



Great Falls

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One brother home from war. The other desperate to save him. A gripping journey together to the river's end.

Shane has always worshiped his big brother, Jeremy. But three tours in Iraq and Afghanistan have taken their toll, and the easy-go-lucky brother Shane knew has been replaced by a surly drunk who carries his loaded 9mm with him everywhere and lives in the basement because he can't face life with his wife and two small children. When Jeremy shows up after Shane's football game and offers to take him to the family cabin overnight, Shane goes along — both to get away from a humiliation on the field and to keep an eye on Jeremy, who's AWOL from his job at Quantico and seems to have a shorter fuse than ever. But as the camping trip turns into a days-long canoe trip down the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers, Shane realizes he's in way over his head — and has no idea how to persuade Jeremy to return home and get the help he needs before it's too late. In a novel at once gripping and heartbreaking, Steve Watkins offers a stark exploration of the unseen injuries left by war.

Great Falls Details

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Author : Steve Watkins

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From Reader Review Great Falls for online ebook

Adele says

There is a bit of false advertising associated with this book as they don't even get on the river until more than 100 pages in and the falls are not mentioned until even later. Other than that, I think this book is a great read. The relationship between the brothers is believable and moving. Watkins very effectively communicates the constant tension Shane is under being alone with his brother whom he loves and fears and is frustrated and annoyed by. There was one point where I thought Watkins had made a misstep and gone too far - over the top - but he turned it back around.

Colton Puls says

Resub

Colton Puls

Grade:9

Great Falls. Steve Watkins.

Personal Response

I think this book shares a great message while keeping me entertained which may I add is hard to do. It shares the struggles a boy and his brother and that everyone has them just in different degrees and circumstances. This is an overall good book with action, emotion, problem solving, and character. I like this book because I can relate to the concussions which suck and always worrying about what people will think or do based off of my actions. I wish I had a brother like Jeremy because he helps him through problems and makes him feel good when he is down.

Plot Summary

Great Falls is a story of a boy and his brother who had just gotten out of the military and has ptsd. He gets very angry really fast isn't good at socializing when he gets any type of emotion his first instinct is violence. The brother really wants to get jermey to pay more attention to him so he volunteers him to do things like encouraging the football team before games and wants jermey to come and watch the games but he doesn't. One game jermey got a concussion and was still sent back into the game and ended up running the wrong direction so he ran off the field due to embarrassment and him and his brother went to there cabin afterward. They stay at the cabin for a while worrying of what others will think and doesn't want to get judged. When they finally decide to go back no one judged or even acknowledged what he did and his life continued as normal.

Recommendation

I would recommend this book to anyone who likes sports, guns and a group of guys having a good time. It also shows a little bit of the soft side of people with situations they are in, almost everyone goes through something like this in their lifetime and it is great to hear an example of one. If you liked anything I have previously stated I would recommend this book to you

Wendy says

"Great Falls" which I won through Goodreads Giveaways is a gripping and heart-breaking story of two brothers; one a Marine returning from three tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, the other a high school football athlete who take a days-long canoe trip down the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers to escape their problems. Shane Dupree humiliated on the football field after suffering a concussion, and his brother broken by the ghosts of war, a victim of Post Traumatic Syndrome Disease (PTSD) battle rapids, the elements, and Jeremy's drunken hot-temper that results in the police hunting for them.

In the heart-wrenching realism of this beautifully choreographed story the reader takes a journey into the mind of U.S. Marine Captain Jeremy Dupree who's struggling with memories of the senseless killings and brutality of war, wanting to regain the normalcy of life at home but failing. It's an emotional -roller coaster ride as Shane Dupree who idolizes his brother struggles to support him, hoping that he'll find deliverance from the guilt and pain of the past or to persuade him to return home and get help. Fast-paced with heart-stopping action as they face rapids, a falls, a knife wielding drunk and his psychotic girlfriend the story progresses quickly to a tragic climax. Yet out of all the misery, hardship and sorrow a new awareness, deliverance and purpose will be found.

