



## After You

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The complexities of a friendship. The unexplored doubts of a marriage. And the redemptive power of literature...Julie Buxbaum, the acclaimed author of *The Opposite of Love*, delivers a haunting, gloriously written novel about love, family, and the secrets we hide from each other—and ourselves.

It happened on a tree-lined street in Notting Hill to a woman who seemed to have the perfect life. Ellie Lerner's best friend, Lucy, was murdered in front of her young daughter. And, as best friends do, Ellie dropped everything—her marriage, her job, her life in the Boston suburbs—to travel to London and pick up the pieces of Lucy's life. While Lucy's husband, Greg, copes with his grief by retreating into himself, eight-year-old Sophie has simply stopped speaking.

Desperate to help Sophie, Ellie turns to a book that gave her comfort as a child, *The Secret Garden*. As the two spend hours exploring the novel's winding passageways, its story of hurt, magic, and healing blooms around them. But so, too, do Lucy's secrets—some big, some small—secrets Lucy kept hidden, even from her best friend. Over a summer in London, as Ellie peels back the layers of her friend's life, she's forced to confront her own as well: the marriage she left behind, the loss she'd hoped to escape. And suddenly Ellie's carefully constructed existence is spinning out of control in a chain of events that will transform her life—and those around her— forever. A novel that will resonate in the heart of anyone who's had a best friend, a love lost, or a past full of regrets, *After You* proves once again the unique and compelling talent of Julie Buxbaum.

## After You Details

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# From Reader Review After You for online ebook

## Trupti Dorge says

I have been sitting on this review for a long time. I tried writing it a couple of times but I just couldn't do it justice. But I'm going to try and tell you how lovely this book is. Ellie's best friend Lucy is murdered in broad daylight and Ellie goes to London to take care of her 8 year daughter Sophie. Lucy's husband Greg is coping with his own grief and does not really pay much attention to Sophie or what's going on in the house. He's more than happy to hand over the ropes to Ellie for a while.

Sophie is understandably going through a shock and has stopped speaking at all. Ellie and her husband's relationship is strained because Ellie lost her child some time back. Instead of working on it, Ellie goes to London to take care of Sophie and figure out what's going on with her life and her relationship.

As you can see, *After You* is not strong on plot; it's more focused on the relationship aspect of it, relationship between friends, between mother and daughter and between husband and wife. Ellie tries to get Sophie out of her shock by reading aloud *The Secret Garden* to her every night. And even though most of you know what I think of *The Secret Garden*, I really enjoyed how the author used the book in the story. I disliked Ellie sometimes because of the way she handled her relationship with her husband, the way she even refused to try. Why does a loss of a baby have to result in the loss of your relationship with your husband too? Is having a child or not the only basis for the marriage?

As Ellie comes to terms with these things and more, we get to see the transformation in her and as well as Sophie, who is a real sweetheart by the way. Everyone in this book has their own problems and in the end however everything is not resolved, there is an effort to mend what they already have instead of being distraught over what was lost.

*After You* is a story of loss, hope, grief, regrets, family, finding happiness and most important, finding a place where you belong to. *After You* is a brilliant look at relationships with beautiful writing from Julie Buxbaum. Although the book may sound really sad, it is actually quite funny most of the time.

Highly Recommended.

My favorite passages. They are probably understood best with context.

Time and place fall away. We dip into the book, as if bathing. There will soon be a garden. A buried key. A hidden door. We keep reading, and we can almost forget everything that has been lost and taken.

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"Can you at least try to understand?"

"Okay, I can do that. I'll try." And here's the thing about Philip. Just when you think you may stop loving him, that you can give him up for good, that enough distance has grown between you that there is no climbing back into this thing, that he's become more stranger than husband, he goes and says something that makes you forget why you could have ever doubted him in the first place: "Of course, I can try for you."

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I want to be eight years old again, sit in a desk that wraps around on the right side even though I am a lefty, and I want to store my already made lunch and floppy school-books in its belly. I want to laugh when my teacher gets chalk on her back and get called on to recite my multiplication tables. I want my responsibilities clearly laid out: to go to school, to do my home-work, to go to bed at bedtime, and to brush my teeth twice a

day. I want to surrender all of my decision-making power, the cruel weapon of too much freedom, and hand in my adulthood badge. I don't want to keep falling up.

