



# Unbreak My Heart

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Sophomore year broke Clementine Williams' heart. She fell for her best friend's boyfriend and long story short: he's excused, but Clem is vilified and she heads into summer with zero social life.

Enter her parents' plan to spend the summer on their sailboat. Normally the idea of being stuck on a tiny boat with her parents and little sister would make Clem break out in hives, but floating away sounds pretty good right now.

Then she meets James at one of their first stops along the river. He and his dad are sailing for the summer and he's just the distraction Clem needs. Can he break down Clem's walls and heal her broken heart?

Told in alternating chapters that chronicle the year that broke Clem's heart and the summer that healed it, *Unbreak My Heart* is a wonderful dual love story that fans of Sarah Dessen, Deb Caletti, and Susane Colasanti will flock to.

## Unbreak My Heart Details

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## From Reader Review Unbreak My Heart for online ebook

### Cara says

Say you'll love me again....  
I just couldn't help myself! It was begging me to do it:)

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### Ari says

There is something awful about feeling guilty.. It eats you from the inside, it kills the joy, it leaves you empty, it sucks the life out of you. The thing is, it doesn't matter if you've made a big mistake or a small one, because your conscience will act like a magnifying glass making your memories haunt you day and night.

"My mind is not a very forgiving place."

Also, being young is difficult; it's hard to know what's right or wrong, and it's even harder to manage to walk that thin line between the two of them. You do some things that you wouldn't normally do, and I am not making excuses for you, i am just stating the obvious.

And Clem is like this. She is young and naive and she falls in love for the very first time and she doesn't stop for a moment to think about it. Because you don't really *think* about love (do you?), you just feel it, and when the feeling is new you don't know what to do with it. It comes out of nowhere and it leaves you breathless (and maybe a bit brainless) and even when the rational part of you screams that something is off you keep going with the flow.

This is what this story is about: making mistakes and living with the consequences - Clem fell for (no other than) her best friend's boyfriend and the guilt is too much for her.

Did she feel like this while letting it all happen? Yes, a bit, but probably not enough..

So what's her worse regret: that she had a secret or that the secret got out and she was left alone in the cold? (I am not criticizing here either, we all do this, it's part of who we are even though it doesn't sound so well on screen.. does it?)

Sarcasm aside, the truth is that I really cared for Clem. I noticed how she thought that she and Ethan could have been perfect together; how he made her feel *alive*; how they shared the same interests; how they became closer and closer and she got more and more confused, trapped between her friendship with Amanda and her growing feelings for Ethan.

She didn't take enough time to think that he might not be *that perfect* if he was flirting with his girlfriend's best friend (duh!). I think that young love is blind like that.. You might feel the need to be loved, to find your 'prince on a white horse' and you forget what's really important to you. Someone gives you a smile, holds your hand, makes a joke and steals your heart..

The question is.. Is it worth it, could you make it work somehow?

I am asking this because if you have any doubts (and you might have some) it might not be worth losing your friends for just a dream.

But Clem is young, she has a lot to learn, and making mistakes is only human if in the end it makes you a better person - and I think that she became one.

I understand why she was so angry. It was frustrating what happened with Ethan and the fact that she let it happen ((view spoiler)). It was frustrating not to find some free time just for herself to cry her eyes out, but life doesn't stay on hold, so she had to keep moving on, she had to find other reasons to smile, to forget, to forgive herself and to start over.

Another thing that I liked about this story was how the family got involved - as a side note, that little sister was an adorable smartass.

Back to the point, when you are young (and not only then) you try to keep your family at a distance, you are annoyed when they try to help you, but deep inside you might be just grateful that you still have someone to count on, to talk to, to give you advices, to make you smile again, to give you a hug, to say how important you are, how all the good things about you might define you better than your mistakes (I loved those lists in this book and I think that we should all do some lists with all the reasons why we care about our loved ones.. Maybe this way we would appreciate them a lot more).

Somehow I think that I am making the story sound too emotional and I shouldn't because there were some cute moments as well. I loved Clem's memories with her friends, some family scenes, her sarcasm and outbursts (yeah, some of you found them a bit annoying, I found them to be realistic and this way I had a stronger connection with Clem) and even though I wasn't crazy about her new relationship with James, he was such a sweetheart with his optimism and his wide smile (not to mention his drawings) and they shared some cute moments as well.. and the good thing is that their more-than-friendship helped them both in a way or another.

Now.. I gave it 4 stars because I thought there was a bit (too much?) of an unnecessary drama.

It's what they call in Spanish 'una tormenta en un vaso de agua' (translation: a storm in a glass of water)... I knew somehow the storyline from the synopsis, but I kept looking for the big secret, big mistake, **big wolf** and even though what Clem did was quite wrong, I couldn't stop thinking: 'oh, come on, this is why you are ruining a potentially great summer?'

Also I wanted Ethan's version. He seemed sincere at some point, they started so well that it really hurt to know that their 'love' story was about to hit a dead end (I am stupid like this because I liked him at the beginning, even though I could never appreciate a guy that keeps flirting with his girlfriend's best friend - and I could write a whole book about this, so I won't even start talking about this subject), so I still wonder why (view spoiler)?

And then, the ending.. It's just too open for my taste, or maybe just too abrupt. It happens quite a lot for me to feel the need to read one more chapter, and here I needed it so badly - one more page, one more paragraph... just a few more words?

All in one, this was a great story that made me think a lot and I hope that you will enjoy it as well.

Happy midnight reading!

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*\*\* For a better visual effect, read this review at [ReadingAfterMidnight.com](http://ReadingAfterMidnight.com)*

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### **Jessica \*The Lovely Books\* says**

I liked this I really did!

But I was very unsatisfied with the ending. I want to know if Clem and Amanda patch things up. And also if Amanda finally dumps that tool once and for all!

This was such a raw and emotional book. I was laughing and crying along with Clem. Everyone has been in her shoes or even Amanda's shoes at one point in their life. I felt bad for both girls for falling prey to Ethan.

