

ANN REDISCH STAMPLER

where it began

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Summer I Turned Pretty trilogy



Where It Began

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A teen's world comes crashing down in this compulsively readable YA debut that's as literary as it is commercial.

Gabby Gardiner wakes up in a hospital bed looking like a cautionary ad for drunk driving and without a single memory of the accident that landed her there. But what she can recall, in frank and sardonic detail, is the year leading up to the crash.

As Gabby describes her transformation from Invisible Girl to Trendy Girl Who Dates Billy Nash (aka Most Desirable Boy Ever), she is left wondering: Why is Billy suddenly distancing himself from her? What do her classmates know that Gabby does not? Who exactly was in the car that night? And why has Gabby been left to take the fall?

As she peels back the layers of her life, Gabby begins to realize that her climb up the status ladder has been as intoxicating as it has been morally complex...and that nothing about her life is what she has imagined it to be.

Where It Began Details

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Author : Ann Redisch Stampler

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From Reader Review Where It Began for online ebook

Jasprit says

I was truly suffering from a brain funk after finishing Where it Began. It wasn't that the book was complicated, so I had a lot to get my head around. But it was just the long winded path the book well more specifically the main character Gabby took to finally discovering the truth! Seriously Gabby kind of made your head spin in exasperated circles.

Gabby wakes up near the remains of her boyfriend Billy's battered car with no recollection of how she got there, when in hospital she still can't remember a thing, it takes her a while for things to slowly make sense. She was driving and ended up slamming into a tree and smacking her head. Her blood level showed she was way over the limit and consequently the smack to her head has left her with retrograde amnesia. The only thing that she remembers was that Billy Nash her boyfriend was with her in the car, but she doesn't know what happened to him after that. Did he manage to escape? Is he hurt? Is he still alive? No one's telling her anything, her mum just flips her off, and she won't let her friends come to visit her either. She's more concerned with making sure Gabby's looking perfect physically, not the least concerned about her mental state. On top of all that Gabby also has the police breathing down her neck.

I really enjoy reading books dealing with memory loss, I've come across some okayish ones in the past but Where it Began started really well. You're thrown head first into Gabby suffering from a head trauma, and you have all these questions flying all over the place, what are they not telling Gabby? Where's Billy? Is the fact that he's not got in contact with her and everyone's tight lipped about him mean he's dead? Why's Gabby's mum so selfish? Will we ever find out what really happened? Would Gabby get her memory back?

Despite starting off well, I had several problems with this book and thus my 2 star rating. Initially the book had the constant need to flit back and forward between time spans, so one minute you're in hospital with Gabby, the next she's recalling a memory of when she first started dating Billy and then you're thrown back into the hospital and then back into the past, and so on, at times it was utterly mind boggling. I know it was there to establish the back story about Gabby's huge make-over; finally becoming noticed, becoming part of the popular crowd and everything she remembered up until the accident. But at times I really wanted to shout would you please get on with it! I really didn't give a toss about the back story; I just wanted to know what really happened. It was also hugely frustrating when Gabby kept constantly yammering off the point.

However what truly grated me about Gabby's character was her infatuation with Billy. It's like she had blinkers on throughout the entire book he was loving, caring, good-looking, everything he said was right, he was doing everything for her, basically she thought he was perfect. I don't know if when Gabby banged her head that she knocked the part of her head which was for common sense too, but ugh some of the drivel she spouted about Billy I really wanted to slap some sense into her. Gabby's parents were also another major annoyance in this book, like seriously does no child have decent parents anymore? Gabby's mum Vivian honestly made my blood boil, first her daughter has suffered a major head trauma, she's lucky to be alive, but all she's concerned with is how she looks, instead of remaining by her bedside, she goes shopping whilst she's in hospital for make-up so she can spruce her daughter. Obviously because that would be Gabby's number one concern right now her appearance?

"You were so beautiful, you were"

"It kills me to see you like this."

What a way to boost her daughter's confidence, whilst she's lying in bed cut off from her friends and the outside world, not having a clue what's going on and suffering from a head trauma. Gabby's dad was just the invisible parent, wandering aimlessly in the background making occasional appearances or just drinking himself away.

