



# The Milestone Tapes

*Ashley Mackler-Paternostro*

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## **The Milestone Tapes** Ashley Mackler-Paternostro

The only thing Jenna Chamberland ever wanted in her life was to be a good wife and a good mom. In death, she'll find that she still wants the same things.

With stage-four breast cancer, a terminal diagnosis and six months to live, Jenna fears what awaits her family after she is gone: Her husband, Gabe, will be left to raise their daughter alone, and Mia, only seven years old, will be forced to face a world without her mother.

Ten blank tapes to teach her daughter everything she'll ever need to know.

Dead before Mia ever really got to know her, Jenna exists now only in pictures and watercolored memories, and Mia finds herself struggling to remember her mother in a way that feels real. But on the ninth anniversary of Jenna's death, she will return to her daughter through a series of audiocassettes. One tape each of the milestones of Mia's life, and with them, a letter explaining that Mia should only listen to the tapes when the time is right.

With the help of her mother's long-gone voice, Mia may just learn how to embrace the challenges and triumphs of her ever-changing life with humor, grace and a lot of hope.

Rereleased for its second anniversary, the novel that book bloggers have called "beautiful" and "unforgettable" returns with new content and tapes never before read.

## **The Milestone Tapes Details**

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Author : Ashley Mackler-Paternostro

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## From Reader Review The Milestone Tapes for online ebook

### Julie says

The Milestone Tapes by Ashley Mackler-Paternostro is a independent publication. I was provided a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

The first part of this book chronicles Jenna's struggle with advanced breast cancer. She has a good marriage and beautiful daughter and fights the good fight. After an exhaustive fight Jenna passes away peacefully on a beautiful fall day leaving behind her devastated family. But, because Mia was only seven years old and she would not have her mother around for all those milestone moments when a girl needs a mother, Jenna has the foresight to record a set of tapes for her daughter to listen to as she goes through the various stages of her life.

The second half of the book deals with life without Jenna. We are privy to the words that Jenna recorded for her daughter and we see how things turn out for Gabe as he eventually moves past grief and realizes that Jenna would want him to be happy and so he begins to date and live his life once again.

This book is a difficult read due to the rather depressing subject matter. I usually read for entertainment purposes and I am not prone to consider this type of book escape reading. It is a touching book that of course is very emotional and sad, but it's also uplifting and shows there can be no greater love than that of a mother for her child. I do recommend being prepared for the realistic depictions of living with cancer and the high emotional level can have one feeling worn out. I decided the next book I read will be something light and fluffy in order to shake off the aftermath of this one. I don't know if this book is for everyone. If you have had an up close look at cancer and the effect it has on the patient and the family then you might find this book cathartic, but for me I just couldn't help but fall into a funk after the first few chapters. I may feel things a little too much especially since these are fictional characters, but I did feel like I was experiencing everything right along with them. For me this is a one time read as I don't know if I could put myself through a second reading of it. But, don't let my depressive attitude keep you from reading this book. Again, it is sweet, and painful, and emotional, but I couldn't help but think that Mia was a lucky girl in that she had a mother that thought so much of her and prepared in advance this way for them to share their lives together although Jenna was no longer with them in body. Jenna's spirit though at peace still flows through the hearts of those she left behind and you can't ask anything better than that. This one is 4 stars.

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### Laura says

The Milestone Tapes is one of those books that really touched me because it is about the journey of love between a parent and child. Jenna Chamberland loves being a mother, but after a 3-year battle against breast cancer, she is dying. She makes the decision to stop treatment so that she can spend the most quality time left with her family, especially her 7-year-old daughter, Mia. Jenna records a set of ten audiocassettes that her daughter can listen to as she grows older and goes through different milestones in her life that her mother would have helped her through had she been alive, such as her first love, college graduation and her wedding day. What a loving provision and legacy from a mother to her daughter!

As I began reading this book, I realized there were several similarities between Jenna and myself. Jenna was married for about twenty years, had a loving husband, Gabe (who reminded me so much of my own hubby!) and had a child later in life. So in this respect I could really relate, and my heart broke time and time again as she tried to deal with her situation. I kept asking myself how I would have dealt with dying had I been in the same situation.

The novel is divided into two books. The first part is Jenna's story and the second, taking place nine years later, is Mia's. The novel flows well and Jenna is very much alive even in the second part through the milestone tapes she leaves for her daughter. I loved reading this part the most. It read like a YA novel and I liked Mia, who was then a sixteen year-old teen. The first part was very emotional and I was in tears as Jenna's illness progressed.

