



Lie Lay Lain

Bryn Greenwood

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Jennifer has a great job and a go-getter fiancé. She's on track for success, until she witnesses a fatal hit-and-run. Mistaking Jennifer for someone else, the dying victim extracts an impossible promise. Jennifer's fiancé wants her to forget the whole incident, but when she closes her eyes, she can still see the bloody face of the woman who asked for her help.

Olivia is in a rut. Burdened with caring for her brain-damaged brother and already feeling like a spinster at 27, she's desperate to escape. In a moment of weakness, she tells a lie that draws an unsuspecting paramedic into her life. As she struggles to expiate the lie, a horrible act of violence will test her resolve to be honest.

Where Jennifer's promise and Olivia's lie intersect, their lives begin to unravel.

Lie Lay Lain Details

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From Reader Review Lie Lay Lain for online ebook

Sarah says

People that know me well, know that I have severe secondhand embarrassment. It is not the "oh this is uncomfortable" reaction. It usually propels me to either help/reach out to the person in the situation or to *physically* cringe/walk away/block out the situation. This was the ENTIRE book. I hated and loved it. A book that can make you feel these things (through writing, not *because* of the writing style) should make you continue reading.

While it was clear to me after certain events, hints were dropped on where this book was headed, it was the characters that made this book, not the plot - character driven.

It was a book of many layers - about boundaries black, white or grey. About hard truths and soft lies. A book about growing and coping and discovering oneself and their limits.

I've seen this quote in quite a few reviews and I have to admit, I think it will stay with me as well "Take one leg off a three-legged stool and it falls over." To me, it seems as like an avalanche effect - once you do ONE big action, you're no longer afraid or care about the other actions, it all falls down.

I will give you and my future self a small recap of the book so I may remember this when I look back.

We start with two characters living in the same town within different social circles. You are hit with a traumatic accident and the beginning and get a feel for the depth and understand how one of the characters operates. The secondary character it takes a bit to unwrap that one. It is NOT comfortable at all. But by the end of the book, you feel the opposite about each of these characters. I feel like you are hyper aware of each step these characters take to reach themselves - or to disappear.

I finished it in a day. Of course I would recommend this.

Paula says

After reading "All the Ugly and Wonderful Things", I knew I want to read more of Bryn Greenwood's work. So I one-clicked and read "Lie Lay Lain."

I went into the story not really knowing what to expect but I was fairly sure it would be a book that would have me captivated and would make me think and feel a lot. I was right.

This book is so different from most things I've read lately. It's in a way very low-key. Best way to describe it maybe: It's life. In it's most honest form. It's ugly and pretty at the same time. Sad and happy. And at times it's so damn hard to navigate.

Both Jennifer and Olivia are trying to do that. To just get by, find their place and maybe some happiness. Jennifer has a demanding job, a fiance and then she witnesses an accident that throws her for a loop and knocks her off balance. Trying to figure out how to get passed it, how to fulfill a promise and still live up to the demands of her life, she's really struggling. She completely loses her footing and getting it back seems impossible as everytime she feels like she's making progress, something happens that has her floundering again.

I liked Jennifer and then I didn't like her, before I started liking her again. It was hard at times as she was someone who wasn't in touch with her feelings, who seemed a bit robotic. She was flawed - no doubt about that. And I suppose in a way it's those characters that make us reflect on our own faults, which is uncomfortable at best. So Jennifer and I...we didn't necessarily click. And some of her actions pissed me off, but in the end, I could sympathize with her pain and her need for balance, but wanted to shake her or slap her a few times as well.

I wanted to shake Olivia as well, but mainly to get her to stand up for herself. Living with her parents and working at her church, with a bit too much weight on her hips and not enough self-esteem to carry it around, she was mostly existing but not living. Her parents are douchebags - and that's the diplomatic version of my thoughts. They treat her like crap, make her feel bad about herself. In case it's not clear - I hated them. Olivia on the other hand, she was really likable. A sweet girl with a big heart. Her problem was that she didn't see her beauty and she had it - inside and out. No matter the number on her scale, she was attractive. She just didn't see it. Couldn't see it with all the stuff her parents said. It took Rindell to change that and he really did. She started to come out of her shell and shed her family's limiting beliefs. I loved seeing that happen. I enjoyed witnessing her grow. It was really amazing.

