book's said to have influenced Nabokov's own tale about forbidden love, *Lolita*, and the Oscar-winning women-on-the-run film *Thelma & Louise*.

For years *The Price Of Salt* was relegated to the suspense and thriller shelf. But now, rightly so, it's being recognized for its literary merit. A couple of scenes sizzle: in the women's first meeting, Therese, who's working part-time in a department store before Xmas, helps out Carol, who's looking for a doll, and the two obviously share a connection; and there's a terrifically catty scene later on between Therese and Carol's nosy (and possibly also lesbian) friend Abby.

Director Todd Haynes, who brought 50s-style hidden homosexuality so evocatively to the screen in *Far From Heaven*, is directing a forthcoming adaptation of the book (called *Carol*), with Cate Blanchett (see production pic above) and Rooney Mara in the leads. Can't wait.

...more

## The Price Of Gold

A foreboding and atmospheric tale about love between women, *The Price of Salt* sensitively portrays an aspiring set designer's coming to terms with her sexuality. Set against the backdrop of postwar repression, the story follows nineteen-year-old Therese Belivet as she abandons her quiet life as a shopgirl for a budding romance with an older, married lover, Carol Aird. The bulk of the novel's drama arises from Carol's fraught attempt to divorce her affluent husband, retain custody of her daughter. A foreboding and atmospheric tale about love between women, *The Price of Salt* sensitively portrays an aspiring set designer's coming to terms with her sexuality. Set against the backdrop of postwar repression, the story follows nineteen-year-old Therese Belivet as she abandons her quiet life as a shopgirl for a budding romance with an older, married lover, Carol Aird. The bulk of the novel's drama arises from Carol's fraught attempt to divorce her affluent husband, retain custody of her daughter, and build a life with Therese; class conflict between the two women counterpoints the main plot and saves the relationship from feeling sappy. In hardboiled prose, Highsmith fully renders the heroine's inner life, her sense of apprehension and self doubt, and the author expertly captures the young artist's near-obsessive reverence for Carol as well as her resentment toward her wealth. The novel's aged well and benefits from rereading. ...more

I should be asleep by now... I even turned off the lights! I just couldn't, though, I just couldn't stop thinking. The first word that comes to mind after reading this novel? Odd. This was my first Highsmith's book and she has quite a personal writing style. It's different... but you find yourself going with the strange flow of words. I can't believe this was written in the 50's. The ending is so... bittersweet! I am still rather lost in it... Their relationship? It just happens. I must confess. I should be asleep by now... I even turned off the lights! I just couldn't, though, I just couldn't stop thinking. The first word that comes to mind after reading this novel? Odd. This was my first Highsmith's book and she has quite a personal writing style. It's different... but you find yourself going with the strange flow of words. I can't believe this was written in the 50's. The ending is so... bittersweet! I am still rather lost in it... Their relationship? It just happens. I must confess that at first I couldn't quite understand why Therese felt so drawn to Carol. I mean, I understood why she was drawn to her in the first place, but why she kept coming back after the many strange meetings with Carol? Now that I didn't quite understand. Not until I learned more about Therese, that is. Then it all seemed to fall into place. It was love. It was life. It was everything. Yes, I am completely aware of the fact that I sound like a hopeless romantic. But you know what? I don't care.

There's one thing I find extremely interesting about this book. Usually, when you are reading a novel about a romantic couple, you are driven to fall in love with both characters yourself, whether they are both female, male, or one of each. This novel is different, though. You are a witness to this relationship, not part of it. You forget they are two women, you forget how cold Carol seems to be and how Therese seems to be more obsessed with Carol than anything else. And guess what? At the end of the book you just can't help it. You find yourself smiling and you feel happy for them. You fall in love with them... together. Two human beings who found love. How brilliant is that?

The Price of Salt

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## The Price Of Smiles

Salt, as defined by Merriam-Webster: "an ingredient that gives savor, piquancy, or zest"; or, as it relates to this story, the price (sacrifice) these women paid to live their lives truthfully (hence, the book title, I'm guessing). I admired Highsmith's nerve and honesty for tackling this lesbian love story in the time period when it was so obviously taboo.