I was surprised how well the author dealt with the sensitive topics of dying and motherhood. She has no children of her own, but captured the love and complex bond between mother and child. The characters were real to me, especially Mia and Ginny, with her words of wisdom. The only relationship I found underdeveloped was that of Jenna and her sister, Sophia. At the onset, Jenna has a strained relationship with Sophia who harbours resentment from childhood, but this gets quickly resolved within a few pages. It wasn't realistic to me. This could have been better explored, while some mundane everyday dialogue and scenes eliminated.

I think the beautiful book cover captures the essence of this novel. It is haunting and symbolic. Better editing was needed, however, as I caught many typos, missing words and repetitions, especially in the latter part of the book. Barring this, I think this is a beautiful and well-told story. Ashley Mackler-Paternostro is an author to watch out for, having shown talent by writing a story that pulled at my heartstrings. I look forward to reading her next novel.

Note: This book contains f-words, some religious expletives and crude words, and one sex scene between a married couple.

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### **PuPilla says**

Nahát, meglepett ez a könyv, nem számítottam sokra tőle. Egy haldokló anya, és az ő üzenetei a lányának... Szépen van megírva, és jó volt olvasni, de nem könnyű néha... Betegség, gyász, halál, minden van benne, ugyanakkor az egész életet is megpróbálja felölelni és annak minden fontosabb pillanatát.

Bővebben: <http://pupillaolvas.blogspot.hu/2015/...>

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### **??™ says**

My path has not been determined. I shall have more experiences and pass many more milestones. - Agnetha Faltskog

Gabe and Jenna Chamberland had it all - a dream home, successful careers and a beautiful baby girl. until the day Jenna finds out she has malignant breast cancer. before she loses her battle with the disease, Jenna leaves something behind for her daughter Mia by gifting her with the Milestone Tapes.

author Ashley Mackler-Paternostro's writing shines with a passion that is remarkable for a first novel. her book speaks of the pain of suffering, the tragedy of loss, the triumph of the human spirit, the solace brought by forgiveness and of the enduring bond which exists between mother and child that even death cannot

sever.

this was a very emotional read for me. it is difficult to concentrate when your eyes get teary now and then while your fingers tremble a bit and you are hesitant to flip the pages for fear of what would happen next but unable to stop yourself from continuing because the story has drawn you deeper than you intended it to be. this was especially true during the first part of the story. Jenna's condition reminded me so much of my Mom whom i lost to cancer. i was with her during the last month of her life. i saw her fighting and trying to be strong for all of us. i witnessed her decline and it was so painful to bear, to see your loved one suffering and you can only do so much. i was there until the end when she was brought to the emergency room where after some time she could no longer go on and finally gave up...

these were the memories that kept churning in my mind as i held the book in my hands. the author was able to capture all the range of emotions, the drama and the joys of the Chamberland family and the other characters. i got so involved in their experiences. they were so real and tangible that they became my own. clearly, *The Milestone Tapes* is one of the best, most endearing and unforgettable stories i have read so far this year and i highly commend the author for a job well done!

*Disclosure of Material Connection: i received a copy of The Milestone Tapes from the author. i did not receive any payment in exchange for this review nor was i obligated to write a positive one. all opinions expressed here are entirely my own and may not necessarily agree with those of the author, the book's publisher and publicist or the readers of this review. this disclosure is in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255, Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.*

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## **Kelly says**

### **The Long Goodbye**

*(Full disclosure: I received a free electronic copy of this book for review through Library Thing's Member Giveaways program.)*

Jenna Chamberland is tired of fighting. For the past three years, she's battled the cancer growing inside her. A radical double mastectomy, chemo, radiation - none were enough to prevent the cancer from metastasizing, from traveling to her bones, her liver, her lungs and her brain. With the diagnosis of stage four cancer comes the promise of not *if*, but *when*: prolonging the battle will give Jenna a few extra months, at best; but there is no cure for the cancer riddling her body.

Faced with the inevitable, Jenna decides to discontinue treatment and enjoy what little time she has left: Mothering her six-year-old daughter Mia, for half of whose brief life Jenna has been ill; preparing her husband and best friend Gabe for what lies ahead; and reconnecting with her sister Sophia, from whom she's been estranged since the loss of their own mother to breast cancer more than two decades ago.