Bryn Greenwood doesn't sugarcoat things in her books. She writes things how they are. I love that about her books. There is ugliness in life and she isn't afraid to write about it. People have faults and make mistakes and that too is something she tackles.

4 not-everything-is-shiny-and-pretty stars.

Nadine Jones says

"I like laying here with you," he said.

"I like lying here with you, too."

"That's not right, huh? It's not laying?"

"No," she said, embarrassed.

"I can always count on you to know which is which, but that's weird. Lying. I don't like how lie has the two meanings. I don't want to lie here with you. Been enough lying already. Why does it mean two different things?"

"I don't know."

"If it's okay, I'm just gonna keep saying lay. I like laying here with you," he said.

"I like laying here with you, too."

The title is intriguing, because there are multiple discussions throughout the story of lie vs lay and lie vs truth, but not once does anyone say "lain."

At its heart, this is about lies, and the effect they can have, the harm they can do, and when it can sometimes be better to tell a lie rather than the truth.

But it's about more than that, too. And it's about less than that. This is a very character-driven novel, and usually I get all antsy-pants with those, but Ms Greenwood has a talent for creating characters I just want to spend time with. She's pretty amazing in how she does it, too. Rindell was a gimme, I would love Rindell no matter what. But Olivia and Jennifer and the supporting cast are characters that I normally wouldn't connect with. In Ms Greenwood's hands, I connected. Olivia is a doormat church secretary with low self esteem, but

she is so much more than that, too. Olivia is not a cardboard cut-out. Yeah there were moments when I was silently screaming, "just say 'no,' Olivia!" But I never became completely fed up with her. And Jennifer, who rewards herself with expensive shoes and handbags, is normally the type of character I would have NO time for, but in Ms Greenwood's hands, she is complex and sympathetic. The characters all feel like *real people*; I never got the impatient sense that a character was just a plot device (even when the character - like Gayle - IS just a plot device!).

Ms Greenwood really tricked me with her opening lines:

Jennifer would have walked more quickly if she hadn't been wearing new shoes, but she couldn't stop glancing down to admire the way the slender black t-strap bisected her foot. They were easily the most elegant shoes she had ever owned.

That is such a trite opening line, so common in sub-par contemporary romances! (Exhibit A: Eyes on You) I couldn't believe it! I was so disappointed! Because I don't give a fuck about your shoes! But Greenwood plays with it, and spins it around, and stretches out her hands and suddenly you (the reader) realize she's woven the most intriguing cats cradle, rather than just giving you a piece of string.

And Ms Greenwood also has that magical ability to capture the surprising magic of everyday moments, and the irreverent humor that can be found in solemn moments. Passages such as these keep me coming back for more:

Tracey offered a bottle of pills and Jennifer swallowed one, not knowing what it was. After that, she floated in a haze, numb. It was not the numbness of childhood illness, where familiar hands take on the task you cannot do. It was like the well-meaning but alien care people offer an injured or abandoned baby animal. How you scoop and cuddle a tiny rabbit, cupped in your hands.

The rabbit is not comforted—you're a giant monster booming, "Aw, look at his little earsies," with none of the familiar shapes and smells of its mother. Even so, the baby rabbit is relieved to be dry, to be fed, to be unharmed.

and

Marco's words gnawed at her. The least I can do. That was what Jennifer had done. The very bare minimum. The inside of her head felt like a mouth full of sore and loose teeth. No matter where her thoughts wandered, they landed on something painful.

and

... she pulled bottle after bottle of polish out of her drawer, and set them on the vanity. The glass bottles clinked together musically, a sound that had always cheered Olivia up. Now it teased her as she tried to decide on a color. What was the color of betrayal? What color was

The Truth? After all the bottles were lined up before her, she could see that whatever the color was, she didn't own a bottle of it.

