



Aftermath

Kelley Armstrong

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Three years after losing her brother Luka in a school shooting, Skye Gilchrist is moving home. But there's no sympathy for Skye and her family because Luka wasn't a victim; he was a shooter.

Jesse Mandal knows all too well that the scars of the past don't heal easily. The shooting cost Jesse his brother and his best friend--Skye.

Ripped apart by tragedy, Jesse and Skye can't resist reopening the mysteries of their past. But old wounds hide darker secrets. And the closer Skye and Jesse get to the truth of what happened that day, the closer they get to a new killer.

Aftermath Details

Date : Published May 22nd 2018 by Crown Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9780399550362

Author : Kelley Armstrong

Format : Hardcover 371 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Mystery, Thriller, Contemporary, Fiction

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From Reader Review Aftermath for online ebook

Laura says

There's grief, too, but I bury that even faster. You aren't allowed to grieve for someone like Luka. It doesn't matter if he was an amazing brother. Luka Gilchrist was a monster. Write it on the board a hundred times and don't ever forget it.

I can't deny being apprehensive about reading this book due to the school shooting subject matter. I am happy I ended up giving it the shot the book deserved. Aftermath is an extremely relevant book handling a sensitive subject in an empathetic way.

Three years ago, both Skye and Jesse lost their brothers in a school shooting. Skye's brother was a shooter, while Jesse's was a victim. The story is told from both Skye and Jesse's perspectives. Skye moved away after the shooting, but now she has to move back to live with her Aunt May. It doesn't take long for Skye to realize no one wants her there. The gossiping has started. There is a petition going around saying she shouldn't be allowed to attend the school for the safety of others. There are threats and mysterious notes showing up. Oh and seeing Jesse is painful because they used to be best friends.

This book ends up being part contemporary character study, part mystery with a hint of romance and heavier dose of suspense. The story shows how different people can be affected in different ways by tragedy, while also showing we all cope with grief in our own ways.

It takes talent to take a timely, sensitive topic and handle it so well while turning it into an entertaining thriller.

The disturbing scenes are kept to a minimum making this readable for most readers. Although, you should keep in mind the subject matter.

♥Rachel♥ says

Aftermath is a story that's relevant to current times. Living in the States, school shootings are sadly becoming more and more frequent. I've often thought of the family of the shooter, how they're affected when one of their own commits such a horrible crime. Often the family is shocked, blindsided and branded as villains as well.

Aftermath is a fictional story centering on Skylar, the sister of one of the school shooters of a shooting that took place three years ago. My heart went out to her. The brother she knew would never have done what Luka did, and with him gone she's been left to bear the brunt of hate aimed his way. More now than ever when she's forced to return to her hometown where the shooting took place. Skylar expects hostility, but not the sinister pranks, bullying and phone calls she experiences. Is someone trying to punish her for her brother's crimes or question his guilt?

I've enjoyed Kelley Armstrong's writing for quite some time, lately with her Casey Duncan series. Love that

series! While I liked *Aftermath*, I can't say it wowed me. Skylar was a likable and sympathetic character and I liked Jesse as well, but their romance was a bit underwhelming. It was sort of a second chance romance and they both had gone through so much, so of course I wanted them to be together, there just wasn't really any spark to it, IMaO. Kelley Armstrong usually has me on the edge of my seat with suspense, and there were a couple of tension filled moments in this story, but I think the danger was downplayed by the characters when the panic button should've been pushed! They didn't feel the urgency (stupidly, IMO) and so I think the story didn't feel as suspenseful. Maybe this was because the story is Young Adult? I don't know. Still, I was entertained, and felt the need to push on and find out what exactly was going on.

A copy was kindly provided by Crown Books for Young Readers via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

This review is also posted at The Readers Den.

Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

There really isn't a whole lot that Armstrong can't write, in virtually any genre.

The very fact that she combined a very sensitive topic with a mystery and somehow made it both mysterious and heartfelt make it work, is truly a talent not a lot of authors have.

I love that this kept me on the edge of my seat wondering exactly if the main character wasn't slightly unhinged herself or if she really was being bullied and pranked by those that really didn't want her there.

Truly a great stand alone read that fans of Armstrong are going to love and new fans will be glad they took a chance on.

