



Underneath Everything

Marcy Beller Paul

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Mattie shouldn't be at the bonfire. She should be finding new maps for her collection, hanging out with Kris, and steering clear of almost everyone else, especially Jolene. After all, Mattie and Kris dropped off the social scene the summer after sophomore year for a reason.

But now Mattie is a senior, and she's sick of missing things. So here she is.

And there's Jolene: Beautiful. Captivating. Just like the stories she wove. Mattie would know; she used to star in them. She and Jolene were best friends. Mattie has the scar on her palm to prove it, and Jolene has everything else, including Hudson.

But when Mattie runs into Hudson and gets a glimpse of what could have been, she decides to take it all back: the boyfriend, the friends, the life she was supposed to live. Problem is, Mattie can't figure out where Jolene ends and she begins.

Because there's something Mattie hasn't told anyone—she walked away from Jolene over a year ago, but she never really left.

Poignant and provocative, Marcy Beller Paul's debut novel tells the story of an intoxicating—and toxic—relationship that blurs the boundary between reality and fantasy, love and loyalty, friendship and obsession.

Underneath Everything Details

Date : Published October 27th 2015 by Balzer + Bray

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Author : Marcy Beller Paul

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From Reader Review Underneath Everything for online ebook

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

TL;DR Mattie is too passive and uninteresting a character, Jolene isn't compelling either, it's more fun to do a Freudian analysis on Mattie's love of maps than actually read the book, and I spent 160 pages with this book but still fail to care. I don't even care about whatever went down at the manhunt, which apparently takes too long to come out and is a bit of a disappointment, especially considering the wait. I'm exercising my right to DNF. So what if it gets better in the second half? No reader should have to suffer through a bad first half for a good second half.

Dahlia says

THANK YOU FOR BEING EXACTLY THE HOMOEROTIC TOXIC FRIENDSHIP YA I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

“What if we’re both not real?”

“We’re not,” I said. “We’re better than real. We’re the two little girls.”

This was one of these books where I got to the end, and still couldn't figure out what it was really about.

Mattie was a fairly normal girl, but her relationships with her friends were a little confusing. She was best friends with a girl called Kris, and basically didn't really talk to anybody else, and all because Kris had had some sort of falling out with a girl called Jolene. In fact Jolene seemed to be a major cause of problems in this book for everyone.

The storyline in this followed Mattie as she started a relationship with a boy called Hudson, who also happened to be Jolene's ex. She reinvented herself a bit, but felt like she constantly lived in Jolene's shadow. Kris was grounded, Mattie moved her relationship on with Hudson, and Jolene was noticeably absent from school. There was a bit of a mystery surrounding what had gone down between the 4 of them that Kris wanted to split from Jolene and the rest of her friends so drastically, but the mystery wasn't really enough to keep the story interesting, and the romance wasn't really enough either.

The ending to this wasn't very memorable, and an hour after finishing I can't really remember it at all, other than the fact that it didn't feel like much of an ending at all.

Natasha at Book Baristas says

Review on blog: <http://www.bookbaristas.org/2015/10/r...>

Secrets. Deceit. Love. Betrayal. Loyalty.

UNDERNEATH EVERYTHING unearths all of these points and more in this story of friendship and the lines that blur when trust gets broken.

“What do you want to be, Mattie?”

Mattie had it all sophomore year – Hudson, the boy who made her feel, and the group of best friends, Kris, Bella, and Jolene, who were tighter than tight. Yet things were off. Mattie wasn’t fine with this, especially when her friendship with Jolene constantly teetered on the edge of suffocation. Then one night, she loses everything, or rather, she walks away from it all. She and Kris are a unit in the following year and a half. It’s them against the world. But she can’t seem to shake the past, can’t escape the feelings that Hudson gave her. Can’t escape the hollowness that sits where Jolene once sat.

“Being her best friend wasn’t a pinkie-swear kind of thing. It was rabid; a deep cut instead of a drop of blood; smashed glass instead of a store-bought necklace. It was thrilling, the lengths she’d go to for me.”

Mattie decides to take it all back. She lets love into her life in the form of a boy named Hudson, drinks the poison that is Jolene and once again gets caught up in a mess that she can’t ever clean off.

“Hudson had trusted me. He’d drawn me into his distant place. And I loved the dark, dense closeness of it. The shared secret.”

