



## Bad Call

*Stephen Wallenfels*

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*It was supposed to be epic.*

During a late-night poker game, tennis teammates Colin, Ceo, Grahame, and Rhody make a pact to go on a camping trip in Yosemite National Park. And poker vows can't be broken.

So the first sign that they should ditch the plan is when Rhody backs out. The next is when Ceo replaces him with Ellie, a girl Grahame and Colin have never even heard of. And then there's the forest fire at their intended campsite.

But instead of bailing, they decide to take the treacherous Snow Creek Falls Trail to the top of Yosemite Valley. From there, the bad decisions really pile up.

A freak storm is threatening snow, their Craigslist tent is a piece of junk, and Grahame is pretty sure there's a bear on the prowl. On top of that, the guys have some serious baggage (and that's not including the ridiculously heavy ax that Grahame insisted on packing) and Ellie can't figure out what their deal is.

And then one of them doesn't make it back to the tent.

Desperate to survive while piecing together what happened, the remaining hikers must decide who to trust in this riveting, witty, and truly unforgettable psychological thriller that reveals how one small mistake can have chilling consequences.

## Bad Call Details

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Author : Stephen Wallenfels

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## From Reader Review Bad Call for online ebook

### Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

3.5 Stars!

Bad Call by Stephen Wallenfels was quite the read. One filled with jealousy, deceit, anger, and misconceptions but it was also one about friendship and making wrongs right and yes, even a tiny bit of romance, or at least something that could be romance..eventually... maybe.

But mostly, it was one heck of a thrill ride. One where you weren't always sure which direction it was going to take and exactly what the heck was going on, but in a good way, not a bad way and one that was almost always filled with darkness.

From the moment you read the first chapter you know this isn't going to be a story filled with rainbows and sunshine. You know it will be darker and you love it because of it. I mean, four boys, one girl in the wilderness during a freak rain/snow storm and no one knows where they are. What could possibly go wrong.

This story was about not giving up and hanging in there and believing in who you are and what you are capable of. It was about struggling and fighting and succeeding when it really mattered.

With suspense, tension, and danger literally lurking in all shapes and forms, this is a read you don't want to miss out on.

\*ARC provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.\*

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### Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says

*This review and others can be found at BW Book Reviews.*

#### 2/5 - DNF at 48%

When I won this book through BookishFirst, I was a little hesitant. The blurb for it didn't do it for me and I remember thinking that I was interested, but not entirely sure if I'd like it. That feeling basically stayed with me.

In short, three college-aged guys decide to get some weed from somewhere and find a way to fake everyone out about it so they don't get in trouble. After all, they're tennis players. Big deal athletes. Then, a high school girl gets invited by one of the guys, yet isn't told that his friends are all men. And she lies to her family, gets her best friend roped into this plot, and goes.

And that's it.

Literally, I was halfway through the book and that was all that had happened.

Nothing interesting and the pacing was so bad. There was no tension, no mystery, no real intrigue. It was written well and that was the saving grace that would have kept me reading, but I picked it up to read it today

and realized how much I was dreading it. And so I decided to DNF rather than read the rest of the book.

It was easy to get into and well-written, but not interesting and easy to space out through for me. While someone else might love this book, I didn't.

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### **Kathy says**

If only plans went as planned...

This wilderness/psychological suspense is quick read about how the reaction of one person to one moment in time sets off a chain of events that forever alters the lives of four teenagers, CEO (Cee-o), Colin, Grahame and Ellie.

Four fourth-year boys from a Prep school decide to take an unapproved long-weekend trip exploring and hiking some nearby mountains. When confronted by a school official about leaving school, they lie about going to a tennis tournament which has been approved (not!) by their coach. The man doesn't buy their story and is ready to call and verify it with the tennis coach until CEO says "he's at a family wedding and he'll really be upset about being bothered, especially with the time difference and all." After bribing the school official, they are all set and raring to go. Except one unexpectedly drops out before they even start. Then there were three with two worried about how they will bear the additional cost of the trip now that expenses are divided only three ways instead of four. CEO surprises both Ellie, and Colin & Grahame alike when he invites Ellie along. She agrees, and the foursome head off for their adventure.

