



Where We Fall

Rochelle B. Weinstein

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By all accounts, Abby Holden has it all. She's the mother of a beautiful teenager and the wife of a beloved high school football coach. And all it took to achieve her charmed life was her greatest act of betrayal.

Coach Ryan can coax his team to victory, but he can't seem to make his wife, Abby, happy. Her struggles with depression have marred their marriage and taken a toll on their daughter, Juliana. Although this isn't the life he's dreamed of, he's determined to heal the rifts in his family.

Chasing waterfalls and documenting their beauty has led photographer Lauren Sheppard all around the world. Now it has brought her back home to the mountains of North Carolina—back to the scene of her devastating heartbreak.

For the first time in seventeen years, a trio of once-inseparable friends find themselves confronting past loves, hurts, and the rapid rush of a current that still pulls them together...

Where We Fall Details

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From Reader Review Where We Fall for online ebook

Kristin (Kritters Ramblings) says

Abby Holden is a mother and wife, but she has been battling a secret that could tear apart her seemingly perfect life, but the secret is also tearing apart her. She must let this secret out and see where her world is after to get better. This book is told through her point of view, and her daughter, her husband and a college friend - all of them will be affected when the truth is released.

I have critiqued quite a few books on how they handle mental illness and a few people on Amazon have written some nasty remarks. I don't personally battle with mental illness, but I know what it looks like and even in fiction my wish is for books to portray things as honestly as possible - at least contemporary fiction, fantasy is a different story! This book felt real and honest and as the character enters a home to battle her brain to find out how to live a full life, this book made me really love how the author wrote her.

Rochelle Weinstein has written two previous books, have any of you read them? I am intrigued by What We Leave Behind and just may have to add it to the TBR pile!

Maria Ryan says

Squeezing Toothpaste through a Pinhole

An attempted suicide early in the story throws a tumultuous marriage into further turmoil. This marriage exists as part of a long ago started love story that has never been resolved. As one angle's mental distress took precedence over this threesome critical secrets were buried deep and each of the three players went off to lick their wounds, each in their own way.

Told in the alternating voices of the three principal characters along with the sole offspring of Abby and Ryan, the gaps are slowly filled in for the reader as we wait for the characters to finally reach out of themselves toward real growth.

Somewhat slow-moving and dull with no real discernment between each separate voice, the story lacks luster and seems forced. An ending that doesn't seem well thought out after the many years that two of the characters had stayed together and the reasons behind their dogged refusal to separate although they should not have ended up together in the first place appear like a last minute one eighty for dramatic effect. The author makes her case for the proper treatment of what she deems mental illness but her beliefs may not be scientifically documented and a fictional platform can be a dangerous thing. The truth is we are never clear on why Abby suffers the way she does.

Where We Fall unfortunately falls short.

Regina says

Thank you Netgalley for this preview! Throughout this whole book, I kept thinking - I really want to like this more than I do. The small town setting, Friday night lights and buried secrets made for an intriguing

storyline. The author did a good job describing one of the main character's mental illness, but most of the book fell flat. The female characters were wholly unlikable and the male protagonist was made to look gullible and clueless. The ending was the part I found to be the worst part of the experience, completely unsatisfying.

Melissa says

4.5 stars

This is only the second audio book that I've listened to and I have to say, I was pretty impressed. My first audio experience was a letdown, so I wasn't convinced listening was for me, but I decided to give it one more shot. I happened to stumble across this one, never having heard of the author or the book, and I'm so glad I did. This book was such a pleasant surprise.

From the start, I was hooked. The story opens with Abby and Lauren, two best friends, and Lauren's boyfriend Ryan, all spending one final day together before Lauren heads off to pursue her dream. She'll be back though. Lauren and Ryan have a connection that most people don't ever find and besides that, she has a ring and a promise.