James. He made the story 100 times better. So sweet and funny. The kinda guy that Clem deserves. I also like Olive. She was such a sweet little girl. It almost makes me want to be nicer to my sister. Almost.

I hope there is a sequel to Unbreak my Heart. I just feel like the story hadn't ended yet.

Great book, make sure you read it if you haven't already!

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### **Charlotte says**

This is a beautifully written journey of a young woman working through the weight of her choices.

I HIGHLY recommend this!

Update: It's been several months since I read this and I've struggled with writing this review all along. Why is it so hard to write a review for a book you love so much?

I don't think I will ever do this book justice, I loved it so much. I found it real and emotional and so much of what I want to explain to my teen daughter about friendships, loyalty, family, patience, first loves, and so much more. But I know I can't TELL her all of this...she has to go through it, just like the main character did here.

This was definitely one of the most realistically written stories I've read in YA. I will definitely be recommending this for our teen book clubs and discussion groups.

*A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through Net Galley.*

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### **Jasprit says**

Unbreak My Heart is a poignant read about heartache, testing where friends loyalties lie and trying to leave all the hurt behind and about making a fresh start.

After the great fall out with her best friend Amanda just before school broke out for summer, Clem just wants to get away from it all, she's become the school pariah, her best friend doesn't want to know her anymore, so being stuck on a boat with her family for the next three months doesn't sound like a bad idea at all. But eventually that becomes too much after a while too, being cooped up with her jumbled up thoughts

all the time, having no communication with the outside world and having her family watching her constantly. And it's so difficult moving on without knowing if her friendship with Amanda has totally gone. Can they ever go back to what it was? But then Clem meets James, whose taking the same roundabout trip on his boat with his dad, after a few chance meet ups they start spending more time together and Clem realises she likes his out take on life, it's as though nothing can ever break him, she decides this is what she wants too, to be strong and real, but has she got the right amount of strength to do so?

After reading the blurb to *Unbreak my Heart* I didn't really know whether I would like Clem, she lost her friendship of years with Amanda over a guy, a guy who was her best friend's boyfriend. But the flashbacks gave a great insight into what really happened, and I don't condone everything that Clem did, but most of all didn't do, but I think Amanda was a bit rash in her decision, I wanted to shout at least listen to the poor girl before ditching her.

The Lull in pacing in the present tense did make me more eager to get more of the back story in the alternative flashbacks. I think I actually enjoyed reading the back story, watching the friendship blossom between Amanda and Clem, the introduction of Ethan and how he slowly came in between two best friends more than the present story.

James was a refreshing change that Clem needed in her life, he got Clem the real Clem straight away. He could tell something was bothering her and making her sad, but he didn't push her about it, but was there whenever she was ready to discuss it. He was also always bouncy and full of life and encouraged Clem to make the most of her life too. Even though Clem wasn't looking forward to this trip with her family it ended up being one of the best summers for her.

I normally don't mind books that are left with open endings, but I felt with *Unbreak my Heart* I needed to know how things would end, after Clem's constant over thinking and worrying I thought it would have been good to know these answers. But overall I still did enjoy reading *Unbreak My Heart*, I liked how being around James, helped Clem overcome the guilt and find the real Clem that she had lost all those months ago.

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### **Tiff at Mostly YA Lit says**

This is one of my favorite summer 2012 reads. It has heart, it has depth, it has lightness, and it has the sweetest romance ever. Walker has absolutely triumphed with this book. What really got me was how REAL everything seemed, especially the characters. Clementine, the protagonist, felt very much like me as a teenager. James, the love interest, was the perfect complement to her rawness - he was joyful and jovial, but in a way that felt both masculine and flawed. The secondary characters of her family and the other boating people were so full and rich and authentic - I confess that I cried at a family moment, which I NEVER do.

The descriptions of boating in the summer, of how the environment and nature play into the emotions of the protagonist, Clementine, made this book for me. Melissa C. Walker masterfully and creatively makes this tale of cheating with a best friend's boyfriend fresh and new. It very quickly stops being about the betrayal itself, and becomes much more a book about self-acceptance, taking responsibility, and how to deal with the people around you.

I would compare this book to Amy and Roger's Epic Detour, one of my favorite books of 2011, in its ability to heal and empower, as well as give the swoon-worthy moments that we all want.

Absolutely and totally my favorite Melissa C. Walker book yet - and that's saying a lot considering how much I loved her Violet books and Lovestruck Summer.

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### **Katy says**

I thought this book was just okay. It was kind of dull, and Clementine was a little too depressing for my taste.

It was written in short scenes, so it really just brushed the surface, and I didn't have a chance to connect with the characters. As soon as I found myself beginning to like a character, the book moves right along and I lose that attachment I was beginning to grasp.

Like I said, Clem was a little bit too depressing for me. I understand she was heartbroken from losing her best friend and her friend/crush. But she was so brooding and whiny that I just wanted to shake her for taking everyone else down with her too.

And I didn't like that we never found closure with Amanda and Ethan. There was so much I wanted to know about "how it all went down." I thought Ethan felt the attraction too, but why did he turn against Clem so quickly? And how did the rumors get so bad? Does Clem ever regain her friendship with Amanda, even even Ethan? I guess we'll just never know the way Walker left the book so open-ended.

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### **Rose says**

"Unbreak My Heart" tells a rather tough story from the get go, and one I think that provides a fair punch in the stomach when you think about what the protagonist is going through and the wake of events she left behind. Clem spends the summer on a boat trip with her family trying to cope with the aftermath of a tough school year. Her best friend Amanda shuns her, she's lost friends on Facebook, and she thinks of herself as a horrible person who can't find love again. Reason being? She fell in love with her best friend's boyfriend. While the interaction between Clem and Ethan isn't much given the circumstances, Clem isn't hurt by losing Ethan, she's hurt by losing her best friend and the memories they had together.

