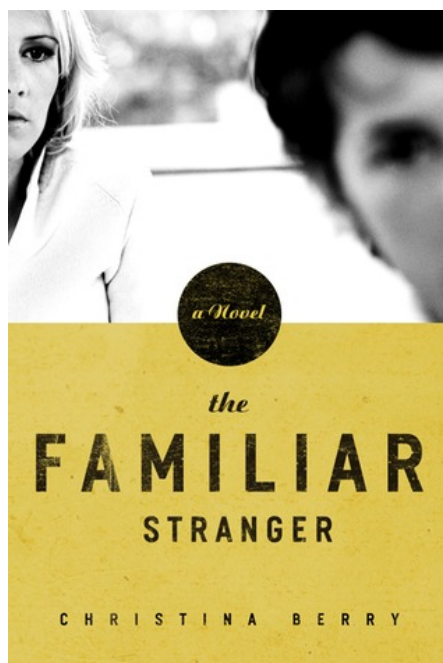




The Familiar Stranger

Christina Tarabochia

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Craig Littleton's decision to end his marriage would shock his wife, Denise... if she only knew what he was up to. When an accident lands Craig in the ICU, with fuzzy memories of his own life and plans, Denise rushes to his side, ready to care for him.

They embark on a quest to help Craig remember who he is and, in the process, they discover dark secrets: An affair? An emptied bank account? A hidden identity? An illegitimate child?

But what will she do when she realizes he's not the man she thought he was? Is this trauma a blessing in disguise, a chance for a fresh start? Or will his secrets destroy the life they built together?

The Familiar Stranger Details

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Author : Christina Tarabochia

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From Reader Review The Familiar Stranger for online ebook

Andi says

This is an over due review. When I first received this book for review I was in the middle of my divorce and I just couldn't handle the story in this book. I picked it up again and finished it in just a few days. I fell in love with Denise and my heart went out to her. Early on a Sunday morning her husband Craig decides he's not going to church he's going to go on a hike, while Denise and her boys go to church she gets a phone call that he's been in an accident on the side of the road and he's being rushed to the hospital. What begins to unfold is almost too hard to believe. Each day Denise finds evidence of a double life that her husband Craig has been living. Told in his and her's first person perspective it made the book very personable and believable. The ending left it open for a sequel which I hope to see Christina write. If you haven't read this one I highly recommend it!

Christy Lockstein says

Familiar Stranger by Christina Berry is an emotional rollercoaster novel filled with suspense. Denise Littleton has been feeling the cracks in her marriage for the last several years. Her husband, Craig, treats her with disdain, turning away her attempts at affection and belittling her every move. When he's in a car accident that wipes his memory, it at first seems to be a blessing. The familiar strangers fall in love; he pays attention to their sons, and they are finally finding the life Denise has always wanted. Until Craig's secrets start coming out, shattering their calm and exposing his lies. Berry mines every bit of emotion by alternating narration between Craig and Denise to show their growing feelings and confusion. Astute readers will figure out what's going on, but the superb writing keeps them guessing about particulars. Two small areas of concern: Denise runs hot and cold with the turn of a page with no explanation, and a vital piece of information is casually tossed out near the beginning of the book, but when all of the secrets are exposed, it isn't referenced, making the ending a bit less satisfying. Those issues won't stop readers from devouring this enthralling story.

Jeannie says

Great book in the beginning, but as the book moved along, things got too predictable. This was a story about a man who decides to leave his family and is injured in a car crash. But, it wasn't him that was injured! The author wasn't really that good with the timeline. As injured as the man was in the accident, it should have taken months to recover, but he seemed to be up and moving around within a few weeks. So then, how could the wife not recognize that this wasn't her husband once the bandages were removed? A little too soap-operaish for me. It was also too preachy. Lots of connotations about religion. If that is what you enjoy, you will like the book. I prefer just a good story, even if unbelievable, as long as the plot is good. Familiar Stranger had it's moments, but I think it could have been better.

Janna Ryan says

I have heard good things about this book, but I have to admit I was still a little skeptical because it looks

pretty woman's fiction to me... you know, all relationships, my life isn't perfect, my husbands a jerk, blah, blah, blah. But I really wanted to give it a try because I met Christina in September at ACFW and I was so impressed with her as a person that I had to see if she could write. Okay people, it is official. This girl can write!

She blew my mind with this book. I expected it to take me awhile to read, nope, couldn't put it down and finished it in 24 hours. I figured I'd see everything coming, nope, twists and turns down to the very end. I thought I'd be bored with all the woman's issues, nope, it was actually almost more mystery then woman's fiction. I just knew that I'd add it to my pile of one time read woman's fiction books, nope, this book might make it to my keeper shelf.