Basically *Where It Began* started off as a highly anticipated read but ended up being a big disappointment. The book went around in maddening circles and frustrated me to a no end with two faced and pathetic characters.

Favourite quote;

"I thought she knew" argghh!!"

This review and more can also be found on my blog: [The Readers Den](#)

Lea says

It isn't very often that I sit down to start a book and have it finished about 4 hours later-- As much as I love reading, I'm pretty slow at it and I usually lose steam and need a few breaks in between. But every now and again, I get my hands on a book that I just *cannot* put down, that I just cannot get enough of, and end up devouring the whole dang thing in one day. *Where It Began* was one of those books...

Gabby Gardiner has what many people would call a "privileged life." She's grown up in the "Three B's" -- Bel Air, Brentwood and Beverly Hills-- she goes to a prestigious private school, and her mom just dumped a ton of cash to give Gabby a totally hot new makeover. But Gabby's life is far from perfect, and she feels completely out of place among the other rich and beautiful people at Winston High. The pressure is constantly on for her to be absolutely perfect, to get into an Ivy League school, and to not under *any* circumstances come across as being "regular," or God forbid-- a "sub-regular" freak who wants to go to art school.

It isn't until Gabby somehow miraculously catches the eye of the God-like Billy Nash that her life is saved from sub-regularity. For Gabby, Billy symbolizes the perfection she's supposed to attain-- her savior that rockets her into popularity and brings her new acceptance from everyone, including her parents. Unfortunately, Gabby's entire life ends up crashing down around her when she finds herself in the hospital after getting drunk and wrapping Billy's BMW around a tree. With no memory of what actually happened, Gabby now has to figure out how to pick up the pieces of her not-so-perfect life and somehow hold onto the guy who seems to give that life purpose.

So I thought that in Gabby, the author was able to create a main character who was flawed but who you just can't help loving to death and completely sympathizing with. She was smart and sarcastic, but she was also very innocent and susceptible to the world around her. She had a rather cynical outlook on life but at the same time she had a good heart. And even though she was lost and misguided throughout pretty much the whole book, I was still rooting for Gabby hardcore and wishing her a happy ending.

Now, as some of you may know, I absolutely *hate* when books portray female protagonists who are pathetically dependent and obsessive about their loser jerk-face boyfriends. But in this case, the dynamics

between Gabby and Billy really worked marvelously with the whole plot of the story. Yes, Gabby has pretty much zero self-esteem and clung to Billy as if he were God himself, being completely unaware of what a creep he really was. But this insecurity and vulnerability in the main character didn't make me hate her at all or think that she was pathetic or crazy-- If anything, I felt sorry for her and could relate to her in many ways. As the reader, you could definitely understand why Gabby thinks and feels the way she does, and how she came to value superficiality over real love and a healthy relationship, due to the fact that her parents, her friends, and her whole school expects her to look and act a certain way. She was still likable and interesting, and her weaknesses only made her that much *more* likable and interesting.

The world-building was another plus in this book. I just adored how the author presented the world of Winston High and the society Gabby lives in-- from the jocks to the "Slutmuffins" to the doctors and nurses at the hospital, it was just one hilarious character sketch after another that had me giggling to myself throughout the book. Gabby gets just how ridiculously fake her world is, and life through her eyes was definitely entertaining to follow! There was clearly a tragicomedy feel to this book and I really loved that aspect of it.

Besides the main character and world-building, the other major thing that really struck me about this book was the writing. Narrated through Gabby's voice, it was both snarky and sarcastic, but also incredibly smart and heartfelt. Not to mention it flowed really well, which is probably why I couldn't put the book down and finished it in a day. The internal thoughts and emotions that are woven throughout the story not only revealed Gabby's life leading up to the car accident, but also worked perfectly to keep me totally wrapped up in what was going on. The twist at the end threw both Gabby and myself for a loop, but thanks to it, Gabby becomes much wiser and aware of what really matters-- and for me, that kind of character growth is what makes a book worth reading.

