



While I'm Falling

Laura Moriarty

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"*While I'm Falling* deftly captures the moment a child realizes that growing up means being responsible for your parents' mistakes--and preventing yourself from making the same ones. Laura Moriarty keeps getting better and better."

--Jodi Picoult, author of *Handle with Care*In *While I'm Falling*, Laura Moriarty presents a compelling depiction of how one young woman's life changes when her family breaks up for good.

Ever since her parents announced that they're getting divorced, Veronica has been falling. Hard. A junior in college, she has fallen in love. She has fallen behind in her difficult coursework. She hates her job as counselor at the dorm, and she longs for the home that no longer exists. When an attempt to escape the pressure, combined with bad luck, lands her in a terrifying situation, a shaken Veronica calls her mother for help--only to find her former foundation too preoccupied to offer any assistance at all.

But Veronica only gets to feel hurt for so long. Her mother shows up at the dorm with a surprising request--and with the elderly family dog in tow. Boyfriend complications ensue, along with her father's sudden interest in dating. Veronica soon finds herself with a new set of problems, and new questions about love and independence.

Darkly humorous, beautifully written, and filled with crystalline observations about how families fall apart, *While I'm Falling* takes a deep look at the relationship between a daughter and a mother when one is trying to grow up and the other is trying to stay afloat.

While I'm Falling Details

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From Reader Review While I'm Falling for online ebook

Sara says

If you've read *The Rest of Her Life*, you already know that Laura Moriarty has such an easy command of language that not a lot needs to happen in her books for them to seem gripping. *While I'm Falling* is no exception. To over simplify, a college student, Veronica, struggles with a pre-med course load and her parents divorced resulting from her mother's indiscretion. Veronica makes one bad choice after another over the course of a pretty crappy weekend. Her mom, Natalie, is reeling from the financial consequences of the implosion of her marriage. In the hands of lesser authors the story reads like chick lit, but Moriarty's rendition focuses more on the complex relationships within families mostly that of a mother and a mature daughter.

Lorilin says

What I liked most about this book was its completeness. Sometimes authors find the laziest possible way to define a problem and then solve it--especially in modern fiction--but Moriarty really took her time developing the story and the characters. She made me care about the people in the book. She gave their lives depth and meaning, so it was easy to relate to them.

I was especially impressed that Moriarty was able to create a believable relationship between a mother and her two daughters. Each character was unique--and uniquely flawed. But because their flaws were revealed through complex issues and dilemmas within the story, I found myself empathizing with all three.

There were a couple of questionable parts in the story when I couldn't quite believe that a certain character would respond the way she did, but, overall, I very much enjoyed reading this book.

Diane Chamberlain says

A charming book. I love how Moriarty put her character up a tree and then threw rocks at her. Lots of rocks. :)

Carole P. Roman says

A well-written account of a family in turmoil. Life is a neatly wrapped package for the Butterfield family. A happy marriage with two daughters, one a highly successful lawyer and the younger pre-med. The future looks settled for the couple and their children in their well-ordered world, until the father returns from a business trip and finds a strange man in his bed. His world shattered, he divorces his wife, and the family slowly unravels, the skeins of their lives pooling into a giant puddle of despair. Like a game of dominos, each member of the family's life is knocked out of whack, so that their plans dissolve, leaving them rudderless. This was a great depiction of the death throes of a family, the struggle to come to grips with their

imploding world. The road twists, skewing judgement, allowing the accepted rules of behavior to warp. Each one is faced with their derailment, and Moriarty does a fantastic job by giving each character a different voice. Veronica is left to sink, her parents wrapped up in their own disillusionment and pain, selfishly letting her flounder until common sense resurfaces. Both Veronica and her sister learn to see their parents as real people who's lives have taken a surprising turn. Astonishingly poignant, frighteningly real, this is a story about coping and learning to accept one's limitations by opening their eyes and being honest with themselves.