If you are looking for fresh and different, pick up The Familiar Stranger and see if it doesn't blow your mind a little too!

Rosanne says

I enjoyed this book! Christina weaves plot with character development and it's a page turner! Far better than Mary Higgins Clark. I heard Christina talking to a friend in the coffee/muffins line in front of me at Oregon Christian Writer's Conference, and was intrigued with her comments. After eavesdropping, and coming away with the impression of how transparent and real she is, I bought her book. I thought it would be. . .more negative, a downer, but far from it--Familiar Stranger grabs you from the first page and takes you on a ride. . .

Louise says

"The Familiar Stranger" is one of the best debut novels I've read in awhile!!! I was totally captivated from the first page to the last. The characters are well-drawn and Berry has the ability to transport the reader into the pages of the book.

After Denise's husband Craig is in an automobile accident he wakes up from a coma with amnesia, but things just don't seem right. Prior to the accident Craig had become distant, wasn't home very much for her or their two boys and the marriage was falling apart. As Denise sits by Craig's hospital bed she promises herself to make the marriage work. If Craig is suffering from amnesia, then perhaps they can have a fresh start.

However, a bombshell piece of news blows the family apart when Craig suddenly regains his memory and nothing is as it was. Can Denise forgive Craig, can her Pastor help her to use her faith in God to forgive him after he has lied and used her as a fool?

This is one debut novel you don't want to miss and I'll definitely be looking for more novels by Christina Berry!!

From back cover:

"A fresh start or a double-cross? Why is Craig so cold and distant? Denise wonders. Is it his job? The family? Or is it me? Though she's poured her heart into her marriage, years of enduring his long hours, frequent times away, and short temper have left her with a deep sadness.

Then one morning in the middle of church her cell phone rings. Embarrassed, she heads to the lobby, takes the call...and is shocked by the news she hears. Craig's been in an accident.

So begins their fresh start. While keeping vigil by his bedside she wills herself to make their marriage work, whatever the cost. And when Craig finally regains consciousness, he appears to want the same thing - except for one detail. He doesn't know who she is.

Nor does he remember anything about their life, their children, or why he was parked on the side of the freeway when the accident occurred. As he struggles to recall the past, he also shows a new love for Denise characterized by tender strength and consideration. So what is she to do when ugly betrayals emerge? Is it possible to forgive a man who thoroughly violated her trust? How many more lies and secrets are yet to be discovered?

And then, without warning, his memories come flooding back..."

Michelle says

The Familiar Stranger was a real page turner. It was written so well that it wasn't until I was three quarters of the way through the story that I realized the point of view for each person (titled his and hers respectively in the novel) was written in the first person past tense. This was very well done and flawlessly executed, IMHO. The Familiar Stranger is also the perfect title for this incredible tale. It was an intriguing and a profoundly mysterious story that kept me guessing until nearly the end.

At first I was thinking something was occurring like what happened Rekindled by Tamera Alexander. Then I thought it could be like The Man in the Iron Mask starring Leonardo DiCaprio. Then I thought of the movie Summersby starring Jodie Foster. Long story short, this delightfully romantic and emotional tale was one of the most amazing debuts I've read in a long time. It was well thought out, excellently plotted, and the characterization was so believable that it left me breathless. Yeah, I even got choked up several times, especially toward the end.

I found the resolution in The Familiar Stranger more satisfying and believable than if the story had been taken a different direction. The unique spiritual perspective was also truly inspirational, which is why this book is making my best fiction for 2009 list. I highly recommend it.

Cindy says

The Familiar Stranger
Christina Berry
2009
Moody Press
Fiction/Christian/Contemporary

Reviewed by Cindy Loven

An accident, leaves one man horribly injured, and in a drug induced coma, and another man dead. Denise rushes to the hospital to be with her husband, Dr. Craig Littleton. He was injured when a car hit his parked car beside the freeway. But who was the man who died? And why was he with Craig? And why was Craig parked alongside the freeway? Why was he arguing with the strange man, as passing motorists noticed? What was going on?

These questions plague Denise, but the police clear up the mystery, sort of, it seems. They discover the dead man was William Rodain, a patient of her husbands. But why he was with Craig, was still a mystery.

Denise stands beside Craig, amazed at how different his personality is, as he is slowly recovering. He has trauma induced amnesia, and doesn't remember her or their sons. Hopeful that his homecoming will jog his memory, they all look forward to him coming home and getting well.

