



## If You Leave Me: A Novel

*Crystal Hana Kim*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# If You Leave Me: A Novel

*Crystal Hana Kim*

**If You Leave Me: A Novel** Crystal Hana Kim

**"An unforgettable story of family, love, and war set against the violent emergence of modern Korea."—Gary Shteyngar**

**"*If You Leave Me* is graced with truly wonderful writing; great poise, lyricism, intelligence, and an utterly engrossing portrayal of life."—Richard Ford**

**"A gripping, heartrending tale of the birth of modern Korea filtered through the prism of an intimate love story. In fresh, often astonishing prose, Kim brings her characters to life: complicated, flawed, and hard not to fall in love with. A strikingly original work."—Jessica Shattuck**

An emotionally riveting debut novel about war, family, and forbidden love—the unforgettable saga of two ill-fated lovers in Korea and the heartbreaking choices they’re forced to make in the years surrounding the civil war that still haunts us today.

When the communist-backed army from the north invades her home, sixteen-year-old Haemi Lee, along with her widowed mother and ailing brother, is forced to flee to a refugee camp along the coast. For a few hours each night, she escapes her family’s makeshift home and tragic circumstances with her childhood friend, Kyunghwan.

Focused on finishing school, Kyunghwan doesn’t realize his older and wealthier cousin, Jisoo, has his sights set on the beautiful and spirited Haemi—and is determined to marry her before joining the fight. But as Haemi becomes a wife, then a mother, her decision to forsake the boy she always loved for the security of her family sets off a dramatic saga that will have profound effects for generations to come.

Richly told and deeply moving, *If You Leave Me* is a stunning portrait of war and refugee life, a passionate and timeless romance, and a heartrending exploration of one woman’s longing for autonomy in a rapidly changing world.

## If You Leave Me: A Novel Details

Date : Published August 7th 2018 by William Morrow

ISBN :

Author : Crystal Hana Kim

Format : Kindle Edition 432 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Literary Fiction, Cultural, Asia, War, Romance, Adult, Literature, Asian Literature

 [Download If You Leave Me: A Novel ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online If You Leave Me: A Novel ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online If You Leave Me: A Novel Crystal Hana Kim**

---

# From Reader Review If You Leave Me: A Novel for online ebook

## J says

Literary novels normally turn me off, if I'm being honest. But this one shies from the romantic flowery language and gets to the heart of the characters, and let me tell you, it is HEARTBREAKING. But so so so soooooo goooooood. I couldn't recommend it higher, it is breathtaking.

---

## Jessica Woodbury says

My early years of motherhood were very difficult. They made me wonder whether I was fit to have kids at all. And sometimes I would start to think about what my life would look like if I lived 50, 100, 200 years ago in a world where women had no choices about their families and childbearing. I could never think about it too much because the thought of what it would be like would overwhelm me. Even now it's a hard thought experiment because those years are still so fresh and raw in my mind. IF YOU LEAVE ME is about a woman who has no real control over her choices when it comes to marriage and children, and I found it deeply affecting.

Haemi and her family start the book uprooted from their home during the Korean war, doing what they can to find food. Haemi is only 16, her father is dead, and her younger brother is ill. It's a harrowing circumstance but she has her own escape sneaking out at night with Kyunghwan. During the day Kyunghwan's cousin Jisoo is courting Haemi. They both love her, and she wants desperately what each of them has to offer. Once Haemi makes her choice, we follow all of these characters through over a decade.

Thankfully Haemi's narrative is not the only one. We get to see the world through several sets of eyes, what everyone else wants Haemi to be, and sometimes we get her own view of how trapped she feels by being a wife and mother with no other real choice. Haemi loves her children, loves her husband, and yet she feels empty and lost in a way she can never get anyone else to fully understand. Even in a drastically different time, Haemi makes the kinds of choices to take care of people around her that women still make today.