Parking their car, they start their hike up the mountain without telling anyone where they are going or when they expect to return (OMG - such stupid kids)! Hikers coming down the mountain advise the teens that the path they were planning to take is in for bad weather and to head in another direction. Weather fails, nighttime descends, mountain animals come out, egos emerge, and conditions get worse in every possible way.

I liked the interplay between all of the characters; the jockeying for position, the tension, the surprising reveals, the sexual tension and competition that Ellie's presence kicks off (not of her own doing, but simply because she is a female traveling with 3 young men.) The author subtly distracts us with the drama of the characters until we are as surprised as they are to discover how bad the weather has gotten and how few choices are left at that point. What starts out as an adventure turns into wilderness survival with psychological suspense as well.

Though the book may be called Bad Call (and the characters each made several!), I doubt you'll be disappointed by picking up this book. A fine read!

Many thanks to NetGalley, BookishFirst and Disney Hyperion for allowing me the privilege of reading and reviewing an advance copy of this book.

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### **Anne says**

My first read of the year and it was an awesome YA thriller! But what's not to love: a camping trip in

Yosemite in inclement weather, four high school students (three boys and a girl) who each have secrets and jealousy abounds! Between past and present, the story unfolds as we get to know them through each "bad call" they make as of course they aren't experienced campers. What starts out as a late night poker game challenge between friends, ends with heart-racing chills breakneck speed as they attempt to challenge a mountain full of snow with a girl they barely know...and why was she invited anyway? Many reviewers have commented that most of the characters are not terribly likable, but I love a good flawed character and the conflict that ensues. Wallenfels packs a punch so satisfying that you can't wait to discover what happens. A great way to start the new year!

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### **Kitkat says**

I really loved the characters a lot. They were relatable and had flaws like humans. They had bad and good feelings that made me love them. The setting was beautiful and chilling, pun intended. I liked how Ellie's point of view differed from Collin's because he's closer to the others than Ellie the outsider. Ellie saw the emotions in Graham's eyes which caused me chills. Graham was a jerk but he did redeemed himself. Ceo was a jerk but he had admirable qualities about him that made me like him. I thought everyone was a jerk except Collin but they were all people who made mistakes. Every person on a bad day can be a villain (quote by Lin Manuel). The flashbacks were boring. But they were so important to the plot and how they were out of order made me even more intrigued. The book Bad Call was fantastic and I was shocked because it took a while to read it.

### **!!!!SPOILER SECTION BELOW!!!!**

Oh my God how Graham warned Collin about the rabbits in blenders before he tried to kill Ceo. I knew Ceo was trying to set up Collin and Ellie together on this trip, it was so obvious! I honestly thought that Ceo was dead. How at the end Graham saves Collin from the river and dies. I was shocked that he would do that! I mean I thought he was a terrible human being but I was wrong. How Collin loves Ellie was cute and I really liked them together! I loved it. But before he dies there's a snow storm. I mean what could get worse (cue laugh track) a bear! A bear takes all their food and they drop the GPS nice job! I mean sometimes they were idiots but it was so enjoyable.

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### **Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says**

#### **Review: BAD CALL**

I started this book with a sense of foreboding. Beginning with the first page (what a reader's hook!), my intuition just "knew" something was going to go very badly wrong. Some one or more of the characters would suffer, and so would I, vicariously. Some of them I distrusted from the beginning; plus I knew that the deception from the very beginning would prove disastrous, bringing on trouble, and more lies, and quite possibly betrayal. As the story continues, the suspense ratchets higher and the tension tautens. As everything seems to conspire against this disparate conglomeration, tricking and blocking their attempts at progress, true character rises to the forefront, both strong integrity and vicious cruelty. When Nature itself leaps in to confuse and destroy, and more than one of this mismatched group of four adolescents makes their own "bad call" (and making wrong or misguided decisions is a consistent theme in this novel), nothing can result but tragedy. The result for the reader: constant breathtaking suspense.