Denise says

I am a huge fan of Laura Moriarty, and I was not a bit disappointed with her latest offering, "While I'm Falling." It is wonderfully relationship driven and fast moving. Ms. Moriarty creates very real, multifaceted characters and has us caring about them before we know it. I sometimes gauge a book by how many times it makes me cry, and this one made me cry twice which is a very good sign. Lol

This is the story of pre-med student Veronica Von Holten and her family. Veronica is struggling and wondering if pre-med is really for her when she learns that her parents are divorcing because her always dependable mother has allegedly had an affair. While dealing with her parents' break up and problems in school, she makes a series of poor decisions over a weekend. It is at this time that her mother shows up at her dorm with the dying family dog and no place to go. Veronica is pushed to the brink. While the story is told from Veronica's perspective, we are also treated to some perspective from her mother which was perfect and necessary.

I really loved this book and as a bookseller will definitely be recommending it to my customers.

Sarah says

SOOO disappointing. I read Laura Moriarty's first novel, Center of Everything, and just loved it to pieces. But both her follow ups have been meager at best and this last one is just not good. The pacing is unbelievably slow (despite a good start) and the actions of everyone involved seem more forced than realistic and certainly repetitive. Three hundred pages is essentially dedicated to a one week time period where a college age girl gets in trouble with her one-time house sitting job, struggles with her parents, her grades, and her way in life. I'm a decade past college so it's really frustrating to read. Just not enough character growth, really. She had a party and has to clean up? And it's a challenge? BOO.

Then there's the dog. The newly divorced mother considers putting the elderly, but still in decent shape, dog down because she's moving into an apartment that does not accept dogs. You lost me there and never got me back. Considering a dog over an apartment? Seriously? I know how terribly difficult it is to rent with dogs - I have two large breeds - but I have never considered for even a second putting the dogs down or giving them away for a place to live. Ridiculous. Unsympathetic. And a reader who will never go back to this author.

Diane Eichler says

When everything in your life seems to be going the opposite of how you want it to be, you just have to let go and understand that the universe is trying to tell you to make some changes.

Linda Lipko says

Oh, what a disappointment this book is! After reading *The Center of Everything*, I was eagerly anticipating another wonderful book by the same author.

The story line of a college age girl whose parents are getting a divorce simply felt contrived, flat and lacking of depth.

I finished the book, but long about 1/2 way through I wanted to chuck it out a 20 story window.

Not recommended.

Laura says

Veronica's father finds Roofer Guy in the marital bed, and decides to divorce her mother. As a result, Mom starts on one of those downward slides where everything just snowballs into *A Bad Life*. Veronica, in college as a pre-med, is heading in the same direction. Not doing her job as an RA well, not getting Organic Chemistry, just Not Doing in general.

The problem is that I just didn't feel sorry for her. I know what depression can be like, and yet there was a part of me that wanted to say "Grab hold of yourself - snap out of this!". It just felt that Veronica didn't want her life to be better, that she just didn't care. Since she wasn't sympathetically drawn as a character, *I* just didn't care. Which is a pity, because my first thoughts were that this book might make a nice progression up from Sarah Dessen's oeuvre for my students.

Sonia Reppe says

Disappointed in this one. Theme is things falling apart: Veronica's parents marriage and her college classes are out of control. Then she makes some bad choices and those get out of control. For me the premises and situations of this book were so unimaginative. Like if the author was in a hurry and said to herself, "Okay, how can I give my character Veronica a really shitty day? Like this: She'll get in a car wreck and she'll throw a party that gets out of control. And I'll have her cheat on her boyfriend so that relationship falls apart." About the characters, the parents were written okay, but Veronica's friend and boyfriend were just there to say to Veronica the exact thing that she needed to help her move along in the story. So cliché. I could talk about all the other clichés, like when the mom moves into a cheap apartment that smells like curry, and the wholesome, charming, highschool homecoming queen who is different now—she is goth. It was so predictable: the cute guy in the dorm whom she hooks up with, and everything else.

Clif Hostetler says

The angst of the mother-daughter relationship is thoroughly explored in this book as only the skillful writing of Laura Moriarty can do. However, also contained in this book is exploration of an example of how a long time marriage can end up in divorce. The book is structured around the parallel actions of a mother and her daughter, and as things develop their lives appear to be mirror images of each other. They both make mistakes, and they are both "falling" from their former lives into a potentially sad future. The question is, will the daughter be doomed to suffer similar consequences to those of her mother? Conversely, can the mother learn from the daughter?