The narrative switches between memories of Clem and Amanda together leading up to the big falling out and the present, where she's shifting the balance of her emotions in the aftermath of what happened. While I had some issues with the switching back and forth, I appreciated the care that Walker took with the subject matter, not only showing moral lines crossed in the events that transpire, but also giving a great look in terms of how Clem finds a way to move forward. This is very much a summer coming of age story that I enjoyed, particularly in the interactions that Clem has with the firey-haired and sweet gent that is James. He's funny, lighthearted, and even while he's going through some tough situations himself, he provides a balance with Clem's character that's refreshing to read. I definitely felt the connection between them and enjoyed their interactions.

The only other thing that slightly bothered me were, in the discussion of music selections, playlists and such, I thought there were too many to keep track of. It somewhat weighted the narrative a little in places. Still, it didn't deter from me enjoying the novel for what it offered, and I would definitely recommend it for those who like YA teen reads with a chick-lit, coming of age, summer story leaning.

Overall score: 3/5

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from the publisher Bloomsbury.

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### **Donna {Book Passion for Life} says**

After seeing so many mixed reviews about *Unbreak My Heart*, it was one of them books that I wanted to read but didn't want it to disappoint. But in the end I finally decided to take a chance and, I'm so glad I did because it's one I really enjoyed.

*Unbreak My Heart* is an emotional read about a young girl who struggles to deal with the aftermath after falling for her best friend's boyfriend but, also tries to rediscover herself while on a secluded family vacation.

I really enjoyed this story. Honestly, there's wasn't much not to like. It's a good YA contemporary story that has just the right amount of fluffiness, heartache and fun times. I felt the story is well written and it had a ton of great characters.

Clem – even though she's quite depressed to start with – was a great character to get to know. She's fun and full of life but when everything is revealed, she's like a shell of herself. The whole relationship with her best friend's boyfriend in my opinion was quite complicated. I honestly couldn't see why Ethan was Amanda except for the fact that Amanda is really pretty. I felt as though Ethan and Clem had an undeniable attraction to one another. It felt more real and as a reader you can really see the feeling that they had for one another. In my book, it wasn't really cheating. Yes Ethan and Clem weren't completely innocent but Ethan was always the one that instigated anything between them and then suddenly, all the blame is on Clem. I felt bad for her. She loses her best friend and friends all together and Ethan is walking around scot-free. I hated Ethan after that and Amanda too for treating Clem the way she did.

The other characters that stood out to me were of course, Clem's family. What an amazing family. They supported Clem no matter her mood and always tried to include her in everything they did. And then of course we have James and his father. James was exactly the right person Clem needed. Someone who didn't know but could get to know the real her – and James saw the real Clem for sure. I love their moments together.

In all, *Unbreak My Heart* is a good summer read and one I'm glad I took a chance on!

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### **Lauren says**

Oh my goodness I forgot how adorable Melissa Walker's romances are! UNBREAK MY HEART is cute, heartwarming, and the perfect amount of swoony. I loved the dual timelines, and, most importantly of all, I ADORED the main character! Clementine is incredibly easy to relate to, and while she technically did the unforgivable, I couldn't find it in me to dislike her, because I think just about anyone has been in her shoes before.

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### **Rachael says**

This summer was supposed to be the best summer of Clem's life, but when she falls for her best friend's boyfriend and said best friend refuses to speak to her, the summer is looking pretty gloomy. That's why she doesn't put up much of a fight when her parents get the bright idea to spend their entire summer on their sailboat. Maybe being surrounded by only her parents and her little sister Olive will be good for her, since they're the only people who seem to still like her. Clem has resigned herself to a summer of wallowing and self-punishment until she meets James at one of their first stops along the river. Like Clem's family, James and his father are sailing the river for the summer, and something about James and his unwavering cheerfulness is getting to Clem, in the best way. Maybe, with James's help, Clem might find the strength to forgive herself and heal her broken heart.

Unbreak My Heart is a sweet and touching summery read from a favorite author of mine. I loved the fun premise of Walker's Violet on the Runway series as well as her more contemplative look at personal faith in Small Town Sinners, and I immensely enjoyed all of those books. Unbreak My Heart falls somewhere in the middle of those books as a thoughtful twist on a lighthearted summer story. By alternating the story between reflections on the school year where everything went wrong and the summer after, readers get a generous glimpse into a girl who's struggling to be a good friend and still be true to herself. Walker has this girl's voice perfectly through Clem's character, and this really brings Clem, her memories, and her struggles to get past them to life. I love how Walker ends the story on an open yet hopeful note, though I wish there were more interaction between Clem, her best friend Amanda, and Amanda's boyfriend Ethan after the whole debacle to clear up the drama. Despite this, Unbreak My Heart is still a wonderful love story, personal journey, and summer read.

Unbreak My Heart will be enjoyed by fans of The Unwritten Rule by Elizabeth Scott, Stay by Deb Caletti, Lock and Key by Sarah Dessen, and Sixteenth Summer by Michelle Dalton.

reposted from <http://thebookmuncher.blogspot.com>

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### **Crystal says**

I think every teenage girl should read this book. I can remember being sixteen and thinking the world was going to end if a boy didn't like me or if my friends were mad at me when in reality things like that aren't as important as other things.

In this story Clem has to set sail with her family for three months. This means not having any contact with her friends via cell phone or computer. Normally this would be a huge inconvenience for Clem and she would have begged and pleaded with her parents to let her stay at home, but since things with her friends have gone south she is left with no other option but to join her family. Something huge happened between Clem and her BFF and when I say big I mean BIG for a sixteen year old girl. You remember being that age how awkward it was right?? Well Clem commits the ultimate sin between girlfriends and learns the hard way what is important in life. So begins her summer on the water and it is definitely a bumpy ride.

