



Swimming Through Clouds

Rajdeep Paulus

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I live in the in between. Between what if and what is. It's how I manage. It's the only way I know. Everyone has their way. This is mine.

Senior year kicks off when a Post-it note sparks a sticky romance between two unlikely friends. Transfer student Talia Vanderbilt has one goal at her new school: to blend in with the walls. Hoops and homework occupy Lagan Desai until something moves to the top of his list: befriend the new girl.

One Post-it note at a time, Lagan moves past Talia's caution-taped heart, revealing a world where hope seems to lie around the corner...she never turns.

From Award-winning author Rajdeep Paulus comes a story that reminds us that life is battle we don't fight alone.

Swimming Through Clouds Details

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Author : Rajdeep Paulus

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From Reader Review Swimming Through Clouds for online ebook

Lisa says

I tore through this book. It was lyrical, heartbreak, tender, and beautiful, and unlike a lot of bleak tableaus of abuse and suffering, it held out hope. Although, technically one might say this book is a work of contemporary realistic fiction, I might put it slightly in the magical reality column. It had an almost Cinderella quality in that the bad people were so utterly awful and the main characters were so utterly good-- but given the beauty of the writing style and the poetic soul of the main character, it all worked so well. Rajdeep Paulus is a lovely writer who paints vivid pictures with deep emotion. I am looking forward to reading more of her works, including the sequel to this book!

Amy says

Maybe if each person in the whole world contributed one tissue to the pile of mush that has become my life, I would be able to soak up the absolute river that erupted from my eyes after finishing Swimming Through Clouds.

Maybe.

But let's just leave my mental health and tendency to get too attached to beautiful characters in novels behind for a moment, and cut straight to the point, shall we?

Swimming Through Clouds was phenomenal. It's been a very long time since an author has stunned me speechless with the combination of an incredible storyline, impeccable writing style, and realistic, lovable characters. I highly doubt many books will be able to live up to the standard that Rajdeep Paulus has set.

I think that if there were one thing that I had to praise the author the most on, it would be her writing. Paulus' writing was breathtaking. Honestly, if I could write like her, I would write all day, every day, and then gloat about it to every single person that I met. Not that it would earn me any friends, but then again the whole world would probably be in awe of my writing, so...

Anyway, I was completely ensnared within the first paragraph:

"I live in the in between. Between what if and what is. It's how I manage. It's the only way I know. Everyone has their way. This is mine."

After reading those first few lines, I was convinced. I knew straight away that this was not simply the work of another wannabe writer with a simple, catchy idea for a storyline in her head. This was the work of a great novelist, who is able to capture the entire theme of a novel, to completely sum up a tormented soul's heartache, within a single paragraph. This was the way to grab a reader's attention, and damn was Rajdeep Paulus doing it all the way to Jupiter and back.

She could make me laugh with the flick of a pinkie finger, cry with the bat of an eyelash, and then absolutely bawl my eyes out right through the last chapter and leading into the epilogue. I don't know how she did it. But she did. And it was incredible.

It was not only the writing style that impressed me, but also Paulus' ability to make me feel like I could relate to a girl with whom I shared almost no common ground, and to make me entirely lose all sense of time and place when I was reading. I would tear myself out of Talia's world to find that the sunlight had long since vanished, my nails had been bitten down to stubs, and that a chunk of the novel had just vanished into thin air. And as I said before, my attachment to her characters has proven to be most worrisome. I loved how they were real. Not "real". REAL. I didn't come looking for a plastic Barbie doll that cried when her vampire boyfriend dumped her - I was looking for bittersweet reality. And that's exactly what I was given. Even though I have never been in a situation anywhere close to Talia's, I have developed a strong bond with her, and feel like I can relate to her. That is another sign of genius writing at work.