ARC provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

OutlawPoet says

I had to give this one some thought prior to writing my review. I was conflicted.

I really like the author and I found the book was extremely suspenseful.

I also don't know that I'm ready for the School Shooting YA sub-genre that seems to be on the horizon. My initial thought was...if it's done well it should be okay.

This largely is. The focus isn't so much on the shooting itself, but on the aftermath (hence the title). We see the turmoil for the friends and families of the victims, as well as the friends and families of the assailants. It's horrible and heart-rending and you realize how terrible it is for both sides involved.

But...

The story dissolves into a romance, complete with the brooding hero. And our heroine is prone to utter stupidity. A good third of the book could have been avoided if she only had a brain.

Ultimately, the book left me just a little unsatisfied as it turned what could have been strong and powerful commentary into a popcorn teen romantic suspense novel.

*ARC Provided via Net Galley

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life in Books.

This book was truly great. I have to admit that when I first saw that this book would involve a school shooting I was really nervous about reading it. Did I really want to read a book about such a terrible event especially in the current climate? I really wasn't sure but I decided to add this book to my reading schedule because I wanted to see what Kelley Armstrong could do with such a terrible event. I haven't read too many books written by Kelley Armstrong but I have really enjoyed the ones that I have read so I trusted that she would deliver a story worth reading. This book ended up being one of those books that are almost impossible to put down. I am so glad that I decided to give this one a try.

As previously mentioned, this book does involve a school shooting so I was really afraid that it would be one of those books that would break my heart to pieces. In some ways, I guess it did because I hated everything they had gone through but it wasn't the traumatic reading experience that I had feared it would be. The focus of this book is Skye, the sister of one of the teens responsible for the school shooting that tore her hometown apart just a few years earlier. Skye is forced to move back home with her Aunt and go back to the school with the same kids who knew her brother and what he did.

Jesse was Skye's best friend and was possibly becoming more when everything happened. His brother was one of the victims and his life is completely different than it was before the shooting took place. Jesse not only lost his brother but also his best friend when Skye's family quickly left town. Jesse isn't really sure what to think about Skye's return to their hometown.

This book was a whole lot about the characters. Spending time with both Skye and Jesse as they work through their thoughts and feelings about everything going on was very eye opening. This book was also a really well done thriller. I think I might have actually missed the fact that there was some new issues when I first read the book's summary but I was quickly caught up in the events surrounding Skye and Jesse. I had a few suspects but I was never quite sure who was responsible for all of the things going on and I found myself completely glued to the pages. I really liked how Skye and Jesse were able to reconnect as they worked to figure things out.

I would not hesitate to recommend this book to others. I found this to be a thought provoking page turner filled with wonderful characters. I can't wait to read more from this talented author.

I received a digital review copy of this book from Random House Children's - Crown Books for Young Readers via NetGalley.

Initial Thoughts

I really enjoyed this rather exciting book. This story wasn't what I thought it would be. It was a lot better than I expected. I had no idea this would be a thriller but once things started happening, I didn't want to put the book down. I liked Syke and Jesse and was really hoping that things would work out for them. I was able to guess a few things that happened in the book but I was still completely entertained.

Stephanie ((Strazzybooks)) says

Thank you to the publisher/author/Netgalley for my copy.

3.5/5. This book is different. I loved the characters of Skye and Jesse and ESPECIALLY JESSE'S MOM. ((Can we get a spin-off of her story? Because I'm pretty sure I love her.))

The characters were nuanced and believable as they deal with the 'aftermath' (3 years later) of a very personal school shooting.

Though the story does have a slight mystery/suspense angle to it, I appreciated it more for the characters and reading how they dealt with such a compounded tragedy, whose ripples tore through a community and multiple families. The ending of the suspense part got a little silly for me and somewhat detracted from the story, though I know it was a vehicle to move the story along and bring Jesse and Skye together. Overall, well-written and interesting.