Therese Belivet is a young and struggling set designer working in a department store when she meets and instantly becomes enamored with Salt, as defined by Merriam-Webster: "an ingredient that gives savor, piquancy, or zest"; or, as it relates to this story, the price (sacrifice) these women paid to live their lives truthfully (hence, the book title, I'm guessing). I admired Highsmith's nerve and honesty for tackling this lesbian love story in the time period when it was so obviously taboo.

Therese Belivet is a young and struggling set designer working in a department store when she meets and instantly becomes enamored with Carol Aird, a sophisticated and wealthy married woman. The meeting leads to a relationship that causes Therese to mature as well as some foreseeable repercussions for the married mother, Carol.

Therese's growth and transformations are subtle and nuanced. Initially, she is very naive, vulnerable and almost obsessively smitten with the older Carol. She later matures into a confident young woman with a sympathetic grasp of who Carol is and what she may be going through. The author captures the ecstasy (and agony) of an intense new love beautifully. It's a thoughtful character study and erotic in a romantic sense rather than with explicit sex.

Lesbian literature is often suggested for my book group; and, even though there have been more than a few excellent choices (such as those written by Sarah Waters) many have been sub-par (pulp-like) fiction. It was enjoyable to read a novel where lesbian characters are so well-written with powerful descriptions of an intense new love that rings emotionally true.

The film adaptation is called "Carol" and coming soon to my theatre. I can't wait!

...more

"Don't you want to forget it, if it's past?"

"I don't know. I don't know just how you mean that."

"I mean, are you sorry?"

"No. Would I do the same thing again? Yes."

"Do you mean with somebody else, or with her?"

"With her," Therese said. The corner of her mouth went up in a smile.

"But the end was a fiasco."

"Yes. I mean I'd go through the end, too."

"And you're still going through it."

## The Price of Salt

Therese didn't say anything.

Patricia Highsmith got the idea for Carol (or The Price of Salt as it was named originally) shortly after her first novel, Strangers on a Train was published. She lived in New York at the time, was depressed, and in need of money. She took a job as a sales assistant in a department store and, one day, met a lady customer in a mink coat. The stranger in the store made such a strong impression on her that it gave her an idea for a new book. An onset of fever (from chickenpox) shortly after the encounter helped with the writing.

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With her. Therese said. The corner of her mouth went up in a smile.

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And you're still going through it.

Therese didn't say anything.

I have no idea if the fever really had anything to do with the writing or whether this is just my impression but the story of Therese Belivet and Carol Aird had a feverish quality that had me hooked from the start and had me lose sleep because I had to know how the story would end. Yes, this was another one of those books where I had to stay up all night to finish it, even though the two protagonists were difficult to like at times.

Therese is in her early twenties (I think), stuck in a dead-end sales job, has aspirations of becoming a stage designer, and generally seems to lack empathy for any of the people around her. Carol, on the other hand, is a relatively well-off divorcee who gives off an air of detachment. It is only in the course of their story that we get to see behind the veneer that both characters put up for different reasons (view spoiler) [ - one out of immaturity and one out of a need for self-defence (hide spoiler) ] .

However, likable characters is not what Highsmith's books are about. For me, Highsmith's books are primarily about one thing - intensity. This is the aspect that has appealed to me most in her novels. And although the plot and thematic focus of Carol depart from the thriller genre that her publishers wanted her to follow, there is certainly enough "suspense" writing to have kept me reading until the wee hours. In particular, there are two scenes, where I sat on the edge of my seat: one in the later part of the book where I found myself yelling at Therese because she was behaving so childish it drove me mad, and one that had me glued to page thinking that if it were a scene in a film, the theatre audience would collectively gasp and fall silent to see what happens next (view spoiler):

The Price of Salt

## The Price of Salt

"Crawl in the back and get the gun," Carol said.

Therese did not move for a moment.

Carol glanced at her. "Will you?"

Therese did agilely in her slacks over the seat back, and dragged the navy blue suitcase on to the seat. She opened the clasps and got out the sweater with the gun. "Just hand it to me," Carol said calmly.

