

JONATHAN  
TROPPER

THIS  IS  
WHERE I   
LEAVE a novel YOU

## This is Where I Leave You

*Jonathan Tropper*

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# This is Where I Leave You

*Jonathan Tropper*

## **This is Where I Leave You** Jonathan Tropper

A riotously funny, emotionally raw novel about love, marriage, divorce, family, and the ties that bind—whether we like it or not.

The death of Judd Foxman's father marks the first time that the entire Foxman family—including Judd's mother, brothers, and sister—have been together in years. Conspicuously absent: Judd's wife, Jen, whose fourteen-month affair with Judd's radio-shock-jock boss has recently become painfully public.

Simultaneously mourning the death of his father and the demise of his marriage, Judd joins the rest of the Foxmans as they reluctantly submit to their patriarch's dying request: to spend the seven days following the funeral together. In the same house. Like a family.

As the week quickly spins out of control, longstanding grudges resurface, secrets are revealed, and old passions reawakened. For Judd, it's a weeklong attempt to make sense of the mess his life has become while trying in vain not to get sucked into the regressive battles of his madly dysfunctional family. All of which would be hard enough without the bomb Jen dropped the day Judd's father died: She's pregnant.

This Is Where I Leave You is Jonathan Tropper's most accomplished work to date, a riotously funny, emotionally raw novel about love, marriage, divorce, family, and the ties that bind—whether we like it or not.

## **This is Where I Leave You Details**

Date : Published August 6th 2009 by Orion

ISBN : 9780525951278

Author : Jonathan Tropper

Format : Hardcover 339 pages

Genre : Fiction, Humor, Contemporary

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## From Reader Review This is Where I Leave You for online ebook

### JanB says

This was a recommendation from Sarah of Sarah's Bookshelves blog and I loved it! If you enjoy funny and irreverent books about dysfunctional characters, this is the book for you. The death of the family patriarch brings together the Foxman family for seven days to sit shiva, their father's last request. The enforced togetherness brings all the dysfunction to the forefront. What ensues is a mixture of hilarity with moments of poignancy.

Highly recommended!

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### Melki says

"Seven days?"

"That's how long it takes to sit shiva."

"We're not really going to do this, are we?"

You have my deepest sympathies. I don't want to spend seven days with people I *like* much less spend them with my family.

Well, a dying wish is a dying wish, and when patriarch Mort Foxman requests that his family sit shiva, well, DAMMIT!, they'd better do it. So, Judd, the narrator, moves back to the old homestead for seven days of communing with his three siblings and a whole lot of ghosts-of-not-so-good-times-past. Says Judd, "**In my family, we don't so much air our grievances as wallow in them.**" Sounds like a swell time is guaranteed.

And there are a lot of funny moments in this book. I honestly laughed out loud several times. This truly started out as a five-star read.

And then...I started to really hate Judd.

Here he is, folks, rapidly approaching middle-age with a rapidly expanding waistline, and yet, he has comments on **EVERY** woman's body. Her legs are heavy. She's pudgy and showing her age. Man, do her boobs sag. Despite his own flaws, only a physically perfect specimen will do for the chunky Juddster. Read how he describes the elderly friends of his mother who attend the shiva:

**Some of them have managed to hold it together, but on others, skin hangs loosely off the bone, crinkled like cellophane; ankles disappear beneath mounds of flesh; and spider veins stretch out like bruises just below the skin. There really should be a dress code.**

Damn those women for coming to pay their respects and offending the eyes of Judd!

In my experience, men who believe that no woman is good enough for them always die alone clutching a bottle of cheap muscatel (sometimes under the wheels of my Humvee, should I ever choose to buy one!)

Anyway, Judd's ego ruined what was initially a fun book. I still plan to see the movie, because, well, look at that cast - <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1371150/> I actually DON'T HATE most of those actors.

And one more rant while I'm all wound up. This made my *guy-written-chick-lit shelf* because I'm firmly convinced, had this book been written by a woman, it would have died on the vine, disappeared instantly, I would have never read it, and we wouldn't be having this conversation.

So, there.

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### **Amanda says**

Judd Foxman had a content but not always perfect marriage to the woman of his dreams. And then, I guess because Life just enjoys being an asshole, Life knocks Judd down. Judd and his wife lose their first baby, which causes Judd to lose his wife to his boss, which causes Judd to lose his job. And, because Life in this book likes to remorselessly kick people while they're down, Judd loses his father to cancer. And just when you think things can't get any worse, Judd finds out that his atheist father's last request is for his emotionally stunted family to sit shiva, seven days for a family full of anger and resentment and unresolved issues to come together and mourn. Oh, and Judd's soon to be ex-wife is pregnant. Judd is clearly Life's bitch.