One last thing: as a teenage girl, I have taken it upon myself to decide that – for the sake of the world – all boys now have the responsibility to write romantic sticky notes to girls all day, every day. On second thought, if I could just have a Lagan to lock up in my closet and force to write me sticky notes all day, every day, that's also acceptable. Maybe those sticky notes can help me to hang on to what remains of my dignity and mental health until the sequel to Swimming Through Clouds is published.

Read more of my reviews and blogs at amybouwer.blogspot.com

Paige says

I almost can't write this, to be honest. This book just struck so many cords within me that it makes it difficult to explain how much I loved it. This was a debut, but from reading it I can definitely say that y'all should get familiar with the name Rajdeep Paulus because this book is definitely one I recommend you read!

Before I get into the deep stuff, can i just say how much I love the names? Of course, they could be named John and Jane and I'd still love Talia and Lagan. They were just... ahhh so many words to choose from so I'll just say amazing!

Talia: Talia. Talia. Talia... There are just so many books out there that talk about abuse. Very few though, paint the portrait so heartbreakingly(is heartbreakingly a word--don't judge me if it's not), so heartbreakingly real. Her father just absolutely sickened me. This book literally had me in an emotional tailspin because I absolutely loved most all the characters, but very few times in my(I'll admit short) life have I ever felt such intense hatred towards a character as I did towards that man. But, I was talking about Talia, so let's get back to that. I've lived a life nothing like Talia. My parents are together, are supportive of me, and have never lifted a hand physically or mentally to hurt me. Yet, Rajdeep Paulus writing is just so... so outstanding that few characters have I related to on such a level. Yes, I know I talk often about books giving me the ability to relate to the character, but Swimming Through Clouds took that to a whole other level. I just couldn't get enough!

Then there is, of course, Lagan. What can I say about him? The post-its he continually sends to Talia are just so wonderful, and will forever have me wishing for my own Lagan when I am feeling down. He just kind of worms his way into your heart so quickly you don't even know that he's there until it's too late but to love him, such a wonderful character!

Like I mentioned before, this book is a whirlwind of emotions but it is so worth it. the story is amazing and I honestly cannot wait to read another book by Rajdeep Paulus. This one is going into the favorites category, and I forever see it staying there. Both poetic and powerful, Swimming Through Clouds will keep you thinking long after the last page, and ready to open it right up and read it again.

I received this book for review from the author, but this in no way affected my review or opinion.

Indiebrag says

We are proud to announce that SWIMMING THROUGH CLOUDS by Rajdeep Paulus is a B.R.A.G. Medallion Honoree. This tells a reader that this book is well worth their time and money!

Lacey says

First Thoughts:

This is one of those stories that stays with you. It was at times a little hard for me to read, the scenes between Talia and her dad were so raw and emotional that I just wanted to get through them as fast as I could. This is definitely a story that takes you on a roller-coaster of emotions but leaves you breathless by the end of the ride. A must read for teens and anyone who's just looking for a good book.

Goodreads Summary:

I live in the in between. Between what if and what is. It's how I manage. It's the only way I know. Everyone has their way. This is mine.

When high school, cell phone disruption forces a classroom ban, the words on a Post-it note spark a sticky romance between two unlikely friends. Transfer student Talia Vanderbilt has one goal at her new school: to blend in with the walls. Lagan Desai, basketball captain and mathlete, would do just about anything to befriend the new girl. One Post-it note at a time, Lagan persuades Talia to peel back her heart, slowly revealing her treasure chest of pain—an absent mother, a bedridden brother, and an abusive father. In a world where hurt is inevitable, the two teens search for a safe place to weather the storms of life. Together.

Plot:

This book was about breaking out and learning to be yourself. This book dealt with a serious issue that left me stunned. To read about such a hard abusive relationship between a daughter and her father was eye-opening. This book wasn't just about abuse, it was about love and finding someone to be there for you; someone to support you. This story was really realistic to me, I could imagine it happening in our world. The scenes at school and at home had their own dark twisted realism. They brought realism and meaning to the story. As for the pace, it was normal, not too slow and not too fast. Overall I enjoyed the plot and thought the author did a good job at creating a backstory and plot that kept me interested.