If this book's depiction of a changing Korea appeals to you, I'd recommend following it with EVERYTHING BELONGS TO US, set around the time this book ends, which addresses centrally class and political issues that are more periphery to this book while still having the same kind of deep empathy for its characters this novel has.

---

## Jessica Bates says

I was totally engrossed in the story of Haemi, Kyunghwan, and their families in war torn Korea. I cried so many times with Haemi. This is one of the first (if not THE first) novel I've read that touches on postpartum depression, though it doesn't call it by that name. Haemi talks about being in a haze a year after each child was born. About how she longed for more, how she felt misery creep in and poison her thoughts. It was such a full, aching story.

---

## **Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says**

### **5 bold stars to If You Leave Me! ?? ?? ?? ?? ??**

If You Leave Me takes place in the 1950s during the Korean War. As children, Haemi and Kyunghwan were friends, but when the pair find themselves teens in a refugee camp along with their families and living under dire circumstances, a small spark is ignited as they spend a couple hours each night on the fringes of danger.

Kyunghwan is entrenched in his schooling and has no idea his wealthy cousin, Jisoo, is making plans to marry Haemi. A life with Jisoo would offer financial security, comfort, and proximity to her mother and brother, and for those reasons, Haemi sacrifices her feelings for Kyunghwan in order to protect her family.

The story follows as Haemi becomes a wife and mother, and there comes a time when she reflects on her choosing Jisoo, and the ripple effects of that one choice will impact much more than she ever could have foreseen.

If You Leave Me is a richly drawn novel from multiple viewpoints. The narrators are Haemi and the men who love her, Kyunghwan and Jisoo, and later, we hear from Haemi's brother, Hyunki, and Solee, Haemi's daughter. The multiple narratives helped me to learn about each of the characters through the eyes of the others. Complex, well-developed characterization is the star of the show with a vividly depicted backdrop of not just Korea during the war, but over time with modernization and changes within these characters' lives. I felt fully immersed in Korean culture.

Overall, I found If You Leave me to be an engrossing, tragic, and heartbreaking tale of forbidden love and how one decision can have a lasting imprint for more than a lifetime.

Thank you to William Morrow for the complimentary ARC. All opinions are my own.

My reviews can also be found on my blog: [www.jennifertarheelreader.com](http://www.jennifertarheelreader.com)

---

## **Lucy Tan says**

I was completely absorbed by the forbidden love story of Haemi and Kyunghwan, their complicated ties to Kyunghwan's cousin, Jisoo, and this rich portrait of war-torn Korea. IF YOU LEAVE ME is a novel of epic proportions whose tone shifts agilely over time, following the lives of its characters and the devastating consequences of war. It's full of longing and hard truths, and now that I've finished it I'm in solid agreement with the buzz surrounding this book, naming Crystal Hana Kim as a talented writer to watch.

---

## **Erin says**

There was a lot to like about this novel - Kim does a great job creating well-rounded characters with emotional depth and the span of time she covers allows her to fully explore life's twists and turns with her characters. However, I felt like some of the most dramatic action happened off the page with minor characters reporting on it. This element made me feel disconnected from the plot and left me not caring too much about what happened to anyone. There aren't really many redeeming qualities in the characters, which

usually doesn't bother me, but in this novel, it just ended up feeling a little more tedious. Also, I think I would have appreciated the story more with just one or two POVs instead of many. Kim is clearly talented, but this isn't one that will stick with me for long.

---

### **Jennifer says**

In Crystal Hana Kim's debut novel: *If You Leave Me*, multiple narrators allow us to bear witness to female lead character: Haemi Lee as a practical life choice at the young age of sixteen impacts her and those around her for years to come. It's not news that women fulfill a wide variety of roles in our one short lifetime. Some are by choice, some are not...and this is the main theme threaded throughout this novel: choice. Set in the 1950's and 1960's in war-torn Korea, Haemi's ability to choose is hindered due to a wide variety of factors, gender roles being on top. Crystal Hana Kim shows how deeply scarring this can be. It seems that war isn't the only thing that leaves lingering trauma. Imagine that.

