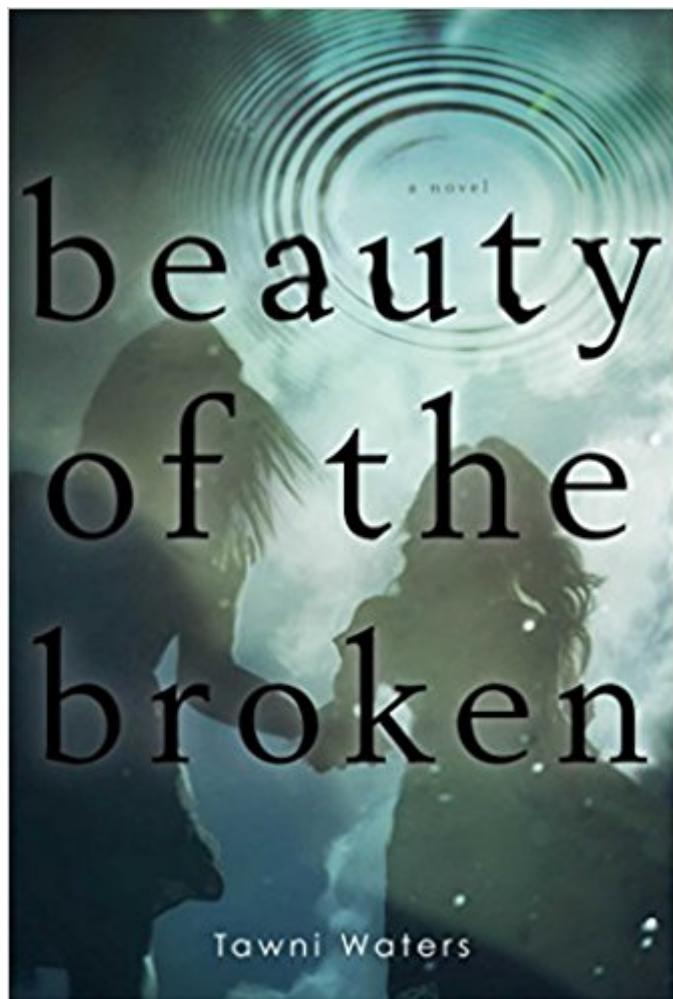


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Beauty Of The Broken



Synopsis

In this lyrical, heartwrenching story about a forbidden first love, a teen seeks the courage to care for another girl despite her small town's bigotry and her father's violent threats. Growing up in conservative small-town New Mexico, fifteen-year-old Mara was never given the choice to be different. Her parents—an abusive, close-minded father and a detached alcoholic mother—raised Mara to be like all the other girls in Barnaby: God-fearing, churchgoing, and straight. Mara wants nothing to do with any of it. She feels most at home with her best friend and older brother, Iggy, but Iggy hasn't been the same since their father beat him and put him in the hospital with a concussion. As Mara's mother feeds her denial with bourbon and Iggy struggles with his own demons, Mara finds an escape with her classmate Xylia. A San Francisco transplant, Xylia is everything Mara dreams of being: free-spirited, open, wild. The closer Mara and Xylia become, the more Mara feels for her—even though their growing relationship is very much forbidden in Barnaby. Just as Mara begins to live a life she's only imagined, the girls' secret is threatened with exposure and Mara's world is thrown into chaos. Mara knows she can't live without Xylia, but can she live with an entire town who believes she is an abomination worse than the gravest sin?

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Simon Pulse; Reprint edition (August 4, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1481407112

ISBN-13: 978-1481407113

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 28 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #947,723 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #86 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > LGBT Issues #269 in Books > Teens > Romance > LGBT #345 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Physical & Emotional Abuse

Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up—Mara Stonebrook knows she does not belong; she is "different." Her small town is conservative and strictly religious. She attends a parochial school even though her parents are far

from wealthy. Her mother drinks to forget that she is married to an abusive bully who punishes her and Mara's older brother Iggy, because he is not his biological son. Mara's mother loves Iggy the best because he is the son of the man she really loved. Mara has managed to escape her father's abuse for 15 years, but she knows that if anyone finds out her deepest secret, that she is a lesbian, she will be punished as an abomination in the eyes of their conservative church. If her father finds out, she will be lucky to live. Keeping her secret is easy until Xylia comes to town. A free-spirited transplant from San Francisco, Xylia encourages Mara's artistic talent and returns her feelings. The reverend's son takes a picture of them the two girls kissing, and they fear that they will be outed. After both of their houses are tagged with graffiti, Xylia's mother sends her back to her father in San Francisco, and Mara is alone. Shortly after school starts, Mara is raped by the reverend's son and is told that if she reveals that he is the perpetrator, he will release the photograph of her and Xylia. For months, Mara lives in a fog, but when her friend Henry, a Native American, is mistakenly arrested for the rape, she knows she has to tell the truth, whatever the circumstances. The aftermath is severe but frees Mara. Emotionally wrenching, this novel will resonate with students struggling with their own sexual orientation.