"I want it in the side pocket."

She reached her hand over her shoulder, and Therese put the white handle of the gun into it, and crawled back into the front seat. The detective was still following them, half a mile behind them, back of the horse and farm wagon that had turned into the highway from a dirt road.

Carol held Therese's hand and drove with her left hand. Therese looked down at the faintly freckled fingers that dug their strong cool tips into her palm. "I'm going to talk to him again," Carol said, and pressed the gas pedal down steadily (hide spoiler) ."

This scene alone is one of the reasons I really want to see the film version and I am miffed that I didn't get a chance to see it at our local cinema.

I know that a few readers have found the book slow moving and boring, but I kinda liked the understated pace. It added to the feel of a 1950s road trip into the middle of nowhere, which, I thought, was also an appropriate metaphor for the relationship between Therese and Carol - a journey that lacked company, landmarks, or sign posts.

In the Afterword (written in 1989) of the edition I read, Highsmith wrote that she "like[s] to avoid labels. It is American publishers who love them."

As mentioned above, after the publication of her first novel, *Strangers on a Train*, Highsmith's publishers wanted to see her establish herself in the thriller genre. They rejected her manuscript of *Carol* and urged her to write another thriller. Defying her publisher's request, Highsmith offered to release the book under an alias and sought out another publisher who would to publish a lesbian romance novel that dared to criticise contemporary American society in 1952.

Considering that this could have been the end of a writing career that had not even started, yet, and considering that presumably there would also have been some backlash to her personal exposure, I truly admire Highsmith's insistence on getting the book published.

The publication itself is not the only break with commercial wisdom that happened with *Carol*. Highsmith also broke with the convention of how she described her characters as ordinary women, how she re-evaluated the importance of home life and family, and asked the specific question of what price people would pay to even attempt living a life of their own design. As such, I must admit that I actually preferred the book's original title: *The Price of Salt*.

"In the middle of the block, she opened the door of a coffee shop, but they were playing one of the songs she had heard with Carol everywhere, and she let the door close and walked on. The music lived,

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but the world was dead. And the song would die one day, she thought, but how would the world come back to life? How would its salt come back?" ...more

## The Price Of Admission

I've tried and tried and tried to understand why people like these two characters and their story so much. I've tried to come to it with an open mind and eyes ready to see whatever it is everyone else sees. But I just cannot seem to do it. I can't read Therese as anything but a petulant child with an obsessive fixation on someone she barely knows. I don't understand the swooning over Carol when, to me, she's written so nebulously that it's almost as if she isn't even present in the novel, let alone present in the relationship with Therese. I find both of them (in the book) wholly unlikeable.

This was distressingly hard to read. I remember being insulted when I heard people felt the on the road/camping portion of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows dragged for them. Impossible, I thought! Well, now it's my turn. The road trip portion of this book was painfully slow to get through.

The movie is so much better than the book, in my opinion, though the characterization problems are still present. I think I could have understood so many people having such a positive reaction to it because it is so well made. But the number of people who have called it life changing, and swoon over it? Well, this movie has started to make me feel more and more disconnected from everyone around me. Now I not only don't understand it, I resent it. ...more

All joking aside, this is a well-plotted and engaging romantic story, which works on multiple themes. There is the 'coming out' narrative mixed with travel, the 'love under pressure' theme, and the suspense and fear of being compromised. Highsmith is an uncanny writer when it comes to describing human behavior - in personal tics or conversation or gesture.

Sixty years after, this genre needs more happy endings. This is a story that lives and breathes.

## The Price Of Privilege

This book had me in pieces by the end. That last chapter, oh my god.

Never mind the notion of Patricia Highsmith as an "unloving and unlovable woman"-- she clearly understood the painful delicate aches of love and loving and, having lost, the bittersweet triumph in growing up. The Price of Salt carries an emotional honesty that is exquisite and devastating.

Highsmith's prose is simple but she realizes even the smallest moments with a keen observance. The results are gorgeous and tender, and at times even comic -- the melodramatic angst of interruptions, to the wistfulness in seeing a lover's hands, to the thrill of meeting for the first time... or again.

