



All the Beautiful Lies

Peter Swanson

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Harry Ackerson has always considered his step-mother Alice to be sexy and beautiful, in an “other worldly” way. She has always been kind and attentive, if a little aloof in the last few years.

Days before his college graduation, Alice calls with shocking news. His father is dead and the police think it's suicide. Devastated, he returns to his father's home in Maine. There, he and Alice will help one another pick up of the pieces of their lives and uncover what happened to his father.

Shortly after he arrives, Harry meets a mysterious young woman named Grace McGowan. Though she claims to be new to the area, Harry begins to suspect that Grace may not be a complete stranger to his family. But she isn't the only attractive woman taking an interest in Harry. The sensual Alice is also growing closer, coming on to him in an enticing, clearly sexual way.

Mesmerized by these two women, Harry finds himself falling deeper under their spell. Yet the closer he gets to them, the more isolated he feels, disoriented by a growing fear that both women are hiding dangerous—even deadly—secrets . . . and that neither one is telling the truth.

All the Beautiful Lies Details

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From Reader Review All the Beautiful Lies for online ebook

Emily (Books with Emily Fox) says

DNF at 60%

I've read a lot of uncomfortable books but I guess this is where I draw the line. If you're into step-parents being in sexual relationships with their step-children, then this is the book for you.

I still recommend his other books, specifically The Kind Worth Killing but this is a hard pass.

Update: Since people can't take a joke. It's not the relationships that are the problem, it's the pace. After 60% barely anything has happened, I'm bored and not at all intrigued. His other books were simply better. The relationships seem to be there just for the shock value and I'm tired of that as much as the alcoholic unreliable wife. I listened to it as an audiobook, so it might have not helped but after raving about his work I'm extra salty about it!

Shannon says

All the Beautiful Lies by Peter Swanson was an awesome psychological thriller! This is my second read by this author. The Kind Worth Killing was so good I just had to get my hands on this gem. It alternates between then and now with multiple POVs. All the Beautiful Lies was twisted, weird and fun as hell to read. I LOVED it!

So what's it about? Harry has just graduated college when he receives the unfortunate phone call of his life. His father, Bill, has died. Harry returns home to his father's house to be with his (hot) stepmother, Alice. At first Bill's death just seems to be an accident but then the detectives start to believe there was more to it. Was this an accident or did someone murder Bill?

I really enjoyed reading the chapters of "then", through Alice's perspective. The girl doesn't give a damn! I thought the twists were excellent. I didn't see them coming!

I definitely recommend All the Beautiful Lies. 5 Stars! Thank you to William Morrow for a copy via Edelweiss.

Tammy says

Having read all of Swanson's books, All the Beautiful Lies is almost smack dab in the middle of his oeuvre. It isn't as compelling as his first two but much better than his last. Then again, I still may be suffering from "grip lit" or thriller burnout and others may find this to be among Swanson's best. As you can see this is another of "lie" books rather than the formerly popular "girl" books.

There is nothing wrong with this novel. It moves along at a nice pace beginning with a college student learning that his father has died. He goes home for the funeral and learns that his father's death may not be

accidental. The book moves between “Then” and “Now” as the action in the present day unfolds and events in the past are revealed. It reads quickly, has a tidy ending and it works within the subgenre hence the four stars.

Meredith says

“The world is chaos, and then a detective comes along and restores order. Or he doesn’t, and that’s really my favorite kind of mystery story.”

Fast-paced mystery about a young college grad who is drawn into the deceitful web of his beautiful stepmother.

All the Beautiful Lies is primarily about Alice, a beautiful realtor whose husband recently died. But even though beautiful, cold Alice appears to be grieving for her late husband, her stepson Harry thinks there’s something not quite right about her.

The narrative switches back and forth between “Then” and “Now”. In “Then,” the reader learns more about Alice’s past and the events that shaped her. In “Now,” the reader is mostly in Harry’s mind as he struggles to put the pieces behind his father’s death together.

This book is filled with delusional characters, webs of lies, and, unfortunately, pedophilia. There’s also a deep level of uncomfortableness surrounding almost all of the romantic relationships. There are some twists, but they are fairly predictable.

My main gripe with *All the Beautiful Lies* is that it felt incomplete. The idea of Alice’s character intrigued me, but she, and many other characters, lacked the substance needed to take this mystery to the next level. Despite my issues with this book, I was deeply entertained by it and enjoyed how classic crime novels played a role in helping Harry figure out the mystery of his father's death.

Dorie says

In over four years of writing reviews I’ve never given a book 1*. Usually I will know when a book is not right for me and send a note to the publisher and don’t continue on with the book, therefore I don’t write a review.