I am definitely giving 5 stars to *Where It Began*-- which I haven't done for a book in a really long time, since I very rarely pass out 5 stars. I thought this book was very real, the main character was really genuine, and I'm pretty sure that I laughed out loud at least three dozen times as I was reading. This was one awesome coming-of-age kind of story-- intelligent, but not taking itself **too** seriously. If you are thinking about reading a YA in the contemporary genre any time soon, I would definitely recommend this one to you-- trust me, it won't disappoint!

~Lea @ LC's Adventures in Libraryland

Nicole Wang says

?FIRST POSTED ON www.fiction-freak.blogspot.com

EDIT: I just re-read this and I realized how immature I was when it came to reviewing. Wow. Anyways, jsut needed to say I KNOW IT ISN'T VERY PROFESSIONAL.

So because I'm new to the whole blogging/book reviewing business, I don't receive ARC's. I just have to deal with whatever books I buy from Amazon or Barnes and Nobles, or library books. But, thanks to a certain giveaway on Goodreads, I finally managed to get my hands on *Where it Began*, which comes out in March. You have NO idea how much I was screaming when I found out

Yeah, basically. Anyways...this book is so similar to *Stolen* in so many ways, but so different in so many other ways. It warmed my heart. It broke my heart. It made me cry and made me smile. Gabby's the kind of girl who just wants the perfect, the safe, life to live. And so she becomes the picture of perfect and catches the eyes of Billy Nash. Or does she? Because when things are getting tough, when she can't remember anything about the accident that crashed Billy's car and took her memories, he's not there. And he only communicates with her through Instant Messaging. And in public? He's once again the boyfriend of the slut* of the school. But it's just an act, right? To protect her. That's what it is.

As much as I could connect with Gabby, I really didn't like her. She was blind in some situations, desperate in others, hostile when she shouldn't be, and consenting when she should've fought back. These were the things that stuck out, the things that I didn't like much. The things that irritate me. But then, how would you react if what happened to her happened to you? So I can't very well judge Gabby (especially since we were seeing things in her POV).

I can't say I was all-knowing when it came to the ending of the book, but I did suspect a few things. What actually happened though, shocked me out of my mind. It made me think. What happened in that book should never happen to anyone, but that stuff happens almost everyday without us knowing. It makes me think that sometimes the "perfect" life is the "fake" life, that there's not one single person who is perfect in all ways. But that's my philosophical side talking.

To be honest, it wasn't the summary that got my attention. It was the cover. I know, I know, we're not supposed to judge a book by its cover, but who hasn't? I entered the giveaway, not really expecting to win. But I DID!!! And I am so grateful that I did. So if you see this book in the bookstore and you don't think it sounds that great, read the first few pages, then judge. The blurbs don't always give you the full blow of a book.

Pages: 384

Series: Stand-alone Book

Genre: Realistic/Mystery-ish/Romance-ish

Bonnie says

Review originally posted to Words at Home June 7, 2012: <http://www.wordsathome.ca/2012/06/whe...>

Where it Began is an utterly compelling and poignant look into the life of a sub-regular turned, girlfriend-of-a-golden-god teenage girl. It is a completely addictive story and I guarantee that you will be glued to this book within the first few pages. Between Ann Stampler's unique and utterly fabulous writing style, her incredibly three-dimensional characters and captivating plot she has become my favorite new contemporary author.

I don't even know where to begin when it comes to summarizing this story, it was just brilliant and you simply must read it yourself. The story starts when Gabby wakes up in a hospital bed desperately trying to piece together how she got there. She is able to gradually recall scenes from her life before the accident but has no memory of the accident itself. The novel revealed Gabby's history through a series of flashbacks as she remembered them during her recovery. It was difficult to stand on the sidelines and not be able to do

anything to help Gabby as I could see that ending coming the whole time, although I never expected the full extent of what came to light. I was just waiting on pins and needles for the other shoe to drop and when it finally did it left me as shattered as Gabby.

I truly believe that Stampler has an unparalleled ability to not only get inside her characters heads, but to actually get the reader inside the character's heads. I have never in my life been so invested in a story or character as I was with Gabby. And that is saying a lot considering I am always talking about how I am a character reader. The entire reason I read is to make a connections with a brilliant character. My heart broke continuously for Gabby as I was reading *Where it Began*. It was painful to listen to how she described herself as nothing but sub-regular before [her makeover] and her only worth to anyone other than her two besties came After [her makeover]. The way she divides her life into a before her makeover, After her makeover, and after-her-After (after the accident) evoked more emotion than event or conversation could have been. Listening to Gabby describe her life felt like talking with a girlfriend back in high school. At times I just wanted to shake her and get her to wake up, but given the way she was raised it was absolutely no surprise why she acted the way she did.