Fast forward seventeen years and now Abby and Ryan are married! This was the catalyst behind my non-stop listening. How in the heck could that happen? What about Lauren and Ryan or girl code even? **The truth was shocking, emotional, gut-wrenching and just so darn sad. My jaw dropped.**

What made things uncomfortable was seeing how unhappy Abby and Ryan were together and the toll it was taking on their daughter. Ryan was a standup guy, all the way. Always ready and willing to support Abby and her struggles with mental illness. Abbey, on the other hand, was selfish and pretty manipulative. It was hard for me to look past all that and feel any sympathy for her. I did though, eventually. I found myself wanting her to make things right and find inner peace and acceptance. I was worried for a bit, but the ending truly unfolded in the best way possible.

I have to mention the narrators because they were a big piece of the experience. They really did a phenomenal job bringing the four different perspectives of the story to life. I only hope my next audio is a great as this one.

Karen says

Where We Fall by Rochelle B. Weinstein

I am writing this review with mixed emotions.

This is the story of a wife and mother who is afflicted with mental illness. The author is clearly adept at writing scenes where you can feel the emotional impact that this woman named Abbey experiences the pain and suffering. There is still so much stigma that an individual suffers with having this problem.

Why are we so accepting of heart disease or cancer, but not a disease of the brain?

Abbey is married to Ryan who is a high school football coach and he is very understanding of his wife's ailments. They share a daughter named Juliana, who Ryan has been incredibly responsible for being the present parent for most of Juliana's life.

The author writes about the situation with such descriptive prose that you can feel that Abby's suffering is real and heartbreaking to her family. The story becomes evident that Abbey has contributed to her state of mind by an act of betrayal and selfishness in a situation between Ryan and her best friend Lauren.

As the story becomes evident that Abbey has been incredibly self centered you may just feel that her actions in a situation involving Lauren and Ryan has exacerbated in her mental decline over her marriage with Ryan. That is what this book explores.

This novel is unique in that there was an impetus for Abbey's fears of losing Ryan during the years of her marriage. Ryan has as he so eloquently described in one scene had his life hijacked. In a very real sense that is true. He is also culpable in the novel because of his actions.

This was at times painful to be part of the characters lives. That is how realistic the author portrayed each of the characters choices. The ending of the story is satisfying and a surprise.

I am reading this author's former work as I found the mastery of this outstanding novel to be so realistic. I highly recommend this book to people who like contemporary fiction and realism.

Five Stars!

boogenhagen says

So I am not stupid, I get that depression is a serious thing. However I had no empathy for Abby at all. She was basically a narcissistic sociopath and that was being kind about it.

Was I supposed to be happy that she pompously and magnanimously decided to end her marriage so that her husband could finally be with the woman he was supposed to be with? Was I supposed to be pleased that she decided she could move on to manipulate some other decent people because she had sucked all the life out the man she parasitically attached herself to?

I felt bad for her daughter, having a mother like Abby is like having a permanent albatross around her neck. Abby was a complete and utter waste of my time and the rest of the characters, even though the POV was supposedly switched, wind up being pale reflections as the overwhelming egocentric narcissism that is Abby is reflected in all they think.

Yes depression is a serious illness, more could and should be done to help those who have it. But IMO Abby was using the guise of depression to feed her megalomania and instead of feeling compassionate and understanding, I wanted to slap her silly with a toilet seat.

The story isn't badly written, the characters are utterly believable until almost the very end, but selfish users like Abby are everywhere and I don't need a primer on how they like to dramatize and manipulate. Really the only thing that stops some one like her is death and sadly that did not happen here.

Again, no judgement on the seriously depressed, but Abby wasn't really a depressed person, that was just her way of focusing the drama and attention she desperately craves on herself and her over inflated idea that she should be the center of everything. The poor other characters in the story will never be rid of her, she will be a continual plague on their existence and it is too bad that a more permanent resolution couldn't be found for the callous cow.

And also, I am a bit tired of the "fight for your man when he is busy fucking your best friend" trope. Srsly? That kind of crap went out with the fifties. Look, if you have a chance to do a big thing and the supposed true love of your life can't wait and gets into the sack with the woman who is supposedly your BFF, you don't have to confront or accuse or do anything but walk away. What exactly is there to say? People do what they do, they make choices and you can act or react.

This books is supposed to be all about love and compassion and forgiveness. To walk away from that scenario without making a big to do is the ultimate act of forgiveness in my view. Forgiveness is really a matter of acceptance that some thing horrible happened and letting it go without dwelling on it, nothing is mentioned about embracing or even tolerating a betrayer in your life again or reestablishing a relationship with them.