First posted at <http://violetcrush.wordpress.com/2009...>

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## **Winna says**

After reading the *Opposite of Love*, I expected *After You* to be just as amazing. And it's not bad or anything, it's just that maybe I've expected too much.

We get sucked into Ellie's world immediately, the chaos and loss of a best friend, a husband, a life. But then, I'm not sucked into Ellie as a person. At first I don't understand her, I don't really know why she's making the choices she's making. It's only after half the book that I begin to relate to her, and like her as a character.

The book is rather slow paced, which I'm not so fond of. I find myself skipping a few paragraphs just to get to a scene faster. However, one thing I do find characteristic about the author is that Julie Buxbaum weaves her personal insights and her characters' thoughts so beautifully. Complicated yet very insightful. I love how she creates a journey for her characters to find themselves, and the ending shows that in her books, each and every time. We feel her characters' heartbreaks, their confusion, and their self discovery.

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## **Julie says**

*After You* was a decent book. It wasn't great and it wasn't awful. The story line is fairly well thought out and interesting, as are the characters. The writing, however, wasn't spectacular. The metaphors are mostly trivial, as are most of the descriptions of the characters. Ideally, there could have been better character development, and more detailed interactions between the main character, Ellie, and everyone else (besides Sophie). The story starts off pretty slow, the middle is decent, and I ended up fast reading/skimming the last few chapters.

However, some of the dialogue is actually pretty light-hearted and, at times, quite funny. The character Sophie, the child who loses her mother, is probably the best all-around character and is really the main reason to read the book. The author does her best job with Sophie. At the end of the book, I couldn't have cared less about any of the characters, especially Ellie, except for Sophie. Hopefully, Buxbaum will continue with the character in a future novel.

This is a good book to check out from the library and it's a good book to read while traveling or for a book club. I wouldn't necessarily recommend it out of the blue, but I also wouldn't discourage anyone from reading it. So, if you've come here because you are interested in reading it, go ahead.

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## **Tea Jovanovi? says**

Good c'est la vie story... About love, loss, death, birth, life, grief, friendship, family, parenthood, childhood, marriage, doubts, weddings, divorces... All in one book and one story... :)

Well written and one that catches you from the start and don't leave you till the last page... I fell in love with this author with her debut novel *The Opposite of Love* (I was Serbian editor of the book), and my faith in her

writing is still strong and I'm looking forward to enjoy her third :)

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### **Jill Lynn says**

I enjoyed this. There were many ways this book could have concluded, depending on which path the character (and author) chose, and while I had no problem with the way it ended, it seemed a bit abrupt.

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### **Amy says**

I am not much of a chick lit reader, but “After You,” was a fantastic read for those who embrace the chick lit and those who do not.

Ellie’s best friend, Lucy, is brutally murdered in front of her daughter and Ellie comes to stay with her daughter to help comfort her during this time of loss. Ellie arrives in Notting Hill to find her husband who is drinking and working to comfort himself while Sophie has decided to stop speaking after witnessing the death of her mother.

Ellie remembers that when she was small and lost someone she loved that the book, “The Secret Garden,” was read to help bring her the comfort she needed. She begins reading the book with Sophie and as they dive deeper into the book, they both began to heal with each flip of the chapter.

As they read the book, Ellie begins working through her own grief losing her baby Oliver in her the ninth month of her pregnancy, the decline and fall of a marriage that she thought could withstand it all, and the reality that she didn’t know her best friend as well as she thought she did as a secret life begins to unwind.

I could not put this one down and now I am dying to read, “The Opposite of Love” because I enjoyed this book so much!

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### **Helen says**

Eight-year-old Sophie has been left traumatised after witnessing the murder of her mother, Lucy, in the street near their London home. Sophie's reaction to the tragedy is simply to stop speaking. Lucy's best friend, Ellie Lerner, has travelled from America to London to try to help her goddaughter and she becomes determined to break through Sophie's self-imposed silence. Knowing how much Sophie loves reading books, Ellie decides to introduce her to one of her own childhood favourites - The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

I was very unsure about this book at first; it looked very 'chick lit' and I'm not usually a fan of chick lit. So why did I want to read it, you might ask? Well, the plot sounded interesting and the Secret Garden connection piqued my curiosity (The Secret Garden was one of my favourite books when I was a child). It's nice to think that sharing a special book with someone can help them through a difficult time. I also learned a few interesting facts about the book - I never knew Frances Hodgson Burnett was inspired by the walled garden at Great Maytham Hall, for example.