I really enjoyed this book and I wish that I had it when I was sixteen. There are wonderful life lessons throughout this book and I loved it to pieces. Melissa did a wonderful job unraveling Clem's story and my heart broke for her several times. I could totally feel her pain when she let everything out and I just wanted to

hug her and tell her it would be alright. Clem is definitely one of my favorite characters. She owned up to what was her fault and the growth that she shows by the end of the book was just amazing. I have high hopes for her and her BFF, Amanda. I also really loved Olive her sister and James the boy she meets while sailing. They were fantastic additions to this story and I loved them both to pieces for being there for Clem. Please read this book you won't regret it and if you have a teenage daughter hand this to them, they need it I promise.

Awesome AWESOME book!

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### **Amy says**

I did not want this book to end. Not at all. In fact, Melissa Walker, I am not amused by your antics. You ended this book just when I really REALLY wanted to know what happened next. That is dirty play on your part, and I am going to cross my arms and pout at you for a long, long time.

Or until you tell me what you think happened next, at which point I will forgive you, because I am nothing if not easy to woo.

You will like this book too. I promise.

You will like Clementine Williams, even with her overwrought emotions and self-flagellation. She blames herself for everything that went wrong in her life, to the point that she believes she is unworthy of everything, from love to enjoying her summer. See, Clementine flirted with her best friend's boyfriend. Okay, maybe 'flirt' is the wrong word. She fell for him, and she encouraged him. When he stepped over the lines of propriety, she didn't stop him. Yes, she told him that they need to step back because Amanda would get upset, but when he said that he can have friends who are girls, she willingly grabbed at that lifeline like a passenger on the Titanic. And she never exactly tried to move his hand when it covered hers, or when it covered her thigh. You will like her even through that. Even through the three-hour instant messaging she engages in with Ethan The Cad (as I came to think of him). Even through the playlists he makes for her (and that she listens to repeatedly) and the one she creates for him. And then lies about.

You will like her.

You also will like Amanda, the best friend, who is sort of on the periphery here. Amanda reacts the way Clementine's mother says most women do: she blames the Other Woman and dumps her, not the boyfriend. But when you were sixteen, wouldn't you have done the same thing? Don't grown women do that NOW? Yes, they do. You know it's true.

As an aside: I tell my girl students all the time that I do not understand why it's always the other girl's fault. If the boy initiates the flirting - and let's be real clear here: Ethan initiates the flirting - then isn't he to blame? Is it really that girls are so desperate that they fear being alone or fear seeing the boy with another girl that they willingly forgive him and completely blame the girl? My fear is that it is as simple (and complex) as that.

But back to the story.

Clementine's family decides to spend the summer sailing down the Mississippi, and quicker than you can say, "Look, Huck! There's Jim!", Clementine meets another boy. James. He's tall, somewhat gangly, and red-headed. He also sees Clementine for who she is. He brings truth into a life that feels built on lies and

deception.

Along the journey (both metaphorical and literal), Clementine reflects back on her relationships with Amanda and Ethan. She admits to jealousy over Ethan, and she cops to enjoying it when Ethan, under the cover of a blanket, puts his hand on her leg.

People know how to stop - they just *stop*. They stop holding their friends' boyfriends' hands under the blanket. It didn't *have* to happen, even if Ethan wanted it to. I could have taken my hand and moved myself around in a way that he couldn't really get to me, and he would have had to stare straight ahead at the movie even if he was upset or angry, because he shouldn't have been doing what he was doing! He shouldn't have been trying to touch my leg and hold my hand!

Aaaaaand she's back. It's Ethan's fault. But this is what a sixteen-year-old girl would do. She would vacillate between blaming Amanda, blaming Ethan and blaming herself. She knows she went too far, she knows she betrayed Amanda, but she's also unwilling to fatally fall on the sword. She's willing to nick herself and leave a scar.

Clementine is so intent on her sadness and loneliness that she fails to see that Amanda established the pattern for their friendship much earlier in her relationship with Ethan. When Amanda displays some of Ethan's boxers for a scavenger hunt, Clementine is shocked. "I felt a pang in my chest. Ethan had been at her house. He left his boxers there. Maybe they had been naked together. And she hadn't told me."

A painful lesson. Your best friend may know all your secrets, but do you know hers?

This is an addicting, wonderful, besotting book. You will love Clementine's family, especially her ten-year-old sister Olive. And you will love James. Most of all, you will love Melissa Walker's ability to get into the head of a teenage girl and accurately, realistically create her on paper. But you may not love Ethan.

This review is published on cupcake's book cupboard. @VivaAmaRisata  
Thanks to NetGalley for the preview.

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### **Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says**

Originally posted here.

When Unbreak My Heart first appeared on NetGalley, I actually didn't request it. I haven't read any of Walker's prior novels, I don't have much history reading contemporaries, and I have a very black and white view of cheating in relationships. All of that told me this might not be the book for me. I went back and requested it when I saw some very favorable reviews roll into the blogosphere.

As I started reading, I was initially regretful of that decision. The opening of the book is so mopey and nothing really happens. All Clem thinks about is the horrible thing she's done, which slowly unfolds in front of the reader. Every other chapter goes into the past (at least until that's all explained). The others are about her summer, in which her family (mom, dad, little sister, and herself) sail down rivers on a boat. I really

wondered how Walker was going to pull off a book where the characters are stuck on a boat.

Thankfully, the book picked up the more you learn about the past, and the better you get to know the other people taking this same boating trip. I know absolutely nothing about boating. Honestly, I had no clue people could take a sailing trip like this down rivers. Color me surprised. Early on, they meet four other people who are on the same timeline and route they are (an old couple, and a father and son).

The cheating aspect of the story, the frame of it, never really coalesced with me. It mostly made me angry in a way I was not expecting. Clem has become a social outcast because she fell for her best friend's boyfriend. That's bad, for sure. I mean, having those feelings and not confessing definitely violates the 'hos before bros' pact. What's incredibly NOT cool (slight spoiler) is that Clem didn't even initiate anything and yet she is the one who becomes a social pariah. Her best friend even takes the guy back. All we see of the friendship is them keeping secrets from one another. And, so far as I can glean, Amanda doesn't really even seem to like Ethan that much, so I have a lot of trouble figuring out why she would want him back, unless it's to prove something.