You can't make people be faithful, you can't make them love you and to predicate an entire character on a betrayal she walked away from twenty years ago and still have her mooning enough to want him back years later is just too much plot manipulation for my taste.

Betrayals like this happen everyday, a lot of people just walk away and get on with things. That is acceptance and the ultimate forgiveness, cause time and distance and life experience will eventually mute that big love that was so harshly shattered and painful. At least that is what happens for people who grow up and get some maturity.

Don't misunderstand me, I believe that we all carry a bit of the love we had and lost or left behind with us all our lives, it helps grow character and values, but I also know that that first big love can be pushed aside by other loves and most of us get up, get over it and find more ways to fill our hearts.

The points made about the seriousness of mental illness are well done, it is just galling to see them so misapplied to such completely inappropriate examples and the resolution to the whole thing seems so appallingly trite for such a serious issue.

Barbara White says

I finished reading this haunting novel several weeks ago, and I'm still thinking about the writing, the setting, and the characters. On one level, WHERE WE FALL is a simple story about three friends and a shocking secret that pushes them apart but also connects them forever. It almost freezes them in time. On another level, it's about the impact of mental illness on friends and family, and the struggle to treat and manage depression and anxiety. And yet it's also a multi-layered love story. That might be my favorite part, because Ms Weinstein has some incredibly visceral descriptions of what it means to love heart and soul. I want to read everything she's written!

Myrna says

I really enjoyed *Where We Fall*. It has a good storyline, well written and liked the multiple characters' perspectives. The main character, Abby, is not likable at times but I kept rooting for her. This novel also has a full range of emotions but love is definitely a strong theme felt throughout. I look forward to reading more by this author.

I received this book in a Goodreads giveaway contest. Thank you Goodreads!

Darlene says

This was another winner that I got for free from NetGalley.com.

Picking up this book was therapy. I felt I could relate with the main character, Abby, who seems beset with depression and anxiety. These are disabilities that pulled me from the workforce and 14 years ago. I've been through the medication, and therapy routes. I finally gave up. For the same reasons that Abby did. But watching her try to find answers gave me hope that if I try I might find my own answers.

Mental illness is a tough thing to deal with. To be raised by someone with it and knowing how you have to walk around it, how your childhood is merely survival, how that is the one thing you have in common with the family members and the life with those issues is ALWAYS there. When you wonder if this is the last day for you to live or would your mother actually blow up the house with everyone in it this day. When you are raised like that, it is easy to understand Abby's daughter, Juliana, and what she is growing up around.

And the husband comes off like a saint. This particular husband, Coach Ryan found and adjusted to this life with a life that was fulfilling. Not often the outcome for spouses of the mentally ill. I don't think my father ever found a life until my mother was gone. He had work and TV and sleep.

So I know what I am talking about when I say that this book was well done, literally, and psychologically. Either the author was raised with or has lived with mental illness or she did some fantastic research. Her story did not come across as judgemental or preachy. She made the characters very human. I loved the way she told the story through this family's individual points of view and once established as a part of the history, Abby's best friend, Lauren's viewpoint.

While the drama centers around the family and friend of Abby, maybe the character that is most seen and given understanding is depression and its friend, anxiety. Abby's counselors come across as human and yet wise, asking the right questions and words to cling to as you find yourself sinking. Oops, for Abby, when she would find herself going astray of her healthy choices.

As you can tell, I took a lot of this wisdom to heart. I plan to reread this later, maybe pick up the Audible version as I read a review that praised it highly. I think I need to practice some of the ways Abby learns to deal with her issues. I have to admit that I stuff things down like she did. Most people wouldn't know I was depressed or anxious as I can hide it from myself and everyone else. But these issues have ways to come to life on their own. I think that is where my Fibromyalgia comes from, stuffing it all down deep into my bones. Now I need to look at what is needing my attention and I will need help dealing with what comes up.

Thank you, Rochelle B. Weinstein, for writing such an insightful book and sharing it with the world.

