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Leaving Paradise 10th Anniversary Edition (A Leaving Paradise Novel)



Synopsis

Nothing has been the same since Caleb Becker left a party drunk, got behind the wheel, and hit Maggie Armstrong. Even after months of painful physical therapy, Maggie walks with a limp. Her social life is nil and a scholarship to study abroad her chance to escape everyone and their pitying stares has been canceled. After a year in juvenile jail, Caleb's free . . . if freedom means endless nagging from a transition coach and the prying eyes of the entire town. Coming home should feel good, but his family and ex-girlfriend seem like strangers. Caleb and Maggie are outsiders, pigeon-holed as "criminal" and "freak." Then the truth emerges about what really happened the night of the accident and, once again, everything changes. It's a bleak and tortuous journey for Caleb and Maggie, yet they end up finding comfort and strength from a surprising source: each other.

Book Information

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Series: A Leaving Paradise Novel (Book 1)

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 182 customer reviews

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up—A story of forgiveness and loyalty, *Leaving Paradise* contains equal parts romance and mystery. Seventeen-year-old Caleb Becker was sentenced to a year of jail time for driving drunk and hitting his neighbor and friend Maggie Armstrong. Maggie struggles for more than a year

to be able to walk again, albeit with a limp. Both return to high school with strict instructions from parole officers, parents, and friends to stay away from each other. Despite their history, Caleb and Maggie begin a relationship that is therapeutic for them both. Listeners know early on that Caleb is harboring a huge secret about what actually happened the night of the accident. While the dialogue at times is stunted by clichés and the parents are unnecessarily oblivious to the lives of their children, this is a fast, enjoyable listen that was first published in print (2007). Fans will be glad there is a second book, *Return to Paradise*, (2010, both Flux) to continue the story. The narration matches the alternating chapters. Nicholas Mondelli reads for Caleb and Elizabeth Cottle reads for Maggie. Both do an admirable job voicing the main characters, but their portrayals of other characters are rather poor. It may have been better if they read all characters in the same voice, rather than attempting falsettos and altered tones. Still, this title is recommended to fans of realistic YA romance. —Suzanne Dix, *The Seven Hills School*, Cincinnati, OH --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Maggie has just returned home from a long stay in the hospital to repair the leg that was badly injured in an automobile accident; Caleb has just returned from prison, where he served nine months for driving the car that hit Maggie. In spite of a court order to stay away from her, Caleb continues to encounter Maggie and even ends up working for Mrs. Reynolds, the same elderly lady who Maggie helps. Telling the story in alternate chapters, Elkeles reveals the traumatic accident and its consequences from both victims' points of view. Maggie can no longer play tennis and is now convinced that she is ugly; Caleb must endure the harassment of his former friends, especially the beautiful, seductive Kendra. Not everything in the crowded plot is adequately addressed, but Elkeles creates raw emotions, dialogue, and high-school ambience that's just right. Maggie and Caleb are complex and authentic teens whom all readers will embrace. Theirs is a delicate, delicious love story--without the happy ending. Frances Bradburn Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Plot Summary: One horrible night changed so many lives. Caleb Becker has spent over a year at a juvenile detention facility for hitting his next-door neighbor, Maggie Armstrong, while driving drunk and fleeing the scene of the accident. Maggie has changed from a confident athlete to a solitary, friendless girl with a permanent limp. Caleb gets out of jail just when Maggie is finally ready to return to high school, and she's not ready to forgive Caleb for changing her life for the worse. Caleb and Maggie just want their old lives back, but everyone has changed, and in the end, they

