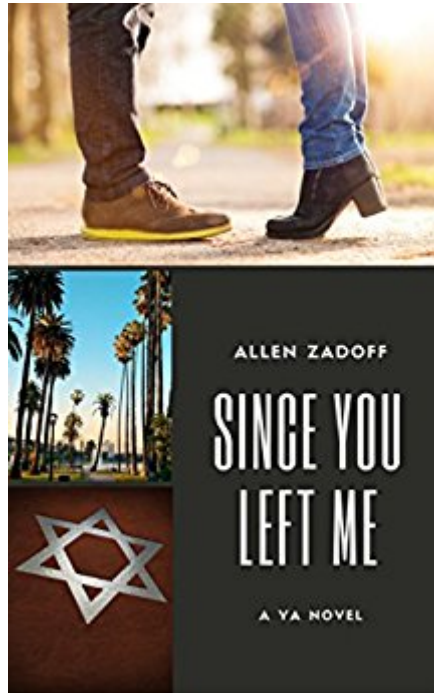




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Since You Left Me



Synopsis

"Zadoff tells the story of California's new Jewish family...a humorous and introspective read for any age." --The Jewish Daily Forward For Sanskrit Aaron Zuckerman, it isn't easy to believe. Especially when all the people you care about leave. His dad left after the divorce. The love of his life left in second grade. His best friend in Jewish school found God and practically left the planet. Now his yoga-teacher mom is falling in love with her spiritual guru, and she's threatening to leave, too. In a desperate attempt to keep his family together, Sanskrit tells just one small lie. And for a while it seems to be working. Because people start coming back. Sanskrit might even get the family he always wanted. There's just one little thing in his way. The truth. Against the setting of modern-day Los Angeles, YA author Allen Zadoff presents a funny and heartbreaking novel about the search for love and meaning in a world where everyone is looking for something to hang on to. Editorial Reviews "...it isn't the plotline that makes Allen Zadoff's *Since You Left Me* special: it's Sanskrit's voice...so snarkily hilarious that you'll laugh through all of the painful moments." --Kirkus Reviews "Not many YA books dare to tackle the issues of faith and religion, but *Since You Left Me* is a rare gift...a story that's hilarious and hopeful--and one you should definitely add to your reading list." --Pick of the Week, 60SecondRecap

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Customer Reviews

Allen Zadoff's *SINCE YOU LEFT ME* (his fourth book and third novel) is an extraordinary look at one boy's struggle with family, religion, and identity. With enormous depth and sensitivity, Zadoff explores a brief chapter in the life of Sanskrit Aaron Zuckerman (yes, you read that right) as he faces some very difficult decisions and, even more importantly, their consequences. If it sounds heavy, it is anything but. Zadoff has found Zuckerman's voice and it is full of wry and often hilarious commentary--Sanskrit is a 21st century Jewish Holden Caulfield. Zadoff finds humor and humanity in this wonderful, wonderful novel.

Since You Left Me is a witty, acerbic, heartfelt first-person account of a teenaged boy's issues with school, girls, family, religion, deception, grown-up baby sisters and betrayal - among other things. Sanskrit Aaron Zuckerman is a young man with problems - the girl he's crazy about ignores him and everyone he loves seems to leave him - including his mom, who might just disappear halfway around the world. Sanskrit is part Holden Caulfield, part Judd Apatow, and will have both young adults and adults hoping for a sequel.

After his parents' divorce, Sanskrit Zuckerman lives with his ditzy mother who seems to put more time and consideration into her yoga center and her new boyfriend, a spiritual guru. Sanskrit's best friend had a religious awakening, which Sanskrit doesn't understand, and he pines for the girl from his past whom he still loves. Sanskrit is the grandson of a deceased Holocaust survivor. His grandfather left him money, but only on the condition that it's used for a Jewish education. This does not sit well with Sanskrit, because he doesn't want to be shaped by his grandfather's ideals. All these conflicts are set off or revealed after Sanskrit's mother doesn't show up at a parent-teacher conference at his Jewish academy, thanks to her forgetfulness and irresponsibility. He lies and says that his mother was in a horrific car accident. This puts Sanskrit in the limelight of an outpouring of care and support from his school, meanwhile he's under pressure to keep the lie concealed. While outwardly it looks like his mother is out of his life because she's in the hospital, in reality she is becoming more distant because she's falling for the guru who's pulling her away from Sanskrit and his sister. It's hard for Sanskrit to keep his family together when it's disjointed to begin with. The writing is light and humorous, while it also deals with serious family and religious matters. There were also many surprises--just when I thought I had a character or situation figured out. I haven't

read Zadoff before, but after reading and enjoying SINCE YOU LEFT ME I'd like to read his previous books. I received the galley from NetGalley, courtesy of the publisher.

First off, please understand that you don't need to be a Torah scholar or a student of Talmudic law to fully enjoy this book. There will not be a quiz about Maimonides at the end. You didn't have to be an Evangelical Christian to get the point of "Rapture Practice", and I'm pretty sure that while Bing Crosby was a Roman Catholic, that didn't figure heavily when he picked up the Academy Award for "Going My Way". There is a lot of Jewish culture and religion in this book, but that's not the point. There's also a lot of Los Angeles in the book, and that's not the point either. There is a Mother, a Father, a best friend, a girl, life, school, a community, and a very perplexed teen, and that, actually, is the point. In a review of his book that Allen Zadoff posted elsewhere, he observed that "[This novel] ...encompasses a lot of my experience living in my adopted city of L.A., my complicated relationship with Judaism growing up, and my run-ins with the diverse and occasionally exotic spirituality that is a part of life in this city. " Now, he could have addressed these issues as an adult in an adult oriented book. Maybe that would have been interesting, maybe not. What Zadoff did do was create a brilliantly precocious, observant, funny, confused and endearing young character who is the perfect hero/fool for wrestling with those issues. This is one of those happy books that appeals to a wide age range. A younger reader can identify with the hero, sympathize with his plight, and enjoy the sometimes rollicking humor. At a certain level young Sanskrit speaks directly to the concerns of younger readers, (Jewish or not). On the other hand, an older reader can filter Sanskrit's thoughts and experiences through a different set of lenses and enjoy and appreciate what the author is trying to accomplish. Either way is a win. So, you can emphasize what you like in this book - family, questions of faith, abandonment, love, guilt, yearning, lying, belief, the meaning of life, heartache, responsibility, hope, the dangers of yoga - it's all there. And it's there for all readers, and there in the most entertaining, appealing, engaging and generously good-hearted fashion imaginable. A nice find. Please note that I received a free ecopy of this book in exchange for a candid review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.

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