Kendall says

I really enjoyed this book. Definitely see the struggle associated with mental illness and the unfortunate stigma that society has towards the mentally ill population.

It was refreshing that Rochelle was able to show through Abby's character how strong this stigma is towards mental illness and the negative perceptions that society has.

This novel was inspiring and emotional for me. I loved how Rochelle truly was able to define all of her characters in such a powerful light whether it was due to grief, mental illness, sadness, or guilt/regret.

I will be exploring other novels by this author. I would recommend adding this novel to your list if you haven't read it! :)

Heather says

I really love books where you get different characters' points of views, slowly gleaming the truth out of them all one by one—and this book does just that. In Rochelle B. Weinstein's *WHERE WE FALL*, a marriage that is hanging by a thread due to a wife's long term bouts of depression and the husband's unwillingness to do anything but hold everything tightly together as best as he can out of obligation is shattered to pieces when his ex-girlfriend/her ex-best friend resurfaces after disappearing from their lives seventeen years earlier.

Three Friends Who Thought It Would Last Forever...

Abby has always struggled with depression, and when she meets her new college roommate Lauren, she feels like she's finally found someone who understands her. When Lauren starts dating Ryan, they include Abby in everything and Ryan treats her with empathy and respect. When college is over and Lauren leaves Ryan for what's supposed to be a six-month job photographing waterfalls around the world, both Ryan and Abby are lonely and heartbroken that she left them. And when tragedy strikes Ryan, Abby is the one there to pick up the pieces when Lauren doesn't come home from abroad to comfort Ryan and take care of him in his time of need. So Lauren and Ryan's relationship ends, and Abby and Ryan's future begins...

Abby's Depression Crushes Her...

Abby is a tortured soul, often unable to bring herself out of her depressive lows to take care of Ryan and their daughter Juliana. The effect this has on them has taken its toll, and after a severe episode she's finally admitted to a treatment center. Abby's journey through treatment and self-discovery was realistic and emotional, even though you never find out what happened in her distant past to set off the depression (and it was eluded to). Abby isn't an entirely likable character, but you feel for her as she admits her mistakes and tries to get better—to make things right.

While Ryan Sacrifices To Hold Her Together...

Ryan is a successful high school football coach, and while he's commanding and a great leader on the sidelines while coaching his team and well respected in the community, he's barely holding it together at home. He takes care of his daughter and his wife since she can't do it on her own a lot due to her illness, but he manages to hold everything together somehow. His self-sacrificing attitude has him thinking that his life is good, when in reality he's not happy—not since Lauren left him all those years ago.

Lauren Still Feels the Pain, and She Won't Let It Go...

Lauren left the country and became a successful author using a pseudonym, and now she's finally completing the book of waterfall photography that she'd started all those years ago. But she has to return to the town where she grew up, where she fell in love for the first time, where she was betrayed—to finish the project. When she comes face to face with Ryan and Abby's daughter by chance, the emotions and pain she's held back rush to the surface, and she won't stand idly by without telling both Ryan and Abby how she feels this time—even if nothing will come of it.

I give **WHERE WE FALL** a 4.5 out of 5. Emotional, heartfelt, and beautifully written with great outdoorsy scenery, this contemporary women's fiction piece hit all the right notes with a story of first loves, first hurts, betrayal, and hope of redemption. While the characters weren't always likable, they flawed and realistic, which made them intriguing and multi-layered. One thing that did stick out was the lack of distinction between the four points of view. Ryan, Abby, Lauren, and even teenager Juliana's chapters were all written with the same voice. It would have been nice for them to have more distinct speech patterns, thoughts, etc. in their first person point of view written chapters. Overall, I highly enjoyed the journey this book took me on.

(Also on Bewitched Bookworms. Book received for free in exchange for honest review for book tour.)

Jeanie says

Running from the truth has only exhausted and hardened me. What I see staring back is my solution. I am not willing to live the lie anymore. Anxiety occurs from threats of the subconscious. Own the real threat. Share it! If you step on them or push them down, they will manifest in some other way.

