



## **Backwoods**

*Jill Sorenson*

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The more you trust, the more you risk...

When plans for a wilderness retreat with her teenage daughter Brooke go awry, Abby Hammond reluctantly pairs up with Brooke's stepbrother and his dad, Nathan Strom, for the weeklong trek. The only thing Abby has in common with the bad-boy former pro athlete is that their exes cheated with each other. That...and a visceral attraction that's growing more complicated with every step through the picturesque woods.

Nathan's wild-card reputation lost him his career and his family. After years of regret, he's ready to fight for what truly matters—and that includes Abby's hard-won trust. When Brooke goes missing, Nathan knows he's her best and only hope of rescue. But the deeper into the rugged mountains they go, the more dangerous the territory will prove—for their safety and for their hearts.

## **Backwoods Details**

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Author : Jill Sorenson

Format : Mass Market Paperback 378 pages

Genre : Romance, Romantic Suspense, Suspense, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance

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# From Reader Review Backwoods for online ebook

## Christi Snow says

### My Review:

For the first half of the reading of this book, I felt like I was watching a horror movie. They are hiking in the woods and you know something bad is going to happen, but just don't know when it's going to occur. That sense of suspense was definitely there for me throughout the first half of the book and I kind of liked that. With that being said, the build-up to that something happening lasted so long...it felt a bit anti-climatic when it did happen because "the bad thing" just wasn't that momentous of an event in the book. In fact, the actual first contact happened off the page and the reader didn't find out about it until a couple of hours after it happened. After all that build-up, I just expected some heart-pounding action and suspense and danger. Don't get me wrong...there was some of that, but what was there was fairly shortly lived in the book. But that was my only real complaint about the book. The rest of it was really good.

There were two romantic stories in the book....Nathan and Abby; and Leo and Brooke. They are on a backwoods backpacking trip. The only one who's truly excited about being there is Brooke...everyone else ended up there through a bizarre set of circumstances. 18 yo Brooke and 19 yo Leo are step-siblings. Leo's in trouble with his parents and he's been forced to come because they hold the purse strings. He's also incredibly attracted to Brooke although knows that the family situation makes them a REALLY bad idea. Nathan is Leo's dad and he fills in for the other set of parents who have to cancel at the last minute. Leo and Nathan do not get along. Abby is Brooke's mom and she came along just because she knows that Brooke's father is unreliable (he's the one who cancelled last minute) and she doesn't want Brooke to end up abandoned somewhere in the forest.

It's an interesting family dynamic. Everyone here is related, but the adults don't know each other at all, even though they are all family. Immediately, there are sparks between Abby and Nathan. But the same thing that is keeping Brooke and Leo apart is holding them back too. They already have a complicated family situation (their ex's are married to each other now) and it will just mire things more for them to become involved. It's really complex, but I liked that. Their reasons for staying apart are good ones, but their circumstances make bonding between them inevitable. This is a high-stress situation where they relied upon one another for life. Before the life-threatening part occurred, they had already connected by friendship and respect. The danger aspect just made them that much closer.

And both Nathan and Abby are great characters. Nathan is a recovering alcoholic. He knows that his marriage fell apart because of his mistakes. He's also made some awful choices as Leo's father. That's one of the things that binds him and Abby. She counsels him a bit about where he's handling his son wrong and hurting both of them. Abby is a survivor from the earthquake. When it happened, Brooke was home alone and Abby was trapped in her car for 3 days. She has lingering mental/stress issues because of that. Nathan helps to see that she isn't weak because of that. I liked the two of them together. This was a great example of a good relationship making each person stronger. They were both definitely better people by knowing each other.

I enjoyed the book. I enjoyed the backwoods setting. (I want those hot springs!) I enjoyed both romantic story lines. I'm hoping that we get to see more of Brooke and Leo after a few years pass. Their story is most definitely not done. As well as Wyatt...I would love to see what Jill Sorenson does with him in the future...she's incredible with wounded scarred characters and that kid most definitely has issues, but you could see his good heart in this one. Definite future hero material.

I received a complimentary copy of this book in return for an honest review.