To say that the Foxman family is dysfunctional is an understatement. They're nuckin' futs, folks. There's the oversexed, always inappropriate mother. The middle-aged failed-college-athlete brother. The perpetual boy-child younger brother. The bitter and sarcastic child-factory of a sister. The anxious and emotional sister-in-law desperate for her own child. The brother-in-law who is always glued to his cell phone while spitting out words like "mergers" and "net profit." And then there's lonely, depressed Judd.

The whole dysfunctional family thing is a tricky one for me. When done well, I can't get enough. For example, I love *Arrested Development*, a show that got the concept just right. But *This is Where I Leave You*, while admittedly hilarious in spots, is just trying too hard for the laughs in others. These laughs are even harder to come by when one takes into account the angry and bitter tone that runs throughout. It seems to want to be a comedy and a thought-provoking look at mortality and family, but never hits the right balance.

I think what's lacking in the novel is *Arrested Development's* key to success: Michael Bluth. In a family this messed up and unlikable, you need a relatable character--one you can root for, one that you like, one whose normalcy plays straight man to the overabundance of quirky found in the other characters. I need such a lynchpin character to connect me to the others, because normally these are people I would actively avoid in real life. And Judd Foxman is not such a character. When I say he's Life's bitch, I mean it. Life happens to Judd; he seldom acts to change it or fight against it. He mopes, he whines, he thinks about sex. It's tedious as he's an underdog that deserves to be an underdog. Judd Foxman, you, sir, are no Michael Bluth.

So why the 3 star? There were parts I liked, moments of real, honest humor and the scenes where Judd reflects on the father he remembered and the father he lost to the unavoidable act of growing up have a real poignancy. I wish more time had been spent pursuing this aspect of the novel and less in mourning the loss of a marriage.

Cross posted at This Insignificant Cinder

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### **Allison says**

Meh. This book was *fine*, but it wasn't *good*. My main problem is that there seemed to be a lot of anger at and objectifying of women on the part of the main character, Judd Foxman. There was a lot of talking about women (both young and old) as body parts (though to be fair, this happened a lot with the descriptions of men too) and as vehicles for Judd's fantasies. I get it that his wife cheated on him, but still I didn't like this part of the narrative. Maybe I just wasn't supposed to like Judd as a character, but since he's narrating the book I just ended up not liking the book very much.

The writing was fine and I was involved enough in the plot and the nuances of this family's relationships to finish the book, but it seemed to be lacking something. The revelation that Judd was (sort of) responsible for his brother getting bitten by a pitbull and losing his baseball scholarship was a really anticlimactic plot twist. It seemed like the author wanted to build some tension into the book by revealing this story in bits and pieces, but I was left wondering: who cares?

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### **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

I got book pushed into reading this book. Kelly and Snotchocheez both rated this book highly and I usually somewhat agree with them on books so I requested this sucker from the library.

And..I loved it.

How to get a five star review from this hateful reader? Characters that are so real that I expect them to drive up my driveway. Characters that have no filter on their mouths or their thoughts. A fucked up family that makes mine not look as bad.

I'm not going to tell you what the book is about. It's been done and done better than I could. Just go read it...and don't be trying to mack up on Judd..He is mine!

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### **j says**

Voice Over: Judd Foxman had the perfect job...

(on-air antics at the radio station; his boss makes a sexist joke)

VO: the perfect girl...

(hot young starlet (Jessica Biel?) smiles at camera)

VO: The perfect life... Until one day, it left him behind.

(smiling, Judd carries an ornate birthday cake into a bedroom. "Surprise, honey! Happy birthday!" Flash cut: Biel in bed, looking over a man's shoulder. "Judd!" The man turns, and it's Judd's boss. "Foxman! How's it hanging?" Back to Judd, who flings the still burning cake at the couple.)

(phone rings)

Off-Camera Dialogue: Judd, it's about dad.

(Sad music. Montage of Judd driving, looking sad. Arriving at a house, entering and hugging his siblings, interrupted by a comedy gag with baby vomit. Judd's brother: "Welcome home.")

(Dialogue over a montage, fill this in later...)

"I can't believe dad wants us to sit shiva! He wasn't even religious! Mom is a sex columnist for heaven's sake!"

(Goldie Hawn gets her glamor shot: "Hey, just because I'm your mother, doesn't mean I don't get a little lonely for a man once in a while!" Beat. Reaction shot of the siblings. "Well it's true!")