I think that my biggest issue was with Amanda's character. It might have helped to have better context for their friendship. We learn very little about Clemanda pre-Ethan. As it was, I never got a great sense of Amanda as a person. She seems to be a showoff. Clem definitely suffers from an inferiority complex, since Amanda is the kind of person everyone likes and can have any guy she likes. Amanda's also strange for not having been more afraid of Clem and Ethan happening, since they have this crazy obvious chemistry, and she even encourages them to go on a date. That's just weird.

What really worked in this novel were the character relationships. I loved how real Clem's family felt. The mother with her crazy cookbook, the dad with his hat, and, most especially, adorable annoyance Olive. It's so obvious how much Clem's family cares for her. They give her space for a while and they let her know that they're ready to listen when she can talk about it. They put up with a surprising number of tantrums with good grace. When she finally confesses what she's been so upset about, they are just so sweet and non-judgmental.

I also can't leave this review without talking about the adorableness of James. He may be one of the most genuinely sweet guys in YA literature. Girls, let me just say that you want a guy like this, not an Edward or a Jacob or a Noah. You want someone real who will never try to change you or tell you what to do. He has advice, sure, but he doesn't pressure you. Plus, he's a ginger. Oh, how I love redheads. He is cute, upbeat, and funny, and their chemistry is so moving.

Unbreak My Heart is well-written and touching, despite the slow start. There's a lot to be learned from Clem's story. I see more Melissa Walker in my reading future!

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### **Emma (Miss Print) says**

Clementine made a big mistake her sophomore year. It started with a series of little mistakes and foolish decisions but by the end Clementine had broken one of the most important rules of friendship.

That was two weeks ago.

Now, heartbroken and friendless, Clementine is about to embark on a three month sailing trip with her

parents and her little sister, Olive, on *The Possibility*. Last year the trip sounded like a horrible, faraway idea. Now that it's here, Clem is surprised to realize it might be exactly what she needs.

Three months is a long time to be on a boat with nowhere to go and nothing to do. It's a long time to have no one around except your family and the other boaters on your route. It's an even longer time to be miserable. Not that Clem deserves to be anything else after what she did.

But as *The Possibility* sails farther from home and Clem really thinks about what happened, she begins to realize that being miserable won't actually fix anything--if she wants to move forward, Clem has to do that herself in *Unbreak My Heart* (2012) by Melissa C. Walker.

*Unbreak My Heart* is a fizzy, adorable story about a girl who made a really bad choice and what she is doing to move beyond it. Alternating between scenes of Clem's summer trip and memories of what happened during the school year, Walker tempers Clem's past with a strong dose of retrospection so that she is always a sympathetic and approachable protagonist.

The reveal of what ultimately went wrong is also well-handled providing a good balance between teasing asides and actual facts. The pacing is excellent and Walker does an excellent job of unfolding Clem's complicated motivations and choices throughout the story.

Although the core of the story comes from a complicated issue, the plot is charmingly simple as Clem comes back to herself on the sailing trip and meets other boaters (including a cute boy) who help her put her own mistake in perspective as she starts to heal.

I also loved that Clem's family played such a huge role in the story with a sister that I would definitely hang out with and parents who are refreshingly present and helpful and supportive throughout the story. I know it's hard sometimes to have excitement and growth in the same story as parents but I wish more books could find that balance as easily as *Unbreak My Heart*.

Another dimension is added to the story by Clem's repeated attempts to write a letter to her best friend as she tries to explain herself. (Not to mention a totally realistic, unobtrusive integration of social networks.) I tend to be extremely skeptical of reconciliation plots because they seem simplified and idealistic but it works in this one. *Unbreak My Heart* features one of the only reconciliation plots that felt not only legitimate but necessary. I'm absolutely rooting for Clem and her best friend.

As the title might suggest, there is some romance and a whole lot of flirting but what I most enjoyed about this story is the romantic parts are very secondary to Clem's own understanding of what she has done and what she wants to happen next. Filled with idyllic sailing scenes, lots of humor, and some very wise ruminations on what friendship really means, *Unbreak My Heart* is a surprising, enchanting story about fresh starts and healing.

Possible Pairings: *The Best Night of Your (Pathetic) Life* by Tara Altebrando, *Just One Day* by Gayle Forman, *Something Like Fate* by Susane Colasanti, *The Key to the Golden Firebird* by Maureen Johnson, *After the Kiss* by Terra Elan McVoy, *The Unwritten Rule* by Elizabeth Scott

You can find this review and more on my blog [Miss Print](#)

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## Jen says

Buoy, is this a good read and such a pretty cover. Definitely knot one you want to miss. (See what I did there? If naut, you will...)

Lifelong friendship, true love, the ultimate betrayal, and crushing heartbreak. "Unbreak My Heart" has it all, reminding us that while you may be able to choose your friends, you can't necessarily choose who you fall in love with or help who gets hurt in the process.

Sixteen year old Clementine, or Clem was supposed to have the best summer EVER with Amanda, her BFF since kindergarten but all that changed at the end of Sophomore year. Now, she's spending the entire three months at sea with her family aboard their boat, "The Possibility". Here she'll be subjected to their overenthusiastic nautical attitudes (Ahoy Matey!) and their sympathetic eyes that tell her, "Everything will be OK." If they only knew...

Clem would love nothing more than to stay locked in her stateroom all summer where she can listen to sad music while flipping through her journal that replays everything that's happened over the past few months. Going above deck and interacting with her family or anyone else for that matter doesn't hold any interest for her but may be exactly what she needs to help heal her broken heart.