Romance:

Ah, the romance in this story was cute and adorable to read. I loved that this relationship started out with a post it note, very creative and unique. This relationship had plenty of realistic interferences and made it more believable. So overall I really enjoyed the romance in this story and looked forward to reading the blossoming relationship between the two.

Characters:

I loved the characters in this book, they were so beautifully created with so much detail. They each had their own unique personality. I could easily connect with Talia, she had such character to her, she instantly became a character I could relate to. I really got to know her through the post it notes she wrote. I felt like she let down a barrier she had in those tiny little notes. In few little words she told me so much about her and I love her for that. As for Lagan, he was more of a character that took me awhile to like. There was something about him that was both mysterious and standoffish. But once I really got to know him and see how sweet and determined he was made me start to really like him too. Now Jesse on the other hand was more of an easy character to understand. He played a huge roll in Talia's life and though he was limited in aspects of physical abilities he was still a lovable character. So I really enjoyed the characters in this book and didn't see any unnecessary characters.

Transformation of the Character:

Talia did do a little transforming in this story though nothing too big. It was more of a slow gradual transformation. She started out as a weak and guarded character and slowly transformed into someone who can stand up for herself. I enjoyed seeing the transformation and still believe she has more room to transform. This was an aspect to the story that added a new layer to the world and created a great texture.

Description:

I loved the description in this story especially when it came to the emotional aspect. I really felt the raw and sharp pain of the story. Talia's description was one of the hardest parts of the story to read. The pain and sharp emotions she felt were so real and life like. To feel lost, alone, confused and then love...the emotions were literally like a roller coaster they went up and down, none ever staying the same. The description of the scenery and landscapes was beautiful; I could really picture each scene in my head and had no trouble seeing what was happening. So overall I enjoyed the description and thought it really added something to the story because without it this story would be lifeless and dull.

Style:

This was written in one POV and in first person. Being written in just Talia's POV allowed the reader to really grasp onto what was happening from her perspective, to be able to see her world in her own thoughts. I think being in only her POV allowed the mysteriousness and wonders of the world to come to past; allowed those little surprises. As for being written in first person it really allowed us to connect better to Talia; to be able to feel her pain more and grasp onto what was really happening. As for the author's writing itself it was smooth and easy to read. I had no problems reading it and it was almost poetic at times. In the end I loved the style of the book and thought it added something extra to the story.

Quote of the book:

“All the sensations around me blended. The snow felt warm. Jesse's body sounded loud. Dad's voice seemed heavy. The blood on my hands felt cold. The snow tasted salty. My eyes felt numb. And the neighbors were falling.”

Last Thoughts:

I would recommend this to any YA reader and to anyone who likes realistic based stories. One thing I

noticed by the end of the story was that I still had some questions left unanswered, there were so many what happens now? What happened? Why? These questions I assume would be answered in another book? Is there going to be another book? I don't know but I think with another book we would have these questions answered and we would be able to see Talia transform even more. So in the end I enjoyed the book and look forward to more writing by this author.

Jessica Andrews says

I absolutely cannot falter this book! I spent most of my time trying to scream at Talia to realise things that she just didn't, and I think that really showed how sheltered she is in a sense, because she doesn't understand what's actually happened although she's older than I am and I saw it clearly before it was even shown as clear as day. Although It's different when you're on the inside. I hated her dad (obviously), but Rajdeep's portal of him was ingenious to say the least. I loved how she gave little hints to what had forced Talia's mother to marry her father but Talia herself didn't realise what had happened and so Rajdeep never stated it outright. Lagan (pronounced la - gone) was breath taking! Seriously all the sticky notes (post its to you american friends :P) were adorable, even before Talia had first had lunch with him I was already sold on him. I thought that it was a brilliant idea of Rajdeep's to make the sticky notes a huge part of their relationships because I think it shows that people can and do feel braver on paper or email and such to say what they really feel, and since Talia and Lagan don't have the option to facebook each other the sticky notes are another outlet for Talia to open herself up to Lagan without saying anything at all. and the waterfall willow!! seriously you'll get it if you read it :P Weeping willows are my favorite tree so that being my idea of romance may just be in my weird head :P. I liked the symbolism in the colour blue too (intentional or not). As for Talia it really did symbolise the true meaning of beauty, she even said she wanted to wear blue on her wedding day.