The author has given Sophie a well-developed personality of her own, making her a believable and endearing eight-year-old. She's a girl who prefers reading to playing games and as a result isn't very popular with other children her age; Ellie's own love of books helps her to form a bond with Sophie and watching their friendship develop was one of the highlights of the story.

This book is not just about Sophie though. I was kept guessing how Ellie's own problems and relationships were going to resolve themselves, as it wasn't immediately obvious what was going to happen. As the main character and narrator, I didn't always agree with Ellie's actions but as the book progresses it becomes obvious that she is grieving too - and not just for Lucy - and is trying to work out what she wants from life. Another aspect of the book I found interesting was the way Ellie, as an American woman from Boston, had to adapt to the British culture and life in London.

So, although this was not a book I would usually have chosen to read, I did enjoy it. It was a much more complex and emotional story than I had been expecting with some important messages about love, loss, relationships and family.

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### **gautami says**

*Let's pretend things are different. That in the last couple of days, I haven't become the kind of person who resorts to wishing on eyelashes, first tears of the night, and the ridiculous 11:11, both a.m. and p.m., in earnest and with my eyes closed.*

When Ellie's best friend Lucy is murdered in London, Ellie rushes there from Boston, to be with Lucy's eight-year-old daughter, Sophie. After greeting Ellie, Sophie stops speaking. Meanwhile, Lucy's husband has withdrawn into himself and the charge of taking care of Sophie falls on Ellie. Sophie had seen her mother mugged and killed while they were going to school. Ellie loves Sophie and will go to any length to get her back on track.

Sophie, like Ellie is a book lover. Ellie thinks she has the right book to share with Sophie and that can help both deal with their feelings. Hence, both start on the journey of reading *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. In the process of sharing the secret of that beautiful book, the healing process for both starts in the right direction.

Ellie too has certain issues to deal with in her personal life. Even though her marriage is disintegrating and she doesn't want to go back to her home and husband Phillip, leaving behind Sophie. For a while now, their relationship has gone down the hill. Ellie doesn't know how to deal with it. Sophie and Ellie deal with their griefs in the company of each other. Sophie has nightmares, misses her mother yet loves Ellie and can't think of letting her go. Ellie too can't leave the child even though she knows her marriage will disintegrate. Greg and Ellie become friends, what with Lucy and Sophie being the common bond. When Ellie discovers some secrets about Lucy, she is deeply shocked, about the secret and also about the fact that Lucy didn't trust her enough to share those with her. Lucy knew Ellie would disapprove.

Ellie is the narrator of the story and she understands the value of friendship, and being there at their times of need. She also knows her own deficiencies, although she doesn't know how to deal with it. The sadness is balanced out by the funny, witty moments. The sardonic manner of the narrator is not repelling as that is directed towards herself. And when she is away from home, she understands the real value of home and belonging.

The colourful characters of Ellie's parents too take us in, along with her very straight brother. Her husband Phillip, too comes across well. A novel, which totally grips us, the sadness, the funny quirky moments, Gregs' idiosyncrasies, Sophie's childishness, the death of Lucy hanging in the background. And most important of all, The Secret Garden can and does heal Sophie. As it helps Ellie find home finally.

After You A Novel

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### **Jessica says**

I read this in an evening when I wasn't feeling well and DH took over boy duty. It was fine for that but not a great novel. Ellie's best friend, Lucy, is murdered and Ellie moves to London to help care for her 8-year-old, Sophie. The author dodges a few cliches but manages to incorporate quite a few obvious plot points. The characters never seemed quite real to me. She excels in a few passages that describe the emotional punch of losing a loved one, but overall the book felt thin to me.

My star rating won't save but I gave it 2. I was surprised to see so many 3-5 star reviews; others seemed to like this book more than I did.

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### **Rhonda says**

One thing my girlfriend and I have always been amazed at is that ONE PHONE CALL in ONE MOMENT can change your life forever. Just like that, things will never be the same again...an accident, a disease, a death, whatever the news, one moment things can be just fine and the next moment your life is turned upside down.

