

Come As You Are

Jennifer Haupt

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In Jennifer Haupt's keen-edged, intimate novel *Come As You Are*, an intense, imperfect bond yields to more expansive resilience.

Skye and Zane first meet in 1987. Growing up in 1990s Seattle, they watch their offbeat city become an indie culture mecca, with grunge hyped into chic fashion and record label scouts prowling the clubs, looking for the next Pearl Jam or Nirvana.

Skye and Zane plan to go to Los Angeles, where Zane can become a rock star, and artistic Skye can sketch "Picasso-esque portraits." But then Skye's sister dies, and Skye and Zane's friendship deepens. After Skye's unexpected pregnancy, the responsibilities of parenting overwhelm Zane, and he abandons Skye and their daughter.

Skye's emotional vulnerability alternates with her need for independence. After Zane leaves, she moves to Albuquerque, where she raises their daughter, Montana, and works at a local casino. She also becomes engaged to Aaron, another casino employee and an aspiring environmental lawyer. When Zane insists on seeing Montana again, Skye feels pulled from her more purposeful future with Aaron, and back toward her bittersweet history with her first love.

Skye's relationship with Zane is developed with compelling complexity. Beyond the heady allure of their shared experiences, there are darker recollections of Zane's selfish behavior. As the narrative shifts, Zane's troubled perspective is also included: he tries to overcome his addictions and make amends for the past.

Seattle is at the center of *Come As You Are*, with vibrant memories of mosh pits, flannel shirts, and "loud-and-proud misfits" sharing "a world where nothing mattered but the music." But the novel's lovely descriptions of New Mexico's cloudless skies and sagebrush are freer. There, Skye can allow Zane to be part of her life, while still finding her own well-earned peace.

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