Growing up, Mattie has always needed someone there. She’s the girl who doesn’t know how to be alone – I think everyone is like her at some point in their lives. I know I was. Because of this, she latches onto friendships – Kris’, Hudson’s, Jolene’s—like a lifesaver to keep her from being left by herself.

Mattie surrounds herself with maps, yet she’s still lost. You’re lost right alongside her. You feel that emptiness she feels being with these people she doesn’t know how to communicate with. I felt like the skin she wore just never felt form-fitting. At that point in Mattie’s life, you kind of understand that her feeling lost becomes real in the way she outwardly portrays herself. You have this idea of maybe molding yourself to what you think others want to see when they look at you. You end up needing to be that person they see. For Mattie, this need drove her to do things she never would have done, yet making those mistakes lead her to a better place.

UNDERNEATH EVERYTHING dives into the heart of toxic friendships, knowing and understanding who you are when no one else is around, and being okay with that person. This debut was gritty, stunning, honest, and overall an A++ read. I absolutely recommend this.

Christi says

I've read a lot of positive reviews for this book, but I just don't get. I spent the entire book waiting for something to happen. Found the narrator to be very unlikeable, the storyline dragged, and I just didn't care about any of it.

Arlene says

I don't get it... I just don't get it... After slowly trudging through 300 plus pages of **Underneath Everything**, I believe I might have missed the point somewhere along the way. Probably my most disappointing read in 2015.

From what I gathered, Mattie and Kris purposely removed themselves from the social scene back in their sophomore year after something went down between their Fabulous Four group that included Mattie, Kris, Bella and the core of this madness Jolene. Now that senior year is upon them, Mattie no longer wants to miss out, so she and Kris head to the high school bonfire where the wheels are set in motion for Mattie to get back what she lost... her social status, Hudson and Jolene's attention.

It's no surprise the ratings for **Underneath Everything** fall on two sides of the spectrum. I've seen some readers absolutely adore this book for pushing the boundaries using beautiful words and elusive writing. I will give it that... there's a ton of eroticism that definitely doesn't fit the Young Adult mold. The novel also dapples with topics around teen bisexuality, dysfunctional relationships, and obsessive personalities.

However, where others seem to easily connect with Marcy Beller Paul's bold debut novel, I really feel this story will resonate with a specific niche of readers, and unfortunately, I don't fall in that category.

Throughout the entire novel, I never felt fully engaged with the story. I constantly felt I was missing the point, sort of like walking into the middle of a conversation where the characters never desired to clue me into their story. The mystery to the novel felt a bit light and somewhat odd. (view spoiler)

Overall, **Underneath Everything** was a story about a lot of things, but nothing very significant. Its major bragging right is that it's a YA book that boldly depicts a story about a dysfunctional, borderline obsessive, bisexual teen relationship with lots of characters that are still trying to define themselves and their friendships. Not quite for me, but apparently it is for many others.

Sharon Roat says

Whoa. Just finished reading an ARC of this beautifully-written novel. It was so different, and so incredibly tense. I felt like I was holding my breath the whole time.

Marci Curtis says

WOW...this story is an absolute GEM. So beautifully written, so haunting, so authentic, so powerful.

Five glorious stars.

Natasha Sinel says

OK, so wow. I loved reading this amazing, surreal book. Haven't we all had toxic friendships that we can't quite seem to get out of? Marcy Beller Paul captures how it is to be the quieter half of a close/too-close female friendship and its consequences. Her sentences are beautifully written. I was pulled right into Mattie's world, and I was sad for it to be over. Hopeful ending rounded out the perfection. Loved.

Paula Stokes says

I was lucky enough to "meet" Marcy Beller Paul in an online class when she was writing the first draft of this book. Back then, it didn't have a title. It didn't even have chapters. It was just this outpouring of gorgeous words, this story about a group of friends with complicated relationships and a girl who was only beginning to figure out who she was and what she needed.

I got to watch *Underneath Everything* grow and change throughout several drafts. I got to see Mattie take control of her story--to mess up, to risk things, to suffer the consequences of her decisions and evolve as a character because of those consequences.

This book manages to be gripping without being sensationalistic; Marcy's prose manages to be lyrical without being overwrought. This feels like the kind of story that could happen to anyone, and there's something very compelling about that. If you like evocative description and complex and flawed characters, you definitely don't want to miss *Underneath Everything*.