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## Diana Iozzia says

"Bad Call"

Written by Stephen Wallenfels

Review written by Diana Iozzia

I was really excited to read this, but I think the anticipation had to do with the length of time I waited for my complementary copy to come. Not to be disparaging, but I think I built up a huge amount of excitement. When I do this, I do find myself becoming a little let down and disappointed. "Bad Call" let my twenty-two year old self down, but would have really impressed my 13 - 16 year old self. This is a book created by Disney's teen imprint, Hyperion, so it is really marketed at teens. I still read young adult / teen fiction, so I had thought that this would still be a relatively good read for that young adult side of my reading. This follows a group of five high school seniors, 4 boys and 1 girl, as they lose their way while camping in Yellowstone National Park.

Perhaps I was going into this thinking that it was going to be significantly creepier than it actually was. It sounded like a twisty Donner party reimagining, so I was hoping for some creeps and spooks. When I found out that this was an imprint of Disney, I was surprised to see cursing and foul language as well as bloody violence. However, this was slightly disappointing. I have always been a fan of "The Lord of the Flies" and other survival in the elements stories, but this turned out to be a little more frothy and sugarcoated than I expected.

There are a quite a few complements that I have for this book, although I was relatively disappointed. Like I said, my younger self would have loved this book if it was written when I was younger, so I think I still resulted in liking it. Although there weren't people roasting others' limbs, it was still relatively creepy. It's weird to phrase this, but I liked that one of the characters, Grahame, was creepy in the sexual, awkward advances. He was very uncomfortable and eerie, and a perfect almost villain. I also thought that the language and dialogue was very realistic for teen fiction. Sometimes, I feel that some teen characters sound like adults, or they sound like caricatures of teens. Okay, save Grahame's weird fake Jamaican accent. Yes, we are supposed to think he is annoying and weird, but it seems like a step too far. I also enjoyed the map in the beginning of the book and the descriptions of Yellowstone National Park. The locations and scenery seemed very realistic and well-described. In the last few pages, we also receive a few newspaper clippings. I often enjoy extra additions to books like maps and newspaper articles.

I think my main complaint about "Bad Call" is the build-up to the action. About 150 pages before the characters even slightly seem to be in danger. There's a gigantic amount of backstory and perspectives that collide and are repetitive. I guess the backstory is in place to show how some of the characters could have secret agendas and aren't always the nicest people. Unfortunately, I felt this was a massively slow start. By the time it became interesting, it was great, but it took a while to get to the exciting point.

Okay, I have one last funny gripe to make. Characters that don't understand references to Sir Isaac Newton? High school seniors don't have a clue who he is??? Characters that go viral and become popular on Jimmy Fallon's talk show because of a funny Q-Tip picture????

\* I was sent a complementary finished copy for reviewing purposes. \*

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### **Michelle says**

This book isn't quite what I thought it was going to be. I thought this was going to be creepier, more suspenseful, and definitely more thrilling. It's not really any of those things. It's a YA novel and it most certainly reads like one and maybe if I were still a teenager I might of liked this more. I found all of the characters pretty annoying. I found the reasons for why they did certain things to be beyond stupid. There was just constant bickering and it was all just very melodramatic. It is a quick read and I did finish it just to see what the conclusion was. All in all, meh.

I won a hardcover copy of this book through BookishFirst. Thank you.

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### **Mary says**

The first thing I noticed about this book is the cover. Normally I just barely skim the picture on the cover and don't pay attention to it. This one was quite different. If you pay attention to the tree's shadow, it promises a more sinister story. It set the tone for a book that promises to be a gripping thriller.