In this well-written, descriptive narrative Steve Watkins has crafted characters who are realistic and complex with personalities forged by complicated and challenging lives. Shane Dupree the hardworking, caring younger brother is easy-going and idolizes Jeremy. Raised by a submissive mother and a hard-nosed, overbearing, abusive step-father Jeremy has always sheltered his sibling. Reciprocating Shane looks after Annie and the kids when he shirks his fatherly responsibility and suffers his stepfather's scathing hostility when Jeremy makes mistakes. Disillusioned and guilt-ridden Marine Captain Jeremy Dupree haunted by the demons of a senseless war stumbles through life, agitated, angry, drinking incessantly and missing work at Quantico. Running from his problems he takes Shane on a disastrous trip to Great Falls.

A gut-wrenching, starkly honest and painful exploration of the impact of war on a man and his family, "Great Falls" is an absorbing page-turner that's a must-read.

Rachel Rooney says

A 2018-2019 Missouri Gateway Readers Award preliminary nominee (grades 9-12).

Shane's brother Jeremy is back from another tour in the Middle East, but he's not the person Shane knew. He lives at home instead of with his wife and kids and drinks a lot. After an embarrassing incident at a football game, Jeremy offers to take Shane to the family cabin. What Shane thinks is a short camping trip turns into something more.

This was a gripping portrayal of PTSD. 3.5 stars.

Nina O'Daniels says

In the year 2017, we will have been engaged in a war that has lasted almost sixteen years. That's almost half of my adult life. Technically, it ended in 2014 but let's not pretend otherwise. I crumble every time a video

montage of families welcoming home their soldiers shows up on my feed. I seriously can't handle it. Just this week, the reminder of PTSD and mental health in the military is present as I witness an active shooter who is formal military. Suicide rates for soldiers are rampant. I could go on and on. The bottom line is this is a problem, it's not going away, and it needs to be discussed not as a taboo topic but as a real one. In the author notes, Watkins says, "*Great Falls* is for all the families of those who have served. We owe them far more than we are giving them." Ain't that the truth.

Watkins puts a lot into such a short story. Jeremy Dupree is home from his third tour of Afghanistan. He should be staying with his wife and two children, but he's at his childhood home, holed up in the basement, avoiding them and the rest of the world. His younger brother Shane picks up the slack for his brother's wife--helping her watch the kids, chores around the house, and pretending that his brother is okay when deep down he knows he's not. The pretense is comfortable until Jeremy picks up Shane after an epic disaster at his football game. Instead of going home, the two embark on an impromptu rafting journey down the Potomac. Shane goes along with it because he can't say no to Jeremy and Jeremy needs it to outrun the demons in his head. This story is fraught with tension as Jeremy's moods, behavior, and actions all point to destruction. It doesn't help that his constant source of security is his M16 and 9mm that he puts together and takes apart repeatedly. Jeremy refuses to go back even when Shane tries to reason with him, and as their journey comes to an inevitable end, Shane knows he'll never truly understand his brother's struggles but wants so badly to save him from them. The question is, will he alone, be enough?

Sherri says

The title *Great Falls* literally refers to the series of waterfalls and rapids along the Potomac River, just upstream of Washington D.C., yet a raging river full of challenges is also a metaphor for the lives of brothers Shane and Jeremy Dupree.

Jeremy's a Marine who has recently returned from his third tour in the Middle East where his bravery earned him a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. Jeremy's married with two young kids but has been sleeping in his parent's basement and drinking 12-packs to fall asleep because he just can't handle being home. Jeremy keeps his loaded 9mm close by--which scares his 17-year-old brother Shane, our narrator, who's seen first-hand how serious Jeremy's anger issues are.

Shane's a big guy who plays football and helps out his brother's wife on the weekends as a way to try to pick up the broken pieces of his older brother's life. Shane always assumes responsibility for Jeremy's mistakes--like the time Jeremy let a homeless veteran sleep in their garage and he stole their lawn mower.