The first half of *The Milestone Tapes* ("Book One") concerns Jenna's "long goodbye." With six months to live, Jenna aims to make the most of them. She celebrates a seemingly endless parade of "lasts" with her family: her last excursion to a favorite vacation spot with Gabe; the last of Mia's birthdays that they will celebrate together; the last Christmas she's able to spoil the ones she loves.

Finally, and for a brief moment, Jenna is able to be the mother she's always yearned to be. Mia was only

three when Jenna's doctor handed down the diagnosis of stage three breast cancer. In Mia's short memory, Mommy is a woman who spends most of her time confined to bed while "aunt" Ginny bathes, feeds, comforts, and scolds her. While grateful for the help, Jenna can't help but feel jealous - jealous that another woman has raised her daughter, and so well. The long goodbye is a chance to reclaim this title, if only for a little while.

Inspired by a fellow support group member, Jenna decides to record a series of tapes - the titular milestone tapes - so that she can continue to mother Mia, even in death. Becoming a Mother, Father Getting Remarried, College Graduation, First Love, Wedding day, High School Graduation, First Broken Heart, Leaving Home, First Time, Cancer: ten (potential) milestones, ten corresponding tapes. "*You raise your children to fly*, Elizabeth had said, *but a mother's work, even in death, is never really done*, Susanna whispered from behind."

Fast forward nine years. Book Two is about Mia, now sixteen years old, and her discovery of the milestone tapes. As she falls in love for the first time (and subsequently suffers the inevitable broken heart), becomes acquainted with Gabe's new girlfriend Kris (the only one he's deemed important enough to even mention to Mia), moves away from her mother's dream home in Port Angeles to join Gabe and Kris in Seattle, and (eventually) becomes a wife and mother herself, Mia devours Jenna's gifts with eager and bittersweet anticipation.

Touching and a not little sentimental, *The Milestone Tapes* is about as depressing as you'd expect, but with moments of sweetness and humor. I'm not afraid to admit that certain passages had me bawling like a baby.

But the book isn't without its flaws:

Early reviewers noted that the book was riddled with editing errors. While this edition has been overhauled, there still exist a number of rather obvious mistakes. (I'm no professional editor, but the missing, extra, and incorrect words are hard to miss.) This edition includes the five "missing" milestone tapes, which the author notes are very rough cuts; these decidedly worse.

Book One could stand to be about 50 pages shorter; this first half really dragged on for me.

Though ostensibly the focus of the book, the milestone tapes are only mentioned three or four times in the first 50% of *The Milestone Tapes*, usually briefly and in passing. Jenna finally gets around to recording them in one day about two months before her death. Since they seem such an integral part of the story, I expected her to expend more effort on them: pondering them, mapping them out, creating them. (I've spent more writing cookbook reviews, okay.) And given that she dedicates about an hour of her time to each tape, the actual recording (or transcript, as it were) is surprisingly brief.

Jenna and her family are so privileged that many readers, I suspect, will have trouble relating. For example, there's no indication that Jenna's illness impacted the Chamberlands financially. At all. The cost of Jenna's treatment, her flights to and from Seattle, the extended leave of absence from work: none of these prove a hardship, however minor.

In fact, the Chamberlands are able to afford a (seemingly full-time) nanny/housekeeper in Ginny, who literally shows up on Jenna's doorstep, unbidden, like a graying guardian angel. Jenna splurges on Mia's birthday party to ridiculous excess (a petting zoo? really?) and blows what sounds like a ton of money on Christmas presents. While I suppose this can be justified inasmuch as they are Jenna's "lasts," there's no indication that dropping money like breadcrumbs is out of the ordinary for the Chamberlands.

(Exhibit A: their dream home in Port Angeles. Incidentally, I call BS on Jenna's home office: there's no way that a) Jenna, a successful author, would decline her own home office in lieu of working in the kitchen and b) that Gabe could "sneak" an office into a home that he and Jenna are planning - carefully, down to every last fixture - together. Yeah, I'm just nitpicking now.)

To wit: Mia grows up to be one pampered teenager, with a closet stuffed with pricey clothes, a shiny new Jeep for her 17th (16th?) birthday, and a father who takes her globe hopping during school vacations.