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The romance being between two women should really hold no bearing of anyone's enjoyment of this book, but having read the afterword and knowing the climate during the time of publication makes the story seem especially courageous. Swoon!

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THIS REVIEW CONTAINS SPOILERS!!!!

ALERT!!!! BIG BIG SPOILERS!!!

The Price of Salt, published in 1952, is considered the first book—and the only one for a very long time afterwards—to depict a lesbian relationship with a happy ending. Having just reread it, what strikes me now is how anyone, even lesbians, especially lesbians, could have thought that losing custody of your child with no visitation rights and being publicly humiliated in court and in the newspapers constituted a happy ending.

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But we said, “At least neither of them died or went to jail or was committed to a mental institution or gave up her beloved to live a “normal” life married to a man.” Because that was what happened to lesbian lovers in pulp fiction. And pulp fiction was the only place you could find stories about lesbian lovers.

When I puzzled over the title, The Price of Salt, what first occurred to me was a quote from the book of Matthew in the New Testament:

“If the salt should lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?”

I later learned from a biography of Patricia Highsmith that that is indeed where the title came from. In asking the price of salt, she is asking what price a person must pay to live an authentic life. In those days it was a high price, if it was possible at all.

At the end of the book Carol and Therese have a future together, and for us that was enough. So The Price of Salt does not have a happy ending, but it does have a hopeful one. And I am hopeful that the release of the movie will herald a time when no one, no matter how “different”, must settle for a life unsalted, without savour.

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## The Price Of Silver

If you read enough books, you're bound to become jaded once in a while by all the sub par ones out there and then a book like The Price of Salt comes along to remind you just how great a book can really be and what a reading experience should really be like. Yes, I loved this book THAT much :)

My only other experience with Highsmith's work until then has been through Ripley movies and I liked the character of Ripley, but not enough to track down the books. I picked up this book, because the cover If you read enough books, you're bound to become jaded once in a while by all the sub par ones out there and then a book like The Price of Salt comes along to remind you just how great a book can really be and what a reading experience should really be like. Yes, I loved this book THAT much :)

My only other experience with Highsmith's work until then has been through Ripley movies and I liked the character of Ripley, but not enough to track down the books. I picked up this book, because the cover said that this was the one to inspire Lolita, one of my all time favorites.

This was the author's second book, originally published under a pseudonym to avoid being typecast as a lesbian writer. It was also for years misfiled as a mystery, which it really is not. It's a coming of age story, a story about relationships and consequences, a story about a road trip, an eye opening and fairly frightening account of how lesbians were treated as recently as 60 years ago, but most of all it's a really great love story, about first love, the most difficult of all.

I've read that Patricia Highsmith has been a particularly unpleasant person, particularly during her later years, which makes it so interesting how well and sympathetically she is able to describe the inner turmoils and thoughts and actions of her characters. I'd say in this book her writing shows great humanity. Of course, I am now interested in reading her other works, though I am not even a mystery fan, just to experience more of that amazing writing.

I can't recommend this book enough. ...more

OMG this book had the DULLEST LESBIANS EVER!!! I have read a lot of early queer pulp and normally I love them for their honesty and the raw emotion they present. Here there was none of that, everything just felt like it was being written about behind a veil. There was none of the soul searching and the camaraderie that is found in other lesbian pulps. The writing style did nothing for me either, I felt it was very dry. I almost felt like someone had described being in a queer relationship to Pat

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I think the biggest problem I had with this was that Carol and Therese was totally boring. Carol was a rich housewife who did nothing. Therese wanted to have a career but spent her entire time moping expecting her boyfriend's connections to find her work. The two just seemed obsessed with money and shopping and having a very occasional cocktail. Even when they went on their "road trip" there was

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nothing interesting. There was no sense of adventure or place anywhere they visited. It was just a series of dull hotels. It made you wonder why they bothered to leave New York in the first place.

There are so many better old lesbian novels out there. I really can't recommend this one at all. Read Ann Bannon, Thereska Torres or Valerie Taylor instead. ...more

## The Price Of Freedom

How was it possible to be afraid and in love, Therese thought. The two things did not go together. How was it possible to be afraid, when the two of them grew stronger together every day? And every night. Every night was different, and every morning. Together they possessed a miracle.