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### **Erin says**

Sorenson excels at building complicated relationships. There are exes, steps, cheaters, scorned lovers, and alcoholics in this book. And that's apart from the action sections, which is some Hills Have Eyes type shit.

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### **Cindy ~ SnS Reviews says**

This was a character driven story about 4 people who end up on a journey of self discovery during a backpacking trip. There was also some suspense of murders that had happened over the years in the woods where they are camping and they unsuspectingly are right in the middle of his hunting ground and he's watching them.

The characters are a mother and daughter and a father and son. There is a bit of a twist as the two adults had been married to people that had an affair with the other and were now married - which made their collage age kids step siblings.

Both Abby Hammond and Nathan Strom were still trying to put the pieces of their lives back together. Nathan had the most demons as he had been an absentee father and husband for most of his marriage due to being a professional baseball player who when his career ended he spiraled into alcoholism and alienated his family even more. He has been sober for 3 years now but his son has never forgiven him and makes it very hard for Nathan to try and repair the damage. Abby on the outside is a pretty put together woman but on the inside she still suffers anxiety from the earthquake and the blow to her esteem by her husband's betrayal. She never let that get in the way of her relationship with her daughter though.

These four people go through a lot of emotions out on the trails. Abby and Nathan are attracted to each other but both leery about getting involved but they have some great one on one talks that start the healing process for them both and they form a bond. The kids have been best friends for years with the son doing his best to keep it that way for fear of ruining something good. Their story doesn't end on happy note so hopefully they will get their own book in the future.

This was more of a love story than the intense action suspense that we got in the first book but the author still keeps your attention throughout with the pain of these 4 people.

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### **Luli says**

*You can find this review in English below*

Dnf @ 86%

Esta reseña es una de esas que se escriben solas.

Durante toda la historia había algo que no cuadraba, no encajaba, pero me gusta esta serie y quería ser justa.

No ha podido ser. Pero lo he intentado, eso seguro.

Tenemos 6 personajes principales (los malos, Nathan, Abby, Brooke y Leo) y todos, absolutamente todos son TSTL. ¿Ves? Fácil...

Poco les pasa para lo que les podría haber pasado. Son tontos hasta los malos. Y poco originales, en fin, lo de siempre, asesinos y violadores de rubias jóvenes y guapas. Esperaba algo más, la verdad.

La premisa es difícil de tragar. Pero bueno, venga, vamos a ver por dónde salen. Y lo peor es que los personajes son interesantes y reales en sus sentimientos y emociones, pasamos un buen tiempo en sus cabezas viendo qué piensan, sienten y quieren. Y es complicado. Son divorciados, un ex alcohólico, otra con serios problemas de confianza y dos adolescente con las hormonas desatadas. Pero en cuanto el *suspense* entra en juego, todo se viene abajo.

Los malos son planos y sin caracterización. No se sostiene que hayan podido estar tanto tiempo a sus anchas. La autora ha decidido convertir a algunos protagonistas en (mi querido y adorado) McGyver y a los malos les ha hecho una lobotomía. Ha sido insultante. Tan insultante como el hecho de que varias muertes y desapariciones (view spoiler) en la zona no hayan sido resueltas ni relacionadas entre sí por la poli pero la protagonista, Abby, lo hace en 5 min y desde su móvil. Pobre polis....

Otra vez nos encontramos con sexo inverosímil, en el peor momento y casi incómodo de leer: (view spoiler) Venga hombre.... Increíble. No me lo podía tomar en serio. Y la última gota que colma el vaso es cuando *cierta persona* va sola a una cabaña para... para hacer el tonto, oiga, porque si (view spoiler)

Así que no, si la autora priva a sus personajes de sentido común, la historia ya no tiene ningún sentido (valga la redundancia) para mí.

Una pena porque esta serie me estaba gustando.

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Dnf @ 86%

This review is one of those that is written by itself.

Throughout the story there was something that did not fit, did not sound right, but I like this series and wanted to be fair. It has been impossible. But I've tried, that's for sure.

There are 6 main characters (the bad guys, Nathan, Abby, Brooke and Leo) and all, absolutely all of them are TSTL. See? Easy...