In fact, the intersection of poverty and health care is only alluded to once, in passing, in the form of Susanna Taft - the inspiration for the milestone tapes. At thirty-five years old, this mother of five was married to a logger whose "company's insurance hardly covered her treatments." He was forced to leave his dying wife alone during the day, since he couldn't afford not to work. She recorded six milestone tapes: one for each of her boys, and a sixth for her beleaguered husband. I can't help but wonder if Susanna's story would have proved more interesting (and representative of most people's experiences) than Jenna's.

Last but not least, I nearly threw my Kindle across the room when Gabe insisted on uprooting Mia and moving her to Seattle - *just before her senior year of high school* - so that he could marry Kris, a woman Mia has known for all of two months. It's a real shite move, and one that seems out of character for Gabe, considering that he spent the past nine years commuting to Seattle so that Mia could stay in the home Jenna built for her. He couldn't hold on one more year? Really? And I don't know any teenager who would have handled this indignity with half the grace shown by Mia.

Overall, the things I enjoyed about *The Milestone Tapes* were almost equally tempered by those I didn't quite like. An okay book, but not the first on death and dying I'd turn to when in need of a good cry. 3.5 stars, rounded down to 3 on Amazon.

<http://www.easyvegan.info/2014/05/30/...>

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## **Mish says**

The premise and story is alright but seriously, does anybody proofread these amazon kindle special offer books? I hate being the preposition-pronoun-missing word-grammar police but the errors got worse and worse as the book progressed. And even the font changed for awhile half way through and I don't think it was intentional. The first half is about the doting mom, Jenna, dying of breast cancer but not wanting to miss any moments with her family. It was an interesting perspective since I lived it except on the opposite end with the husband dying of cancer. I agree with the other reviews that the character introduction was tedious and that the dialogue/concepts are above the comprehension of a 6 yr old. The second half skips 9 yrs which is a tad awkward and then focuses on the daughter-dad relationship and I'm afraid the soul is sucked out of the book in the second half. Plus the errors get worse which is more distracting. Better luck next time.

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## **Dierdra McGill says**

The first thing that drew me to this book was the cover. It is a stunning cover and I fell in love! I put this book at the top of a huge list of books I want to read based on the cover. Don't judge a book by the cover come to mind? Probably should have for me!

The blurb for this book caught my attention also and I recently lost my mom, in November actually so that also drew me in because it has been hard and I thought reading this might help a little and it did, the only reason I did 4 stars instead of 3. The story was really interesting, emotional and heartfelt but there were some things that made this really, really hard to read and not in a good way.

There were a lot of glaring mistakes in this book sadly. Enough to where I could just not "look over" and go on because I had to keep going back and re read something to try and figure out what the author meant to say. For example "she put on hand on her hid" it took me a few minutes to see that it was supposed to be head. Another one was "Made the Jam yesterday, blackberries to who wouldn't have it in my freezer" Does that make sense to you? It doesn't to me! This is another example "you need nothing wrong" dad trying to console his 6 year old daughter. How does you need nothing wrong make sense? These are just a few of the MANY errors, PLEASE have your editor go back over this. I hate to see you get bad reviews for this because this really is a good story.

The other thing that drove me nuts about this book was the over details, I know what a soda pop can looks like when it has been in ice, I know what a cigarette looks like when it is lit and or smoked. The book felt so bogged down by details sometimes it drove me nuts. Then there was such a lack of detail in other parts! I never really knew what Jenna looked like before she was sick for example, I never could get a good picture of her in my mind.

Overall this got 4 stars because this is a debut novel and it was a good story!

I would recommend this book and author because I did really enjoy the writing and the overall book just needs to be re edited and IMO was a little long for this sort of book and really could have been cut down a lot because there were a lot of places where things were repeated and I don't feel there was a need to be repeated.

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## **Jiffy says**

GoodReads needs to add a bookshelf called "Attempted to Read". My Kindle tells me I've made it 12% into this book. To say the grammar is horrible is an understatement. And there's already been at least one instance of using the wrong character name in a paragraph. Every time I came across a grammatical error, I tried to tell myself I could stick it out to finish the book. When I found the incorrect character name followed by a "you're" that should have been "your", I threw in the towel. I realize we all make grammatical errors, but this book appears to have not been proofread or edited, at all. Life is too short...

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## **David Adams says**

I have to be honest, here... I really wasn't expecting much when I bought The Milestone Tapes.

How wrong I was.