What about the writing you ask? Oh let me wax on about the writing for a minute please! I can't even describe Ann's writing style except to say it is nothing short of amazing. Ann Stampler is an absolute and certifiable genius when it comes to her way with words. And you will see what I mean tomorrow when you read her "deleted scene" guest post. Point in case:

"I want to be back in my After, and not in some weird after-After Purgatory, waiting to find out if I am Saved or Damned."

"And you can kind of see it: me sitting in a room with Olga Blau and a big lump of clay, even if she is bat-shit crazy and I have a scarlet F for failure stamped across my forehead. So what if what I actually want to do makes everyone else wince? Because you Have to figure, things would be looking up if I wasn't the one wincing."

I honestly could go on and on for days about *Where it Began* and I still wouldn't do this brilliant novel justice! All you need to know is that if you are a fan of contemporary fiction you must run out right now and get this book. You will be thanking me in about 3 chapters I promise! The characters, the storyline, plotting and pacing are just out of this world and this is why Ann Stampler just became my contemporary fiction hero!

Sarah says

[Cross-posted at my blog]

Where it Began opens with a fairly simple premise: a teenage girl wakes up in the hospital, having barely survived a car accident. She has no memory of the night in question, but she's certain she's to blame.

The narrative voice is fresh, crisp, and incredibly witty. I absolutely loved it. (Also, there is BILLY NASH. BILLY NAAAAAAAAAAAAASH.)

What makes the book stand out so much? I shall tell you!

Narrative Voice

Gabby's narration is fabulously sarcastic. She considers herself a "sub-regular" at school, skill-less and destined for some crappy no-name college while her classmates head to Princeton and Stanford, but as readers we quickly realize she has an inaccurate, harsh view of herself. In truth, she's a talented artist, and an extremely witty young woman.

Check out how Gabby describes some of the people in her life:

Boyfriend Billy Nash, polo-playing golden boy of the school: "Billy sticks out his hand like a politician who is pretty damned sure he is going to get my vote. Then he flashes me The Grin. The smoldering, adorable grin. Like he knows that I'm going to race from precinct to precinct and vote for him over and over all day long."

Friend Lisa: "Lisa had been on a religious Outward Bound where she learned to survive if she ever gets stranded in Wisconsin with only dehydrated stew, a toothbrush, and a pocket Bible."

Mother Vivian (always Vivian; never Mom): "She is sitting in the corner on a green plastic chair, maybe too far away for me to see her clearly. Or maybe in her quest to look as if she's made of ten-years-younger, wrinkle-free plastic sheeting, my mother has found a way to get herself permanently, cosmetically airbrushed so *nobody* can see her all that clearly."

Use of Humor

I really like books that maintain a sharp, biting sense of humor amidst very real, very painful drama. *Where it Began* does this expertly, placing both elements in stark relief. Gabby has suffered through a terrible car crash; her face is bashed in; her boyfriend seems to have mysteriously abandoned her; and her alcoholic parents who live "in the lower dregs of Bel Air" have pinned all their hopes for social advancement on their daughter's continued attendance at the prestigious Winston School.

Despite the heartache and confusion that swirls around the story, and despite the increased evidence that poor Gabby has been left out to dry, the book is also deeply, darkly hilarious.

As part of his latest probation terms (it turns out Billy is anything but a golden boy), Billy is supposed to be counseling other teens at the Youth League shelter in Santa Monica. Of course, he has no intention of doing this. As Gabby puts it, "The only helpful counseling he could possibly be doing would have to be arriving by astral projection via the psychic cat that's always out there on the Third Street Promenade in a wizard hat making money for his half-zonked owner."

Use of Setting

Where it Began takes place in the Three B's (Bel Air, Brentwood, Beverly Hills), as well as the Valley, the West Side, and all of Los Angeles. Stamper clearly knows this world and fully immerses the reader in it.