However in the case of “All the Beautiful Lies” I continued to read the book to 75% to see if there was any way that I might be missing something since there were quite a few high ratings for this book. Here is what I concluded.

I found nothing redeeming about this book. The writing is mediocre, the flow is choppy and the characters are shallow and not well defined. There wasn’t a character in this book that I cared about, even young Harry, while trying to decide whether his father was “pushed” off of that cliff or just fell, gets taken in by Alice. The characters can be described as narcissistic, amoral, self indulgent, and on and on.

The mystery part of this book was easy to figure out and did nothing to redeem the quality of this book.

I'm left with wondering why, when there are so many wonderful books out there, that anyone would want to read this book. It's not erotic, just in your face selfish sexual desire. It's not a good mystery, it's not well written. Jake in his younger years could easily be considered a pedophile as his tastes in females began with girls as young as 12.

I'm writing this review basically to warn off my Goodreads friends and anyone who may be reading reviews and thinking about purchasing this book so that they can get other opinions about it. Obviously we're all free to read whatever we want but, dear readers, think again when searching for a good mystery/thriller to read and read a variety of reviews.

ADDENDUM: I don't think this author compares to Ruth Ware, I've read all of her books and never read anything indecent or amoral in her books.

I received an ARC of this book from the publisher through Edelweiss.

Crumb says

A twisted tale of desire, obsession, and deceit

I read this book with the traveling sisters group and it certainly enhanced my appreciation for the book. I loved our discussion, and I gained new insight than I would have if I had read the book alone.

This book was an excellent psychological thriller. It started off strong, in my opinion. After only the first couple chapters, the book sunk its teeth in me. Like so many other books I've read, this book follows a similar pattern of alternating between the past and the present – or “then” and “now” , and I think the author executed this style very well.

Alice, a young teenage girl, precocious for her age, is extremely independent. She doesn't have a choice in the matter; she has to take care of herself because her mother is an alcoholic. However, it isn't the two of them for long. Her mother marries a man, Jake, who is a successful banker. Pretty soon, Alice and Jake are going out to eat at nice, fancy restaurants while Alice's mom is passed out at home, drunk. *Twisted, huh?* I don't want to reveal too much more of the plot. I believe this is a book that you should go into knowing as little as possible.

So my friends, I will leave it at that. This was a fascinating, compulsive thriller that left me satiated. Was it The Kind Worth Killing? No, it was not. Was it a good psychological thriller? Yes, it was.

Thank you to the publishers for providing me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review

Holly B says

An engrossing page turner that had me guessing and gasping until the very last page.

I had to finish this one and the twists were plenty throughout. I enjoyed the alternating time line of then and

now. It follows the story of Harry Ackerson and the phone call he receives from his stepmom Alice that his father is dead. He is told that the police think it is suicide, but Harry is heading home to Maine to sort it out. He will miss his college graduation, but he needs to be home. Harry begins to suspect something foul and may find himself entangled in this web of deceit.

Tense, gripping, creepy and twisted with some dark moments. Never a boring moment and I loved the suspense!

Thanks to Edelweiss for my ARC

Mackey St says

Peter Swanson is well known in thriller/suspense field and his latest book, *All the Beautiful Lies*, only adds to his credibility as a master story-teller.

Harry Ackerson has just completed his university studies when he receives a call from his step-mother informing him that his father has died in an apparent suicide. Harry rushes home, not even attending graduation, in grief and disbelief. His step-mother, Alice, appears to be in a state of shock. Harry believes it is his duty to comfort Alice and help sort out the bookstore that his fathered owned. As he is doing so, he sees a young woman who continually appears - at the book store, his father's funeral, wherever Harry is there she is too. Who is she and what does she have to do with Harry's father? When the news breaks that Harry's father has been murdered rather than dying from a accident, more questions arise surrounding all those who knew and supposedly loved his father.

While this is told primarily from Harry's point of view in the present, there are flashbacks to the past from Alice. We learn how she came to marry Harry's father, her childhood, etc. The more we, as readers, learn about all of the characters, the more we realize there are lies, beautiful lies, but lies never-the-less swirling all around Harry. Those lies lead to danger.

I admit that I adore Swanson, especially his writing style. His books never are quite what they seem. You think you are reading Harry's story, when in fact, it is all about Alice. You think you have the "whodunit" figured out, when it is just the tip of the iceberg. Swanson is clever, toying and, ultimately, masterful in the art of suspense and I loved each and every page of ***All of the Beautiful Lies***.

Linda says

"He began to think about all the words his father read, all the plots he'd absorbed, and how they were all gone, but then he stopped himself."