I write science fiction with aliens and explosions so that's the kind of thing I'm drawn to when I read. However, while I'm more than happy to explore outside my genre, reading chick-lit is definitely right down the bottom of the list of weekend activities I enjoy... the experience hovering somewhere between being waterboarded and stung to death by millions of tiny scorpions. Further, the Milestone Tapes is also a writer's debut novel and I know from experience that, regrettably, so often a young writer's debut novel just isn't their best work.



So when I saw that Ashley was a new author to the Kindleboards, and she mentioned in a thread that she hadn't had any sales of her debut novel yet... I had my reservations, but against my instinct I decided to help her out. Her cover was beautiful, her book was cheap and she conducted herself professionally in the threads she posted in so I thought, hey, why not... I'll buy a copy, read the first bit of it, say how it wasn't my thing, give the book a short three star review and be done with it. I went into this work feeling like I was just going through the motions; I thought reading this was going to be a chore, feeling only slightly mollified by the knowledge that I only had to force my way through enough of it to write a review and then I could walk away.

All that went out the window when, at about 2:40am on a week night, I suddenly realized what time it was and just how deeply I'd been sucked into the world of the Chamberlands.

First of all, the book is quite long given the premise, and this surprised me. I read a few pages then procrastinated for about a week and a half, casting my eyes longingly towards that scorpion pit in lieu of reading, before deciding I should just get it over with... but when I did I couldn't put it down.

This 'all at once' thing might not work for everyone. The book's not a light read, especially the first part; Ashley pulls no punches emotionally and The Milestone Tapes details clinically, precisely and elegantly the subject matter, and does so with a quiet grace that echoes the events it is portraying... made all the more tragic by the fact you \*know\* what's coming. I'm a bitter and jaded cynic hardened by years on the Internet, twisted and emotionless to my blackened and empty core, and yet... I found the quiet grace of Jenna's extremely well researched, tragically believable journey towards the untimely end of her life haunting and intensely emotional, especially the end of book one.

The Milestone Tapes is subtle in the way it handles things; there's no fate of the world at stake here... no dramatic hijinks and just-in-the-nick-of-time rescues, just painful and humiliating death slowly creeping up on one woman's life for the first half, then the blossoming life of her daughter in the second. This works to the novel's advantage, giving it a grounding in the real world and sometimes -- just sometimes -- make you wonder if the writer isn't writing this as a therapy novel, working from painful experience. I don't know the answer to that and the fact that the book inspires such thoughts is to its benefit.

I used the highlight function to draw attention to lines I really enjoyed... and there were a lot more of those than I originally thought possible in a work like this. I can't share them directly, but when enough people highlight a section that part will show up at the bottom of the book's page on Amazon... so \*eventually\* she'll see what I liked.

The prose is elegant, tight and descriptive -- flowery in places, and sometimes slightly melodramatic to my eyes, but in such an emotionally driven piece this really isn't to be unexpected. Some things that stood out:

- The descriptions of the results of the mastectomy were quite chilling.
- Ending to book one. Yeah... that was to be expected. I didn't cry, stop looking at me like that. I didn't!
- Book two, February. I laughed, then smiled.
- The epilogue was great.

That said... there \*are\* flaws and when you're reviewing you're a critic, and the role of a critic is to be critical. I found a scattering of typos; nothing too distracting, nothing that would be caught by a spellchecker, but I did notice the occasional missing word or missing piece of punctuation (period or space usually), or other mistakes that slipped through the review process (a bowl of 'icy' instead of 'ice', for example). There were also a few awkwardly phrased sentences where I thought an additional proofread would be the last little

bit of spit-polish that the story needed. It seems a shame to have crafted this wonderful, engaging tale without ironing out the bugs; in a lesser story I would have just ignored them, but *The Milestone Tapes* is good so my tolerance for avoidable, simple errors was reduced.

Fortunately the areas needing just a little more polish seemed concentrated in clumps, though, which suggested that the section I was reading was added in when the book was nearly complete so was just missed in the review process. These occurrences were fairly uncommon and almost to be expected in a work of this length, so they didn't distract me from the flow of the narrative... but I did notice them.

I felt the story lingered too long on the first half. The story was, of course, about the titular tapes... but they didn't show up for a while and some of the scenes, such as finding the float on the beach, were cool but unnecessary. I tend to be brutal with my editing, so if I had my way... honestly I would have cut some scenes, or even compressed the first half of the book into the prologue, leaving the entire work about Mia's life, using the tapes as a device to look back at Jenna's experiences through Mia's eyes. As it stood I was dreading the half-way change in protagonist for a number of reasons but it's handled smoothly (and with manly, manly tears).

