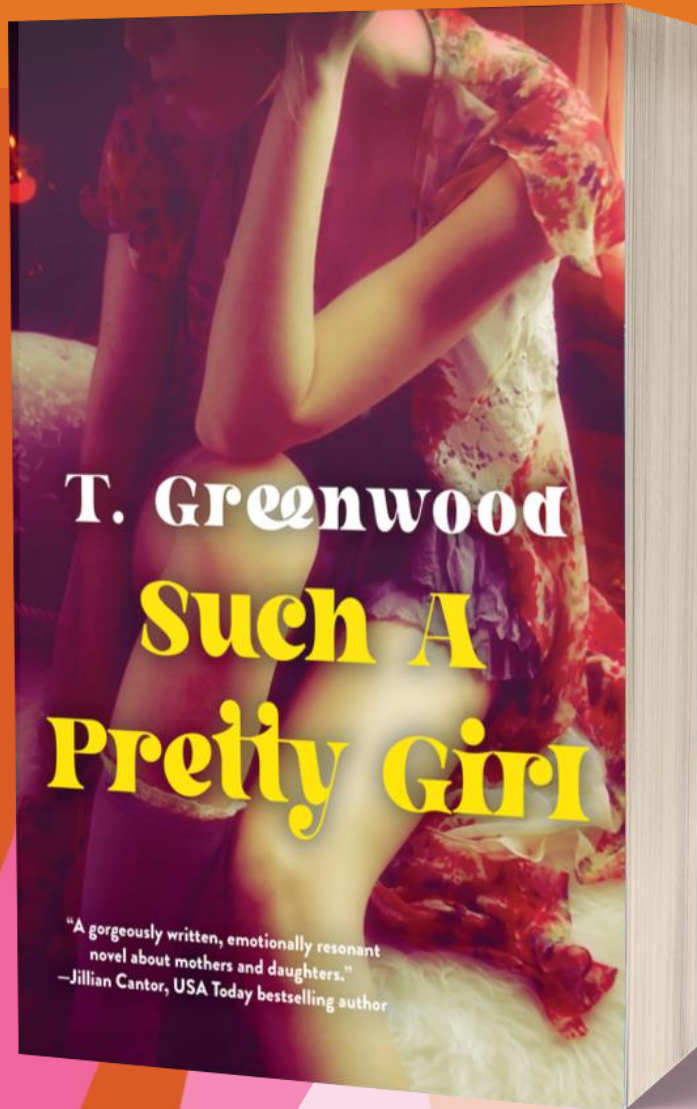


# Such A Pretty Girl

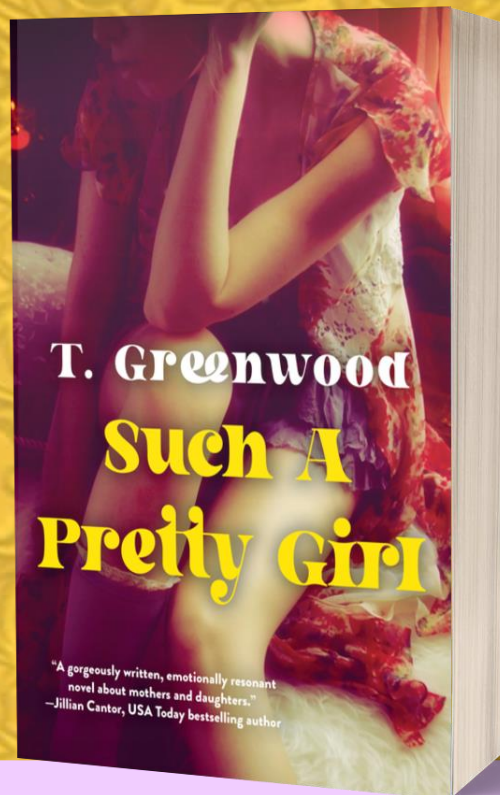
By T. Greenwood



**Book Club Kit**

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*The precarious lines between art and obscenity,  
girl and woman, fetish and fame flicker and ignite  
for a young girl on the brink of stardom  
and a mother on the verge of collapse  
in 1970s New York City...*



Deftly combining lyrical prose with rivetingly commercial plotting, T. Greenwood's novels have earned her acclaim as "a writer of subtle strength... finding light in the darkest of stories" (*Publishers Weekly*). She is at her formidable best in *SUCH A PRETTY GIRL*, as a former child actress is forced to confront the culture, relationships, and injustices of her youth when a controversial photo taken of her as a preteen on the night of the 1977 blackout (think Brooke Shields circa "Pretty Baby" or those creepy Loves Baby Soft ads) ignites a media firestorm. As Ryan returns to the months leading to that night, readers are plunged into the glittering danger of 1970s NYC, with vivid scenes from the early days of the West Village Halloween Parade, Jefferson Market, Hubert's Museum and Peep Show, Washington Square Park, the Russian Tea Room, Coney Island, Times Square at its most risqué, and more.