Even the bad guys are fools. Add to that the unoriginal suspense plot (your usual sickos wanting to rape and kill young, pretty and blond women) and little else. I really was expecting something more.

Plus, the premise is difficult to swallow. But hey, come on, let's see where this goes. Best of all is that the characters are interesting and real in their feelings and emotions, we spend a good time in their heads seeing what they think, feel and want. And it's complicated. They are divorced, an ex-alcoholic, another one with serious self-confidence problems and two teenagers with *out-of-control* hormones. But as soon as the *suspense* comes into play, it all comes crashing down.

The bad guys are flat and lack characterization. It is a miracle that they have been able to spend so much time without being arrested or killed. The author has decided to turn the heroine into (my beloved) McGyver and the bad guys have been lobotomized. It has been insulting. As insulting as the fact that several deaths

and disappearances of women (view spoiler) in the area have not been resolved or related to each other by the cops but the heroine, Abby, does it in 5 min and only with her smartphone. Poor cops...

Again we find unbelievable sex, at the worst time possible and almost uncomfortable to read: (view spoiler) Come on... Give me a break...

I could not take it seriously. And the last straw was when a certain girl goes alone to a cabin to... to play the fool, because if you have been just (view spoiler) You definitively should have known better.

So no, if the author deprives her characters of common sense, the story no longer makes any sense for me.

A pity because I loved this series.

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## Shauni says

Originally reviewed for Bodice Rippers, Femme Fatales and Fantasy

Looking for an emotional and psychological ride? Want a book that makes you ask when does trust begin? Or better yet, how does trust begin? Jill Sorenson offers us just that in Backwoods.

Abby Hammond married young and became a mother soon after. Making her husband and daughter her entire world. When she walked in on said hubby, doing a client (who didn't need implants, btw), Abby was devastated. But she started to grow up.. when a serious earthquake kept her from her young daughter for three days (not knowing if she was dead or alive), Abby began to have some serious control issues. When a kayaking trip with her sister and daughter turns into a run in with Drug Smugglers (Island Peril), Abby tips completely over the edge. Obsessive compulsive here we come. But...those are Abby's issues, she manages to remain a fantastic mother, even managing to let go when it was time to go to college. But one thing experience has taught her (after one too many broken promises) .. don't trust the ex to keep his word. So when a fun filled family vacation is planned (The ex, the stepmom, the daughter and the Stepbrother) Abby invites herself along. A good thing because, you guessed it, no dad.

Nathan Strom also married young and had a son young. But he focused on his career as a baseball player and pretty much left his young wife and son alone. Making sporadic attempts at fatherhood and never really connecting. When an injury stymied his career, Nathan turned to painkillers and alcohol, slowly disintegrating. A YouTube video, gone viral caused him to lose all custody and any chance if a relationship with his son. Now he has an adult son, who is troubled and starting to completely slip away and Nathan has no clue how to help him. So when the ex invites him along on this family trip, Nathan jumps on it. Only to find out that he has been set up.. Both his ex and her jerkwad of a husband fail to show up. Who did show up is the sexy mother of his son's stepsister. Yeah, this trip has complication written all over it.

Ignore the family dynamics for a moment, they will be hiking into an area where several young women have disappeared ( over several years ) and only obsessive compulsive Abby seems to see a connection. Unable to convince the Others not to go on the hike, the "family" sets off.

Back to family dynamics and there are plenty..Nathan and Abby sizzle but try to ignore it. Could things get

any more tangled? Brooke and Leo (the kids) steam but there are issues there as well. Nathan is really trying to connect with Leo, Brooke is a typical self absorbed pretty eighteen year old girl and Abby is just trying to stay clean... and away from Nathan. But when Brooke goes missing, the emotional chess board gets tipped and it's game on..

Brilliant! Ms. Sorensen ties this all together in a realistic manner. Yet offers enough twists and turns to keep a reader on the edge of her seat. A totally enjoyable read.

Shauni

This review is based on the ARC of *Backwoods*, provided by netgalley.