Jesse also (although I do hate his name, as being a Jessica I get called it constantly and it is more of a boys name than a girls but I digress) his improvement throughout the book really showed how much closer they were getting to getting away. God there's so much I can say about this book! (Also digressing again but I have noticed that since the review of TFIOS Or LFA my reviews are getting longer as I'm reading as a writer :P) The ending was the best part for me, because I do have a love-hate relationship with ambiguous endings and this one I really did love. I wanted to have my own ending in my head for Talia and it wasn't unsatisfying as some ambiguous endings seem to be. i liked what the ending gave us and what it didn't. It explained what it needed to to get you thinking and stopped there in the exact right place!! I'm really looking forward to reading more from Rajdeep as this is her debut novel and I can tell there will be plenty more great ones in her future.

C.P. Cabaniss says

I received a free copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

This novel is simply beautiful. I absolutely adored it. Talia and Jesse, her younger brother, suffer extreme abuse at the hands of their father. They aren't allowed to talk to people, have friends, use the internet, get jobs. But then Talia meets Lagan. And the story starts to change.

This novel was equal amounts heart wrenching and heartwarming. It's very emotionally draining to read about the abuse that Talia and Jesse face, but there is always some ray of hope breaking through. The sweet parts come in during Talia and Jesse's interactions as well as the growing relationship between Talia and Lagan.

Lagan is one of the sweetest characters I've ever read, but he seems so real. The sweetness was never overdone for me. And seeing Talia begin to respond to his pleas for friendship was so cute. I loved that the novel was building this relationship from beginning to end, nothing was rushed. And the use of post-it notes added a cute, but not cheesy feel to their new relationship.

Talia and Jesse's relationship as sister and brother was adorable. It was fraught with extreme anxiety, fear, and suffering, but they still loved each other. Strong sibling relationships are always something that I enjoy and it was perfect here. You get to see flash backs to when they were younger and some of the hardships they faced throughout their younger years.

This novel was brilliant and I adore it. I highly recommend it to any and all fans of emotional contemporary love stories with beautiful relationships and complicated situations. It will tear you apart, but hopefully it will also put you together again.

You can read this and other reviews on my blog at www.courtneysreads.blogspot.com

Karen says

How do I start reviewing this book? It just so happens that I've just read *It Ends With Us* by Colleen Hoover two weeks ago and now THIS.

I love it when people recommend good books, I really do. But it never hurts to pick up books based on your own instincts. I personally think it's challenging and fun. Because 1.) if you end up loving a book that you picked up yourself, you could boast it to the world that you got yourself a really good book, and 2.) if you end up not liking it, at least you only have yourself to blame. Don't be afraid of buying a book you've never heard anything about. Who knows, it might even turn out to be a great one, or your fave read of the year. This happened to me 3x already. I read *The False Prince*, *Still Alice*, and *I'll Be Yours* without a single person telling me to read them, and they're now three of my favorite books of ALL TIME. Same thing applies to *Swimming Through Clouds*. Look at the number of ratings and reviews and you'll see that not many people have read this piece of gem. And I undeniably want to be one of those few people to put a 5 stars right here and get more people to read the book.