After a horribly embarrassing incident during a football game, Shane's ready to disappear when Jeremy conveniently shows up at the right moment offering a weekend canoe/camping trip. It turns out that Jeremy's running away from a required psych evaluation (he calls it an Unauthorized Absence--not AWOL). The two brothers head down the road and have soon rented all the gear they need to canoe along the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers.

Their adventure starts off with a dangerous encounter that results in Jeremy getting seriously hurt in the leg. Shane soon realizes that his own brother's mental health might be worse off than his physical health and their journey quickly becomes more dangerous. Can Shane navigate the treacherous river and his brother's quickly changing emotions and bring them back home safely?

Teens will be quickly drawn into this edgy story of the after effects of war and PTSD on a family--especially siblings. Readers feel bad for Shane and learn to have some sympathy for Jeremy--even when it becomes clear that his anger has resulted in some poor decisions that caused damage to those he loves most. The tension-filled canoe trip will keep you reading a pace faster than the rapids the brothers navigate.

Annette says

GREAT FALLS by Steve Watkins is a young adult novel exploring the relationship between a teen and his older brother who suffers from PTSD.

When high school football star Shane agrees to go on a camping trip with his older brother Jeremy, he soon realizes he's in over his head. Military hero Jeremy is back from deployments in Iraq and suffering from the effects of this war experiences. A canoe, alcohol, and a rifle combine for a terrifying experience that escalates around every corner as Jeremy's behavior becomes increasingly erratic.

Watkins effectively balances the fast-paced, action with an authentic, somber examination of a suffering soldier dealing with life after war.

Librarians will find this gripping story of brotherhood to be popular among young men.

To learn more about the author, go to <http://stevewatkinsbooks.com/>.

Published by Candlewick on April 26, 2016. ARC courtesy of the publisher.

Sandy says

Jeremy has returned after doing three tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan but he is not the same Jeremy that left. The town thinks of him as a hero but Jeremy doesn't feel like a hero, he is haunted by the war and when he thinks about his fellow serviceman Atwell, Jeremy is overcome with emotion. Did he really do everything he could have done? There is a hardness to Jeremy, a wall that he brings with him and he not willing to remove this wall or share why this wall came home with him. Camped out in the basement of his childhood home, his wife and children live close by and he does stop to see them but he tries to keep his distance. Shane, his younger brother is on the football team at school and after getting hit hard in a game, makes a touchdown for the opposing team. Humiliated, Shane immediately walks off the field, where he finds Jeremy and the two boys decide to take off. Life is just too difficult for them both right now. It is a concussion that Shane has suffered which made him confused when he made the touchdown for the opposing team, but he had let his team down and he feels ashamed. It just feels right that the two of them get away for a while, perhaps Shane can help his brother with the issues that he has been having. It's not an emotional time for the boys, it is more of an adventure as Jeremy takes Shane on a canoe trip that Shane feels lasts forever. Shane mind is elsewhere at first, as he is worried and scared concerned about where this trip will take them but as the trip continues the relationship between them changes.

I liked the relationship between the brothers. They each were trying to protect each other in their own way

and they each had their own issues that were dealing with. Shane tried to look out for him yet, Jeremy was looking out for him also. The ending, I wasn't expecting that, but it worked in its own way. Jeremy's issue took center stage in this novel and I liked the way that the author drew attention to it without throwing it in your face: the way Jeremy was constantly taking apart and putting together his M16, the way he looked over his shoulder repetitively, the way that Shane looked at him, and the way that he never slept, etc. A great book about living with challenges, about war, and about family and relationships.

I received a copy of this novel from Candlewick Press, thank you for sending me a copy of this novel. This review is my own opinion.

Stacey Conrad says

Shane idolizes his older brother Jeremy. Since Jeremy has returned from Afghanistan, he is distant. He moved into their parents basement rather than back home with his wife and daughters. Jeremy self medicates to forget the horrors of war. After a concussion on the football field and a spectacularly bad play, Shane and Jeremy escape to the river and canoe from Virginia to West Virginia. As Jeremy deteriorates, Shane worries for himself and his brother, wondering if or when they will get back home.