My favorite (but also the saddest) element of this novel involved Haemi in her role of motherhood. It's not always rainbows and butterflies. In Haemi's case, it can feel like imprisonment. Having gone through postpartum depression myself, this condition feels isolating enough as it is. I couldn't fathom living in a time and place where it doesn't even have a name. But of course women of that time were expected to be grateful, submissive, adoring, and to be anything less was deeply problematic. Haemi is none of these. She is a character full of regret, independence, and longing, and the trickle effect onto the other characters is palpable right to the end. Diverse, personal, and skillfully layered, *If You Leave Me* is a beautifully written saga that I'm glad I read.

#### **My favorite quote:**

*"We can stitch ourselves back together, Mother said. I believed her."*

---

### **Lexie says**

4.2 stars a beautiful novel. Heartbreaking. Full review to come soon

---

### **Lillian Li says**

I'm always so fascinated by books where every bad choice also feels like a necessary one. Crystal Hana Kim's *If You Leave Me* is such a novel. There are no villains (except, perhaps, history itself; the rigid conventions of the time), only victims, who are strong, but not unbreakable; loving, but not saints, or martyrs. Haemi is the kind of headstrong, whip smart woman you ache to see born in the wrong era. Her decision (if it can even be called that) to protect her family by marrying a man she doesn't love sows seeds of tragedy that feel perversely familiar as they bloom down the line. What is timeless, though, in Kim's novel is the question of why love is something we both can and cannot live without. If only it were as necessary as air, or as ornamental as diamonds. If only it were as strong a savior as it is a destroyer.

---

## Nicole Swinson says

This is Crystal Hana Kim's debut novel and she in no way disappointed me. This story is brilliantly written, each chapter guides you through the lives of the three main characters- Haemi, Kyunghwan and Jisoo. The story line is set in the time of the Korean War when they all had to flee to safety in a refugee camp. Haemi and Kyunghwan were childhood friends and their friendship continues to grow as they sneak out and spend time with each other past curfew. Haemi does not hide her affection for Kyunghwan but he does not give in to her, his focus is on school. Kyunghwan's cousin Jisoo takes notice of Haemi and before he goes off to war he wants to be married and have a family to come home to, Haemi decides to marry Jisoo for a better life for her family and their lives are never the same after that. The story guides us through their lives throughout the years after the war, we follow Haemi and Jisoo and their growing family; Kyunghwan and his inability to settle down and Haemi's never-ending love and desire to be with her true love Kyunghwan.

This story was beautifully written, having just read Pachinko this felt like it could tie in with that story line. I enjoyed how each chapter was about each character, there was no crazy flashbacks or flash forwards that distracted me. I highly recommend add this book to your reading list, I hope you enjoy it as much as I did..

---

## Nobonita - The Bengali Nomad says

My blog: The Bengali Nomad

**I received an advanced copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.**

This book is BEAUTIFUL. It is the EMOTIONAL-roller-coaster-ride & relatable tearjerker kind of beautiful. But my lips are sealed. Full review to come closer to its publication date.

---

## Janelle says

Thank you so much to William Morrow for providing my free copy of IF YOU LEAVE ME by Crystal Hana Kim - all opinions are my own.

This is a poignant, insightful debut novel set during the time of the Korean War involving a complicated love triangle. We follow sixteen-year-old Haemi Lee who is staying at a refugee camp as she and her family have been forced out of their village due to the calamity of war. Haemi has been sneaking out to spend time with her childhood friend, Kyunghwan, but a spark ignites and it becomes more than friendship. The only issue is simultaneously she's being pursued by his more affluent cousin, Jisoo. Jisoo wants her hand in marriage; he offers financial security and the chance for her to stay close with her family. She ignores her feelings for Kyunghwan and reluctantly makes a decision to marry for stability rather than desire. The story spans over sixteen years during a time of great change for the Korean people and Haemi reflects on her decision to marry Jisoo.