I read this because I read Ms Greenwood's recent book, All the Ugly and Wonderful Things, and it just blew me away. That was a five star book that was really twenty stars. This is a five star book that is five stars. And I don't hand out five stars all that often.

ETA: I read most of this book while I was in an airport or airplane, flying home (I had lots of reading time, because my home airport closed due to heavy snow while we were in the air, so we were diverted to another airport in another state, blah blah blah ... it took me a long time to get home), and today while I'm getting my house back in order and trying to get to work, I think about these characters, and I have to remind myself that they were NOT real people that I encountered at the airport, these were just characters in a book!

***Marsha,Marsha,Marsha* It's always Marsha says**

I'm sorry but this just did not work for me. I was confused. Was it about Christianity? There certainly were enough church references along with the not so great sex scenes. There were too many POVs for me and frankly I just struggled with this author's writing. Perhaps this is just one of those that did not connect with me. :(Sorry

Jessica says

This book was awful. I really don't even know how to write this review because it was that bad. This book was extremely slow & monotonous. The writing was just ok, the characters made me want to gauge my eyes out, the alternating pov's didn't work at all, and the storyline was weird. I couldn't tell if the author was trying to write a romance with some church & christianity thrown in or if she was writing a christian romance with god awful sex thrown in. Either way, it didn't work. The story revolves around these 2 heroines so you get their alternating pov's. I didn't see the need in both their pov's. Both of those girls were spineless, pushovers, who got stepped on by everyone around them & didn't stick up for themselves. One of the heroines was also very overweight so I thought there was some fat shaming when it came to her character. The whole book just didn't work for me.

buzy_reading says

A church secretary...caught up in a web of lies.
A Christian with a penchant for luxury items...made a promise.

The lie and the promise joined forces to honor a dying woman's wishes.

Will the truth set you free?

Overall: Bryan tackled a variety of subject matters in this book. For that it was a long arduous process. While I appreciated every element she included in this book I must say the delivery fell flat. I was so bored with

these characters no matter what Bryn did to change them.

These were religious characters who went to church regularly, yet their beliefs were narrowly minded. They still lied, they still judged, they still were racial ignorant, and they still were mean.

After reading the outcome of this story I imagine a completely different delivery would change my outlook on this story. As it was, I chose to skim the book in order to find closure for myself.

I didn't like the guilt placed upon these Christian characters for their behaviors. The guilt of telling a lie. The guilt of making a promise. The guilt of buying luxury items. The entire premise was about these two Christian characters and their religious beliefs. While they both attended the same church they didn't necessarily follow the same beliefs.

Brandi Aga says

Man, oh, man. I'm so torn about this book.

If you ask me at any given moment what my fave books are, they're always changing. But one that always remains the same is *All the Ugly and Wonderful things* by Bryn. It moved me, changed me, opened me up and gave me ugly cries.

This book though, I don't know what to do with it. I didn't *like* any of the characters except for one: Rindell. I loved his accent and his way of speech and everything about him. Even through his lies, he was the most honest one of all of them.

It's not a religious book. More of a church-goer background. I wasn't a fan of that, either, and would have preferred the backdrop to be somewhere else but it worked okay. You can look past it for the plot of the story.

You have to understand the character development is very heavy, very strong and normally I don't like over wordy books but once I finished I understood why Bryn felt the need to draw these characters out the way she did.

84%. That was the turning point for me. That was when I said, oh, things are happening. So, you see, long ways to go but totally worth the journey to get there.

Two totally opposite women. Lifestyles. Relationships. Brought together by something unexplainable in life. Why do bad things always happen to good people?

It almost doesn't seem like these two women's stories should even go together. And ultimately that's where my trouble with it stands. While I did like this story, I was expecting something else.

"I'm glad you lied. Otherwise you wouldn't be here. I never would have met you."

