



Landslide

Melissa Leet

Antrim House (Dec 15, 2017)

Softcover \$16.95 (401pp)

978-1-943826-33-9

Landslide is a hopeful and sympathetic story about friendship, loss, and growing up.

Melissa Leet's *Landslide* is the moving story of two childhood friends, Jill and Susie. The narrative follows Jill as she navigates the trials of growing up; Susie is her sounding board. The story jumps in time between adolescence and young adulthood.

Jill and her mother live in an idyllic setting, near a vast garden laid out into many "rooms," all with special themes. Here, Jill often seeks solace when life blooms in unexpected ways. With her bold and daring friend Susie to ground her, Jill endures angst and loss while ensconced in the comfort of the garden. Susie also finds comfort in Jill's garden, where she goes to escape from her mother's drinking.

Garden work unites Jill and her mother, soothing tension over the absence of Jill's father, Jay, who is a busy photographer. Jill struggles to understand her parents' unconventional relationship and is plagued throughout the story by her conflicting feelings.

As major events unfold, including family struggles, death, and new love, Jill and Susie support each other through their doubt, pain, and confusion. Two challenging, heartbreaking sections come in the aftermath of unexpected and impactful deaths that shape Jill's approach to life, creating obstacles for her—particularly around love and its inherent vulnerability.

When the story moves to Jill's adulthood, focus shifts to her romantic bond with Charlie. Theirs is an undeniable, instant connection that leads to a comfortable relationship, though Jill questions whether she can be vulnerable with Charlie. Jill must decide whether she will embrace success and love or inadvertently sabotage both. During one especially fraught period, she escapes to the family garden for strength and clarity.

The story is largely an examination of how Jill's childhood and traumas shape her. She grows into a successful entrepreneur with a thriving business designing garden furniture; Susie becomes a journalist. The details of their working lives give the story a credible contemporary edge.

Jill and Susie are characters worth rooting for as they find their way toward grounded lives. The women anchor each other, acting as the mirrors that each other needs to face life's challenges. Supporting characters, including Charlie and Jay, are compelling and quirky, and their foibles add to the women's lives.

The dialogue is resonant and realistic. Themes of grief and resilience are focal points that are explored in depth; they define Jill's life. Her emotions are close at hand in her thoughts and as the reason for her actions.

The structure of the story, with its jumping back and forth in time, is effective, as each section fills out the others with added detail and background. Childhood events impact and explain each woman's approach to her adult life, and bring depth to their characters.

The story is satisfying in its unflinching authenticity, especially as challenges are confronted and Jill's struggles are explored. No character is without flaws, yet all have good intentions.

Landslide is a hopeful and sympathetic story about friendship, loss, and growing up, with gratifying elements of drama and romance.

FELICIA TOPP (January 24, 2018)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.