She's spent most of her time reliving the last year and wondering what, if anything she could've changed. She and Amanda have been friends forever and she would never do anything to purposely hurt her. Clem never expected to fall for Ethan but he was her friend too and everything seemed to be fine, until it wasn't. Until their conversations seemed to be more comfortable, their chats lasting longer than they should. Clem knows she should've put an end to things and she did try once or twice but should she have tried harder? Could she have even if she wanted too? It doesn't matter now because once Amanda found out, Clem was the one everyone hated. She was treated as if it was all her fault, even Ethan came out looking like a victim though he played as much a part in it as she did. How is THAT even fair?!

So, here she is stuck on this stupid boat with her family all.summer.long. with nothing to do but pine away for what she's lost. The tides begin to change when they make their first marina stop and Clem and her sister Olive head into the dock deli for snacks. It's there that they bump into James (literally) a tall red-headed boy with eyes as blue as the water and a great sense of humor. Seems he's spending his summer on a boat with his dad and they're following the same route as Clem and her family are. (Hmm, maybe the summer won't be so bad after all.) James is funny, sweet and he's kind to all the ladies, young and old alike. \*swoon\* He's also an artist who captures the realness of Clem in his very first sketch of her. He always seems to be in a good mood no matter what which is kinda irritating to Clem at first but his smile makes cracking one herself virtually unavoidable.

As James and Clem get to know each other, at their many marina stops, dock delis and dingy rides, she begins to gain a new focus on all that's happened to her recently. James can sense the sadness in Clem but she's reluctant to tell him what it is for fear that he'll think she's an awful person (like she's convinced herself she is). She enjoys spending time with him, realizing that he's helping to heal the broken pieces of her heart by reminding her of what's "real". So when Clem finally musters up the nerve to tell James everything that's she's done and he grows distant she wonders if her heart break all over again?

"Unbreak My Heart" is about a girl who follows her heart and in the process loses more than just herself. Her feelings of guilt overwhelm her at times and blind her to the good that still exists within her. But with the

help of her family and a few new friends, she not only finds her way back to who she is but she also discovers that what matters most in life, what's right in front of you, is what's real.

\*Personal Thoughts/Potential Spoilers:

\*Clem's parents and Olivia do their best to support her, pointing out that while she made a mistake, she's not entirely to blame and that if her friends are truly her friends they will stick by her through this. They are patient with her and supportive, reminding her of "who" she is to them. I LOVED that about them! \*sniff\*

\*Her dad also explains that at sixteen, no one "belongs" to anyone which is so true.

\*James - Oh, James... I \*hearts\* him!

\*Ethan (not sure how I feel about him...) He was just as much to blame as Clem was for not putting a stop to what was developing between them and it wasn't fair AT ALL that she was the only one vilified but that's how high school is unfortunately.

\*Amanda seemed a little self centered to me. The fact that she took Ethan back without even hearing Clem's side was so not fair.

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## **Kay says**

Unbreak my Heart was so much more than I had expected! It was the perfect summer novel : short, cute, filled with feelings, a tad of romance and gorgeous days on the water, under the sun. I thought I was in for something simply light and heartwarming, but the book turned out to be a little more than that.

First I must say that I have very little compassion for liars and cheaters. Most of the time, cheaters are sitting in the "unlikable character" seat, written to be despised by the main character; when they are the main characters, there are often a multitude of reasons generously provided to excuse the horrid cheating behavior (it was just one time - his girlfriend is a horrible human being - it was meant to be - etc). So I started Unbreak my Heart feeling pretty sure I wouldn't like Clementine much.

That didn't happen, at all. Clementine spends a huge chunk of her summer thinking back on what happened, and why. With her we revisit her sophomore year, how she met Ethan, what the two of them shared together. She explains exactly what happened, how she could have stopped it, how she even lied to herself. Like all teenagers, Clementine can be a tad dramatic, but I didn't feel her actions were a cheap ploy to create drama in the story. Instead, I felt it showed her inner turmoil really well (with the added bonus of reminding me my own embarrassing teenage years!) In the end though, Clementine didn't make excuses, and it was so refreshing. She lives with her guilt and her regrets, but through this summer, we really get to see her grow.

Another aspect I really enjoyed was how heartwarming and fun and realistic the relationships were : the ones with her family, with her best friend, with Ethan or with James, the new cute boy Clementine meets on her vacation. Sometimes they get along really well, sometimes they don't, but that's just life, and it was really well written.

I also felt the book was as much, if not more, about friendship, family and staying true to yourself than it was about romance - and I loved that. It made the characters and the story more realistic, easier to relate to.

So, I really liked this one. Short and sweet, it's a perfect summer read!

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## **Paige Bookdragon says**

### **Reread:**

?Say you'll love me again..?

It's been almost a year and Unbreak My Heart is still one of my favorite books. This is a story of a girl who wants forgiveness and acceptance and she's one of my favorite YA realistic characters.

I don't know how to do a review for this one without giving much spoiler but this book doesn't pull any punches. It's raw and emotional but it never went overboard.

I love this and I want you to swallow this book because I want to break your heart.

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## **Fred says**

We meet MC Clementine as her family - Clem, her teacher dad, her on-sabbatical lawyer mom, and her precocious 10 yo sister Olive - are embarking on "The Williams Family Summer of Boating," a three month sail trip from their suburban Chicago home base, all the way down the Mississippi river. Clem, however, is in no mood to enjoy the trip, her family, or anything else. There was this incident, you see, just two weeks earlier, that ended up breaking both her heart and her relationship with long term bff Amanda. I don't want to say too much about what happened between Clementine, Amanda and Amanda's new boyfriend Ethan, since that story is told in chapters that alternate with the story of the summer trip, and part of the book's considerable emotional impact is the slow and rather painful unfolding of exactly what took place. Suffice it to say that as the trip begins Clementine is broken-hearted, ashamed and deeply hurt by the incident and the social opprobrium that followed.