I can't wait to see what Marcy does next! :)

Gisbelle says

My thanks to *Balzer + Bray*

Point of View: Single (Mattie)

Writing: First Person | Present Tense

Setting: New Jersey

Genre: Young Adult | Realistic Fiction

To me this book practically made no sense whatsoever. **It made me feel like I start reading a book in the middle of the series since everything was a huge frigging mess.**

The storyline wasn't interesting enough to hold my attention. By chapter 13, I just wanted to get this book over with. There was nothing I liked about it.

The characters were beyond weird and confusing, especially the main character Mattie. Half the time I had no idea what was going on with Mattie. And I couldn't care less for her relationship with Jolene. **If your friend practically tries to suffocate you to death, you stay the fuck away from her.** Simple as that.

Saying this book was dragging is understatement. I got nothing from the book after reading about 30% of it. Everything was all an enormous puzzle. Not the kind that makes you want to keep on reading, but the kind that makes you want to bang your head against the wall for being so stupid to waste your time like this.

Melanie says

Beautiful, sexy, messy, original and with a great message. Everything I love in a book. I was shocked most of times, holding my breath every time I turned the page because I had no idea what was going to happen next.

Loved every feeling this book cause me and I want you all to read it, if you enjoy books like this.

Plus, one the best intimate scene I've ever read in YA.

I.W. Gregorio says

This is a lushly written, utterly sexy debut about the dark underbelly of teen friendship. It's been a long time since I've read a book that captures the intensity of high school relationships so perfectly. Add in a simmering LGBT undercurrent, and this is a must read book!

Riki says

Woah. This book was so, so good in so many different ways. It is dark, brooding, sultry, and sexy. It is also beautifully written and lyrical in a way I haven't read in a long time. Marcy Beller Paul writes incredibly flawed and complex main characters that are hard to root for, yet cry out for compassion.

This book is captivating, with gorgeous prose and a deeply unsettling female friendship. The relationship between Mattie and Jolene is toxic in the raw sense of the word, and the author expertly explores all that can possibly mean. There's an extremely sexy homoeroticism to the novel that blew me away. Feelings between Mattie and Jolene are complicated and tense, and the way they develop on the page is breathtaking.

Written in an immediate way with a quick, first person present narration, this book would have been easy to blow through. I desperately wanted to know what happened next on every page, but the sheer beauty of the writing forced me to slow down and savor every word.

Despite being haunting and at times difficult to read, the novel ended on a hopeful note that kept me from feeling too unsettled. I highly recommend this book.

Shannon (It Starts At Midnight) says

This review was originally posted on It Starts at Midnight

So, I did enjoy the writing in this book. And the character development. And I really think that I will read more from the author, because I enjoyed the style.

But the actual story? I don't quite "get it". I mean, the point has escaped me, if there is one. I will say that the book started out really strong. Mattie had been betrayed by her friend Jolene, who knew she really liked this guy (Hudson) and snuck in and started dating him. Have you been there? I have. It isn't fun. At all. Not only is the dude you're having some hardcore (clearly unrequited) feelings for unavailable, but you've lost your best friend in the process. So while hearing this backstory, I was feeling for Mattie.

She basically disappeared from the social scene until one day, she decides to finally go to a party. And who does she run into? Hudson, of course. And, he is single, what luck! Jolene remains a mystery, though. All we really know is that she is an awful "best friend", and wasn't great to Hudson, or basically anyone. Jolene is not a nice person.

But Mattie is still kind of obsessed with her. And maps, Mattie is also obsessed with maps. I have no idea why. So the story meanders through navigating the social scene Mattie has re-entered, along with finally getting to be with the boy she's wanted to be with forever. And there's talk of Jolene, and how she's influenced Mattie and Hudson's relationship, as well as Mattie and Kris's. I just kept waiting for the meandering to be over, and for us to get into some real plot.

And the whole time I was expecting something really outlandish, some kind of huge twist, or revelation, or.... something. Anything. In the end, I just kind of felt like the story lacked purpose. I kept reading, waiting to find out what the point was, and maybe there is one that I simply didn't understand.

Bottom Line: ::Shrugs:: The writing was nice, and I did have sympathy for Mattie and her situation. I just wish something more had happened, because it just felt like a nicely written glimpse into some girl's life.

*Copy provided by publisher for review.