And all I could think of were all the words trailing throughout this storyline and all the untapped avenues that were left darkened and not tread upon. This could have been a blockbuster of a read. Instead, *All the Beautiful Lies* turned into a mile high sandwich steeped with layer upon layer of taboo sauce and no burger

in sight.

Peter Swanson creates a story brimming with all the Lolita dangling threads that one would care to imagine. His main character, Alice, begins this tale as a young sixteen year old beach lovely who is the apple of her stepfather's eye. After her mother's death, Alice and Jake's relationship takes on a whole different meaning.

Fast forward from the "Then" chapters to the "Now" chapters. Alice is older and living in Maine as a realtor. She's married to Bill, a successful book shop owner. Bill takes a walk one evening after work. Later, his body is found. Accident or murder? Alice contacts Harry, his son, who now spends his college graduation day at his father's funeral. We'll spend the rest of the book with naive Harry trying to figure out just what happened to his dad.

Let's be honest here. Swanson's book, *The Kind Worth Killing*, has been a favorite of mine. The writing was stellar. Any of my fellow mystery/thriller readers will tell you that layering a novel with excessive titilating sparks does not a thriller make. Mop up the taboo sauce and there's nothing but a hollow plot staring up at you. Murder for the sake of murder and nothing more. As readers, we want to run alongside the writer as the plot unfolds trying to predict which way this is going to go. Predictability will kill a murder mystery in a heartbeat faster than a heart attack.

All the Beautiful Lies is not gonna be for everyone. Know that going in. Swanson had the makings of a dynamite storyline with ol' Alice who put the femme in fatale. But too much leaping into the swamp instead of a solid plot leaves you stuck and uncomfortably mosquito bitten. An okay read that deserved far better from the talent of Peter Swanson.

Susanne Strong says

2.75 Stars* (rounded up)

Well Ho-Hum. That's pretty much all I have to say about that.

"All the Beautiful Lies" is the story of Harry Ackerman, whose father dies right before his college graduation. His father was his best friend and life line and now he's gone. Having already lost his mother years prior, all he has left is Alice, his step-mother. If Harry is honest, he has always had inappropriate feelings for Alice, she is beautiful, sexy and mysterious. Once his father is gone, Alice needs him and he wants to help her, he needs to help her. While in town, Harry meets a beautiful young woman named Grace, and he can't help but feel something and wonder who she is and if she is connected to his father. Harry's investigations lead him to uncover more about his father, Grace and of course, Alice. What he finds leads him down a crazy, twisted path, full of surprises.

"All the Beautiful Lies" by Peter Swanson was a complete disappointment for me. Having reading Swanson's "The Girl With the Clock for a Heart" and "The Kind Worth Killing", I was extremely excited to read this novel. Unfortunately "All the Beautiful Lies" didn't quite measure up to those - it held no excitement and was quite predictable. Not liking the characters didn't help matters. However, the novel was easy to read and moved quickly - I finished it in a day!

I read this with my Traveling Sisters and that made it oh so much better. We were split for this one and that made it much more interesting.

For Full Traveling Sister Group Reviews, please see Brenda and Norma's Amazing Blog:
<https://twogirlslostinacouleereading....>

Thank you to Edelweiss, William Morrow and Peter Swanson for an ARC of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Published on Edelweiss and Goodreads on 1.27.18.

Chelsea Humphrey says

Each year I look forward to a new Peter Swanson novel as if it's Christmas morning; the build up and anticipation grow steadily until I finally hold that nugget of goodness in my grubby little hands and devour it quickly. **And devour it I did.** Obviously the downside to this ritual of mine is that I have to face the long, painful wait for another novel, but I think that's a pretty great problem to have, no? Whether you're new to his books or an old fan like I am, it's never a bad time to pick up a Swanson novel and there's no wrong book to begin with, as they are all meant to stand alone. I say this each time, but the cover for *All The Beautiful Lies* has to be my favorite to date, and it ties in well to the story's themes of passion, deceit, and just how far people are willing to go to preserve what they feel belongs to them. *Also, how is it that crazy people tend to flock to each other?*

Up front I acknowledge that this book won't be for everyone. It's content can be unsettling, disturbing, and inappropriate for some audiences; however, if you're like me then those three words just peaked your interest even more than it previously was and you're desperate to read it. The story begins in present day with young Harry Ackerson arriving home to attend the funeral of his father Bill. Bill was the owner of a book store housing unique and rare books and had remarried Alice after the death of his first wife when Harry was just a teen. Harry has always had a "Mrs. Jones" type fantasy going on for his step-mom, but feels weird when Alice seems to be needy toward him in more ways than one. *I actually expected this to be a majority of the plot fodder but was sincerely pleased when this was not the case, but simply a small portion of the story.* Some weird things begin happening and Harry investigates alongside a few other people when they realize his dad's death may have no been an accident. You may think you have it figured out from the beginning, and you probably will have some ideas correct, but I was ecstatic to find a few twists that genuinely took me by surprise. Maybe I'm getting rusty, but it's a rare day that I am 100% taken off guard by a twist and there were **TWO** in this book that owned me.