Rivers flow slowly but powerfully, and their currents take some things away and bring other things together. Like James, the red-headed boy Clem meets at their first stop for provisions. James' unfailing good cheer at times threatens to irritate the moody Clem. Eventually, however, she can't help but succumb to his considerable charm as time wears on and their families continue to meet, since James and his father are making the same trip as the Williams. As Clem and James grow closer, she comes to realize that James is not without his own issues and concerns, and that perspective helps as she confronts the past and begins to heal.

This is a lovely, sweet, slow moving, thoughtful and often funny book. It's not really a romance, although there is some very sweet romance, it's more a growing up, family drama kind of story. One of the really wonderful things about this book is the portrayal of the relationship between Clementine and her family. Fully functioning families are kind of rare in YA-dom, but the author does a lovely job of creating one here. Clem's parents are appropriately clueless, crazy-making and intrusive, but also supportive sources of wisdom and unconditional love in the face of overwhelming adolescent angst. Little sister Olive is an especially charming character, funny and direct, saying what everyone else is thinking, but also full of bewildered

tenderness for her wounded and sometimes hurtful sister. They, and James, are part of what helps Clementine achieve some perspective about herself, what she did, what is real and what is all in her head, and how she can start to heal and move on with her life.

This is a great read - the story is sweet, the prose is lyrical and evocative, creating a rich atmosphere of the river and its rhythms, and the sweet slow pace of a summer spent growing, healing and appreciating what is, what was lost, and what can be regained. It's also pretty doggone funny at times, I don't want to give the impression it's all unremittingly broody and moody. The characters and the banter among them are just too witty and fun to let that happen. Definitely a book to savor, and one that makes me anxious to read Melissa's other books!

I was kindly provided an advance copy of this by the publisher through NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Jen (Pop! Goes The Reader) says**

Did you find this review helpful? Find more of my reviews at Pop! Goes The Reader!

*“My mind is not a very forgiving place.”*

Ostracized from her group of friends after making a series of ill-advised decisions involving her best friend Amanda's boyfriend, Ethan, Clementine Williams is at rock bottom. Preparing to embark on a three-month long sailing trip with her family in order to get away from it all and clear her head, this will mark the first summer vacation she has not spent with her best friend. Depressed and grief-stricken, both over the loss of her close friendship with Amanda as well as what she thought she had with Ethan, Clementine is a shell of her former self.

*“I feel like a dull and worn-out version of myself, and for some reason I just can’t bridge the gap between who I used to be and the sad sack that’s sitting here now. I don’t know how to reach through it.”*

There's no worse feeling than being the odd man out. Whether it's being picked last for dodgeball or being the only book reviewer to dislike a seemingly universally praised book, it's never a nice feeling.

Unfortunately, that was the situation I faced upon completion of Unbreak My Heart by Melissa Walker. It really pains me to have to write a negative review for a book I had such high expectations for. Bland, formulaic and superficial, Unbreak My Heart will undoubtedly go down as one of my biggest literary disappointments of 2013.

*“And that was that. Amanda had noticed something wrong, and I had my warning – and I didn’t heed it. I had proof then that the weirdness wasn’t just in my head. I knew for sure that I needed to stop talking to Ethan so much.  
But I didn’t. It was like I couldn’t help it.”*

In addition to the scenes spent on the boat involving Clementine and her family, Unbreak My Heart is composed of a series of flashbacks as Clementine reflects on both her time with Amanda, reaching as far back as their first meeting, as well as her time spent with Ethan. While I understood that Walker wanted to firmly establish the importance of the relationship between Clementine and Amanda and outline precisely what had happened between Clementine and Ethan, the constant shift between the past and present perspective was jarring and disrupted the pace and flow of the story. I was more interested in Clementine's sailing trip and less in the minutiae of her everyday life in the past yet it seemed as though I was bombarded with an endless series of flashbacks that involved little more than Amanda constantly accusing Clementine of impropriety.

*Dear Amanda,*

*How can you just forget the entire history of our friendship? Doesn't being best friends for over half our lives mean anything?*

If anything, these flashbacks further hindered my enjoyment of the story, as they underlined what I had already identified as the most problematic aspect of the story – I was never convinced that the relationship between Clementine and Amanda was one that was worth saving. Even with the seemingly endless series of flashbacks meant to demonstrate the depth and importance of their relationship, the dynamic between Clementine and Amanda always seemed more competitive and antagonistic than friendly. Moreover, why would you want to rekindle a friendship with someone more likely to believe the word of their new boyfriend over that of their lifelong friend? One of my primary problems with Unbreak My Heart was that I was never convinced about the importance or severity of Clementine's 'loss' and therefore could not understand the depth of her subsequent mourning.

*"I wasn't always such a downer. Up until, like, two weeks ago, I was Clementine Williams, happy and upbeat and kind of hilarious, if I do say so myself. But that was before everything exploded in my face.*

*Now I'm Clementine Williams, outcast. And that's on a good day."*

Another problem I encountered involved our protagonist. Clementine Williams is a painfully unremarkable, ordinary sixteen-year-old girl. There was nothing particularly special about her apart from a few 'defining' characteristics like a supposed love of music and a propensity for journal writing. As in the above quote, we're told several times that Clementine is not quite herself. We're reputedly told that before the 'incident' with Amanda and Ethan, she was an entirely different person, one who was pleasant to be around. Unfortunately, we're stuck with the *new* Clementine, the one whose main occupations seems to be pouting and brooding. These constant reminders of Clementine's past self seemed more like anticipatory apologies or justifications for Clementine's present insufferable behaviour than as attempts to further the development of her character's backstory. I know we're meant to sympathize with Clementine, but all I could really do was sympathize with her poor parents. Can you imagine going to the trouble to plan and take a well-earned vacation after working hard all year, only to have to spend the majority of your time tiptoeing around a girl who's as emotionally stable as a nitroglycerin? Doesn't that sound relaxing? Clementine treats her parents poorly despite their obvious love and concern for her, and this only further distanced me from her character.