I did think Gabe was "too perfect", as was Bryan, Mia's teenage love interest. I know, I know... it's chick-lit. Unrealistically perfect male romantic interests are par for the course, almost a required feature, but still. As a male reader, I found his character to be sometimes hard to relate to. He was obviously wealthy, worked in an interesting field and was very good at what he did, was a perfectly loyal husband, was loving towards Jenna and their child to the bitter end and never did anything wrong the entire book... and was very handsome to boot.

While I'm sure that person exists somewhere, for us mere mortals the strain of watching your beloved wife wither and die as you sacrificed everything you'd spent your life working to achieve would probably drive us to do at least one stupid thing during that time... or at least drink a lot more. I find stories of ordinary, flawed people doing extraordinary things despite it all more engaging than reading about perfect people always doing the right thing, so I would have liked to see the strain of what was happening effect him a little more than it did... to show the effects his grief were having on his life aside from a little tiredness and job changes, but the story is not really about him. It's about Jenna and her daughter.

I thought it was a bit odd that the cost of Jenna's multiple treatments and hospitalizations didn't get mentioned, and in my mind this represents the loss of a potentially engaging story element. The Chamberlands had money, clearly, but they are also both freelancers and self employed; it's assumed they had health insurance, I suppose, but... Jenna's decline seems to be a journey without external stress, where Gabe stoically stands by her, her sister finds time to reconcile with her despite her own troubles, and her child goes largely unaware of what's happening. I hinted to this above, but I feel there needed to be more external stress in this story... and a mountain of crippling hospital bills could very well have been that little extra 'thing'.

Expanding on this slightly, I think this story could have been more tragic if, while the disease destroyed Jenna's body, it also ravaged Gabe's personality; he could have gone from successful, clean cut, perfect husband to a bankrupt and bitter loner buried in debts accrued trying to save someone he loved but ultimately died, and I think that would have shown that when someone suffers as Jenna does, that darkness can begin to creep out of the person and drag others down with them. It's a missed opportunity, but the story works as-is and, again, it's chick-lit, so the way Ashley chose to write this tale is absolutely forgivable... even for soul-less misanthropes like myself.

I felt the decision to make the protagonist for the first half of the book a writer to be a dangerous choice... but one that ultimately paid off. Writers writing about writing in fiction is a minefield; it can become self-indulgent and whiny, where the "self-inserted-author-avatar" struggles with writer's block and procrastinates by writing reviews instead of working on their own looming deadlines (uhh...), etc etc. Fortunately Ashley navigates this minefield with the same grace seen in the rest of the novel and nothing like this happens at all. Never once did I get the impression that Jenna's profession as a writer was merely a way for her to say "Look! Look! I'm a writer too!" and undue time is not spent on what she writes and why; instead, Jenna's profession added to her character and to the work as a whole so I'm storing that one under 'dodged a bullet there'.

Some tapes were not read "on screen" or even mentioned; four of them in fact, out of ten. I'm stuck between thinking this is sequel bait, or perhaps a deliberate choice on the author's behalf, but I kind of felt that there was an unspoken promise made when the premise of this book was laid down that we, the audience, would get to hear all ten tapes. We were guests in the minds of first Jenna, then Mia, and so it seems a little... unfair... towards the audience to be denied those experiences.

Fortunately, the digital world provides remedy (as it tends to do). Either these tapes were sequel bait, or they and the story behind them would be released as short stories, or something akin to this. In any event, I expected to read all ten tapes and was surprised that nearly half of them were absent entirely... not even mentioned. I would have preferred to have some of the more fluffier scenes edited out and the rest of the tapes put back in, but I suspect Ashley has her reasons for this.

I went into this book expecting -- almost wanting -- to hate it and came out really, genuinely impressed by the quality and strength of Ashley's writing. While there are flaws in The Milestone Tapes, there's nothing here that really made me roll my eyes or mutter, 'Oh jeez, really?', so I think my final result for this book is 4.5 stars... which, on Amazon, I'll choose to round up to 5. Ashley has done mighty fine work here, and the fact that someone who represents possibly her most potentially hostile audience -- someone who, at least initially, was just begging for the flimsiest excuse to switch off the Kindle and call it a day -- managed to not only finish it, then award this story the best possible score Amazon allows, shows the universal appeal of The Milestone Tapes.