I put Great Falls in my survival section of the library but it could fit in three of my sections. War for the fact that Jeremy, the brother in the story, is a veteran of Afghanistan who has returned home and is not well. Sports because Shane plays football, like his older brother did. I decided on the survival section because the last half of the book takes place on a river, canoeing through rapids, for days, only stopping to eat a couple of times. Since it is a slim book, many of my reluctant readers should be willing to give it a try.

Erica says

This book had a lot of potential. Shane's brother Jeremy comes back from another tour in the Middle East and he's suffering badly from PTSD. Shane is a high school senior, and we're told he worships and adores his older brother.

Here's where the biggest problem lies. We're **told** this in the summary, but nowhere in the book did I get that impression. Shane merely observes his brother, but we are never shown what he's feeling. Is he desperate to help his brother and anguished to see him in this way? How is this affecting his state of mind personally? The best word to describe Shane is "bland". He almost seems like a robot with his actions, and the most emotion we get from him is simply to learn that he's frustrated with his brother and sometimes yells "Jeremy, what are you doing?". Jeremy's behavior is well written and realistic, but without being able to get into Shane's head and **feel** his emotions, there was no way for me to connect to the characters. Shane's emotions aren't fleshed out, just quickly glossed by.

I need to get into a character's mind so I'm able to feel like I'm walking in their shoes, I want to feel what they are feeling. If as much effort was put into making Shane a more fleshed-out character as there was when describing Jeremy's actions and the scenery of the river (which I loved), then the book could have been much better. It was as if I was observing things from afar, rather than seeing Jeremy's downfall through Shane's eyes.

If the above was done, then I feel the ending could have been very emotional. As it stands, however, I felt nearly nothing when (view spoiler). I also feel like the ending (view spoiler)

I was waiting for some great scene to get insight into the brothers' relationship and learn about this 'great bond'. I didn't get any of that. In order for me to believe their bond, I needed to learn more about the old Jeremy and how the brothers adored each other before. I needed to feel Shane's pain upon losing the brother he once knew, and perhaps some comparisons between the new and the old version of Jeremy. I needed Shane to actually try to help his brother, other than only making a few attempts to communicate with Jeremy and giving up immediately as soon as Jeremy snaps at him.

I had some other problems as well, some being Shane having an almost creepy crush on Jeremy's wife. I wasn't sure what the reason for this was, and it made him helping out his nieces seem odd and not genuine. Is he only helping out with the kids so he gets to spend time with his brother's wife? Would the brothers' mother and step father really sit by for a week without actively trying to look for their kids? The whole family dynamic and their past seemed like it could be interesting, but there just wasn't enough of it inserted to have a purpose in the novel. If more of this was explored (cruel step father, timid mother) and have the brothers discuss their family life, they could have re-formed a connection over the childhood they shared and possibly started to repair their bond and heal Jeremy. This is where I felt the story was going in the beginning, but it seems the family aspect was cut out toward the end.

Not a terrible book, but if you are looking for something that reads like a character-driven novel and less like an explorative essay, I would skip this one.

Still looking for a book with good sibling dynamics.

Had a hard time deciding between two and three stars. I'll say 2.5, but in the end I'll have to go with a solid number, and while I liked some parts, I can only sum this book up as "it was okay", which is what 2 stars stand for. It wasn't a *bad* book by any means, please don't let the 2 stars come across this way, it was just lacking in ways. For a book that wants to be character driven, it didn't do a good job of building those characters and making them real, making me care for them and understand them. The ending hardly had me feeling at all, and with an ending like that, I *should*.

More to come later, need to gather my thoughts.

Lynn Davidson says

This seemed a story quite different from what I usually read, and the topic was of interest to me. It says on the cover "One brother home from war. The other desperate to save him. A river that will change them forever." – and it had my attention immediately. This book was not a disappointment.