Ahhh the drama on this one - centered on mental illness, friendship and betrayal. Abby suffers from mental illness and her husband Ryan a successful high football coach is supportive...picking up the slack when Abby has a breakdown. Their daughter Juliana is 16 has lived with her mother's depression all of her life. Having her mother emotionally withdrawn, she has become very close to her father. Dealing with a family that suffers from depression, something has to give. Abby checks herself into a live in facility where she faces her demons and the truth that she has run from all her married life. Will her marriage survive? Will she be able to be the mother her daughter needs?

The narration is told by 4 - Abby as she deals with her depression. Going back to the past when she first met her husband Ryan who was dating her best friend Lauren. Ryan who is still haunted by the breakup of Lauren who wants to do the right thing with his family and the young men he coaches. Juliana has she is dealing with the pain of her mother's dis-attachment and her first relationship with a student on her father's team. Lauren who comes back after 17 years of abruptly leaving Ryan to face her own pain that caused her to leave in the first place.

I was impressed with how the narration gets into the head of Abby and how she dealt with her emotions. How it lead her to live a lie by not dealing with her emotions. In her therapy she learned how to deal and to apply that lead her to freely love the ones she loved.

A Special Thank You to Lake Union Publishing and Netgalley for the ARC and the opportunity to post honest review

Bethany Clark says

I just randomly went and picked a book off my shelf a few weeks back and I was so happy that this fall beauty fell into my hands.

Such a sad, tragic love story that has its moments of pure joy along with its moments of utter misery when you see how the pain has hit each individual character of this book.

Abby seems to have the makings of a perfect life - the handsome husband, the beautiful daughter, the house - basically the cookie cutter perfect life. Not all things are as perfect as what they seem when you are on the outside looking in.

But what if that "perfect" family came at a price? At the downfall and heartache of your best friend?

Abby always wanted Ryan but....he was in love with Lauren - Abby's best friend.

But one day Lauren took an amazing opportunity and went to see the world and photograph some of the most amazing waterfalls...but little did she know that her "best friend" would take advantage of her boyfriend in his time of need and rope him in by...you guessed it...getting pregnant.

How could Lauren deal with that? She couldn't go back and watch their lives unfold together so she stayed away for what seemed like an eternity.

One day she came back...Abby was in the midst of a breakdown...what will happen at this end of this mess? Will Lauren get her lost love back? Will Abby get better and keep her family in tact?

Elyse says

THIS REVIEW contains ZERO SPOILERS.....(I tell ya zilch)other that this is a TERRIFIC READwith powerful messages.

It's been a few years since reading Rochelle's novels. "Where We Fall", has an elevated sophistication and depth, which slowed my reading downed -(purposely on my part). I wanted time to explore my thoughts - - specifically- through the characters eyes without judgement.

At the start of "Where We Fall", the year is 1997. Ryan and Lauren are a couple. Abby is Lauren's best friend and is always included.

The story takes a large leap, the year is 2014. Abby and Ryan are married.

I know, "WHAT THE F#€K HAPPENED"? That question stays with you until the end of the novel. Keep reading...it's a very thought-provoking journey.

This story is so well written and complex - It's tempting to make assumptions, and form opinions about the characters. However, I'm aware that when I do that, it becomes part of my belief system, often too 'soon'.

I sensed it would be pure poison to judge any character harshly in this novel.

There are breakdowns, choices made that would affect the lives of others, yet I never blamed or justified any of them for doing what they did - or behaving the way they did.

Rochelle wrote this story with incredible amounts of integrity and sensitivity. Since I noticed her commitment to the seriousness of the underlying important issues, I wanted to read her book with the same integrity. In order to do that...I literally had to clear all judgements - and critical thoughts aside. By reading it this way... and slower than I could have, I took away positive messages about the possibility in ending emotional pain. I felt inspired by the journey these characters took. There is an act of courage in this story....that involves risk of the unknown. It's so truthful it made my heart hurt....yet SING!

Excellent Book Club Choice!!!

There are a handful of female authors that deliver intelligent, astonishing novels -primarily the audience is for women- along with the great men.

These female authors we celebrate because they give the already heavy loaded label, "Women's Fiction", a GREAT REPUTATION!

Rochelle B. Weinstein is this kind of female author!