At the end of the day, despite some minor niggles, this is a cracking story by a new writer who I know will go far in the self-publishing game.

I look forward to reading more of her work and I'm reluctant to end the review by recommending this story to women who like chick-lit, because I genuinely feel that it should be recommended to \*anyone\* who enjoys a great story. I write that because, well, that's what The Milestone Tapes is; a cracking read by a young, talented author who has crafted an engaging, realistic, tragic tale with an uplifting ending that really draws you in there and keeps you there.

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## **Margaret Tidwell says**

I can't even put into words how much I truly loved this book. I had a hard time reading this book because it made me cry so much and even though it made me cry I didn't want to put it down and stop reading it. I loved following the characters and even though you know the mom is going to pass away I had to keep reading. I believe that this book was so hard for me because I can relate to the topic. As some of you know I go to a cancer center every month to get my MS treatment so I do know a lot of people who have cancer and

I have had several family members pass away from cancer as well. It broke my heart to know that the girl at such a young age was going to lose her mom.

I found the idea of making milestone tapes is a great idea even if you don't know you are dying. My great grandma passed away when I was a senior in high school and I was so close to her. After reading this book I wish she would have written down things or even made tapes so that I could go back and listen or read her words. I am sure any person would love to go back and read what their parents left them.

When it comes right down to it I have to give this book 5 stars and it will be a book that I will always keep and I am sure I will read it over and over again. I recommend this to anyone who knows what it feels like to lose a loved one!

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### **Katie says**

Loved it!!

Ashley Mackler-Paternostro did a beautiful job in portraying what it is like for a family to go through their life with breast cancer, death, and the upcoming lost years looming over them. It truly gave me a deeper appreciation for those dealing with, trying to understand, and comprehend the horrific disease of cancer. It was very well written, enjoyable, and I didn't want it to end!

The only thing I didn't really like about the book is that it was written in 3rd party narration. I feel like it could have been so much more powerful if spoken directly from Jenna and then Mia. Something is just lost when someone else is telling you how that person felt. Nonetheless, it was very well spoken for, regardless of who was telling the story.

Great job for her first novel!!

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### **L.E.Olteano says**

Originally posted at Butterfly-o-Meter Books on Apr 7 2012:

I'll begin with the obvious. Freaking AMAZING cover!! Seriously, freaking amazing!! Genius work. The author's site is also pretty freaking gorgeous and the cover for her other novel is genius as well. This angle of things is spot on, it's a full 5 butterflies all on its own.

Now, this was hard to rate. I really loved reading it, but I couldn't ignore some things that bothered me. I'll just say what did bother me and get it out of the way. This book needs more editing, not dramatically so but there were a few spots where it was clear the editor's attention wasn't 100% there. It didn't bug me out because I tend to skim over the stuff if I'm really loving the story, but I won't pretend the elephant in the room isn't there. More editing, a careful comb-over look and this would be, for me, easily a 5 butterflies read. Now that we got that out of the way, let's move on.

The story is not just for every reader out there. Especially if someone close to you was lost to cancer, I'm not going to say dive in unless you're brave and have gotten emotionally balanced after your loss. I had a hard time reading the novel and I cried like a million and one times during. So it's not one of those easy entertainment reads. It's dramatic, in places intense and very demanding. It's not a light read, and you should thread carefully into it in my opinion, because it will leave you ruffled. You'll be smiling by the end, I'm sure, as I was too, but ruffled.

The plot is an emotional journey through life, love, loss and change. The focus shifts from Jenna to Mia somewhere around the middle or so of the book, and just when you might be thinking the tough part is over you'll find there's another one waiting to pounce on you. The author didn't even capitalize on all the sources of drama this story had to offer and I was sobbing all over the place. In fact I really appreciated the fact she didn't capitalize on all the tearjerkers, it felt gracious somehow instead of overwhelming.

The characters were very interesting to me. Jenna was my absolute favorite, I won't lie about it. She was selfless and caring and loving, which only made her fate feel that much horrible. Her milestone tapes was a very intriguing idea, and I've been pondering on it since I finished reading the book. I'm not sure how I would feel about having some with my grandma, for instance. I have something like 16 seconds recorded of her voice, and that by mistake; 2 years since her death I still combust in instant hysterical crying whenever I hear them. I'm not sure how I'd react to having tapes of her talking to me about stuff... but maybe years from now I'll be glad for those 16 seconds of her voice. As I've said, it's an intriguing idea.