Paula Phillips says

A theme of books that I have always been fascinated with is school shootings, I know that makes me sound creepy, but I'm not honest. I guess living in New Zealand, we only hear about the shootings. Kelley Armstrong's book was a different take on your usual school shooting novel which takes place leading up to the shootings. This one features the siblings of victims and shooters three years later. Skye and Jesse were the best of friends until one day changed their lives forever. There has been a school shooting at the high school, and both their siblings died - one was the shooter and the other a victim. Skye moves away for the next three years until her mum suffers a mental breakdown which lands her hospitalized and Skye must move back to live with her aunt in the hometown where the school shooting happened. Skye starts school and is instantly targeted as the girl whose brother shot up the school. Things start happening to Skye, and soon she is being bullied, and someone wants her dead but not before they make her watch footage from the school shooting. As she learns more about the shooting, the evidence seems to come to light that not all was what it seemed and that her brother may have been innocent and others were to blame. This was a good read and also held the moral of not judging others for the actions of siblings or family members but that we are all different and just because a family member might do something, we aren't the same as them. I liked this part as growing up; I had a sibling who was the complete opposite and tried hard to prove I wasn't like them.

Chelsea Humphrey says

4.5 STARS

"I didn't HAVE to," she says. "I chose to. Sometimes, showing compassion for others means doing things that are painful for us."

Folks, this is a book that will stay with me indefinitely. One of the more beautiful aspects of YA fiction is how it can completely take you by surprise by simultaneously sweeping you off your feet and doubling you over with a punch to the gut. This is such a book. I finished *Aftermath* days ago and my emotions are persisting in their wide range of feelings. Obviously the subject matter is delicate, but even the sub-stories within that deal with race, culture, and family dynamics proceed to dig their way below the surface. I felt the emotional equivalent of being struck by an arrow that pierces the skin and isn't able to be just pulled out, because it's head is unable to be reversed the way it went in. It was a beautiful, painful experience, and here's why you should read it...

This is a YA novel written for everyone. Yes, I'm aware that a good bit of YA novels, even ones I enjoy from time to time, are a bit cheesy and underwhelming to most adult readers. Whether the dialogue is trying too hard or the content is flat out unrealistic, these cliches can make-or-break a book for those wanting to dabble in fiction that is aimed at a younger audience. *Aftermath* is a well written character study with a tinge of mystery and suspense, one that bypasses lingo that's trying too hard and sticks to content that matters and is relevant to readers of all ages. I flew through this book as I grew connected to Skye and Jesse/Jasser, because they felt like real, tangible people rather than a glossy magazine spread meant to resemble such.

The content is unsettling and disturbing, but far from graphic. Yes, there are a brief handful of moments with insight into the shooting itself, but these were mostly tame and developed through the emotions of our protagonists rather than relying on shock value and gory flashbacks. I not only felt this was more effective than telling the story the horror route, but also made the story age appropriate for a wider audience, especially those who may be a more sensitive reader wanting to read about a relevant plot so crucial to our current events in America. *Please be advised though that this book IS disturbing, unsettling, and horrifying and each reader should take note before choosing to pick this one up.*

Jesse's mom is the hero of this story, and the diversity is natural. Without delving into spoiler territory, I want to give you insight into one portion of the story which deserves all the attention and credit due. One of our POVs is from Jesse, given name Jasser, who comes from a muslim family. His father is an engineer and his mother is a doctor, but his family still deals with racism and harassment on a regular basis. Armstrong noted in the acknowledgements that she developed this fictional family with the help of a similar one in real life, because she was so determined to have proper representation. Jasser's mom is, in fact, the glue that holds all of the broken people in this story together. She exudes love, support, grace, and understanding, even to those who do not deserve it. She is a classy, upstanding citizen with a wicked sense of humor and a burning deep in her soul to be involved in her children's lives. She is a protective mama bear, not only of her children but of those who don't have a mother to fight in their corner. The Mandals are a family that I grew to feel a part of, and I feel an odd sense of displacement now that the story is over because they felt so... real.

I feel I should mention that the mystery surrounding Skye's brother and the details of the shooting actually takes a backseat to the exquisite character study that exists here. We do get some answers at the end, but I was left unsure of the reason that the shooting happened in the first place. Regardless, we receive enough answers to put our detective cap aside and let it be. If you enjoy novels that bring forth a well of emotions,

both happy and sad, this one's for you. This book is important and focuses on so many necessary themes, such as forgiveness, reconciliation, family bonds (both by blood and those that we choose), and many others I won't mention simply so that you can experience them first hand. Highly recommended and I can't wait to chat about this book with others once they've read it.