Swimming Through Clouds is a sensitive book. It is the MOST PAINFUL book I've read this year so far. Talia, our main character, got some really seriously damaged family background and her Dad is the absolute worst. It took me a while to get used to the writing style and understand what the hell's going on but when I did (a few pages in), I couldn't believe what I was reading. I was thinking, "Should I be reading this?" and if yes, "Am I going to survive it?" (not literally, of course). I'm warning you now, this book will make you cringe A LOT of times. There were moments when I felt like I needed to close my eyes and breathe for a full minute before continuing, because the scenes were very triggering.

Lagan and the post-its were what made me smile from time to time. It's like I'm Talia and I find it difficult to open up and socialize with people. It's like I'm engulfed in her protective cocoon as well; that a single thing

can happen anytime and that cocoon might break and bring about all the worst-case scenarios. Every minute I'm reading I felt frightened for Talia and Jess's lives. There'll be times when you'd want to strangle Talia's Dad (if only you can do that to a fictional character) and just get over with it. But you're there seeing the story unfolds and you're just caught off guard.

I loved Lagan and Talia. It was kind of refreshing to see them interacting with each other and helping each other through such tough (what an understatement) times. I especially loved Lagan for being exactly as he was. I need a Lagan in my life (I believe we all do).

It was too brutal at times. By the last 2-3 chapters, I was pretty sure my heart was somewhere near the opening of my mouth already (it was THAT intense) and I couldn't not continue. Dang, I was so afraid, I needed to know what happens next right away!

I can't even tell you guys how many times I cried while reading this book. Seven? Ten? Twelve? That doesn't even include the many times I flinched at sentences and felt nauseous. When I finished it, I just wanted to hug anyone to push all the pain away. Basically, I wanted to hug the author for making me feel such powerful emotions and thank her for all the cucumber slices, picnics by the oak tree, and post-it notes.

I have no doubt that this book will forever affect me, both in good ways and not. You can just imagine how excited I was when I found out that there's a sequel. I'm terrified and happy at the same time.

Read at your own risk. And again, let me be that person who keeps saying, "Read a book no one's told you about" or better yet, "Read a book you never thought you'd read".

Laura Smith says

Swimming Through Clouds by Rajdeep Paulus is a story of the deepest, darkest pain—the kind we're too scared to share with anyone—all locked in one high school girl's heart.

Talia is a senior in high school. She and her brother, Jesse, know something no one else knows. They endure terror no one was meant to experience. They feel as if they are drowning.

And then a stranger reaches into their pool of fear by means of a sticky note. Cool, laid back, Lagan, holds friendship and acceptance out to Talia like a lifeguard extends a life vest. Talia must decide if she has the strength and courage to grab it, or if the consequences would be too grave.

A heavy story revealing shards of hope from the tender love of The Gardener, Swimming Through Clouds keeps you fearing for and cheering for Talia, Lagan and Jesse all the way through to the final scene

Rachel says

****Disclaimer: Swimming Through Clouds was sent to me for free from Rajdeep Paulus in exchange for an honest review. All opinions and thoughts are my own.****

Trigger warning for domestic abuse

Talia Vanderbelt is a senior in high school who just wants to blend into the wall and get through her last year without being noticed. Lagan Desai though, has other plans and takes it upon himself to convince Talia into having lunch with him. What begins with a innocent lunch turns into a romance that is mostly written on post-it notes. Underneath it all though, Talia hides a very dark family secret and when her demons begin to surface, things begin to change.

Sounds like a cute contemporary romance with a bit of a twist right? Nothing too major? WRONG
I don't know for sure what I was expecting when I first started reading Swimming Through Clouds, but it certainly was not what I got.

This story is raw. I'm talking, Rajdeep did not hold anything back when it came to writing this story and for that I am truly grateful to have read this story.

Let's start with the good, shall we?

I really loved this story and so many times just felt so horribly sorry for Talia and her home situation. It broke my heart to read of such a horrible family life and the things that Talia and her brother, Jesse, have to endure. Their resilience and strength to make it through each day is nothing short of amazing.

I loved each of the characters in this book. I felt that in the situation that they are placed in that they reacted so realistically to what someone who actually had to face this would feel.