That's what happens in this book, Ellie learns that her best friend, who is currently living in Europe, was killed in a street robbery...in front of her 8-year-old daughter, Ellie's god-daughter. Ellie rushes off to England to care for little Sophie who has stopped speaking, and her father who cannot cope. What she learns about Lucy and her OWN marriage while there, make the book so good.

Quote:

"You know how your entire life can change in an instant for hte worse? Like when Oliver suddenly stopped kicking or that call about Lucy? Everything changes. But do you think it can work the other way too? One second you think your entire life has gone to s\*\*t, and the next you realize that maybe things can be okay? Do you think that can happen?" I ask Phillip now, hoping that the answer is yes, yes, yes. That we can just decide to be the happy couple we had always intended to be. We hit restart. Do-over."

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### **Leah says**

When Ellie learns of the murder of her best friend Lucy, she does what any friend would do, and drops everything and heads to London to look after Lucy's daughter, Sophie, and to pick up the pieces. Sophie, as expected, is struggling with her mum's death and has stopped talking. Desperate to get the little girl to open

up again, Ellie decides that the best course of action is to read a book with her. Ellie chooses *The Secret Garden*, a book that helped her get through childhood, and hopes it will do the same for Sophie. As Sophie and Greg get used to Ellie being around, and begin to piece their lives back together, Ellie is in danger of losing her life in America and her husband. Making her decision harder still is the things she finds out about Lucy, things she would never have expected of her best friend and make Ellie look at her in a whole new light. As secrets come out, will Ellie ever be able to let go of Sophie and will she end up ruining her marriage in the process?

After finally – finally – picking up Julie Buxbaum's debut novel *The Opposite of Love*, I was stunned by how much I enjoyed it. It was well-written, it was different to most chick lit I read, and it made me cry. I know that's probably not the most auspicious of reasons to love a book, but only the good ones are able to reduce me to tears. So I was so pleased to read Julie had a new book due to be released called *After You* and I was even happier when I received a copy. I had a quick look over the book and eagerly started it, thinking it would take me a couple of days to finish, but I actually managed it in about 5/6 hours, as it was literally unputdownable.

Whereas Julie's first novel *The Opposite of Love* begins with a rather shocking opener where the main protagonist Emily dreams she cut her boyfriend up into hundreds of little pieces before eating him, the opener for *After You* is far tamer, but is still thought-provoking; "Let's pretend things are different. That in the last couple of days, I haven't become the kind of person who resorts to wishing on eyelashes, first stars of the night and 11:11, am and pm, in earnest and with my eyes closed." It's poignant, and sets the scene for us to dive right into the book. And we are, we're plunged right into the situation Ellie is facing: a dead best friend, murdered no less, a mute god-daughter, a distraught husband and Ellie thousands of miles away from home. There's no pre-empt, we don't know anything that happened beforehand, just what happens in the aftermath of Lucy's death.

While Ellie uses the outward excuse that the only reason she's staying in London is because of Sophie, there's also something bubbling under the surface that tells us that while that may be true, Sophie does need Ellie, Ellie also appears to need that break away from her husband, Phillip, and away from the US. It's not easily apparent why, we learn that a bit later on, but it is apparent that something has made Ellie want to get away from it all and Sophie and Greg are the perfect excuse, despite the circumstances within which it happens. It's definitely a multi-layered plot and it had a lot of depth to it. With everything Ellie has to deal with, the death of her best friend, her best friend's distraught family and being away from home, Ellie also learns a lot about Lucy, things she never would have expected to learn and certainly not things she expected her best friend to keep from her, plunging their friendship into doubt. What really makes the book, though, is the relationship Ellie and Sophie forge together. Their bond becomes stronger and stronger and was a huge reason why I loved the book so much.