**Many thanks to the publisher for providing my review copy via NetGalley.*

Stacee says

Oh man, this was amazing.

I loved Skye and Jesse. They've both gone through a horrible tragedy, but they're at different sides of the event. I loved getting both sides of the story and reading them figuring out how to go forward. And Jesse's mom was one of the best parts.

Plot wise, it was everything I wasn't expecting. There were definitely some heartbreaking moments, but a major part of this story is a mystery and it's absolutely delicious. There are a lot of creepy moments and I spent a good portion of the time reading wondering if everything was in Skye's head. It was fantastic.

Overall, it was a quick read filled with tension. It had me second guessing everything and everyone and I can't wait to read it again.

****Huge thanks to Crown Books for Young Readers for providing the arc free of charge****

Abida's Book Adventures says

Loved this book!

Christy says

Picking up this book I expected it to be emotional, I mean, it is about the aftermath of a school shooting, so I was expecting to bawl my eyes out. What I was expecting was the other emotions that I would feel while reading this book.

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Anger that no one would listen, fear about what was happening now, and sadness for how things turned out for a certain character that I wish I could've known better.

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I know that all sounds kind of vague, but trust me, it needs to be that way. You need to go into this book not knowing what to expect. You need to feel all those emotions like I did. It makes this story that much more powerful.

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Aftermath was a book that I had a feeling I would like, but I ended up loving it. It's a powerful book that will stay with me for a long time.

Jennifer says

4.5/5 stars

I love Kelley Armstrong. She is one of my favorite authors. I really had no idea what to expect from this book. But I absolutely loved it. Aftermath is a standalone YA suspense book. Skye (16) is the main narrator (1st person POV). This book takes place 3 years after a school shooting (her brother was killed). This book is really not so much about the actual shooting, but rather what life is like a few years later (for both the families of the shooters and the families of the victims).

This book was emotional and moving. But it also had a mystery aspect, which I loved. This book was amazing!

The second narrator was Jesse (3rd person POV). He and Skye were best friends three years ago before she moved away. We do get some chapters narrated by Jesse. Although the majority of the book is told from Skye's POV.

I think that the title of this book is perfect. Because while this book is about a school shooting it is really so much more than that. The book is not very graphic. And we don't actually witness anything. But rather the focus is on the aftermath of the tragedy.

There is also major suspense/mystery in this story. And I thought that part of the story was so well done.

I really liked both Skye and Jesse and found both of their stories super fascinating.

This is a tough story to read about. There is also bullying and certain characters having to deal with the fallout even three years after the shooting.

I was completely hooked right from the start of this book. And it only got better from there. The last part was so strong. This is the type of book that is heartbreaking, but it will also really make you think. I loved it!

Kat says

[school shooting (hide spoiler)]

Lola says

It is easy to blame the wrong person.

It is easy for people to blame Skye for her brother's sins. It's harder for them to look at her and put themselves in her shoes, to imagine what her life must be like and how hurt she must feel.

She lost her brother, after all, even if he *did* participate in a high school shooting.

I claim that it's easy, because I once blamed the wrong person for somebody else's mistake, too. I wasn't thinking clearly. All that I knew was that my brother had done something uncharacteristic of him, and since I couldn't get mad at *him*, the only person I didn't feel bad blaming was his girlfriend.

I wasn't acting with my mind; I was acting with my emotions.

I never once stopped to consider what *she* must have felt, discovering her boyfriend was brought to the police station after he shoplifted, as I was sending her that one message that should never have left my draft section.

I am ashamed of what I did, but that was a lesson for me. You don't truly realize how much your words can hurt another person until someone else does the same thing to you, until someone else blames you for another person's crime.

So I felt sympathy and understanding toward Skye's situation. I especially wanted to reach out to her with open arms as she struggled to forget the great brother she once had and didn't let herself weep for a shooter.

But what if there is more to the story?

This is a **fast-paced mystery/thriller** with a storyline that stretches reality here and there, and a dramatic heroine, but it is pretty engrossing and recommended regardless. I wasn't bored for one second. What an intense book. 3.5 stars.

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Didi says

One of my fave authors, and she's Canadian! Love her work. This was great, especially the flow, something KA is a genius at.