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### Anita says

I've been enjoying Jill Sorenson's *Aftershock* series for the past three books, and while they aren't necessarily my favorite reads, they are exciting and attention-hooking, to the point that the books become un-put-down-able. Sorenson always jumps right into the action, with an earthquake burying San Diego in the first book, a plane crash and a loose killer in the second, and a kidnapping of the main characters into the harsh California badlands in the third.

*Backwoods* felt kind of tame and mellow in comparison. Though to be fair, we DO get a glimpse of what's to come when Abby keeps dropping news article mentions about missing young girls and a dead body or two in the area she and her daughter and company will be hiking around.

And to be totally honest, I get that you shouldn't wrap yourself in a bubble just because some bad things happen in life, but shouldn't we also be a bit more cautious if young girls keep going missing in the same area within a certain time frame. I'm no advocate of coincidences, honestly, and so that just screams *SERIAL KILLER RAPIST* to me. But then again, I've maybe read one two many crime thrillers, and grew up with a very paranoid mother who makes sure to lock the doors all the time and calls you regularly when you're out with friends just to make sure you're not lying in a ditch somewhere.

Anyway, logic aside, that was only one of the reasons I didn't find *Backwoods* as enjoyable as the other three *Aftershock* books. To be totally honest, our entire crew of characters is just a walking TSTL team waiting to happen, and that's only because they are letting a socially and sexually unaware eighteen year old girl lead them. I'm not saying that eighteen year old girls aren't capable of leading a group into the wilderness for a nice few days of hiking--obviously Brooke knows what she's doing and can organize a mean hiking expedition with the best of them.

But when she stopped to talk to two strangers, completely ignorant of the leering looks one of them was giving her, and then proceeded to tell said strangers where she and crew were heading... Well, girl you might as well just throw yourself into their arms and ask to be kidnapped if you're going to outline your entire trip, including bathroom breaks to people you don't know.

Once again... A lot of young women have gone missing in this area. If Abby weren't so paranoid, and if Nathan hadn't cut Brooke's conversation off, I'm not sure Brooke would have made it very far in her hiking endeavors.

Anyway...

The book actually starts off pretty slow with a lot of family drama that seriously feels like a dysfunctional family soap. Nathan's wife Lydia cheated on him with Abby's husband; Abby walked in on her husband Ray going at it with Lydia. Now their two respective kids seem to be fighting an intense case of teenage hormones for each other... and then Abby and Nathan end up getting it on. Later on, we even find out that Ray cheated on Lydia and another divorce is in the works.

Meanwhile, our group spends their time trying to keep the peace while hiking around in the wilderness--a trip that is supposed to take at least three days with no contact with the outside world. Meanwhile, a lot of young women have gone missing from this location... Have I already mentioned that?

And Brooke is all, "Stop being so paranoid, Mom. Nothing is going to happen."

Famous last words.

*Backwoods* had a promising premise. I just wish I could scrounge up enough care for the characters to like this book more. The rest of the book really was pretty exciting and intense. And as per Jill Sorenson standards, the story was fast-paced; I rolled through it pretty quickly.

The characters, mainly, were the most frustrating and I had trouble relating with them. In fact, I don't even think I was able to like *any* of the characters, which, while isn't a first for me, is not exactly a very common thing. Sometimes, there's at least one or two characters I can find some like for. Unfortunately, *Backwoods* is not one of those books.

So... probably if not for the fact that the book was written well and the story was not bad, I probably would have given this book a much lower rating. Call me biased--I DO like Jill Sorenson and her books, and the *Aftershock* series is an overall enjoyable one.

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### **Booklikes-opoly**

#### **Roll #7:**

**This book takes place in California.**

**Page Count: 378**

**Cash Award: \$3.00**

**Updated Bank Balance: \$39.00**

**See Also: Freebie Roll Activities**

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## Kbird says

I LOVED the first three novels in the Aftershock series, but this one was only okay for me.

I think the backwoods kidnapping premise just seemed so far fetched, and the characters also came across as less captivating for some reason.

I liked all the characters, I just wasn't a fan of the overall plot and how the characters interacted and relationships transformed over time.

I really found Brooke to be an idiot by the end.

The main romance was between the young (for having 18/19yr olds) parents Abby and Nathan, but I was more interested in the Brooke and Leo show. Abby was too self conscious and a worry wart/scaredy-cat for my taste. I liked the taboo element of Brooke and Leo's romance.