Because Billy is easily bored, he takes Gabby all over the city in his beloved Beemer. "The best Pho 999 for Vietnamese noodles so far out on Sepulveda, it is almost at the far end of the Valley"; "hickory burgers on the red faux-leather stools at the counter at the Apple Pan on Pico"; "Versailles for Cuban plantains and black beans in Culver City"; "tacos at La Canasta, which is somewhere so far south and east of downtown that it looks like some whole other country"; "the Cajun place at the Fairfax Farmers' Market that has homemade yam potato chips fried up and ready to eat by ten a.m."

Having been to several of those places, I can attest to the accuracy of those descriptions. Yum.

Billy Nash

Speaking of Billy, he's an enviably well constructed, well written character, equal parts seductive, fascinating, and horrifying. As a reader, I wanted Billy around. Just like Gabby, I yearned for and anticipated his texts, instant messages, phone calls, and cameos. He's impossibly magnetic. He's also an appalling human being, and waiting for Gabby to arrive at this conclusion (as readers will probably do early on) fills the book with tension and occasional frustration, yet I understood completely why Gabby was in love with him and in thrall to him.

In short, I'm rather obsessed with this book.

Ashlyn Rae (TeenageReader) says

Stampler's debut is amazing! The last few chapters changed EVERYTHING. Review to come!

FULL REVIEW

Where It Began was truly an amazing debut by Ann Redisch Stampler! The novel had many aspects that a contemporary fan would love.

Gabby was an interesting main character. Stampler portrayed her well enough for her readers to really understand what she was going through after her accident. I could really feel how hard it was for Gabby to deal without her memory of that night when the crash took place.

As I read more of the novel, I was surprised to see what kind of guy Billy Nash really was. I thought that he was amazing as Gabby thought he was but he's no where near amazing. Billy was rude and incredibly selfish. I didn't know whether to feel bad for Gabby or to be angry at her because reading about her being with Billy made me so angry!

The ending was what I expected, but satisfied me with what I needed to read. I was glad to read how Stampler concluded her novel!

If you like contemporary, a little bit of romance and mystery, then Where It Began is the book for you!

See more: <http://teenagereader.com/where-it-beg...>

Isamlq says

It started interestingly enough with a sense of confusion and not knowing that was conveyed quite effectively. Except the trip down memory lane was not a pleasant one because in the end all I felt was sorry for this girl who's a bit too used to describing herself as "sub regular." And lost memory or not, her story was funny~ just not in a funny ha ha way. Her running commentary on being sub-regular and being the moon to Billy's earth was in simple terms: off putting and quite disappointing. Yet, I finished this, holding (clinging?) to the hope that she'd realize how off she sounded when she voiced what little she thought of herself.

Point one. Props on being normal girl, non AP/academically inclined girl. Props on being sort-of funny and negative. But, and this important: the problem was how the negativity was always directed at her. She saw nothing good in herself. And from her POV, it seemed like her family was of no help there either. Because aside from being self-directed, the negativity seemed to come from her parents as well. And if Gabby's thoughts were to be believed, I was half a mind to go, (view spoiler) Now, me trying to be less than negative

would concede to the fact that maybe, just maybe, her parents might have been saying that she had to make do with what she had. BUT this reverts back to the problem that she didn't think she had anything going for her! Anyway, the consequence? A girl who refers to herself as "sub-regular" time and again. And, a consequence of that? Me, coming to loathe said term.

Point one and half. Like I said, the first time she made a funny at her own expense, well, it was (funny.) But the next time and the next time and the next time after that? Not so much! If her observations started out as funny- scathingly so, the repeated references on how non- smart she thought herself or how unappealing she found her looks all simply succeeded in frustrating me. My 'ha- ha's' devolved in to a 'Please, stop. It's sad; *you're* sad.'