•Suanne B. Roush, formerly at Osceola High School, Seminole, FL --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Emotionally wrenching." (School Library Journal) "Mara's voice is so honest, so original, and so compelling that I couldn't put this book down. This is a gut-wrenching, heartbreaking, beautifully written story." (Len Vlahos, author of THE SCAR BOYS) "Heartbreaking. As exquisitely painful as it is beautiful, this coming-of-age tale will haunt readers long after the last page." (Kristin Elizabeth Clark, author of FREAKBOY)

Once in a great while, when the stars align just right, you find a book that is so absolutely gorgeous, you can't help but scream from the rooftops: EVERYBODY NEEDS TO READ THIS!!! That is how I feel about "Beauty of the Broken." I was lucky enough to read an advanced copy of this gem. It is a page-turner that grabs hold of your heart-strings on the very first page, and does not let them go. Right away I felt like I knew these characters - Mara, Iggy, Xylia - quickly fell in love with them, and at the novel's end I was both heartbroken and hopeful. The painful but life-affirming journey Ms. Waters has crafted should be on bookshelves and school libraries everywhere. This book will change you. Don't miss it!

What does one say when all of the beautiful words of the written language have already been used

so well and so perfectly by an author? Do I even have words left in me after reading this novel? Yet, more words come, spilling forward and tumbling forth from those broken parts of me that found love through the light and healing power of this story. It is not a book. It is more. It is a balm to mend the soft, broken, fragile bits of the human spirit that don't always understand they weren't loved enough, or as beautifully as they should be by the world. The story of Mara is the story of every woman, no matter how old or young, who has wanted love and not known it was already within her. It is also the story of every boy, or man who did not know his place in society, or what he was really supposed to do. The answer for those men in this lyrical, poetic journey, is that they are to be protectors of their loved ones. They are to be gentle and strong- that juxtaposition was never more evident than in this novel. It is a story for people who thought being beautiful was everything, when really love is everything. Who thought being normal was valued, when really being tarnished, chipped, devalued, cracked, and destroyed is the beauty. It is the path. Tawni Waters and her wondrous characters have shown me that my loving other women, as woman, is a form of alchemy and magic. She has helped me see that love is the only beauty that matters. This is more than a novel. It is a coming home to oneself. I am forever changed.

I am not good with words, but I have to let people know about an author who is. Tawni Waters. I read the book, *Beauty of the Broken*, in a day. The world she crafted sucked me right in. It's not an easy read, but it's full of hope and beauty, of the broken and for the broken. I keep thinking of a movie like *Fried Green Tomatoes* and that this book should be turned into a movie. I hope that it will happen one day. It is aimed at young adults but this 37 year old would tend to disagree. It's for every adult. A gorgeous story.

I didn't realize that *Beauty of the Broken* was marketed as a 'young adult' read, but if it means that 48-and-a-half isn't an adult, I'm happy to go along with it! I thought I'd downloaded a partial-copy and that a few pages must be missing, but then I heard, "Sayonara.....!" in my head (not with the ellipses in my head of course) and realized that in a few short hours, I had come to the end of a really great story. Tawni Waters has created a place that's not a where in a time that's not a when right here in New Mexico, right now today. Her characters are people - they come to life as you read, and encourage you to turn the page -- "Oh man, you gotta see what s/he does next! Keep reading!!" Sure, "*Beauty of the Broken*" is a coming-of-age story. Truth, but it is so much more than that. A snapshot of a time and place and way of living/thinking that I can only hope won't be with us in America for much longer. An incredibly moving story about an American sister and her big

brother. A beautifully written story about two young American girls in love. A painful and raw retelling of the story of an American family who takes the 'fun' right out of dysfunctional. and, of course, about the American ideals of God. Get it. Read it. You'll be a better person after those few short hours you will so willingly give up. I suggest reading it in bright sunlight.

Sigh *** This book gutted me... It was filled with tragedy and hate, but somehow finished off as a heart breaking and beautiful story. The tough topics were quick to pull me in and the character development held my attention long after the final page. Mara is a girl living in a tough world. Her momma is a drunk, her daddy is abusive, and her brother is special because of a family incident. While she tries to find beauty in all of the ugly, she also faces inner battles. Her mind knows feelings for a girl are wrong, but her heart just can't say no. When her secret is found out, her world becomes a game of cat and mouse. The preacher's son uses pictures to his advantage and in the end gets what he wants. I really cannot put into words how much impact this book had on my emotions. I went from stomach sickness to swooning. My heart ached so many times and my mind raced to figure out the conclusion. I wanted a happy ending for Mara, but I also craved happiness for Iggy. To me, it was a no win situation. I wanted more than what could happen. I never expected the ending though and gosh did it rock my world. I'm still baffled and a tad sad. I think this one should be a mandatory read for all ages. It touches on bullying, stereotypes, family struggles, rape, religious beliefs, LGBT, and true love. It wasn't an easy book to read, but it packed a hard punch. I feel extremely blessed to have indulged in such an insightful read and I hope you all check it out too!

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