Talia was a really timid, shy, and ultimately broken character to read about. She is so down on herself and it was so sad to read her flashbacks.

Jesse was so strong as well, reteaching himself basic things with the help of Talia and from that growing to harbor extreme resentment.

Lagan was a wonderful love interest to Talia. His unyielding patience and willingness to help and his gentle understanding of the life that Talia and Jesse lead was so wonderful to read about and something that young men should aspire to.

The overall pacing was perfect, told over several months. The flashbacks were well placed showing glimpses into their past and how they were molded into they were now.

The writing is absolutely stunning and well done.

Now, the negative.

Honestly, the reason I gave this book a 4 stars or maybe even ultimately 4.25 stars instead of 5 was because of the beginning.

After the first few chapters, the pacing straightens out but I was SO confused the first chapter. Everything is just kind of thrown in your face right off the get go. You don't really get any setup to what you are about to read. You are just thrown in and that was off-putting for me. Other than that though, I don't have much negative to say about this.

Ultimately, I loved this book and I HIGHLY recommend it if you want to read a wonderful story of strength, pain, and first time love.

bird says

3.5 stars.

I was introduced to this book by a dear friend who read it four years ago and thought I would connect to it.

She was right.

I'm an abusive survivor. I connected to Talia instantly. It was not hard for me to resonate with her deep fear of her father and her need to protect her brother. The abuse scenes were raw and that pain that followed was all too familiar.

The author's style of writing was suspenseful and poetic, however, I found the romance to be incredibly childish; almost like the author was trying too hard to relate to teenagers. I think I would have enjoyed the story more if Lagan was a best friend, because romance was not this author's strong suit. I liked Lagan as a character, but not as a love interest. He was an incredible friend. His determination to help Talia warmed my heart.

The abuse scenes and the trauma that Talia and Jesse endured was beautifully written. I wish the author had focused a little more on the affects of the abuse and Jesse/Talia's relationship than the romance.

I will say however that the ending made me WEEP. The way the author wrote it was spell binding. I couldn't put the book down and it was a good read, albeit some may be triggered by the graphic domestic abuse content.

Laura Kurk says

Debut young adult author Rajdeep Paulus has crafted a story riddled with pain and terrifying uncertainty. Readers, most of whom will have never experienced anything remotely similar to protagonist Talia's nightmare, will emerge from this story with more compassion for children and teens who are forced to live life with a contrived duality. There are many masks these children must wear depending upon where they are and who can see them.

Talia and her younger brother, Jesse, aren't just dealing with a father whose moods and whims make their lives tough. They are literally living in danger every day of their lives. The dark sickness of their father is reminiscent of the twisted nature of Dwight, the stepfather in Tobias Wolff's memoir *This Boy's Life*—including forced, inappropriate chores, horrific abuse, and public humiliation. But, while Wolff dreamed constantly of running away and even attempted to leave several times by reaching out to others around him, Paulus's characters only try once, and the memory of that failure haunts them. They never breathe a word of the atrocious way they live at home—not to teachers, school counselors, neighbors, or law enforcement. Paulus leaves it to us to figure out why, and the reasons are psychological, but not based in a reality that we understand.

Enter a tenacious, stubborn boy named Lagan Desai, who sees Talia at school and for some reason decides his mission will be to pull the new girl out of her self-imposed silence. He does this in the only way possible—through small, unobtrusive gestures of kindness that slowly gain Talia's trust. As readers might imagine, Talia is not a girl who trusts easily—especially not males. But Lagan sees a spark in her that he wants to nourish, and he does, very sweetly. He's a character who is able to step around his own popularity and busy-ness and invest a great deal of time in this odd girl who shields her face with hair and every inch of skin with clothes.