Highly Recommended. Amazon Kindle is only \$4.99. A great deal!

Judy Collins says

A special thank you to Lake Union and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Deeply psychological, beautifully written, with stunning metaphors of water, and mesmerizing lyrical prose, *Rochelle B. Weinstein* delves into her characters' complex souls with, **WHERE WE FALL** a troubled family on the verge of collapse. *Mental Illness. Guilt. Secrets. Pain. Lies. Betrayal. Darkness. Depression.*

Two parallels, a gripping, inspiring, emotional, and thought-provoking tale of mental illness. The real effects of millions of people, its afflictions- far reaching, often misunderstood, and the stigma attached, as a society.

Tragedy and beauty. Darkness and Light. Hate and Love. Emotions. Facing fears, pain, admitting misdeeds, accountability, taking responsibility for your actions "head on" in order to begin healing. *Redemption, forgiveness, true happiness.*

The author's writing style is absolutely mesmerizing! I bookmarked so many pages, getting lost in her lovely writing, her poetic prose. Fans of *T. Greenwood, Catherine Ryan Hyde, Amy Hatvany, and Jodi Picoult* will love this author and **WHERE WE FALL**.

With finesse, Weinstein skillfully tackles highly-charged complex topics with sensitivity. So excited about the discovery of this new found author; cannot wait to read more. I love Greenwood's lyrical writing and her skillful use of vivid imagery --*Rochelle is right up there with her.*

Falling in love, out of love, falling apart . . . A soft place to land. If you are looking for a light-hearted, cheery and carefree book- look elsewhere. So much more, here! *A clever mix of chick-noir, domestic and psychological suspense, contemporary, mystery, and family drama.*

In a brief introduction, the spring of 1997, at Davidson College in North Carolina, we meet three friends Abby, Ryan, and Lauren. Flash forward to the Fall of 2014. Abby and Ryan, in their late thirties, married, with teen daughter Juliana, *residing in Charlotte, North Carolina.*

Told from multiple perspectives, allowing readers to gain keen insights into how the characters view one another. *Flashing back and forth over the years.*

Abby is taunted by demons of darkness and depression. She feels sorry for herself. Her wants and desires have resulted in an unhappy life. She is not honest about the past. She is manipulative. She has been plagued for years by the unwanted fears--the invasive, sneaky, and powerful thoughts. Neuroses. Sad and hopeless thoughts.

She sleeps for days straight, withering into something more skeletal than human. Ryan has begged her to return to therapy, and stay on her medications. Her therapist urges her to commit herself. She has reached rock bottom, when Ryan finds her on the bathroom floor with pills. Abby is hiding dark secrets, which continue to haunt her. She is an absentee, selfish, and distant parent.

Ryan is good-looking, patient, a loving father, a community leader, and husband. He is a fixer. A football coach, he loves his wife, his daughter, his team. However, his wife's condition is disturbing, and has taken a toll on all their lives. Like a coach, he tried to draw Abby out. There was so much wrong inside her. He will

not leave her. He has all sorts of strategy for the football field and his team; however, his own family is a different story. Abby needs him. His friends encourage him to leave. His wife is a woman of shifting temperament. Low self-esteem. Lifeless. Her mind is tangled and tortured. She needs help.

He has a life, but he cannot think of himself. He buries his needs. He lives in fear everyday she will take her life, buried in her darkness. He had become a single parent, a doting father, in his wife's absences. He made promises and commitments to his wife. However, has he ever got over the love of his life, Lauren? The girl he was to marry. What happened? He cannot forget about her leaving and never to be heard from again. He is unaware of what his wife did years ago. When he discovers the truth, will he ever forgive her? Little does he know she changed the course of all their lives.

Abby is convalescing in the hospital, his star player is on the run, and his daughter is alone and frightened, yet he coaches his boys to a victorious win every week. He is proud of them. Many coaches tell their players to learn from loss—it builds character and resiliency. What about his own personal life?

Juliana, an only child. She is independent and self-sufficient. A fixer, the one who believes she can repair the damage and make wrong into right. She is disturbed by her mother's condition. Her mom was different than other moms. She is embarrassed by her mom's behavior. Why can't she be normal?