I needed more to the ending, and was slightly disappointed in how things fell into place at the end.

Still a great series and a book I would recommend reading to finish up with the series. It's no Aftershock or Badlands though.

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## Jae says

Totally different from the other stories in the series. Definitely was not what I expected from **Aftershock series**. 30% suspense and 70% romance, can you believe it?

Still, JS writes a great story and dialogues so I enjoyed this nevertheless.

Hooked on this series, **4 stars**.

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## Lynn Spencer says

**B- at AAR, so 3.5 stars here** Do you like action adventure romance? If so, you really should be reading Jill Sorenson if you aren't already. She writes fantastic, hot action romance and does it very well. I loved **Aftershock**, and while **Backwoods** isn't the best of her books, it's still a cut above.

Though technically part of the series that started with **Aftershock**, this book can be read on its own. And what is **Backwoods**, exactly? Well, it's pretty much a lovely romance that takes place on The Camping Trip From Hell. Abby Hammond is definitely not an intrepid outdoor explorer but she decides to tag along on a wilderness camping trip with her daughter Brooke because deep in her heart of hearts, she knows her ex-husband's tendencies. And one of those tendencies is to be a total workaholic who cancels on events, leaving their daughter Brooke stranded.

Abby doesn't want Brooke to be out in the wilderness all by herself, so she goes along. Predictably, the ex-husband cancels and Abby and Brooke find themselves on a camping trip with Brooke's stepbrother Leo. Oh,

and since the ex-husband and his new wife canceled, the stepbrother's father Nathan is now coming along on the trip as well. This all sounds more confusing than it is; somehow Sorenson manages to make this tangle of people feel like they fit together on the trip.

This is a partial review. You can find the complete text at All About Romance:  
<http://likesbooks.com/cgi-bin/bookRev...>

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### **D says**

pretty good. while some of the plot edged toward overwrought, the author still put the work in to make her characters feel real and their choices understandable, given their extreme circumstances. no faint praise for the thriller genre.

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### **Sarah says**

good

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### **Jacqueline says**

This book was ultimately just okay. The relationship between the two main characters just bewildered me. They had very little time on page together, almost no dialogue interaction that wasn't about their exes or their kids, there was no sexual tension or tenderness or working together or anything and suddenly they are in love? It was a weird non relationship, all smoke and mirrors. I felt absolutely nothing between them. Even when they were rescuing her daughter they disagreed on how to do it and fought each other and ended up doing their bits to effect the rescue separately. Then they decided to have sex after the kids got away back at the same camp the bad guy and snatched the girl from, when they knew they bad guys were out there and figured well it's raining so surely the psychopath won't come after us in the rain.

I actually liked the relationship between his son and her daughter much better. There was genuine feeling there.

Generally I like JS much better than this. Oh well, this one just wasn't for me.

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### **Ni\_kii says**

Really 4.5 Stars

Reviewed at <http://www.scorching-book-reviews.com...>

FTC : I requested this from NetGalley as I have with all of this series.

This book was unexpected. Unlike the rest of the series (which I would have tagged Suspense with a

romantic sub-thread) this was Romantic Suspense. It has fantastic characters, fantastic dialogue and very tense suspense plot, just like the rest of the series, but that is where the similarities end. It didn't feel like an Aftershock book but that isn't to say that I didn't enjoy it. With more characters, there is more switching POV's, which can be a little dizzying although the actual switching does flow very well, and there is also a NA romance thread. I need to clarify that, although the characters Brooke and Leo are technically Step-brother and Step-sister, there is no blood relationship. They have different parents but, as some reviewers have found this relationship questionable, I thought I should point it out as they have been Step-siblings for 7 years.

Although the main relationship mentioned in the blurb is the one between Nathan and Abby, I didn't notice any extra time given to their relationship. In fact, there is time given to all four relationships (The hero-heroine romances and the parent-child relationships), this book probably felt more romantic as half of the relationships in it are romances.