Without going into the spoiler-zone, I think what makes this book so compulsive for a character driven novel is that the backstories are so intriguing. This book would not have been what it was without Alice and Jake's flashback POV's, and the alternating between time periods really kept things fresh and moving quickly. There was such a comfortable flow to the storytelling technique used, and this made it the perfect book to pick up and fly through during our latest nor'easter that came through. *#springbreak2018* I wouldn't say any of the characters are particularly likable, but they are flawed and ill-fated in varying shades of gray which, of course, is my favorite way to read about villains in any time period. While this is technically a contemporary mystery, it also had a historical vibe due to those flashbacks I mentioned above; again, a really clever way to tell the story and keep the reader engaged.

If you're a book lover who is sensitive to uncomfortable sexual content and flashes of violence and death, this won't be the story for you. However, if you're looking for a bold, character driven story that deals with

some very real and very timely themes, you won't want to miss *All The Beautiful Lies*. I found myself thinking about this book constantly while reading it and even after finishing the story. Questions ran through my mind such as "Do each of our actions truly shape the reactions of those around us?" and "Could the immoral control of those in authority be used to pass on their depraved desires in others simply by manipulating an unformed mind?" It was truly a thought provoking read, as all of Swanson's novels are, and I'm delighted to be keeping him on my auto-purchase list.

Thanks William Morrow for providing my copy!

Carol (Bookaria) says

An excellent thriller from one of my favorite authors!

Harry is a few days away from his college graduation when he receives a phone call, on the other end on the line his stepmother informs him that his dad had a fatal fall while taking his daily walk.

Harry packs and heads immediately to his father's house. Soon after arriving he learns that his father's death might not have been accidental at all.

The novel takes place (mostly) in Maine and is narrated in alternating points of view. I was completely captivated by the story, it was dark and engaging.

Overall, I enjoyed it and recommend it to readers of thrillers, mysteries and contemporary fiction.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via Edelweiss

Jeffrey Keeten says

”Why do you think you like mysteries so much?” Harry asked.

‘I’m deeply skeptical of any book that doesn’t begin with a corpse.’

Harry had heard his father say these exact words, or something close to them, many times. ‘No, really. Why?’

His father frowned, thinking. ‘It’s a religion, I guess, since I don’t have a real religion. The world is chaos, and then a detective comes along and restores order. Or he doesn’t, and that’s really my favorite kind of mystery story.’”

Bill Ackerson doesn’t get to be the detective in the final pages of his own life story. Unfortunately, he has been assigned the role of the corpse. Harry does find himself in the unexpected circumstance of investigating his father’s murder.

Who would kill a harmless bookseller?

Well, my first thought would be a tug of war between two booksellers over a rare book with one of them, after a vicious but bookless tug, falling backwards into a bookshelf and being buried under a set of Encyclopedia Britannica that were jarred loose from the top shelf. This is a common hazard for booksellers, librarians, and book collectors.

Or maybe he recommended a book to some demented reader who was so incensed by the ending of the book that she felt compelled to make him pay for exposing her to such a horrible conclusion to the plot.

There is certainly some irony that a man who spent his life reading crime novels ends up the victim of a crime. Generally, readers like he and I are carefully ensconced in our favorite reading chair, getting our thrills from the plots conceived by the agile minds of writers from all over the world. Unfortunately, Bill liked to go for walks along the cliffs of Maine, and alas, that be where he met his Moriarty for real, rather in the final pages of a compelling mystery. Note to self: walks are dangerous.

Maybe Bill was guilty of being inattentive. **"And honestly, you knew him. More interested in what was happening in one of his books than what was happening around him."** It is rather dangerous being surrounded by nonreaders who just can't begin to understand why anyone would spend hours reading when they could be watching the latest installment of some high brow entertainment, such as *Survivor* or *The Walking Dead*. Maybe someone, family member/friend, just had enough and snatched the latest Peter Swanson novel out of his hands and bludgeoned him with it. Then, they might have hauled him out to the cliffs and dumped his book bashed body, making it look like an accidental fall.