There are so many things that I love about this gorgeous novel: the backdrop of Korea, the strong character development, the multiple perspectives, and how the author lightly touches on mental illness. The story is told from the perspectives of Haemi, Jisoo, Kyunghwan, Haemi's brother Hyunki, and her daughter Solee - I love how as readers we get the full picture of the story from these five narratives. These characters feel very honest and authentic, and by the end I was in tears. Kim is a master storyteller with lovely prose and the

ability to draw you in on every page. IF YOU LEAVE ME is a story about the decisions we make and how they affect our lives and the people around us. Also, I always love stories where the setting plays a character and this one was painted with vivid imagery as Korea changed over the years. I visualized every moment and felt everything Haemi felt. LOVE. THIS. BOOK.

---

## **Kelsea says**

4.5?

---

## **Elyse says**

“If You Leave Me”, by debut author, Crystal Hana Kim, takes place during the 1950’s and 1960’s in Korea. This is a wonderful, tragic tale.....the language, culture, and descriptions are lyrical and emotionally engrossing. We are taken on a journey —feeling the aches and pains.

Haemi and Kyunghwan were childhood friends.

Kyunghwan introduced his cousin, Jisoo, to Haemi, when the war made them go south.

We know early on the reasons why Haemi is conflicted between desire and security.

With the country at war, her family poor - living with her mother- and younger brother who is sick - security- purity - and a good reputation ( values her mother instilled in her), are the only values that mattered.

Haemi marries Jisoo. They have children. Kyunghwan is the children’s uncle. He also still loves Haemi.

Life is closely examined- we get viewpoints - narration from:

Haemi, - and the two men who love her: Kyunghwan, and Jisoo. —

We also get viewpoints from Hyunki, ( Haemi’s brother), and her daughter Solee. The novel is divided into five parts....which works nicely - as Korea is changing - becoming more modern - which has some advantages but also some misfortunes. The characters feel like real people....and their lives are complicated.

The prose is penetrating. Towards the end - I was in tears.

BEAUTIFUL STORYTELLING!

Tidbits I enjoyed: The Korean foods and drinks:

Makgeolli is a sweet alcoholic beverage.

Miyeokguk with cinnamon juice is made with seaweed - usually a soup.

Pajeon is a Korean side dish similar to the Chinese scallion pancake.

Tteokguk- or sliced rice cake soup is a traditional Korean dish eaten during celebration at the Korean New Year.

Gonggi- pronounced gong - gee is a popular Korean children’s game involving small stones or pebbles.

An excerpt: ....which gave me pause:



“ I woke up early the next morning and lay still, collecting the floors coolness inside me before the day heated through with the summer sun. It was my job to make tea in the morning. Daddy drank ginseng and Mommy angelica. Jieun and Mila slept on with open mouths. I imagined dropping seeds down their throats. The kernels settling in their bellies, growing sprouts. Pear blossoms would flow from their lips and crawl up the walls of the room. Then I could puppet them around by their stalks and have THEM prepare the tea”.

Thank you HarperCollins Publishers...and Will Byrnes

Release date in stores: August 2018

---

## **Audrey says**

Overall, this was a disappointment. It's going to get a lot of comparisons to Pachinko but I think it's unfair to both books. While both books are set in Korea, Pachinko is a broader family epic that encompasses more events and time. One got a greater sense of the hardships and joys of the time period and of the family itself. This book, doesn't get there. And, part of it is my tastes: I'm not into the love triangle trope and this book revolves around that.

But, the love triangle isn't the only issue for me. I never got the sense as to WHY these characters loved (obsessed) about the object of their affection. Most of it seemed to be based on physical looks and gestures versus the actual person. There was also no real sense of place of events. Nothing to really draw me into the setting itself. Some of the city scenes in Seoul, other then the food, could have been in any city. There were some lovely bits of writing but not enough to overcome the plot.

But, if you enjoy love triangles, you will love this book.

---