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The Things We Wish Were True: A Novel



Synopsis

In an idyllic small-town neighborhood, a near tragedy triggers a series of dark revelations. From the outside, Sycamore Glen, North Carolina, might look like the perfect all-American neighborhood. But behind the white picket fences lies a web of secrets that reach from house to house. Up and down the streets, neighbors quietly bear the weight of their own pasts - until an accident at the community pool upsets the delicate equilibrium. And when tragic circumstances compel a woman to return to Sycamore Glen after years of self-imposed banishment, the tangle of the neighbors' intertwined lives begins to unravel. During the course of a sweltering summer, long-buried secrets are revealed, and the neighbors learn that it's impossible to really know those closest to us. But is it impossible to love and forgive them?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After a miserable experience with July's Kindle First selection, I was tempted to pass August by. But the title of this book caught my attention, and it was as far removed from historical fiction--or in the last case, hysterical fiction--as I could find. Folks, this little book was a treasure, a journey sometimes pleasant, sometimes perilous, but always gripping, through a bucolic and almost too-good-to-be-true fictitious suburban enclave just outside the very real metropolis of Charlotte, NC. I can attest to the landscape's atmosphere conjured in deft, often lyrical prose by the author--I've been there and seen that back in the day, and it's real enough. Without trying, I believe you can actually smell the chlorine, hot asphalt, cut grass, and hear the sounds of kids at the pool,

amplified by the concrete surround and the humid, breathless air. Besides the setting, which in the author's hands is a character on its own, we see this small world through the shifting viewpoints of children and adults. Normally I'm not a fan of a multiplicity of such viewpoints from so many characters, but this time it worked for me. I found the necessary distinction between the adult women, Jencey, Zell, and Bryte, and the adult men, Lance and Everett, for example; they each had a voice, and each had secrets that colored those voices. Above all is Cailey, who sees more that summer than she wants to see and hears things she shouldn't, and tries to understand. She speaks honestly, as a child, and not a miniature adult. That is difficult to portray with skill, I think. I thought at first that the issue of secrets might mean this story would have something of the ominous thriller about it, but no. Not all secrets are scary, and not all lies are harmful.

According to the description, this is a book about secrets. There ARE secrets in the middle-class enclave of Sycamore Glen, NC. Old ones and newer ones; important and trivial. Some are deep, dark secrets and some are the kind of secrets that people think they've kept under wraps until something happens that makes them realize that everyone knew all along. The smooth surface of social intercourse must be maintained and sometimes pretending not to notice what's right in front of your nose is the only thing to do. But it seems to me that on a deeper level it's a book about loss. The losses that all of us sustain as we go through life and must deal with as best we can. There are inevitable losses that creep up so quietly we don't see them coming and couldn't do anything about it if we did. Sometimes (ironically) our losses are a result of getting what we hoped and worked for. Bryte has longed to be a mother, but her achievement of that status brings an end to the freedom and satisfactions of her career. Zell and her husband have worked and sacrificed for years to raise their children and make them independent adults. Now they can enjoy their well-earned "Golden Years" but Zell has a sense of emptiness and would give anything to go back to the chaos of a young family. Be careful what you wish for. There are the unspeakable losses that we know CAN happen. The end of a marriage. The death of a spouse or child. A severe, life-changing illness. We make bargains with God and do all the right things. I will eat a healthy diet, exercise, buy a car with a good safety rating, and never, ever let my children out of my sight.

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