Harry has other problems besides the death of his father. His stepmother is smoking hot and seems to be lonely, if you get my drift. Then there is the odd girl who has shown up in his father's bookstore with a story that has more than a whiff of being contrived. Suspects are slim, and with so little evidence, there is every chance that someone will...**get away with murder.**

Harry is surrounded by *All the Beautiful Lies*.

**"Life asked death,
'Why do people love me but hate you?'
Death responded,
'Because you are a beautiful lie
and I am a painful truth.'"**
---Author unknown

I know I've had a bit of fun with my fanciful conjecture on this dastardly murder of this obsessed book reader and collector. **"Bill's true passion had been the acquisition of books. Finding places to put them was a chore that he only got around to out of desperation."** Could book clutter be a reason for a murder most foul? In all seriousness, Swanson hits me with some gut punching nefarious situations that make me realize that there are people amongst us who may not be evil, but they do evil things so casually that I could believe that they are missing a soul. 99% of the time they are as normal as you and me. Well, at least normal like...well...most of you anyway.

Peter Swanson writes these wonderful modern noir novels. For me, he is a bridge between the vintage noir novels and films of the 1940s and what I hope will be a new wave of noir novels. Jonathan Moore is another writer who has been writing books that make me nostalgic for those hard boiled pulps infused with the

literary values of the past. I breezed through this book so fast the ink and paper nearly caught on fire. I'm already pining for the next one.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Diane S ? says

Think it might be time for me to take a psychological thriller break again. They are all blending together, and the plots just seem to darn familiar. Am in the minority in my rating and review for this one, but that has happened before and I'm sure will happen again.

Loved the setting, not that many books are set to n Maine and from the descriptions it sounds gorgeous. The rest of the book was rather predictable, easy to guess what was coming next. A few of the plot twists, didn't make sense. One in particular I couldn't understand the reason for, and it kind of disappeared, no meaning forthcoming. Didn't particularly care for these characters, even Harry, who was for all intents and purposes meant to be the good guy. He was, I suppose, but also naive and some of his actions didn't make much sense either. It was fast paced, but the reason I am giving it even three stars is the ending. That came out of nowhere and was surprising.

So a rather quick but predictable read that pulled itself up by the ending.

ARC from Edelweiss.

j e w e l s [Books Bejeweled] says

4 STARS

I have a very smart friend that works as a literacy coach for elementary school teachers. Her advice for young students just learning how to tell someone else about a book? Four little words.

SOMEBODY WANTED_____.

BUT_____.

SO_____.

Is that genius or what? I love it. So short and simple, I'm doing it now. Without spoilers of course!

SOMEBODY WANTED: (You better hold onto your hats, ladies and gents). There are a few characters that want to engage in taboo relationships. They are socially ostracized because of vast age differences and the fact that the participants are sometimes related! As in step parent/step child. Ick. Ick. Ick. There is also a clear cut case of Mrs. Robinson carrying on with a teenage boy. As usual, Swanson has come up with some dark characters living blissfully in their own corrupted world.

BUT: Of course, when normal-minded people have suspicions about these abnormal relationships carrying

on, they tend to interfere.

SO: Since the rational world interferes with the corrupted world, the unbalanced characters become completely unhinged while protecting their own sweet spot and well, WORLDS COLLIDE!!!

There you have it, people. An elementary synopsis of a complicated, layered plot!

And, just a few more words, if I may: This is a compulsive, addictable read. Swanson just keeps getting darker and more forbidden with his plots, next thing you know he'll turn into Gillian Flynn (Haaaa, just kidding, there is no one else residing at the level of our lovely dark goddess, GF).

As usual, Swanson writes in a delicious film noir way. This story is set on the coast of Maine with all the foreshadowing and dangerous mood that accompanies the angry sea. All of his books are clever puzzles with messy edges. At the heart of his novels lies the most basic of human urges: greed. Sometimes the main character is all about the money, money, money.

In this, Swanson's latest, the main characters are driven by sex, not money. And, if you know Swanson, you know this isn't going to be everyday lust, he has to pull down that murky shade and create an illicit, evil scenario. LET ME WARN YOU: ALL BOUNDARIES ARE CROSSED.

I wish I could give 5 stars, but I can't only because it was a bit predictable to me. I'm starting to see a plot pattern in his novels. However, I still love this one!!

This is Swanson's fourth novel and he is extremely consistent in the psychological thriller genre. ALL THE BEAUTIFUL LIES reminds me most of The Girl with a Clock for a Heart, mainly due to the slightly clueless, but lovable, protagonist.

All the women in this novel are strong and richly defined, definitely Swanson's strength. I highly recommend... with reservations because of the subject matter.