Point two. Props on being aware how utterly sad you actually are, Gabby. She was all "Billy this and Billy that." Again, it was so sad and **so utterly frustrating** how a good portion of Where it Began was all about her wanting him... because she saw him as the best thing there was about her. She saw herself as an extension of him (view spoiler)

Point three. Recall how I praised that sense of confusion and not knowing effectively conveyed at book's open? Well, come the end, I was almost wishing those feelings back. Then at least, this picture of self deprecating girl would not be in my mind. This girl who thought all she had going for her was a hot boyfriend. She's sad and frustrating. And it's too bad that the good ended too soon because soon all that was what was revealed was a girl I felt too sorry for to even like. No wonder everyone (view spoiler)

But wait! There is a reason (or two) for those stars you see up there. Namely... Thank you, ~~God~~ Huey! When everyone all could not, it was the one who stood apart who managed to say what was on everyone's mind... then sort of saves the day. Though, dear me, I do wish she'd saved it herself. So, there's Huey to consider. Plus that one moment that I was in total agreement somewhere maybe two or three pages to the close, with this accurate exchange of,

Gabby: "I am so lame."

Lisa: "Totally pathetic."

(view spoiler)

Thank you S&S Galley Grab.

Evie says

***** Originally posted to: Bookish**

**SIDE NOTE: I'm currently hosting a giveaway for a gorgeous SIGNED finished copy of this book!
Enter here: [Guest Post + Giveaway with Ann Stamper \(US/Canada, ends:MARCH 15th\)](#)**

Where it Began by Ann Redisch Stampler is **one gorgeous and unforgettable book!** Laced with humor, exceptional wit and powerful insight, this book gets you hooked right off from the start. It's intense, funny, heartbreaking, taut, mysterious and - most of all - so deliciously addictive! Ann Redisch Stampler did a fabulous job depicting high school relationships, with all their flaws and foibles. The MC's extremely amusing sarcastic tone makes for a great narrative voice that is sure to keep you turning the pages until you hit the back cover. It's a wonderful treat for everyone who appreciates a good contemporary novel.

This is how it starts: some helpless girl in a skanky tank top lying on her back in the wet grass somewhere in Hidden Hills. She is gazing at the stars through the leaves of a eucalyptus tree. The trunk of the eucalyptus tree is wrapped in Billy Nash's blue BMW. Midnight blue. The girl is trying to figure out what's going on, beyond the more obvious facts: a mouth lined with a sick combination of beer and stale vodka, a crunched-up car with black smoke pouring out of it, a night sky filled with glassy constellations and a big white moon.

Gabby Gardiner wakes up in a hospital bed, wired to machines and clueless as to how she ended up there. Her face is smashed in, bruised and unrecognizable. She has a post-traumatic amnesia and her memory of the last night's car crash is gone. Wiped clean. Non-existent. All she knows is what others tell her: she's been at a party with her super-hot-and-rich boyfriend, Billy, and a bunch of his super-cool-and-rich friends. She drank too much. She got into Billy's car and drove it into a tree. And now she can't remember a single thing. Her face, and possibly whole life, is ruined - she's facing DUI charges, being expelled from school and maybe even some serious jail time. Worst of all? Her boyfriend is missing and no one wants to tell her where he is and why hasn't he come to visit her bruised up and miserable self yet. And that's not the only thing people are keeping from her...

Which is when it happens: when the story of my life starts to show up in mosaic splinter flashes in my head.

I was totally in love with this book from page one! The writing was beyond amazing. Witty, hilarious, smart and sexy! For me, Ann Redisch Stampler could write a 1000 pg long description of how to make blueberry waffles and I would probably enjoy every single word of it - that's how fantastic her writing style is. Gabby's narrative voice was - hands down - one of the most enjoyable narrative voices ever. I instantly connected with her, although we didn't really have anything in common (at all). Moreover, I genuinely cared about her and wanted everything to work out well for her. She was quite a complex character- strong yet sensitive, ready to work hard to achieve her goals yet sometimes very naive and impressionable. A typical teenage girl, with all her insecurities, hopes and dreams, longing to be noticed, appreciated and loved. It was really heartbreaking to watch her struggle to hold on to the happy little life she worked so hard to live, knowing all along what she didn't yet realized - that this life was never meant for her.

Gabby Gardiner, shake hands with your totally impossible, not-going-to-happen future.