VO (over another montage, put some of the slapstick in here, with some shots of people crying and maybe dancing): Now, he'll have seven days to re-connect... to pick up the pieces... to see if he can ever put things back the way he left them.

VO: From director Gore Verbinski and the studio that brought you Little Miss Sunshine comes another story about how the things that threaten to tear us apart are often the moments that bring us closer together...

(The Killers Mr. Brightside starts playing over fast cut montage)

VO: Jason Segal. Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Rachel McAdams. David Schwimmer. And Academy-Award winner Goldie Hawn.

(shot of the dad knocking the potty out of the boy's hands, implied shot of the mess landing on a plate, cut to Judd who delivers the laugh line: "Well, you can't ask for a more perfect metaphor than that!")

This is Where I Leave You. Rated PG-13.

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Such a desperate grab for a Hollywood deal, you can practically cast the inevitable quirky pseudo-indie film version as you read it. I enjoyed "Little Miss Sunshine" and all, but sit-com dialogue, comedic episodic storytelling, and dime store emotional depth work a lot better on film.

Just about every character here is a type, constructed to death, whatever depth they have as calculated as the formulated seven-day plotting (i.e. they only reveal their hidden emotions at just the right moment -- the Roger Rabbit rule of storytelling).

I'm mystified why this has garnered such praise, or I would be if everyone hadn't loved Juno too. Tropper is a

great writer, and can certainly write a punchline with the best of them, but there's nothing here you haven't read, or more likely, watched, before.

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### **Alison says**

-Probably one of the most effective combinations of heartbreak and hilarious I've ever read.

-Something about it is cinematic, and almost begs to be turned into a movie (one that won't be as good as the book, of course), and subsequently a few of the plot points feel just very slightly bordering on cliché.

-It took me most of the book before I began to realize that, due to the narrator's state of depression, he's a bit hard to like. But at the same time, it's his wry observations that make the books so painful and funny.

-There were times when I got a little annoyed at the depictions of female characters; the phrase "her smooth, tanned thighs" appeared on what felt like practically every page (even though I was aware that the narrator's state of horny, dejected longing is a part of his character. And all of the characters here are well-developed despite each representing a sort of type or stereotype).

-I teared up at the end, and I truly laughed out loud—much as I hate that phrase now—throughout the entire book.

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### **Jen says**

Judd Foxwell is a broken, damaged man. He has found his wife cheating on him with his boss and then he gets the call his terminally ill father has passed away. His dying wish: to have his family - non practicing Jews - sit shiva for 7 days as final tribute to him in death. Except the 7 days are more like a forced quarantine for Judd and his 4 siblings. What ensues is a hot mess of grudges as wounds are reopened but as part of that process, they are finally given a chance to heal. This is a story of family, relationships and things that matter and shedding things that don't. As far as dysfunctional families go, theirs is pretty bleak but I think it's just a matter of where they sit on the spectrum. Tropper's writing is robust and is both cynical and comical. A very good and entertaining 4 ★ read.

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### **Andrea says**

Defines a new genre: "dick lit." A few moments of profound human interactions amid a sea of objectifying comments about women. Not a single female character passes by the author without some mention of her attractiveness or lack of as a sole criterion of her worth. Despicable.

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### **KrisAnne says**

A grating combination of trying too hard to be funny, casual misogyny, and generally unsympathetic

characters. Tropper also seems completely obsessed with judging the physiognomy and physiques of all of the characters, including minor ones that just show up to sit shiva or whatever. Heaven forbid that you grow old and expose any skin, or wear low-riding jeans postpartum. Everyone is physically icky except for the shining goddess of a wife who cheated on him, and all the women about whom he makes extensive character judgments based on their hotness.

Having said that, there are some good family vignettes in here, and some moving moments. But overall I don't recommend it. It'll probably be much funnier as a movie. Just read *The Corrections* if you want a family-dysfunction novel about a dude in crisis.

Also, everyone quit making the re-hashing of dreams a recurring plot point unless it's, like, a fantasy novel where the dream is a magical visitation. Otherwise you are just boring the crap out of me.

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### **Eve says**

“You never know when it will be the last time you’ll see your father, or kiss your wife, or play with your little brother, but there’s always a last time. If you could remember every last time, you’d never stop grieving.”

Jonathan Tropper and Nick Hornby are two authors that seem to be on the same plane although from two different parts of the world. Sarcasm and dark humor are their specialty, and a few movie adaptations have followed in the wake of their novels. Sadly, even at the adamant urging of well-meaning friends, I’d yet to read any of their books, despite owning most of their works. Ironic, huh? I managed to rectify that a week ago by finishing *This is Where I Leave You*.