I liked the Nathan and Abby relationship. Both have been burned by love and are have put any future love interests on hold. The main priority for the both of them is to work on the relationship they have with their child and they struggle with keeping this a priority throughout the book. I loved the way they helped each other develop as a parent; Abby tried to help Nathan with his relationship with Leo and Nathan tried to limit Abby's protective over-mothering of Brooke. I also enjoyed the openness they had with all of the other characters in the book. Whether it is professing their attraction to each-other or Nathan disclosing facts about his past relationship with his father to Leo, both of them seem to have no time for half-truths or confusion and I love characters like this. When their relationship evolves into a more sexual one, it seems to take on a new depth and I enjoyed it even more. The sex scenes were on-page and hot as hell by the way :D

Brooke and Leo were a different kettle of fish as, like true teenagers, their entire relationship was built on half-truths and misunderstandings. Both wanted each other, both didn't know what to do with those feelings and neither had bothered to ask the other how they other felt about this. They were defined, before they ever had romantic feelings about each other, as Step-Siblings and it was a relationship Leo struggled with especially. This was made harder for him by Brooke. Brooke was constantly flaunting her sexuality at Leo, making him uncomfortable and I'm not sure she quite understood what she was doing. Another reason I loved the character of Abby was that she took the time to explain to her that what she was doing was wrong and harassment (if only this was a conversation more parents had). I did respect the fact that Brooke took onboard what was said to her and thought about her actions. It was a sweet relationship but I can understand people's objections to it, especially when Brooke was constantly trying to flirt with Leo whilst referring to him as "step-brother" minutes later. I was hooked by their story, wanting to know just what the heck was going to go on between them (if anything!).

My favourite plot is the fraught relationship between Leo and Nathan. Nathan has been an absentee dad with alcohol abuse issues but, now clean and sober, he craves a relationship with Leo. He has no idea what is expected of him and his frustrations made my heart bleed. Having no positive Father role models, he has no idea what to say or how to act. He also has to learn the hard lesson that being a sperm donor does not give you parental rights, that being an actual parent gives you the right to respect and a voice of opinion. Abby facilitates this relationship by being the voice of an experienced parent but it is Nathan himself that puts the time and effort into the relationship and I hoped Leo could stop being angry with him.

The suspense plot was as creepy as I have become to expect from Jill Sorenson. It was there to fuel all of the relationships and it was fantastic. The ending of that plot was pretty unexpected and I can't help but hope this isn't the last we've seen of a particular person.

Overall, this is a very different story to the rest of the Aftershock books and, unlike them, I think it could be read as a standalone. With complicated family relationships, complicated young love and a refreshingly uncomplicated romance, this could be one that checks many boxes for many romance readers. The incredibly creepy suspense plot helped keep my interest too :)

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### **? Sassy ~ Amy ? says**

The guy on the cover is great, but it was pointed out by his son in the beginning of this book that he was in need of a manscape... Sooo, where's the hair? Minor details bother me, sorry.

Abby goes backpacking with her college bound daughter, her daughter's step-brother & the step-brother's dad. Girls have gone missing & Abby is a little afraid... Most of this story is about Abby & Nathan really liking each other, but skimming away because of their children & the need to repair the damaged relationship between Nathan & his son Leo.

Brooke gets kidnapped, everyone needs to save her & get out of the woods alive... Not as intense as it could have been... Then off to more relationship fixing.

This was a much better story than the first, but it reads like a psychologist trying to write a romance novel/mystery. The story seems on the verge of being a haunting poignant novel, but the author backs off as soon as it gets near that line... It could have been way better, but skirts the touchy subjects. It's always it "almost" happened but didn't.

This is a great book for the reader who is looking for an intense fast paced romantic suspense without having to deal with the emotional trauma of the experience. It is non-graphic in nature & a safe read for those who do not want to be surprised by intense violence.

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### **Hbeebti says**

This was good, but not as good as book one. Some things bothered me. The reference to the earth quake was talked about or thought about over and over again. It was annoying. Seriously it felt like it was a filler or something. Also the Brook and Leo thing was just left dangling. Does that mean there will be a book about them later? Or was that another filler? The ending could use an epilogue because I want to know what happened next. But maybe it will come up in the next book. Like with Ella and Paul.

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