This story is interesting and it did stay with me for a few days after. I did like the plot and I enjoyed how the character's interacted with each other. However, I was confused on the "thriller" part. The story did not have a racing heart moment until near the end of the book. And even then it was confusing.

The biggest problem I have is that the antagonist did not have enough character development to let us know why he was capable of turning into, for lack of a better word, villain. He seems like a normal athletic teenager and then he isn't, but there is nothing to let us know why and how rage could rule his actions.

If the author gave us more of a backstory on him, and gave us more details and built up what was happening in the more intense parts of the story, then I think this book would have been a home run.

However, it is still a great read and once I started, I could not put it down until I was finished.

Note: I received this book through BookishFirst (thank you!) for my honest review.

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### **Morris says**

3.5 stars, but I'm rounding up. This isn't the best ya survival novel I have ever read, but it's a solid one. I recommend it for those looking for a quick, suspenseful read and who don't mind if the plot is lacking in depth. It's an especially good choice for after a heavier read.

This review is based upon a complimentary copy provided by the publisher in exchange for honest feedback.

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## **Katherine Moore says**

I finished this last night, after the last third of the book really sped up and kept me awake until I was done! I finally think I've come across a YA book that guys will actually like. It's set with mountain-climbing as the main activity and Yosemite as the backdrop; the author, Stephen Wallenfels, is big into the outdoors and mountain-climbing, and through the dialog and writing, it shows. The book is described as a thriller, although it's low on 'thrill' content, plus there's a complicated 'relationship scenario' going on in the story that directs a lot of the plot, and that took me by surprise. The book goes back and forth between what's going on for the different characters but centers mostly around one of them, and flashes back to some events between them at their private school. There were a few times that those lost me a bit and I wanted to stay in the present, but that's because I wanted to keep pushing up that mountain. I also wanted Wallenfels to push more at the suspense and thrill content because I think he could and should have. But maybe that's because I always want a bit more blood in the snow!

Instead of an ARC, I was generously sent a finished hardcover with that gloriously simple red and white cover design! I'm super grateful for that (BookishFirst) and am glad I got to have an early read of this YA novel. I'd love to hear if the boys pick this one up! You won't find me climbing Yosemite any time soon...

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## **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

\*I would like to thank BookishFirst and Hachette Book Group for a print copy of this book\*

When I first read the sampler to the book I thought it sounded awesome and the summary didn't sound too bad either. But unfortunately, this was a "Bad Call" for me.

The story is about a group of people: Collin, Ceo, Grahame and Ellie going out on a camping trip together. Now another friend was supposed to go with them but he backed out. He was the lucky one.

There ends up being fights, fires, snow storms, maybe a bear, an axe and a very strange adventure in my opinion.

I know plenty of people will love this book so pick it up and decide for yourself.

Happy Reading!

Mel ♥

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## **karen says**

i read the excerpt over on bookishfirst and i'm supposed to copy my reaction over here, for POINTS! i love points.

this is me after reading the first 20 pages or so:

*i'm a sucker for survival stories, particularly YA survival stories, so this one grabbed my attention right away.*

*and this excerpt bodes well - it's a strong opening that definitely makes me want to read more. it's got good pacing, the characters have promise (and rhode island is mentioned as a place people are actually from, not as a unit of measurement), it's already teasingly planted the seeds of the peril to come before backtracking into the pre-peril territory of boy-banter and road trip anticipation, dropping hints of the tension and conflict between the boys, and making me stockpile my questions - who's the girl? what did ceo do to colin? and what will happen with this chekhov's axe?*

*very much looking forward to reading the whole book. thank you for the snack!*

ONE HUNDRED POINTS!

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### **Jeff Bailey says**

Wallenfels has done it again. Excellent book. The story starts deceptively slow and then lands hard. BAD CALL is the perfect title. I found the backstories fascinating and the dialog polished. Jeff Bailey, author of THE DEFECT.

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### **Cassie Gutman (happybooklovers) says**

Just not into it

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