There were quite a few twists and turns that I never saw coming. The plot line might seem a bit predictable at the beginning, but if you think you have it all figured out after the first 20 pages, well, then you're in for a surprise. All in all, it was a fascinating and compelling read that I thoroughly enjoyed. It got me emotionally engaged, it made me laugh, kept me guessing and frantically turning the pages, and in the end left me very satisfied and pleased with the way the whole thing unfolded. I couldn't ask for more. Make sure to add it to your TBR Pile and 2012 contemporary challenge!

Julie says

No. Just no. This book is really stupid, for lack for a more sophisticated term. Let me tell you why. (Spoilers ahead.)

First of all, it is WAY too long. By a good 100 pages or something, in which nothing of consequence happens.

Second, there is zero character development. Everyone is one-dimensional--including the main character, whose head we're in! Oh sure, she's an 'artist.' Except that only gets mentioned here and there, instead of being fully shown or explained or reasoned. It's like the author was just trying to make her character seem deeper by giving her a 'passion.' (Which clearly the character is not very passionate about.) Don't forget the token non-white friend who just happens to possess every single stereotypical trait of people from that country. Classy!

Third, related to the first two, is that the character does nothing but think about her boyfriend. That is the impetus for the entire freaking story in this book. In more ways than one. But a good chunk of the book is her obsessing over him. Now, I understand that teenage girls are like that in real life. But a story is supposed to have an ARC--not a flat line of 'ooh Billy is so wonderful I wonder if he likes me eeee he likes me does he like me for me? he's so very dreamy! does he really like me? why is he looking at that other girl? oh he's IMing me and calling me his gf he likes me squee!' THAT'S NOT A PLOTLINE.

Fourth, I saw the 'twist' coming from a mile away More like, almost from the beginning. The asshole boyfriend did it! Well, duh, it was really obvious. Was it supposed to be obvious? Not sure.

Fifth, once she finds out that the asshole boyfriend is indeed an asshole who almost ruined her life, she is mad, BUT DOES NOTHING ABOUT IT. She's all, oh, there's no point, he'll just surf on by and no one will care. WHAT!? Someone else has to suddenly magically reveal the truth for it to come out. Because after a book's worth of pointless dithering about how pretty he is and how scary her life could be now, oh well, I guess it's not surprising that she wouldn't have any kind of spine, seeing as how she doesn't have any discernible personality either.

So you see, this book is stupid. The idea and the beginning are intriguing, and I think it could have been fascinating in the right hands and with an ACTUAL storyline. But the way it turned out? NO.

Sarah says

Awful. The writing itself needs a lot of work. It was trying to be something like Courtney Summers' Cracked Up To Be but came off as whiny, over privileged and utterly unlikeable. DNF. Made it to page 164 before I quit. I don't give up on books easily let me just say but this... horrid.

Page Passion says

All Gabby remembers after waking up in a hospital is her boyfriends car wrapped around a tree. Ever since that night when she supposedly stole her bf's car and drove it after using alcohol, Gabby's life turns upside

down. She is sucked into a life of false beauty to cover up her bruises, lawyers and probation's, and most of all a secret "love." Through her whole ordeal Gabby tries to stay strong, but when she realizes her boyfriend is sleeping with other girls when he's supposed to be in love with her she gets suspicious. But its when she learns the truth that she realizes how desperate love can make you.

For the rest if the review click [Here!](#)

ILoveBooks says

How far would you go to cover for a friend? Would you allow your reputation to be torn to tatters? Gabby is the main character of this book. She doesn't make the best choices, she is a fairly good student, and she has a boyfriend and friends. Overall, Gabby is a normal, everyday teenage girl. One wouldn't think that underage drinking, suspensions from school, therapy sessions, etc... could happen to a normal, everyday girl.

One bad decision can lead to a lifetime of regret. For Gabby, this slightly clichéd statement turns out to be true. She is left with only her most loyal friends, her supposed boyfriend can only talk to her in secret, and her mother doesn't appear to believe a word she says. Gabby is a sympathetic character, the reader will be rooting for her throughout the novel. Gabby can be a little hardheaded, but she is also loyal to a fault, honest for the most part, and likable. The secondary characters in the book will affect different readers in different ways. Some of the secondary characters are in the wrong place at the wrong time, others simply make bad decisions, while still others seem to only manipulate the ones they call friends.