This is not a bubble-gum, high school sweetheart kind of story. Lagan shows a maturity rarely seen in high

school kids, and, although Paulus never says it outright, she intimates that Lagan's nature has been honed through a deep faith and a spirituality that has been nurtured. Our nation and our world have experienced such devastation in recent years that the only thing I look for now in people is kindness. I don't care who you are, who you have been, or who you will be, if you are kind to others, I love you. This is Lagan. He sees in Talia a girl who is suffering in monstrously large ways—inexplicable ways—and his only response is kindness.

It is here that we find the redemption in Paulus's story, because for so much of the book, we wonder if there will ever be hope for Talia and Jesse. Lagan gives Talia so much through a book about a gardener who whispers hope into her soul and lights a spark that becomes movement. It becomes lightning. It becomes escape. No, we don't all experience abuse like this, but we all experience hopelessness and paralysis that rob us of abundant life. When someone steps into our mess and holds out a seed, a sliver, of kindness, we feel hope flutter. This, readers, is the message of *Swimming Through Clouds*.

I recommend this book to older teen readers due to the mature thematic issues and intense scenes of abuse.

Amber Stokes says

With vivid (sometimes painfully so) details and a plot that reads like poetry, *Swimming Through Clouds* is a story that pulls you under but allows enough sweet breaths of air to keep you from drowning in the sorrow. And there is a lot of sorrow - from terrifying flashbacks to present helplessness to future fears. Seeing the suffering that Talia and her brother face is troubling, and hearing about her mother's tragedies is heartbreaking.

Yet the blossoming friendship between Talia and Lagan is beautiful. Their moments together, and Lagan's steadfastness and thoughtfulness and patience, paint the sunset and sunrise colors on an otherwise black scene. They are an unconventional, unique couple, and their story - while surprising, in the sense of finding a young man with such maturity - is sweet, indeed.

The story is rather slow, perhaps a bit like the experience of swimming through clouds might be, but the gripping suspense and hope make it easy to be engaged through the whole book. The creative inclusion of a story from Scripture, as well as the focus on faith through a symbolic setting near and dear to Talia, is neat. And while the ending isn't the nicely wrapped happily-ever-after that can be enjoyable to read, it is fitting and not without hope, despite the uncertainties. *Swimming Through Clouds* is not a light read, but it is an eye-opening one full of difficult realities and compassion.

With thanks to the author and publisher for providing me with a copy of the e-book, which I won via a newsletter giveaway. I was not required to write a review.

Jennifer Murgia says

Absolutely compelling, Rajdeep Paulus' debut novel, *SWIMMING THROUGH CLOUDS*, is a rare breed. Not for the faint of heart, it packs a heavy punch that will leave you gasping for air, reaching for something steady to lean on, and breathless at the hope embedded between the issues so vividly tackled between its pages.

While I find I'm usually too emotional to handle such content in books, I could not put this one down. So vivid were the scenes of family betrayal, abuse and uncertainty, my heart was left raw and wide open. Each emotion that hit me was counterbalanced with a profound hope -- Talia's determination to stay strong for herself and her brother Jesse, Lagan's persistence to slowly slough away Talia's protective outer layer, so that she might see the beauty in things and begin to really live.

Paulus' ability to balance abuse and love, horror and hope, is not only identifiable but flawless and I cannot wait to hear more of Talia and Lagan's story in the future.

Saloni says

I am absolutely in love with this book. It's a perfect mix of intensity and cuteness that just worked. If you've seen my other reviews, there were only a handful of other books that were worth a five star rating in my opinion. Every aspect of this book appealed to me; there wasn't a single part I didn't like. All the characters were so deep and realistic. The ones that you were supposed to love were loved to death, and the ones you were supposed to hate were hated with a fiery passion. And the romance wasn't overwhelming, like I thought it would be. Talia didn't just fall into Lagan's arms the chance she got, there was a slow and steady growth, which I enjoyed. The book really played with your emotions, some parts made me physically cringe, others made me cry, while others made me laugh and squeal with excitement. I really do recommend it to everyone, just with a fair warning it covers some pretty dark themes at times.

[Full Review](#)