The mix of family relationships includes the father, a second daughter (sister), a prospective new step mother, and of course a whole host of other characters who add suspense, love, empathy and confusing complications to the story. Anybody who has experienced the tensions of college student life -- study time versus party time -- will be able to identify with the first person narrative of Veronica, the daughter who is a student at KU. Anyone who has experienced a marriage breakup will probably be able to identify with some of the feelings expressed in the story of Veronica's mother and father as well.

The themes contained in this book will touch the lives of many readers. For those who finish the book, I believe it will enhance appreciation of their relationships with friends and family, and it will encourage their nurturing of personal relationships with loving care.

The book contains some references to and quotes from George Eliot's Middlemarch that literature buffs can appreciate. It would be an interesting exercise to compare the two novels. That brings to mind my favorite George Eliot quotation. "It's never too late to be who you might have been." That quote fits well with this book.

Another thought I had while listening to this book, "Youth is wasted on the young," (George Bernard Shaw). This book also seems to be saying that experience is wasted on the old.

Lisa says

Veronica Von Holten is a pre-med student at the University of Kansas and is struggling through an already tough semester when she gets the news that her parents are divorcing. The stress leads her to a couple of bad decisions over a long weekend, which are only the beginning of an upheaval that will change her life: Her plans, her goals, her relationship with each of her parents.

When her mother shows up at her dorm room, homeless, elderly dog in tow, Veronica is pushed nearly to the breaking point. Her sister lives in California, so for the first time it's up to Veronica to deal responsibly with other people's problems.

Moriarty creates multifaceted, realistic characters, presenting them sympathetically without glossing over their flaws. Neither parent is blameless in the split; each is wounded and at times selfish, but decent enough to not make things worse than they have to be.

The plot of "While I'm Falling" is less ripped-from-the-headlines than the ones in Moriarty's previous novels — not that a timely plot is bad — but in this book a closer focus on the characters allows a deeper look into their fears and hopes without the distraction of a larger issue. There's a little of that near the end,

but the book is about family: what the people in it owe each other, and what they should be able to offer each other freely.

Moriarty's dialogue rings true and her exploration of emotions, particularly Veronica's, strikes the right tone for empathy.

Without dropping into melodrama, "While I'm Falling" puts faces on a family breakdown, allowing us to observe as everyone gets up, dusts off, and starts to figure out where to go next.

Tensy says

Moriarty is a local Kansas writer and I like that she sets her novels in the area where I live. She certainly understands the pulse of campus life and her protagonist, Veronica, deals not only with the pressures of college, but those of her disintegrating family. At one point in the novel she explains, "I was still screwing up. I couldn't stop. It was like I was in free fall." We have all had those moments when a series of events go so badly that the rug is literally pulled out from under our feet and we fall flat on our asses. This happens to several characters in this novel and the plot centers on how they face those crisis. Moriarty does a fine job of focusing on the lives of these women and their inter-relationships. In the novel, we discover that it is when the world looks bleakest and when important things have been lost that we are offered an opportunity to reevaluate our lives and discover alternative paths. This story speaks on a variety of levels about women's lives and the choices we make. I thought to give this to my daughter to read, but the passages describing Veronica's battle with Organic Chemistry were still too raw in my own daughter's experiences in her pre-med classes to find this novel entertaining! Everything she writes about the pressures and competition in that class are uncomfortably accurate.

Chris Blocker says

I like Laura Moriarty. *I really do*. She's really, really nice and her first novel, *The Center of Everything*, was quite good. I had a lot of hopes for her. I scooped her second novel up right away. Huge disappointment. And when the third, *While I'm Falling* came out, I was slow to buy it and even slower to get around reading it. Word came out that a fourth novel was on its way, so I thought I better get to it.

**Another
huge
disappointment.**

Did I mention I really like Laura Moriarty? 'Cause I do. It's just that *The Center of Everything* was good; and *The Rest of Her Life* (TRoHL) and *While I'm Falling* (WIF) were not.