*"The redhead guy was about my age, I think. He didn't look at me like I was a total bitch or some kind of horrible human being. Neither did George or Ruth. They seemed to like me. So did Mrs. Ficklewhiskers, the pirate cat. And I get that that's because they don't know me or what went on with me last year or anything. But still. They all treated me like I had a blank slate. Like I was just plain Clem, a girl with a pretty laugh and a nice walk."*

*But I guess if they knew me, they'd hate me too."*

Perhaps what I wanted most from Clementine was depth. Throughout the majority of the story, it felt as though Clementine spent more time feeling sorry for herself and acting like a martyr and less time reflecting on what had happened and coming to terms with that. Her sudden change of heart and revelation at the end of the novel felt more convenient than it did authentic and well-earned and was as superficial as the rest of the story. Clementine spends the majority of the trip alone in her stateroom in self-imposed exile, ostensibly with the intention of formulating a plan as to how best to atone for what she's done. Her ultimate solution? To apologize to Amanda and take responsibility for what she has done. Imagine that. No wonder it took her so long to come up with such a revolutionary concept! What was Clementine's alleged crime, you ask? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. The infraction for which we've endured over two hundred pages of self-flagellation and angst turns out to be composed of nothing more than Clementine spending time with Ethan when Amanda wasn't around and for entertaining romantic thoughts about him. That's right. *Thoughts*. While I understand that mistakes can seem magnified when you're sixteen and that inconsequential things can often seem like the end of the world, I couldn't help but feel cheated after having to endure an endless number of pages about Clementine's guilt and supposed lack of character only to find out it was all based on little more than impure thoughts. The magnitude to which she had embellished the nature of her alleged crime seemed absurd once one knew the entire story.

*"We both lean down to pick up the bananas, and – boom! – our foreheads collide.*

*"Damn!" he says as we stand up. He's holding his head, one eye shut, the other cocked at me, with a big grin on his face.*

*Then he puts his hands out in front of him, the basket dangling on one arm.*

*"Okay, back away," he says.*

*"Huh?" I ask.*

*"You're obviously an assassin sent to kill me by collision," he says.*

The romance was similarly lacklustre. I struggled to understand what attracted James to Clementine in the first place. I couldn't help but feel that James was more interested in the mystery behind Clementine and the idea of 'saving her' as opposed to being interested in her as an individual. Clementine's relationship with James also seemed sudden and ill-advised, particularly as it begins on the heels of what Walker is implying was a seminal moment in Clementine's life, the consequences of which she has not yet dealt with when the relationship with James begins. It was difficult to invest in a relationship that seemed doomed from the outset. On a trip that should have ideally been spent on introspection and a journey of self discovery, the romance felt unnecessary and unwanted. I was saddened to see that, as so often is the case in the young adult genre, the romance acted as the catalyst for change in our protagonist. I wish she could have found strength and comfort from within rather than seeking it from an outside source.

*"When he smiles at me, I feel like I'm sitting under a heat lamp. I live for the times when his fingers brush my leg at lunch, or when we pass in the hallways and he raises his eyebrows at me, like we have a secret. I should feel bad – and I do, most of the time – but how can I stop thinking about him when seeing his face makes me feel so alive?"*

I think what Unbreak My Heart suffered from most was an overall lack of depth. Walker makes no attempt to confront or examine some of the important issues that arise within Unbreak My Heart, however inadvertent they may be. Why does Ethan lie about the nature of their relationship and who acted as the aggressor? Why is Clementine willing to sacrifice a lifelong friendship for the acceptance and attention of a

boy she barely knows? Why is Ethan more readily forgiven by their group of friends while Clementine is ostracized? What are we meant to take away from this novel? That we should continue to perpetuate this sort of double standard in which infidelity is accepted and forgiven on the part of the man, while the ‘other woman’ is ostracized and held solely accountable? Where I would expect a certain amount of anger in Clementine, I instead found self-loathing. Where I would expect critical thinking, I instead found blind acceptance. Clementine never transcends her portrayal as a typical, angst-ridden teenager. It felt as though we were only ever allowed to skim the surface of what could have otherwise been a very promising and thought-provoking subject. Walker never strove to take this book a step beyond a girl grieving over a lost friendship that never felt particularly special or worth saving to begin with.

*“Dear Amanda,  
I didn’t realize that, sometimes, even if a situation is getting out of control, it happens slowly, in these really small moments. And even if what’s happening is wrong, it can feel like it’s right. I got so wrapped up in the fact that something was happening. Someone was into me. I didn’t have to be boring old Clem all the time. I had a secret.”*

That said, it wasn’t all bad. There were a few things I did enjoy about Unbreak My Heart. I thought the concept of a three-month-long summer spent sailing the ‘Great Loop’ (A route that encircles the east coast of the United States) was inventive and was what initially attracted me to the novel in the first place. I’ve always loved road trip stories and thought Walker’s unique choice of transportation and location held a great deal of potential. I enjoyed Clementine’s mother’s reliance on A Man, A Can, A Plan, which I was delighted to find was a real book. Finally, I appreciated Clementine’s relationship with Olive. It isn’t often that the younger sister or brother isn’t simply relegated to the role of obnoxious sibling. Olive’s hero worship of her older sister, however misplaced, was sweet. It was nice to see a sibling relationship that wasn’t adversarial or combative in nature.

*“I’d thought of all the excuses that might have made my friends cut me some slack, but none of them were real. The truth was that I liked Ethan, and he liked me. We clicked. That’s it. It’s a paper-thin reason to start something with your best friend’s boyfriend, and I knew it.”*

Formulaic, superficial, self-indulgent and melodramatic with a protagonist I would have happily tossed overboard, Melissa Walker’s Unbreak My Heart was simply not the book for me. But don’t simply take my word for it! Given the overwhelming number of positive reviews on Goodreads and Amazon.com, it very well could be that this is simply a case of ‘it’s not you, it’s me’. While I would recommend borrowing this novel from the library as opposed to purchasing it as I chose to do, I’m sure there are a great number of people who will enjoy it far more than I did!

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