Dear Reader,

My hope is that *Such a Pretty Girl* will transport you to a lost city and a lost time. The story begins at a summer stock theater in Vermont, but takes place primarily at Westbeth Artists' Housing in New York City's West Village during the mid-1970s. It was when Son of Sam held a reign of terror. Times Square was a place no tourist would dare to venture. Bankruptcy and pervasive crime made many believe that the Big Apple was rotten to the core. And on the night of July 13, 1977, a blackout shut the city down, leading to twenty-five hours of arson and looting and mayhem.

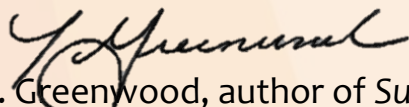
But even as the city crumbled, the West Village was buzzing and alive with artists and bohemians. In Westbeth Artists' Housing, located along the West Side Highway, more than three hundred artists of all different kinds made their homes: dancers, painters, photographers, and actors. The children of Westbeth, like many children of the 1970s, were wild and free, making their own breakfasts and their own rules. Saturday morning cartoons, roller skating on the rooftop, and games of Manhunt; the labyrinthine hallways of the complex were their playground.

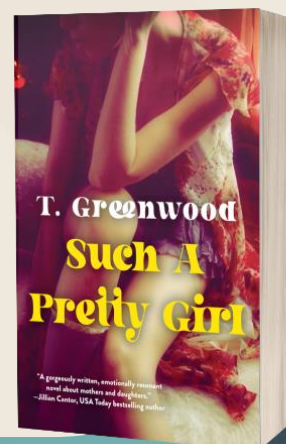
This magical place is where Fiona, an aspiring actress, has moved with her ten-year-old daughter, Ryan, in the summer of 1976 – just months before Ryan is discovered by a modeling agent who will change the trajectory of both their lives. It's a time when famous child actresses like Brooke Shields, Jodie Foster, and Tatum O'Neal appeared on TV interviews alongside managers who also happened to be their mothers, navigating what must have been a complex relationship in a very public forum.

I wrote *Such a Pretty Girl* because I wanted to tell the story of a girl becoming a woman too quickly. I wanted to examine how ambition can tilt one's moral compass. I wanted to write about a period in history when women were simultaneously fighting for equal rights and still being exploited and commodified. And how one's childhood must sometimes be reexamined through a contemporary lens. But above all, I wanted to tell the story of girlhood, and all that means, not only for Ryan, but – I believe - for *all* women.

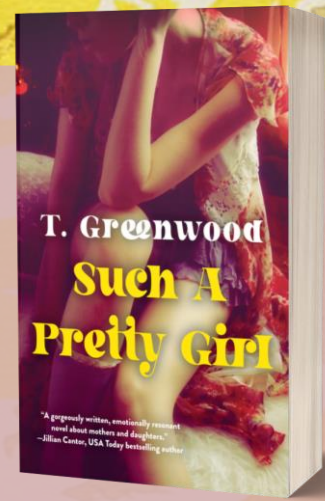
I am so grateful to you for spending some time with this novel. If you enjoy following Ryan as her star begins to rise in a city on the decline, please consider sharing your thoughts online using the hashtags #SuchAPrettyGirl and #Tgreenwood.

Thank you so much for reading,

  
T. Greenwood, author of *Such a Pretty Girl*



**Discussion Questions  
to spark conversation  
and enhance your reading of  
*Such a Pretty Girl*  
by T. Greenwood**



1. Like many of T. Greenwood's novels, *Such a Pretty Girl* explores the relationship between mothers and daughters. Discuss how Ryan's relationship with Fiona changes over time. And how is Ryan's parenting of Sasha a response to her own mother's failures?
2. Fiona is an aspiring actress when we meet her, yet her dreams are ultimately unfulfilled. How does this affect her relationship with her daughter? Do you think that she is both proud of her and jealous as well?
3. What was your reaction to Fiona's claim that she was protecting Ryan by making the deal she made with Zev Brenner? Do you think it was true? Who or why not? What were her other motivations?
4. Do you believe that Fiona should be punished for her complicity in Zev Brenner's schemes? Is what she did on par with what Margie did?
5. There are two major settings in the novel: Lost River in Vermont and Westbeth in the West Village in New York City. Think about the contrast between these two places, and what each represents to Ryan. Why do you think she fled to Vermont when she leaves her career behind? Which setting did you prefer?
6. The 1970s was a dark time for New York City: it was both morally and financially bankrupt. However, for Ryan and the other children at Westbeth, it is *magical*. Discuss the depiction of childhood in this novel. What do you recall about your own childhood?
7. As an adult, Ryan is forced to revisit her childhood through a contemporary lens. As an adult, she is able to see how the adults in her life both failed and exploited her. Is there anything from your own life that you now see through a different filter?