While in *The Opposite of Love* it took me a while to warm to Emily, I found it the complete opposite in *After You* when it came to Ellie. In fact, I loved Ellie right from the off. Not many people would sacrifice their own lives to head to London to help her dead best friend's family. Yes, there was ulterior motives there, but still, it's quite something for her to do. Ellie has her faults, don't get me wrong, but on the whole she's an easily likeable character and I could understand her reasonings for doing what she does. I also must admit at this juncture that I also felt complete sympathy for Phillip, Ellie's husband, because it was clear to see his side of the story as well, missing his wife, having her thousands of miles away, and I could also understand everything he did. My absolute favourite character, though, was Sophie, Lucy's daughter and Ellie's god-daughter. She is without a doubt my favourite child character in any novel. She was so switched on for a 8-year-old and her observations were spot on most of the time. But despite all that, she still had her moments where it was clear to see that losing her mum hurt like hell and Buxbaum portrayed Sophie beautifully with



the right mix of sadness but resilience. We also learn a lot about Lucy, as I've mentioned, but I find it hard to truly judge her because the fact of the matter is she couldn't defend herself because she was dead so I hold my judgement of her. I also couldn't really get a handle on Greg, Lucy's husband, he just didn't click with me.

Like *The Opposite of Love*, *After You* was written incredibly well. It was told entirely from Ellie's point of view which worked brilliantly and Julie's writing just blows me away. There is absolutely no way her books can be classed as Chick Lit, certainly not the light and airy Chick Lit you can get, this is grittier and it deals with some pretty serious issues. There's no real happiness in the book – how can it be a happy book when an important person in the lives of our characters has died? But it doesn't get bogged down with sadness, not at all, and although the book didn't make me cry, I absolutely loved it. With both of Julie's books I've never been sure of how they would end. There's no optimism that it will all turn out OK, just real, proper, grown up relationships and I truly wasn't sure what would happen to Sophie and Greg or Ellie and Phillip. *After You* blew me away, it really did, and I lapped up every single word of it. Julie Buxbaum is hugely talented and I eagerly await a third book.

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### **Katie says**

Ellie and Lucy have been friends nearly their entire lives, having grown up near one another in Boston. After college, the women's paths take slightly different directions when Lucy, a journalist, moves to England to marry a man she'd fallen in love with. In spite of the distance, the women remain close, and Ellie is even asked to be godmother to Lucy's daughter, Sophie. Ellie marries, suffers a crippling loss, and finds her marriage falling through her fingers. One day, she receives a call that Lucy has been murdered. She was simply walking Sophie to school one morning, and a crazed meth addict in Notting Hill mugged and murdered Lucy in front of her young daughter. Ellie hurries to London to care for Sophie who has stopped speaking. Using *The Secret Garden* as her text, Ellie does her best to deal with the problems Lucy left behind and refusing to confront her own. However, in the midst of her quest to help young Sophie, Ellie begins to learn things about her best friend that she wishes she had never found out.

I really liked this book. It was well-written and riveting. It dealt with loss in a way that felt very real and honest. I also appreciated that the characters were created in such a way that I loved them but knew they were far from perfect. I liked the conflicting feelings I experienced regarding Ellie and her husband, Ellie and Sophie, Ellie and Lucy, Lucy and her husband, Lucy and her daughter... The ending tied up in a way that was almost neat, but still left questions unanswered and didn't offer the pat resolutions that endings often bring with them. Great book. I would recommend reading it.

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### **Shelagh Rice says**

This is a very enjoyable read that deals with everything death, loss, complicated relationships, love, marriages but most of all friendship between two women. It's about a promise between two friends that neither thought would ever have to be tested. Fulfilling this promise causes so many ripples throughout the lives of so many people. Julie Buxbaum writes beautifully and handles the difficult subjects with sincerity and intelligence.

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## **Julie Ekkers says**

I liked this author's first book, *The Opposite of Love*, quite a bit for a quick, light-but-not-totally-mindless read. I thought *After You*'s subject didn't sound all that promising (woman's best friend dies, woman ditches husband in States to go to England to take care of dead friend's child and live in dead friend husband's house), but I got it on the strength of the first novel. I should have gone with my gut. In case the parenthetical has you wondering, I'll save you the 300 pages: nothing happens between woman and friend's husband, woman eventually goes back to States and reconciles with husband, after she becomes pregnant during one-night-stand when husband is in London to ask for divorce. See? I mean, really.