Violett says

As I read the other reviews I was surprised by the less than positive ratings. One reviewer said it made her want to gauge her eyes out. I think she meant gouge, but nevertheless, I absolutely loved the book.

For all the POV comments there were in the reviews, to my count (and I was never that great at math), there were only two point of views. I didn't struggle to keep up with just the two. In fact with two heroines it was great to switch between their perspectives.

Perhaps some of the reviewers were looking for an escape into never-never-land and weren't interested in reading a story about REAL people living through the craziness of real life. The characters were well developed and although I didn't particularly "like" some of their behavior I did become completely engrossed in the grittiness of their lives and situations.

There were plenty of uncomfortable scenes that some readers might like to pretend don't exist in life. The heroines and supporting cast are challenged with difficult family dynamics, racial adversity, making their way in the world and deep personal growth. Unbeknownst to them, both the heroines have the inner strength and ability to find their bliss.

I could NOT put this book down!

Maureen Mayer says

I was really excited to read this book. It was recommended to me by both readers and authors, so I had high hopes. The first chapter drew me in right away and tugged at my heartstrings, but the majority of the book dragged and was anticlimactic. Sure there were some dramatic moments but most were predictable and fizzled out.

Ashley says

See this full review and many more at: [5171 Miles Book Blog](#).

As my fellow PLNs (Passionate Little Nutcases) know, when Tarryn Fisher recommends a book, you have no choice but to get your hands on it too. So, like everyone else, when Tarryn told the folks in her reader group to pick up Lie Lay Lain by Bryn Greenwood, I added the book to my reading list. Thanks to my new PLN friend, Maureen, I was able to read this before my library was going to be able to get it in for me!

Tarryn mentioned this book was similar to her novel, Marrow, which happens to be my all-time favorite book. While I can see the minor similarities between the two books, Lie Lay Lain just didn't do it for me. I expected to love this book, not only because of the Marrow connection but because All the Ugly and Wonderful Things by Bryn Greenwood is one of the most incredible books I've ever read. I love a controversial read, something that makes me uncomfortable and able to question societal norms. Lie Lay Lain had some of that, especially in terms of racial stereotypes, but I wasn't sold. For the majority of this book, I was wondering what the point of the story was. The plot didn't seem to be moving whatsoever. The story felt like a journal of daily life for the two main characters, rather than a novel with a purpose. It was hard to see how both characters would fit together in the end because their connection to one another was

incredibly minor. Eventually, I became so bored with the story, I had to start skimming just to make it to the end, otherwise, this would have been a DNF for me.

I wish I could have loved this book as much as Tarryn did. I wish I felt the connection, but unfortunately, it wasn't for me due completely to the slowness of the story and questionable plot. This was the type of book to make me hang on for the ending, just hoping something big would happen, hoping that maybe the point of the beginning of the story would finally be revealed. While that kind of happened, I was still left scratching my head. I needed a bit more for this book to work and it just wasn't there, making me give two stars. If you're a fellow PLN who picked this book up, I'd love to hear your thoughts.

L.S. says

To be blunt, and polite - this didn't really appeal to me and it didn't leave me wanting more! I gave it 2 stars.

I'm a bit confused about this next book review as I was expecting great things. It was recommended to me by the publishing agency after I had reviewed another of its books. It just goes to show that one person's opinion is simply just that - an opinion. And, in this particular, one that is far removed from my own.

The book in question is Lie, Lay, Lain by Bryn Greenwood.

Although it sounded promising, this was a real slow burner, which unfortunately fizzled out and left no real impression on me. With each chapter dealing with the two main characters alternately, it was sometimes difficult to see the very tenuous connection between their lives. Frequently I was tempted to give up and not even finish the book. I made a mental note at the point that the story really came to life - it was at 81% (on my Kindle), which was far too late to really make any impact. By then I was bored with the characters.

The two women are poles apart, but attend the same church. There are many scenes at one church or another, but the worshippers are all putting on a show for each other, not wishing for their true lives to be seen and gossiped about by the congregation. It does showcase the hypocrisy of the church-goers and their bigoted views of those outside of their group.