Some of you may remember back to my review of *The Book of Lost and Found* when i boldly declared "barring something truly amazing coming along later this year, I am happy to declare this exceptional read my book of t How was it possible to be afraid and in love, Therese thought. The two things did not go together. How was it possible to be afraid, when the two of them grew stronger together every day? And every night. Every night was different, and every morning. Together they possessed a miracle.

Some of you may remember back to my review of *The Book of Lost and Found* when i boldly declared "barring something truly amazing coming along later this year, I am happy to declare this exceptional read my book of the year." Well ladies and gentlemen something truly amazing did come along in the form of this beautiful story that held me in it's gentle embrace from start to finish.

First published in 1952 under the pseudonym Claire Morgan, *Carol* centers on two female characters who are both trying to escape from there past. Therese Belivet is a lonely young women in a relationship with a man she does not love. She wants nothing more than to further her career as a theatre set designer, but for now is working in a department store. It will be during one of her shifts that her life will be transformed when a beautiful and sophisticated older women called Carol Aird comes to her counter. When Carol gives Therese her address to have her purchases delivered, Therese will send Carol a Christmas card that will be the start of their courtship.

The two will begins to spend time together and when Carol asks if Therese would like to go with her on a road trip, their relationship will hit a magical crescendo. Over the coming weeks it becomes clear to each other the feelings they have are both romantic and sexual. Carol's husband Harge, who she is locked in divorce proceedings with tries to use emotional black mail to stop the two seeing each other. After being made aware of a letter found at Carol's house, written by Therese declaring her love for Carol, Harge threatens to stop her seeing their young daughter indefinitely unless she ends the relationship and comes back home to New York. For Carol this is a heartbreaking decision to decide between the women she loves and her only child. Will there love survive?

Carol raised her hand slowly and brushed her hair back, once on either side, and Therese smiled because the gesture was Carol, and it was Carol she loved and would always love. Oh in a different way now, because she was a different person, and it was like meeting Carol all over again, but it was still Carol and no one else. It would be Carol, in a thousand cities, a thousand houses, in foreign lands where they would go together, in heaven and in hell.

## The Price of Salt

This book had all the ingredients for an amazing read that I am happy to say when combined made for something truly special. The themes are plenty with forbidden love, drama a plenty, humor and perceptions of a bygone time. The fact that the author needed to publish under a different name shows how much of a risk it was to write such a story. I can only imagine what stir this would have caused in the 1950's. The ending for one was revolutionary as it provided something new instead of the depressing conclusions that was the norm with homosexual literature at the time. Both Therese and Carol are also boldly unconventional and the story is so much better for it. If anyone is thinking about reading this wonderful story then I say to you "don't think, do"

Ps, I can't wait to see the movie starring Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara in January and hope it is faithful to the book. ...more

Let's get this out of the way first: I'm only reading this book because of Cate Blanchett, and not because it's an outstanding literary work of fiction, which it is. Sorry but I'm hopelessly stuck in the 'lowly' lesbian romance genre. 8-)

Anyway, who can possibly miss all the buzz about the upcoming movie adaptation, especially one with Ms. Blanchett in it. But I remember the last time I watched an f/f movie or TV adaptation before I read the book (Fingersmith)--the glances, the blank stares and the very understated British performances left me cold--it was only after I read the book that I realized what the characters were supposed to be feeling at various points in the story. So, book first before movie. 8-)

Anyway, who can possibly miss all the buzz about the upcoming movie adaptation, especially one with Ms. Blanchett in it. But I remember the last time I watched an f/f movie or TV adaptation before I read the book (Fingersmith)--the glances, the blank stares and the very understated British performances left me cold--it was only after I read the book that I realized what the characters were supposed to be feeling at various points in the story. So, book first before movie.