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## **Julie says**

Ellie and Lucy have been best friends since they were four years old. Their lives have diverged – Lucy has always been the glamorous one, and she lives an upscale life with her husband and daughter in London, while Ellie has stayed close to home in a Boston suburb, where she is an adjunct professor – but they have remained extremely close. When Lucy is murdered, Ellie leaves her husband and job behind to take care of Lucy's 8-year-old daughter, Sophie. Ellie finds out secrets about Lucy's life, and also comes to understand that she has been in an emotional stasis for the past two years, since her son's death in utero. Healing begins as Ellie and Sophie read *The Secret Garden* together, and Ellie gropes through suddenly becoming a parent-figure.

I enjoyed this quite a bit. Buxbaum allows her characters to be indecisive and to act stupid without becoming unsympathetic. On the negative side, Ellie's family is a little too preciously kooky, and things fall into place a little too easily at the end, but it nonetheless makes for a satisfying read.

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## **Colleen says**

Though others have categorized this book as chick-lit, I think that underplays the emotional truths laid out in the narrative. When Ellie's friend Lucy is killed, Ellie knows she has to rush to London to help care for Sophie; what she doesn't seem to realize is how much her actions are driven by a desire to escape the life she is currently living. Ellie uses that classic tale *The Secret Garden* to reach out to Sophie because her mother used it years before to reach out to Ellie in a time of grief, or at least so Ellie believes. Over the course of the novel, Ellie comes to realize that Lucy's perfect life in London wasn't so perfect, and begins to address the problems in her own marriage that helped drive her out of the country.

This book features a compelling narrative that does founder a little toward the middle before recovering, but the emotional truths that Ellie comes to learn more than make up for that brief section. Definitely an excellent read that I for one found hard to put down. Highly recommended.

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## **Diane says**

Lucy, Ellie Lerner's best friend of 30 years, is stabbed to death while walking her eight year old daughter

Sophie to school. Ellie is so devastated that she leaves her job and her husband in Boston, and travels to Notting Hill, England to help Sophie and her Greg through this difficult time.

Greg deals with his grief by escaping to local pubs, and little Sophie is so traumatized by witnessing her mother's stabbing, has stopped speaking. Ellie desperate to help Sophie, turns to the book, *The Secret Garden*, as a tool for helping Sophie through her grief. Night after night she reads the book to her, and gradually the healing begins.

Ellie, at first seemed self-centered to me. She left her job, and her husband Phillip to fly to England for an indefinite period of time. The truth is, Ellie too was grieving, not only for the loss of her friend Lucy, but she was also mourning the loss of her baby "Oliver", that she lost during her eighth month of pregnancy. In addition, her marriage now seems doomed, and she is not quite sure how to save it.

*After You*, is a believable story, and despite the ending being somewhat open-ended, it was a satisfying read. The author skillfully portrays a touching relationship between Ellie and Sophie, and shows the reader that although hearts can break, they can also heal given time.

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### **Martha says**

explores how one woman responds when a promise to her husband and a promise to her best friend conflict. I loved the kid in the book, and I connected with the readers in the book. Not a typical storyline for a book that starts with a murder -

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### **Michelle says**

This is a great look at how one handles loss and death and complicated family relationships. I am meeting the author in March and really enjoyed this book by her.

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### **Charlene says**

I won this book from the Good reads site. The story follows Ellie, who is trying to recover from a still born and the slow destruction of her marriage. Ellie's childhood friend, Lucy, is murdered in an upscale part of London while walking her 8 year old daughter, Sophie, to school. Ellie flies to London to attend to the arrangements and deal with Sophie, who now refuses to speak. Dealing with the loss of her stillborn child, marriage, and now lifelong best friend, Ellie attempts to deal with the grief of Sophie and Greg, Lucy's husband. Ellie and Sophie begin to read "*The Secret Garden*", which turns out to be therapeutic for Sophie. During the weeks and months that follow, Ellie begins to discover that things were not all what Lucy had led Ellie to believe. Some might think the ending of this book to be predictable; however, the author leads you right up to the ending, not sure if or how things are going to work out for Ellie. I had a little trouble getting started in this book only because of time constraints. Once I had a good hour to sit and read, I was easily hooked and finished the book within a few days. I was disappointed in the number of typos and the appearance of London Bridge actually being in London in this story, when in fact, London Bridge has been in Arizona for several decades now. Although the story is fiction, the author should be aware of this. Overall a good story I will be passing along. This would make a great book club read.