The book was a page-turner; a reader will likely finish this sordid story in less than a few days. The plot is memorable, the characters are hard to forget, and the ending is unexpected. This book is recommended to young adult/teen readers, especially those who enjoy Gossip Girl and/or Pretty Little Liars.

Amy Jacobs says

I was so excited to get this book in advance from Amazon Vine. It sounded interesting and I was in desperate need of a young adult book to bring back my passion for this genre. Unfortunately, this book was not as great as I was hoping it would be. I think I will be in the minority in saying that this book is not one that will live up to the hype, but this is only my opinion.

Gabby was not a character I enjoyed. I was to the point of wanting to rip her from the pages of the book and slap some sense into her. I just didn't like how the author portrayed her. At times, she was annoying and a pain in the butt, but then there were times when you wanted to give her a hug and a shoulder to cry on. While this could be an interesting combination for a character that would leave the reader interested in more, it left me frustrated and to the point of wanting to just put the book away. I can understand the confusion that the character goes through, but her attitude was not one I wanted to read about. You can tell that Billy is not someone to trust or want to be with, but naive Gabby doesn't seem to grasp this. Even a brain injury couldn't excuse the behavior of wanting this boy.

This book starts out great, but quickly falls into the trap of predictability, boredom and characters with shallow intentions. I felt that this book was a let down, but could have been better with further exploration of the characters and plot.

Skye says

This review is also posted on my blog, [In The Good Books](#).

Gabby wakes up in hospital with no memory of the night that put her there, but what happened was obvious. With the blood alcohol concentration of a keg and in her hand the keys to her boyfriend's car wrapped around a tree beside her, her future looks to be a blur of DUI charges, jail time, and perhaps the most daunting in her mother's eyes, a face mangled by the crash. In the aftermath, she'll question if the events of that night were really what they seemed.

Ann Redisch Stampler's YA debut gets under your skin. Far from the light contemporary the cover and blurb imply, you accompany Gabby through a difficult journey and through so many intense and complicated emotions and realisations -- that growing into the person she wants to be is more important than any relationship is perhaps the most profound of all.

Written in evocative prose in a voice inherently teenaged and inherently Gabby. The narration was so personal, Gabby felt real and like someone we really know. I felt as though in the shoes of a fourth member of their friend group -- another Lisa or Anita bringing board games to her house during her recovery and asking her to open up. Her personality is well realised and well portrayed such that her shortcomings are plausible and sympathetic rather than frustrating.

The characters are dynamic and realistic. I prefer to relate to my characters than to idealise them, so their well-conveyed angst and bias and jealousy and ignorance made them only more engaging. Their flaws and poor decisions bring them to life and make them real. The characterisation was superb, and the narrative voice so true and raw. Stampler creates characters which explore moral grey areas that you can learn things about yourself from.

Gabby's reflection and emotional turmoil pay off in the end, in a huge and unexpected and perfect complete turn around. The way she finds the strength to accept what happened to her free of any bitterness and pursue what she really needs rather than wants is inspiring, and also gives us the comfort of knowing she finds the peace she so deserves.

Where It Began tackles relevant issues in a non-preachy tone, making for a story we get more than a few hours of entertainment from. Characters well-written and are created with relatability prioritised over likeability, to be affecting on a much deeper level. It's an upcoming, enriching contemporary any fans of the genre should definitely seek out in early March.

Edith says

Remember that time you fell for the wrong guy and were so blindly in love you couldn't see anything but the golden glow radiating from his Adonis-like body? Meet Gabby Gardiner the best anti-hero to grace the pages

of a YA novel since well, I can't remember the last time I had such fun. Flawed? Check. Wrecked by love? Check. Strong and hilarious? Check. Gabby lives in the three B's of Los Angeles (Bel Air, Beverly Hills, Brentwood) where the pressure to be perfectly gorgeous and get into the perfect Ivy school leads her to refer to herself as "sub-regular." Who hasn't felt sub-regular among the popular Slutmuffins of the world? When her mom treats her to a makeover one summer, Gabby comes back to school able to attract the attention of Billy Nash, a guy she falls so blindly in love with it runs her into a tree and nearly kills her. This book is one car crash it's okay to rubber-neck.