This book took me through a rollercoaster of emotions. The Foxman family are all called home as the result of the death of their father. Time has created unacknowledged rifts in the family, so it’s a total surprise when they are told that their unreligious father’s dying wish was that his family all sit shiva in remembrance of him. Not an easy task to accomplish, especially as each family member seems to be undergoing a crisis of their own.

I haven’t laughed so hard in a while! I know I’ll definitely come back to this book whenever I need a good laugh. I haven’t tackled the movie just yet, but I’m saving that for a special occasion. Highly recommend if you enjoy family drama and hilarity.

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### **Suzanne says**

What a gem of a book. I am so happy I stumbled across this book in my library, literally just looked up while sneaking glances at the shelves over my little boy's shoulders at library story time. Recognised the title and picked it up straight away. This story follows the Foxman family while they complete the seven day period of mourning and are observing Shiva after the death of their father, Mort. The story is told from son Judd's point of view, and his fathers' death could not have happened at a worse time, while his own life is also

falling apart. We get to know all the children of the family, and their families and their families stories. Jonathan Tropper just seemed to have the knack of capturing the raw and honest everyday observations of Judd (and all of us) as he rails against his recent life changing dramas, the raw honesty of life when you realise that this is it, everyone is just going along in life and nothing is ever going to be perfect. There were many times I just thought to myself 'this guy just gets it, I really did enjoy his writing style and the honest capturing of human behaviour and human nature. There were so many characters to love in this book, I loved all of them (maybe not so much the mother Hilary) and I thought the author developed every one of his characters perfectly. Nothing was boring, I got to know all the characters without any boring 'telling'. If there ever was a book that I should have noted some great lines, this was it. This is a great book, a truly honest telling of a lovely story, I highly recommend it.

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### **Kyla says**

Three stars feels a little generous because though the premise is promising (sitting shiva for their father, dysfunctional family must Learn to Get Along or Not) and it sailed along lightly (I could practically see the movie in my mind) the great big giant dollop of misogyny heaped on top really turned my stomach. Judd's constant snipes at women and their weight problems and their hotness quotient and typical male writers crap about the drag of being slave to their sex drive and the drag of being a monogamous male and again! with women and their weight and utter bitchiness of wives and how old women are just kind of ugly and ridiculous and the paper thin portrayal of any woman - or really any character in this book, especially as anything but a sex receptacle or something to mock - yeah, that wore me out. I started to worry that this IS male thinking and my husband and friends have just never told me what is really on their mind, 24-7. But at least my husband and my male friends have redeeming qualities and the really curious thing about this book is what exactly makes Judd appealing to anyone, let alone his hot wife or Penny at the sport store or - me, as a reader.

I guess I answered my own question. In fact, I'm now going to change my stars to Two.

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### **Jason says**

This book is *weak*. I'm not usually a fan of novels that think they can hold their own merit on nothing but shock value and really bad sexual innuendos—I'm pretty sure this book may have overestimated itself. I'd even feel bad for it, but the fact that its shallow cliché-ness seems to beg for a Hollywood deal rather sucks up any pity I might have otherwise had.

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### **Theresa says**

One of the funniest novels I read last year. Jonathan Tropper has such an amazing, razor-sharp wit. I couldn't stop laughing, and there were a few unexpected moments where I got a little choked-up. A wonderful balance of humor and heart. The movie was just so-so. The book is so much better! I love Judd and his crazy, opinionated, and unapologetic family. They tell it like it is and then some. A must-read. :) Enjoy!

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## **Kemper says**

Does this story sound like it'd tickle your funny bone? Judd Foxman and his wife Jen lost a baby during the last months of her pregnancy. A year later, he catches her in bed with his boss, a crude radio shock-jock. Months after that, Judd doesn't have a job and is living in a crappy apartment when he gets the news that his father finally died after long battle with cancer. Just then, Jen drops by to let him know that she's pregnant. Judd's even more shocked to learn that his father's last request was that a traditional shiva be done for him so he has to go home and spend 7 days dealing with his family that has years of pent up frustrations and grudges with each other.

I'll bet you're laughing already, ain't ya?

Even though the plot doesn't exactly sound like a knee slapper, and the book often has a sad and angry tone, it's got a lot of great lines and situations that made me laugh out loud more than once. My favorite part was Judd's retaliation when he discovers his wife and his boss in bed, and he has a birthday cake with lit candles in his hands. Hilarity ensues.

There's nothing particularly groundbreaking about a story of a dysfunctional family having to gather for an event and deal with some of their old hang-ups as their current lives are turning to crap, but I did enjoy this book. Tropper does a nice job of making all the characters a little fucked-up but basically likeable people. He also walked the razor's edge of humor and melancholy perfectly.

