

Let It Be: A Novel

Chad Gayle

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A coming-of-age novel that elegantly explores the human state of loneliness, *Let It Be* by Chad Gayle is a powerful story with melodic accents from the Beatles' final album.

After moving halfway across Texas in the 1970s to create better lives for her two children and to clean her slate while in the process of divorcing her abusive husband, Michelle Jansen finds solace in a romance with her new boss and from her favorite album, *Let It Be*. Struggling to get along with a nosy, judgmental coworker and dodging harassing calls from her ex-husband, Michelle's imagined fresh start is not as easily attainable as she thought it would be. She becomes especially distraught over her difficult transition into single parenthood when her preteen daughter, Pam, rebels by befriending a smart-mouthed neighbor and her ten-year-old son, Joe, betrays her by making contact with his father (of whose abuse he is oblivious).

Set to the sound track of the Beatles' album, with chapters named after songs, this concise yet layered novel easily weaves together the different perspectives of Michelle and her children and offers intimate explorations of their emotions and ambitions.

The chapter titled "Across the Universe," told from Joe's point of view, intricately captures the loneliness and confusion the boy experiences in observing the behavior of his mother and sister. Riding around on his bike in this hot, dry Texas neighborhood, Joe becomes angrier as his puzzlement over the divorce grows.

The longest chapter, "I Me Mine," narrated by Michelle, offers insight into a single mother's uncomplimentary yearnings both for independence and for a knight in shining armor (a part played by her charismatic boss, Dan). Other sections narrated by Michelle are particularly revealing of the chasm that can form between a parent and child while the family is in the midst of divorce. Michelle's focus on improving her children's lives by becoming a wage earner and by encouraging her children to make friends results only in distancing her from their most important need—namely, emotional support.

Though some readers may be left wanting when it comes to the story of thirteen-year-old Pam and her role in the unfolding of the plot, others may appreciate the mystery she adds to the story. She does not narrate much of the novel, and her brooding presence is elusive. Yet while she does not participate heavily in the story line revolving around the conniving between Joe and their father, events would not unfold in the same way without her.

Overall, Gayle succeeds in creating a unique and transcendent narrative out of a not-so-original premise. The actions of the multidimensional characters, carried out in a realistic setting, illuminate the demolition of family as a result of violence and abuse, the consequences of misguided priorities, and the destructive power of a child's ignorance.

AIEMEE JODOIN (May 3, 2013)

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