8. The modeling industry and the film industry clearly exploit Ryan's innocence and beauty. She argues that Henri really saw her – and that his photos were not exploitative at all. Do you think this is true? Or is it possible that Ryan was wrong about his intentions?
9. In recent years, many women have reexamined past experiences thanks to the #metoo movement. Behavior that was once tolerated or dismissed or even *expected* by men has come under new scrutiny. How do you think the #metoo movement liberates Ryan?
10. Ryan has kept the secret of what happened on the night of the blackout for decades. Why do you think she does not reveal what Raymond did to her to anyone but Henri?
11. Ryan's anxiety begins as a child and is something she contends with her whole life. How does this manifest in the way she parents Sasha.
12. If Ryan had not been “discovered” by Margie, what do you think she would have done with her life? Do you have any moments in your own life that changed your trajectory?
13. Discuss the photo that Henri took on the night of the blackout and what it means to each of the characters: Ryan, Fiona, Henri, and Zev Brenner. What does it “prove” to the media?
14. This book is also about the various kinds of family's – the ones we are born into and the ones we make. Who do you think is Ryan's “family”? How is her family structure similar to and different from your own?



**T. Greenwood** is an acclaimed author whose novels have sold more than a quarter-million copies. A four-time winner of the San Diego Book Award, she has received grants from the Sherwood Anderson Foundation, the Christopher Isherwood Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Maryland State Arts Council. Five of her novels have been Indie Next Picks and her twelfth novel, *Rust & Stardust*, was a LibraryReads selection. Her novels have been translated into five languages. She lives with her family in San Diego, California, where she teaches creative writing for The Writer's Center and San Diego Writer's Ink, studies photography, and continues to write.

**Visit T. Greenwood online at:**  
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***SUCH A PRETTY GIRL***  
**by T. Greenwood**

*Kensington Books, an imprint of Kensington Publishing Corp.*

**On Sale: October 25, 2022** / Trade Paperback Original  
Fiction / \$16.95 (\$22.95 CAN) / ISBN: 978-1-496739322

Author Residence: **San Diego, CA**

Novel Setting: **New York City, 1970s and present day**

# Ryan's Childhood in 1970s NYC



**The New York Times**  
NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1977

**POWER FAILURE BLACKS OUT NEW YORK; THOUSANDS TRAPPED IN THE SUBWAYS; LOOTERS AND VANDALS HIT SOME AREAS**  
Westchester Is Also Darkened After Lightning Hits Line

By ROBERT D. McARDEN  
A power failure plunged New York City and Westchester County into darkness last night, trapping thousands of commuters in the subway system and leaving thousands of homes and businesses in the dark. The outage, which lasted for about 1 1/2 hours, was caused by a lightning strike on a power line in Westchester County. The blackout hit the city at 11:30 p.m. and lasted until 1:30 a.m. The subway system was completely shut down, and thousands of commuters were trapped in the cars. In some areas, looting and vandalism broke out. The blackout also hit Westchester County, where many homes and businesses were without power. The outage was the longest in the city's history since the 1965 blackout.

**State Troopers Sent Into City As Crime Rises**  
Some Civilians Assist Police - '65 Blackout Peacatful in Contrast

BY LAWRENCE VAN CORD  
Thousands of officers, sent in to help with the city last night and early today, were met with a different scene. While the 1965 blackout was peacatful in contrast with the chaos of the current one, the current one was not. The police had to deal with looting and vandalism in some areas. Some civilians assisted the police in these areas.

**To Our Readers**  
This is a special double edition of The New York Times. Regular publication of the paper will resume tomorrow. The blackout hit the city at 11:30 p.m. and lasted until 1:30 a.m. The subway system was completely shut down, and thousands of commuters were trapped in the cars. In some areas, looting and vandalism broke out. The blackout also hit Westchester County, where many homes and businesses were without power. The outage was the longest in the city's history since the 1965 blackout.



**STRANGE GIRLS**  
CAN THEY MARRY LIKE OTHER GIRLS?  
HAVE CHILDREN BE HAPPY AS THEY ARE?  
**WHY?**  
WERE THEY BORN

**TIME**  
JULY 25, 1977 \$3.00

**Blackout '77**  
ONCE MORE, WITH LOOTING

Begin in the U.S.



**TAXI DRIVER**  
ROBERT DENIRO  
A BILL FELLOWS PRODUCTION OF A NANTUCKET FILMS PRESENTATION  
A FILM BY MARTIN SCORSESE  
JODIE FOSTER ALBERT BROOKS as 'Tom' HARVEY KEITEL  
LEONARD HARRIS (PETER BOYLE as 'Wizard') and  
CYBILL SHEPHERD as 'Betsy'