The book is from the point of view of Therese, a 19-year-old budding set designer who starts the book moonlighting as a department store saleslady. A chance meeting with a striking woman customer--over the proverbial 'exchange of looks'--sparks what appears to be an obsession for Therese. She is delighted when the interest seems mutual. But the mysterious, alluring Carol is married and has a child. And how does she explain this sudden infatuation with a woman, when Therese has a boyfriend and male admirers in the wings and neither Carol nor Therese herself fit Therese's idea of a lesbian. It's the 1950s so one can just imagine Therese's confusion.

The author's prose is incredibly powerful and evocative. From the first few Chapters where Therese feels trapped in her hopeless situation, to the confusion brought about by the tingling sensation of Carol's mere presence, to the exhilarating freedom of the road trip, her despair at Carol's domestic problems, to her growing maturity at the end...all vividly portrayed by Ms. Highsmith's powerful imagery. She is a master at 'showing', never needing to 'tell' us how her characters are supposed to be feeling. Rooney Mara who plays Therese, has her work cut out for her. :)

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The Price of Salt

The Price of Salt comes across to me as a bit uneven. The best scenes are of course, every time Carol and Therese interact. They sizzle. Well, Carol does mostly. Since Therese behaved more like a love-struck puppy. The rest of the time, I was just a tad bored and couldn't wait to get to their next encounter. This is due, no doubt, to my over-indulgence in genre romance. :) The rest of the book chronicles Therese's life away from Carol--her claustrophobic existence pre-Carol, her attempts to understand her sexuality (in 1950s style), and post-Carol development as she grows from eager-to-please, compliant admirer and finally comes into her own as Carol's equal.

Rating: 4 stars for enjoyment, 5 stars for the writing ...more

## The Price Of Everything Movie

I wanted to read this before watching the movie ("Carol"), but I first found out about it from the fictional librarian in *Mayumi and the Sea of Happiness*. From the marketing of this title I could not tell if it was more of a love story or a thriller, and knowing Patricia Highsmith I held my breath through the entire book waiting for someone to turn into a sociopath.

This novel is set in the early 1950s, a time where not many women were openly involved in relationships with one another, leaving T I wanted to read this before watching the movie ("Carol"), but I first found out about it from the fictional librarian in *Mayumi and the Sea of Happiness*. From the marketing of this title I could not tell if it was more of a love story or a thriller, and knowing Patricia Highsmith I held my breath through the entire book waiting for someone to turn into a sociopath.

This novel is set in the early 1950s, a time where not many women were openly involved in relationships with one another, leaving Therese without a framework and Carol with a choice - Therese or her daughter. Originally Highsmith published it under a pen name and did not own up to being the author of the book for at least twenty years. In the 1950s there were several lesbian pulp romance novels, but the accepted mode was that because of their "unacceptable" choices, someone had to end up with something tragic happening as "punishment." The original cover includes the tagline "the novel of a love society forbids," which would make you think the focus of the story is the two women against the world. It really isn't, it's far more subtle, two women figuring out their relationship within the typical conflicts of previous relationships and ongoing commitments. As romance goes, this was pretty realistic.

Discussed even more on Episode 052 of the Reading Envy podcast. ...more

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THE PRICE OF SALT is an important book in the LGBT+ literary canon because it was one of the few exceptions in the sea of lesbian pulp fiction published during the 50s and 60s where neither of the heroines ended up married off, dead, or institutionalized. No matter how dull or lackluster it seems today, one can only imagine how many feathers were ruffled - especially since many of these authors were explicitly told that in order to avoid ce

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ending. Was this book banned? Probably. But it's far more enjoyable to think about all the young (and old) women who read this book and felt validated.

I wanted to read this book after watching Vox's amazing video, *Why so many queer female characters die on TV*. The video delves into the whole "Bury Your Gays" trope, and was a response to Lexa's death on the popular TV show, *The 100*, and why it's so harmful. In the video, Vox traces the Bury Your Gays trope back to the lesbian pulp fiction period, and cites *THE PRICE OF SALT*, and its movie adaptation, *Carol*, as a rare example of a happy ending in the genre.