Now, this review is about *WIF*, but it easily applies to *TRoHL*. And since I didn't write a review for the earlier book, this counts as a review for both. The problem with both books is that there isn't much of a story. There's potential for a story, but it just never develops into anything that should be longer than thirty pages. Another problem with both novels is that they're filled with unlikable characters. I don't mean characters that are bad human beings, because those can be fun; rather, characters that are incessantly whiny in an annoying way and bring nothing of quality to the world of literature. Imagine a book about Bella Swan having a bad week: That's the premise of *WIF*. WTF?

Despite having been so disappointed two times in a row, I am still a fan of Moriarty's. I think she definitely has potential and I can't help but blame some outside force for the decline. I will be reading *The Chaperone* when it is released in June. Something tells me this will be the one that brings her out of her slump.

I still believe in you, Laura.

Nette says

I had to read this book in one evening because I had miscalculated when it was due back at the library, and luckily it was a quick read. A nicely done mother/daughter story, enjoyable if not memorable. But what's up with this woman's book covers? This one: one half of a girl with her red hair blowing in wind, snow and dead grass behind her. "The Center of Everything": one half of the face of a pretty redhead lying on grass. "The Rest of Her Life": the back of the head of a russet-haired girl staring at grass. If you didn't know better, you'd think she's writing a series of books about a redhead with a severe facial deformity and an obsession with fescue.

Sarah says

The plot offers no surprises and the story itself is pretty ordinary but what makes Moriarty's novel a worthwhile read is her ability to make her characters come to life. This has been true with all three of her books, I get the characters, understand the motivations that drive them and thus, the course of their actions.

Sheri says

I'm feeling like I'm in kind of a slump here. The past several books I've read have just been too unbelievable and all the plot-wise events have felt convenient and contrived. This one was not an exception.

For starters, the whole ice storm/accident/trucker pick up event was unnecessary. I think Moriarty was trying to add suspense, but then the trucker just lets her out anyway. Kind of ridiculous. And then, Jimmy was the thug that bullied her like they were in 3rd grade. Totally unbelievable series of events. Certainly he would be bad, but how is he gonna bill her? And keep demanding rides?

Also, too convenient that the one person she knows on campus is Haley/Simone who is also Jimmy's girlfriend (and so finds out about Natalie) and whose mom used to be friends with Natalie.

The Marley character was unnecessary (annoying neighbor from a TV sitcom, really), just there to fuel Veronica's disappointment in herself as a caring person when she blows up. Even if she had to be there, having her mom recently deceased was too much.

I found it distracting that there were 2 chapters from Natalie's POV. I get what Moriarty is trying to say about the sacrifices that mothers make (both as people and workers), but I felt like allowing Natalie to give her perspective but not Dan (the father) was a bit slanted.

Overall it was an okay read, but too contrived.

Barb Keltner says

We heard this author read at Watermark Books in Wichita a couple weeks ago and the selection she was reading was so exciting that the lady across from me was actually biting her nails! But really it's just a sweet family story about changes. With a very strong message that all women should work, no matter what their circumstances. The author mentioned that she'd read the book "The Feminine Mistake" that was all about that. Good, good author! Have enjoyed all 3 of her books and heard her speak twice. And she's from Kansas -- a creative writing professor at KU.

Joy H. says

Added 5/26/15.

I decided to read this book after I enjoyed this author's other novel, The Chaperone.

6/15/15 - I forgot to update this review after reading this book. The plot concerns a divorced mother who is having financial difficulties. She turns to her daughters for help. The book held my attention for the most part, but I didn't find it pleasurable. I don't enjoy reading about people's depressing troubles... but I suppose that's the stuff of novels.

I don't like the title of the book because it's too vague.

For an excellent Goodreads review of this book see the review by Clif at:
<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Sharyn Hutchens says

touching and realistic

I discovered this author by chance while searching to see if the 'other Moriarty' might have a new title out. I was pleasantly surprised to discover a new friend I can read when I'm taking a break from my usual mystery and suspense genre. 'While I'm Falling' is a realistic look at the end of a marriage and the effect it has on each member of a family. It's not depressing, but it is realistic. People make some dumb decisions, some decisions that seem reasonable at the time but set in motion events that have (or almost have) bad consequences. It's the story of a daughter coming to know her mother as a person, coming to grips with her own needs rather than just fulfilling those of others, and coming to learn that her actions affect other lives for good or bad. I'll definitely be reading more by this author.