Mia was my second favorite, though she felt almost surreal to me. I mean, I know for a fact I would have reacted way differently to things. Especially to Gabe's jerkiness. I'm sorry, but he felt like a jerk to me. Having this whole other life for himself away from her, getting his jollies off and all, then trotting in with his new thing and deciding changing Mia's life wasn't a referendum... I mean, I would have SO made him regret that attitude for the rest of his life. I'm sorry, but that's just me. Him getting together with Kris wasn't an issue, though I would say I didn't at all agree with the way he introduced her to Mia's life. By all means, move on. But don't do it by bludgeoning your daughter's support system. I really disliked Gabe from a point on, really really did. Kris was a lot more of a parent to Mia then he ended up being, and that's a sad situation. And he doesn't get off the hook with the line of what he lost, sorry. And it especially doesn't justify him sneaking off to a whole other life for himself then force it down your throat when it suits him. Gah Sorry, I get carried away about these things.

Anyways, this was a really engaging read and a truly touching story. I especially enjoyed the Epilogue part, and the end as 'The Beginning' touch. That was a great view on life, in my opinion, and a beautiful way to wrap the story up. I say this book is definitely worth your time, even with those minor editing needs, it's a great story and it's written in an engaging and evocative way.

Give it a shot, it will most likely win you over and break your heart all within the first couple of pages.

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## Wendy says

There are a lot of high ratings for this book, which, along with the beautiful cover (seemingly rare these days among self-published and e-book authors) and the intriguing premise, led me to give it a go. I'm not sure if the 4 and 5 star ratings are because this is the author's first book, but I really can't agree with them. I am struggling to give it these 2 stars.

[Unspecific spoilers may follow.]

The story was tackled moderately well, though I thought going into it that Jenna's story would be more of a prologue than a full half of the book. (view spoiler) It left Mia's story feeling a bit rushed, and we didn't get to hear all of the tapes. I assumed from the outline of the book that we would get to hear all of the tapes, or get an explanation as to why we didn't hear all of them. It was a bit of a let-down. Mia's milestones also seemed hurried, and not everything can be explained away by how fast young love moves. Everything happened to her within a couple of months, and it just seemed unrealistic to me. The epilogue was well done, though (view spoiler).

The writing and lack of editing was ultimately what let me down. I originally thought that this file had been badly converted from PDF, but then realised I'd downloaded it straight from Amazon. There were so many glaring typos and omitted words that it became incredibly distracting. Added to this were mixed metaphors (children were 'under toe', not 'under foot' or 'in tow'), sentences that were mixed up or had extra random words added in, and misuse of words (e.g. cankerous instead of cantankerous, some verbing of nouns). This will probably seem offensive, but at some points I felt like the author was a very high level non-native speaker of English. There were a lot of errors a native speaker (especially a writer) shouldn't have made (e.g. 'tipped toed', 'dapping' instead of 'dabbing'). I stopped several times to decide whether or not to abandon the book completely, but I wanted to see where the story went.

The dialogue often seemed forced or unnatural, and a lot of descriptive passages could have been edited out. Funnily enough, some of the best prose was used in describing buildings and decor, and I think those sentences would have been better used to describe the people. I was stuck imagining Jenna as Ginnifer Goodwin.

I would recommend this book to others, but only if it undergoes another couple of rounds of severe editing. The author shows promise, but desperately needs a good editor.

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## **Parita says**

### **Great story**

Maybe just not as interesting to read. The tapes took ages to come into picture! Execution could have been better.

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## **Kelly Cochran says**

Please note I would have given this an additional half star if it were an option. The reason for not rounding up to a 4 star review is the number of typos and missing words. I hope the author has had a chance to go back and update the Kindle version which is the version I read as it truly distracted me from the touching story.

- spoilers below -

The story is about the heartache of losing someone you love, not only for the one who is left behind but for the one who is dying. It centers around Jenna who has cancer and her daughter Mia.

The beginning of the book was a little slow to get started and I am glad I stuck it out because as much as I

hate to admit it, I cried!!! So, I know the book touched me. Also, a little confusing for me at least was the use of the names Jenna and Ginny for two important women in Mia's life.

As another reviewer pointed out, the ending wrapped up rather quickly. I would have liked to have seen additional development between Mia and Kris, as well as, more about Mia and her life after the breakup of her first love.

All in all this was an enjoyable story and hope the author continues to write.

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