Therese designs cardboard sets and works in the toy section of a department store. She's dating a dilettante painter who's basically using his hobby as a way to run away from his daddy. One day, a well-dressed and impressive woman named Carol purchases a doll from her counter, and Therese is moved to write her a personalized card, telling her what a pleasure it was to service her (heh). The two of them end up in a relationship, one that starts out as a mentor/friendship affair and quickly becomes something more, propelled by Therese's obsessive and youthful fascination.

This being the time period that it was, though, neither Carol's husband nor Therese's boyfriend are quite willing to let them go, and it isn't long before their romantic getaway is spoiled by a hired detective who tries to use proof of their illicit affair as leverage to block Carol from seeing her child. It seems like *THE PRICE OF SALT* is going to take the usual turn, and force the women onto the correct and virtuous path of heterosexual salvation - but that's where things get interesting.

I wanted to like this book a lot more than I did. I know this author can write - I loved her Mr. Ripley series and its gleefully sociopathic antihero. This is a very different style of story-telling and I'm not sure it ages quite as well. The plot is slow and plodding, and Therese is a hard narrator to like. She's very whiny and self-centered, and a bit of a hypocrite, too. During one of her whine-sprees, she's complaining about how Richard, her boyfriend, feels entitled to her, because he was the first to sleep with her and naturally assumes that this means marriage. Granted, this is annoying, classic Chad the Incel behavior, and it's disgusting - but then she kind of does the same thing with Carol, seeming to assume that she's the first woman Carol's been with and getting upset and jealous when she finds out that there's been others, even though it's clear that these relationships aren't ongoing anymore.

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The Price of Salt

I think it's worth reading THE PRICE OF SALT because it's a pretty famous and notable example of the genre and did something ground-breaking back in the day. That said, it wasn't really for me, and I don't think this is an example of the writer at her best, sadly - and if you're looking for tawdry or cheap thrills, THE PRICE OF SALT is not particularly erotic or licentious. There are walk-in freezers that are more sensual than these two characters. Maybe that's a constraint of the times, maybe not.

2 to 2.5 stars ...more

## The Price Of Gold Today

Shit, I picked a great book to start the year off with. Honestly this will probably end up being one of my favorites of the year and of ever. Maybe I actually screwed myself over because I can only see my reading going downhill from here, honestly.

I'm working on building up my ~new and improved~ BlueEyedBiblio blog (!!!!) which I'm really excited about so I won't be posting full reviews on here anymore. I'm going to leave short blurbs here and then link to my full review on my blog (once it's u Shit, I picked a great book to start the year off with. Honestly this will probably end up being one of my favorites of the year and of ever. Maybe I actually screwed myself over because I can only see my reading going downhill from here, honestly.

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...more

4.5 stars.

This was my first Patricia Highsmith book, and I know it won't be my last. Although Highsmith is more known for her suspense writing, Carol is a different style of book altogether. It is part love story, part road novel, and I thoroughly enjoyed the reading experience.

It follows Therese, a young girl working in a department store during the Christmas rush, who one day is enamoured by a customer who comes into her department. Carol is beautiful, in her 30s with a young daughter, and is 4.5 stars.

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It follows Therese, a young girl working in a department store during the Christmas rush, who one day is enamoured by a customer who comes into her department. Carol is beautiful, in her 30s with a young daughter, and is currently going through a difficult divorce. The two women bond and as their relationship deepens, it has a major impact on all other people in their lives.

This was a slow-paced book, but I felt like the pace was perfect for the story it told. Each chapter felt sumptuous in its completeness, and always left me satisfied. I was really impressed by Highsmith's

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The Price of Salt

writing - there were many beautiful turns of phrase, and I felt like she portrayed a blossoming friendship and love in very believable terms. The characters were fully fleshed out and interesting, and I enjoyed the focus on Therese. Although I found Therese's actions a little selfish at times, I could understand for the most part her reasoning and her frustration at her stilted life in those beginning moments. The road trip aspects of this book were unexpected, as I didn't know much about the book going into it, and felt like I was watching a movie in my head.

I am looking forward to watching the movie version, and seeing how it compares to the reading experience. However, if you've not read this book yet, I'd highly recommend picking it up. It is a lovely, captivating read, and a refreshing take on a lesbian relationship than most I have read before. ...more