discover a powerful connection within each other. This is, without a doubt, one of the most authentic young adult books I've read in a long while. This is how teens think, feel, and speak, and I'm not sure how an adult like Simone Elkeles manages to channel her younger years, but it's impressive. There's a scene halfway through the story, where Maggie's mother gets up and dances with someone at a festival, and Maggie is ready to die of embarrassment. She's convinced that everyone is laughing at her mother, and by extension, her too, and it's such a quintessential teen moment, because the adult me knows differently. Nobody cared but Maggie, but in a teen's mind the world revolves around her public perception. Thank goodness most of us grow out of that, because it's an uncomfortable way to live. This is one of those stories that is deceptively simple, short, and sweet on the surface. It makes for a fast read, but there are complicated emotions roiling underneath the narrative that alternates between Caleb and Maggie's point of view. I think the power in this book is that Ms. Elkeles took a realistic scenario that could happen to any teen, but twisted it so that the guilty and the victim end up finding their salvation in each other. If only there was a kind of cosmic justice that really did work this way. The silver lining is that they both turn into better people because of what happened. Caleb went from being a thoughtless, carefree 'popular,' into someone who learned that a person's core is more important than the outside fluff. He comes back from prison with new eyes, and sadly for him, he sees his former friends, girlfriend, and family in a new light. Maggie was messed up before the accident due to her broken family, but she comes out much, much stronger than she was before. While I admire *Leaving Paradise*, it had one big flaw from my perspective, and that was its predictability. There weren't too many surprises along the way, and even though I savored how it all played out, the few twists were kind of obvious. I could see them coming from a mile away, and I wish I had been surprised. The good news for everyone who read this book with me is that the sequel, *Return to Paradise*, will be released very soon - September 1, 2010. *Leaving Paradise* came out in 2007, and I can't begin to imagine what the wait has been like for people who read this three years ago, because Ms. Elkeles did not provide a tidy conclusion. Here's another bit of news; on the author's website it said that she's not writing a third book in the *Leaving Paradise* series, so book two will provide the conclusion to this story.

3 to 4 stars Overall I enjoyed the plot of the story. Caleb and Maggie were written in a way that it was easy to connect with and feel for them. However, this is going to sound mean but I feel like the story could have used a bit more revision like it was an early draft that needed a little extra special touch to be even more amazing. If you like teen dramas I recommend it. I look forward to reading the sequel. Rating: PG-13 (profanity, talk about sex but nothing graphic)

Grade: D Maggie is still recovering from a car accident that left her leg permanently damaged. Caleb is just out of juvey for causing that accident, drunk driving and leaving the scene of that accident. Next door neighbors, Maggie wants nothing to do with her former crush, the brother of her former best friend. All Maggie wants to do is run away for a semester abroad, while all Caleb wants is to fit back into their small town, Paradise, and keep the secrets of the accident from coming out. Told in alternating chapters in Maggie's and Caleb's POVs, I enjoyed Simone Elkeles' writing style, although the voices between the characters weren't distinguishable. I wasn't immersed into the writing or characters and could LEAVING PARADISE was a book written for teens by an adult, rather than feeling like I were reading the voices of teens. I thought most of the characters were cliché and underdeveloped and was annoyed with Maggie feeling so sorry for herself. The minor characters were one dimensional and not unique. The plot felt similar to some I'd either read or watched on TV. I didn't like how the teens were portrayed as shallow and unkind to Maggie, yes teens can be mean, but they can also be empathic, especially to a classmate like Maggie who missed a year of school following an accident. LEAVING PARADISE is a predictable story with an unsatisfactory ending.

Found this book slightly unsatisfactory. One of those annoying books you read and are annoyed by how things turned out because it didn't feel finished to me. The first book started off okay than story builds and suddenly everything comes to a screeching halt as incident after incident happen and you're left feeling annoyed and pissed off. Second book just seemed like a brush off and in a hurry to finish the story. Things seemed all over the place for me and though it's not always necessary that loose ends get tied up, this book had more than necessary. I know it's fiction but does this really happen? Within a two year period there have been so many up and downs I feel like I went hours on a roller coaster with no stop. I don't know... Just confused and unhappy with how thing turned out. Wasn't as good as I was expecting after her other books.

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