The story does not seem to come to a convincing end either. There is no real closure regarding the fate of the little girl, merely a concession to a debate to improve how the child care system operates. Olivia is transformed from the stereotypical ugly duckling with low self-esteem to a confident young woman in a happy relationship. However, Jennifer is left reeling from the initial accident, her unfaithful boyfriend, an over-demanding boss and finally the turmoil caused by the missing child.

There is a recurrent issue over the use of the word 'lying' versus 'laying' which, as the title suggests is a clever way of mixing up the two meanings of the word 'lie' and it goes on to debate whether the truth should always be told, regardless of its consequences.

I'm glad I persevered with the story, as it does leave the reader with lots to consider - although whether that is what everyone wants from a work of fiction is entirely subjective.

As with the previous book I read from this publisher, there are far too many formatting issues and mixed up phrases. They implied that the issue is with individual devices last time, and I guess the same will be said this time. However, I hasten to add that I have read many books on my Kindle, downloaded from both Amazon & NetGalley, and have never had these issues in such abundance as with this particular publisher.

I imagine I won't be getting any recommendations from them again!

Ramsey Hootman says

For about half a minute, I thought this book was gonna suck. A woman obsessed with fancy shoes? Really? Ugh.

And then by the end of the first scene, I was practically in tears. Rarely does a book affect me that much, and the end of that first scene is just the beginning of a story I could not put down until I had finished. I didn't even want anyone to talk to me while I was reading it. Just shut up, everyone, because these people are so real to me that my actual life seems secondary.

Greenwood's eye for detail is phenomenal, and her dialogue so pitch-perfect that I didn't even feel like I'd just read a book. I felt like I'd become intimately acquainted with two very real people - aspirations, faults, insecurities and all. I tried to start another book after I finished, and I couldn't do it. Jennifer and Olivia were people to me; I cared about them deeply, and I needed time to let them go.

This book goes up on my list of all-time favorites. I wish it was coming out before Christmas, because I want to buy it for every woman I know.

Dawn Murphy-marshall says

Geesh. No real climax. I kept waiting for it... I thought the story was pretty good but nothing overly exciting ever really happened... The ending just fizzled out

Ruthenator says

This is a well-written story with well-developed characters who are real people who are transformed over the course of the book due to various events and people they meet. It's not packed with action or thrills but there's something so compelling about it that I had a hard time putting it down at night and I ended up staying up much later than intended, reading one more chapter, one more chapter. I would have done better to sit and read larger chunks of it on the weekend and get more rest during the week. Anyway, I am not going to get into specifics about the plot but I don't understand why people are confused about this book. Some reviewers found the POV confusing, because it switched between "so many" characters. TWO. Not difficult to keep track of. Also people seem confused about the church part of it because the characters spend so much time at church yet it's not a religious book. What is confusing about that? Because it is set in a church, is it expected to have a bunch of moralizing and preaching? Anyway, I am terrible at writing reviews but this is a very good book.

Sarah says

Jennifer and Olivia are two women on very different trajectories at the beginning of this interesting, well-written novel. (Yes, it unfolds slowly, but that's a good thing--the reader truly gets to know these women and

their problems, mistakes, and situations well ... I think some of the reviewers who think this book is too slow must not read much literary fiction. There is faster action/plot drive in the second half of the novel, and it's enough to satisfy anyone who prefers mysteries or thrillers, but you have to KNOW the characters first, so I applaud Greenwood's pacing decisions here.)

Anyway, Jennifer and Olivia's lives overlap in interesting ways, and the woman who seems to have it all slips and the beaten down woman finds her voice. That's not to say the downfall or rise of either character is complete, because many questions remain at the end, but it's fulfilling to see Olivia gain confidence, and to see Jennifer become less shallow. The title has extra resonance because each character is both the perpetrator and the victim of a lie and, like making the grammatically correct decision about which word to use, the way forward for each woman is muddled by complications.

This is a very good, thoughtful novel.