Shane is his older brother's biggest fan, but Jeremy has done three tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and is not the same as he used to be. He's troubled, very troubled, and can't even function around his wife and two very young children. He's drinking too much and seems to be paranoid and nervous all the time. Jeremy has PTSD and needs help.

Jeremy manages to show up at Shane's high school football game, but when Shane suffers a concussion resulting in his making a very bad play, Jeremy offers to take him away for a night to escape the humiliation. Shane agrees, hoping it will also be a turning point for Jeremy, that he can convince him to get the help he desperately needs. That's where the adventure really begins, and things go from bad to worse, with Shane never giving up on his brother.

Great Falls is a novel that is gripping, raw at times, and that takes the reader on a worthwhile journey. Even though there is some violence and strong language in it, one must remember this realistic story is about a war veteran who suffered horrific things that just won't leave his mind. Once you start reading you may not want to set it aside until you finish the book. I didn't, honestly!

Kelly Hager says

This is a novel about two brothers, one with PTSD after returning from the war. That's basically all you need to know.

Since he returned, Jeremy's been different. It's understandable but Shane wants his brother back. They end up on a camping/canoeing trip together, but it doesn't seem to be helping. If anything, Jeremy's getting worse (not sleeping or eating).

This book is painful to read. It goes quickly, but it hurts. And it should. I'm not sure you can have an honest book about this topic if you make it pretty.

Jessica Van Tassell says

This is a hard book to review bc I have such torn feelings. On one hand I think it was written well and is on a subject I am interested (post war soldiers). It was a decent story, despite the abundance of f-words.

Maybe I am just a prude but how could I recommend this book to an elementary or middle schooler when it has such language? I even at one point looked back at the spine to make sure this was labeled as YF. Which I don't necessarily mind language but I felt this was more appropriate for a teen book.

Michael Russell says

Great Falls by Steve Watkins Shane is a high school football player who worships his older brother, Jeremy. Even though Jeremy seems to have a great life: he's married to a wonderful young woman, they have two great young kids, and Jeremy has a secure job as a colonel in the Marine corps, Shane is worried. Jeremy hasn't been the same since returning from three tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. When Shane embarrasses himself on the football field after a devastating collision, Jeremy offers to take Shane camping at the family cabin deep in the Virginia mountains. But what starts out as a simple escape becomes much more symbolic -- and devastating. The two brothers launch a canoe and float on the Shenandoah River through the mountains, and then the Potomac river as it heads toward Washington D.C. Onboard are basic supplies, but also the things Jeremy doesn't let out of his sight any more -- a 9mm handgun and his M16 assault rifle that he cleans relentlessly. Shane knows he needs to talk to his brother about the mental issues Jeremy is having since his return from war, but can he help his brother in time? Great Falls by Steve Watkins

Kaitlyn Abshire says

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

After humiliating himself in front of his entire school, Shane decides to embark on a camping trip with his older brother Jeremy. Before Shane realizes, they are in possession of a canoe and are well on their way down the Shenandoah River and towards the Potomac River. Jeremy, a veteran, is running away from his job, his family, and all the other responsibilities he has back home. While this trip was a way to escape his embarrassment, Shane realizes he needs to stick with Jeremy. If Shane isn't there for Jeremy, who knows what Jeremy will do...

There were so many instances with Jeremy that frustrated me so much. Maybe I am being a bit harsh, but I seldom felt sorry for Jeremy. I cannot fathom the horrible situations and things he went through, but I feel that some of his actions had absolutely no excuse. And then there is Shane. I feel a bit harsh again, but Shane also frustrated me to no end. Shane is a good kid. He wants to help his brother so badly, but is afraid to confront Jeremy. Shane does become better and learns to ask the questions he was once afraid to ask. However, those moments when Shane did not have a backbone were very frustrating.

I do not know what the problem was, but I could not connect with these characters in the slightest. I have read books about veterans before and I have thoroughly enjoyed them. Perhaps it was my timing; I can be a mood reader at times. I honestly wanted to love this book, as other readers before me have. I suppose this book just wasn't my cup of tea.