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## **JFN says**

I picked up this book on the recommendation of an acquaintance whose taste I trust. And in reading the dust jacket flap, I was immediately drawn in by the idea of the book: a family -- four siblings -- mourning the death of their father, coming together for seven days to sit shiva. The book promised to be witty and biting, an unforgiving look at family dynamic. I'm in. Sign me up.

Eh.

For sure there was some great language in here. Some sharp observations about disappointment and growing up and loss and fucking up that leaped off the page. And I really appreciate that and am glad I read this book for that alone. The observations about life are what's best about this book. But aside from that there was a very one-dimensional quality to the dialogue -- families, siblings in particular, just don't talk to each other the way they do in this book. It was contrived and hollow. And the characterization was flat, the characters all cardboard cutouts stuffed into traditional family pigeon holes. The wacky mom. The charming fuck up little brother. The angry older brother. The bitchy, harried older sister. The aloof brother in law. The cheating ex-wife. The douche-bag boss. There was a lot of wize-cracking and mutual disrespect and dismissiveness, but none of it came across as at all genuine or charming.

I also wonder if the author has really experienced the death of a parent, as the characters in this book have. It doesn't seem like it. Apart from a few scattered "I miss Dad"'s, there's no believable, relatable sign of grief, of real loss, of the myriad ramifications and changes that are set into motion when one loses a parent and that you can't know about until it happens to you. It seems to me that Tropper doesn't know about any of that and

therefore couldn't write about it. The grief is conspicuously absent.

I just learned that this book is being adapted for film, and this comes as no surprise to me. In fact, the entire time I was reading this book I had the sense that Tropper wrote it with the goal of getting optioned, and that kind of pisses me off. This book reads like a film, and not in a good way -- not in a way that says that the author's writing style is inspired by film but rather that he wants to bust into the film industry and he wrote a book to make it happen. I resent that. It's a cheap move.

It's amazing -- and dismaying -- to me what passes as brilliant writing these days. This was a marginally fun read, not bad, not great, kind of interesting in some places, but all in all lightweight (strange considering the subject matter) and, ultimately, kind of a throw-away read. I wanted -- and expected -- more.

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### **Jonathan Ashleigh says**

I really enjoyed this book and even a poorly-made movie can't bring it down. The characters felt like people I knew and I sometimes wondered what they were doing when I wasn't reading. The style and flow of this book worked very well and I have recommended it to many people.

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### **Crystal Craig says**

I started *This is Where I Leave You* yesterday afternoon after picking up all four books I currently have on the go and hardly getting through a page before tossing them aside frustrated. I'm not in a rut, really, I'm not. I want to read, but nothing was grabbing my attention. Friends tried to help, asking me what I was in the mood for. Honestly, I had no clue. I have a list of books I want to finish by the end of this year, but that doesn't mean anything if I'm not in the mood. *A Sudden Light*, loved it at the start but am losing interest; *Salem's Lot*, love Stephen King but the book starts out slow; *House of Leaves*, I've been warned it's not an easy book to read - I feel it's not the right time.

I picked up *This Is Where I Leave You*. It's a book club book for the month of November, so it is on my list for this year. This book is excellent. It grabbed me right from the first page. I could not put it down. It kept me entertained for the entire afternoon to the point of me not wanting to make dinner, and I love food. If you're like me and come from a dysfunctional family. Whether you're a sibling or an only child, a parent or not, single, married or divorced. Whether you have a sense of humour or not, everyone needs to read this book. It's my kind of funny.

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### **Sibyl says**

Being married to Jonathan Tropper could scare a woman to death. This man knows women, their thoughts, what motivates them, their foibles, their intellects. He can put it all out there, too. Besides, he's a very sexy writer--he knows men, too, especially the side of them that has that morning wood thing going on all day, every day. But Tropper is not out for anything other than to spin a really great yarn about a family of grown children who haven't really gotten along very well for most of their lives. Their mother, a psychiatrist who is

proud of her boob job, wears staccato heels and miniskirts that go all the way up but who is 63? She is my kind of woman; I loved her. Beware, though. Reality bites and bites very hard and deep in this story. The setting is seven days of sitting shiva, seven days of mourning over the death of their dad---being available all day each of seven days to receive well wishers, while trying to remain somewhat civil with each other. And funny? Tropper's one liners could be quoted left and right bringing laughter right out loud; he did that to me.

This really is a heck of a great read. I'm gonna have to check out his other four novels. And it looks like this one will become a movie; I can't imagine how they'll do the sex work-around scenes, but if it can be done, Tropper will figure it out.

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