Juliana has her own issues. She is dating the high school football star, E.J. However, E.J. comes from a poor, abusive, dysfunctional, and violent family. He is always caught in the middle trying to keep his mom and brother out of harm's way from his father. In doing so, he gets into trouble with the law and on the run—everyone in his path is in danger. Now Juliana has to help him, putting her own father, the coach in the middle—a dangerous situation. She is filled with burdens of those she has chosen to love. Worrying about EJ protects her from the troubles of her own home. Her father provides the love of two parents.

Abby finally agrees to have herself committed, to Cold Creek a clinic in Asheville, western North Carolina—instrumental by Babs, (brutally honest) unlike most psychologists. Babs tells her she is dying and destroying everything around her. Memories of happier times have riddled her with guilt and hopelessness.

The world already thinks she is crazy, why not make it official. How did she get here . . . to this place? How bad does she have to get to make a change. Here, she will be open to scrutiny and self-improvement, even though free of home and pressures to conform. She will have to face what she did. She is angry for so many reasons. Always chipping away. Placing the blame on someone else. Her husband loved someone else first. Will she always be second best. How did she play God?

Lauren had left years ago, to explore the world. A lover of nature. A free-spirit. (my kind of gal). She planned on returning. She and Ryan had plans for marriage. A lifetime. She loves gushing creeks and waterfalls which trickle from secret places. The water that falls from the streams washes away troubles and clears the mind. She loves the mountains—inspiring. The last time she sought the mountains, all those years ago she came for one thing—refuge, to rid herself of pain. *This time she had not wanted to come back.*

She is now an intelligent, world famous published author. (writing under another name). She has traveled the world. Her book was her life's work. Her passion for writing, photography, and waterfalls had led her on a quest to compile the most beautiful cascades in the world. From poetry and musings. The grand finale would bring her home to the North Carolina mountains. Where she would shoot *Linville, Toxaway, Looking Glass, and Elk River.* (have hiked all these). What waited for her, terrified her. She had to return—she had put it off long enough. Her publisher is the only one who knows the truth about her identity. She is ready to reveal herself to her readers.

Everything she has kept at bay circling around Abby, Ryan and herself. Chipping away at her defenses,

reminding her that no matter how hard she tried to move forward, there is always a past pulling us back. Long ago she gave herself to Ryan. A college love, connected. He was woven into her soul. She left. Ryan's father died. *He married someone else. A betrayal.*

The author takes readers on a mysterious journey, at a controlled pace, peeling back the layers when Ryan and Lauren were dating in college. Lauren always included Abby. At first their friendship was new, and she was unaware of Abby's secret suffering. When the lightbulb would go out. However, Abby fell in love with Ryan secretly. Everyone always knew Ryan and Lauren would get married. However, they didn't. Why?

Throughout the book you do not know what happened to change these three. Until the ending... So be patient. *It is worth the wait.*

Now, Lauren is returning to her favorite small town of Banner Elk (Beech Mountain), NC. Her family home was there. Her haven. She has to make her first appearance as an author. Her readers will meet the real Lauren (not the fake). Back where her journey started. Little does she know Ryan, Abby, and his daughter are in the mountains staying at a friend's seasonal cabin, while Abby is going through treatment. When their paths cross, soon the long awaited secrets will be revealed. (A BIG ONE)!

Readers will despise Abby during the majority of the book. She attempts to drag everyone down. You wonder why Ryan tolerates her behavior. You will sympathize with Lauren. Lauren hides behind her work and her mask – her pain, the betrayal. The author has a purpose, precise timing, taking you to the explosive and emotional conclusion. The more you read, the better-- which will keep you glued to the pages.

Richly textured, an insightful look at hope and redemption. The author handles the painful subject of mental illness, with honesty and compassion. The haunting look at a fractured family will please readers of literary and domestic suspense. A compelling character study; Harrowing, heartfelt and ultimately so realistically human --with flawed real characters and a touch of romance--readers will be pleased with the beautiful ending.

What We Leave Behind

On a personal note. Read More of this review on my Blog: [JDCMustReadBooks](#)