Follow this fascinating, fast paced story from beginning to end. See Denise fall in love with her husband all over again. Discover her kindness and developing friendship with the daughter of the man who died in the accident. See the boys grow into a loving and better relationship with their dad. Discover secrets, that hurt and should never had to be revealed. Learn about the infidelities that Craig indulged in before the accident. See forgiveness at its most merciful. A wonderfully written book, this debut novel from Christina Berry will most definitely be a book to share with friends and family. Discussion questions for book groups and clubs included. 5 stars 334 pages \$13.99 US

Debbie says

The Familiar Stranger is a contemporary Christian fiction novel. The world-building was okay, and the pacing was very good. In the first half of the novel, a noticeable about of dialogue (including inner dialogue) felt unnatural to me--and I'm not talking about when awkward dialogue might be expected. In the second half, though, this problem disappeared and the writing was excellent.

The characters were sympathetic enough characters, but the only ones I really bonded with were the kids. This may partly be because I've never seriously dated or been married or had a loved one in a bad accident so I couldn't personally relate to the stress the adults were going through. I did like the way the author handled the struggles that the characters went through, though.

I didn't fully enjoy this novel because there were two or three "mighty convenient" things that happened at critical points in the story to make it end up where it did. I would have liked for these points to have been fleshed out to make them more realistic and probable.

The characters were Christians living out their faith. The novel wasn't preachy, but there was a large amount of God-talk and praying. Non-Christians probably wouldn't enjoy this book. There was no sex and no bad language. Overall, it's an enjoyable book, and I'd rate it as good, clean reading.

Karin says

Okay - you guys know me. I'm not a fan of anything serious. Just look at my movie collection. If you can find a good drama in there I may have watched it once, but there's no guarantee. I figure there's enough drama in life that I want to laugh and love with my movies and books.

With that in mind, "The Familiar Stranger" is out-of-genre for me, but I stumbled upon Christina's blog a few months ago and wanted to help support her when it released. Being sick for a month offered plenty of time to sit back and read, so I picked up TFS...five hours later I finished it.

I love that the entire book is written in first person, but through TWO point of views! Berry dictates at the beginning of each chapter if you're in Denise's head or Craig's head. This draws you into their lives and hearts as they struggle to uncover truths, deal with their findings, and figure out what to do next. This first person experience lets you feel their anguish and jubilation throughout their journey.

From the Christian perspective Denise is a fabulous example of grace and forgiveness. She isn't perfect, and her immediate reaction isn't always what it should be, but that's what makes her genuine. What makes her admirable is that even in the midst of her pain and turmoil, even after she gets angry and screams, she always goes back to God and mends her ways. Her strength truly comes from God, because she makes come hard decisions that would not be possible without the strength and grace of a Savior.

Walking with Craig through his recovery and discovery is eye opening. It's tense and exhilarating to be in his head as he struggles to figure out who he is. Each revelation brings a new challenge. His self-discovery keeps you on edge waiting for each new nugget of information.

Overall I really enjoyed this book. I like the realism of the pains and struggles of these characters, but it would have been hopeless and depressing without the foundation of Christianity. Even though things don't work out perfectly, it's not the fairy tale ending that I usually read, but there's hope because of God and the faith the characters put in Him.

This is a book I can easily recommend.

Carly says

I am always drawn to new authors and stories with a different twist. The Familiar Stranger is the first novel by Christina Berry and it definitely has its fair share of twists and turns. At first I thought the concept of a character having amnesia could be a bit overdone, but after having read the book, it was very well written. I also initially didn't like the truth once it was realized. I'll leave it at that because I don't want to give anything away. But again, after reading the entire book, the truth serves a purpose; a purpose that goes deeper than the story on the surface.

Most of the story is painful, but like life, the pain is for a purpose and there are many important Christian lessons that can be learned in the pages of The Familiar Stranger. I appreciate books that include characters' prayers. There were many prayers throughout this story, which is very beneficial to the reader. Having prayer in a story teaches me how to pray better and helps me to see God at work, even if it is just a story. Denise prayed a lot and had a lot of forgiveness in her heart. She was an easy character to like mostly because she was so real.

Overall, The Familiar Stranger is a very good debut novel. This book has a lot of deep spiritual meaning and a strong Christian foundation. I found it to be very well written with a nice dose of mystery, suspense, faith, and love. It will appeal to a wide audience. I highly recommend it.

Elizabeth says

I really wanted to like this book. And I did. With that said, I was a little bummed with the ending. I just so look for a book to come out where people have real problems (check for this book) and they apply biblical principles and it works out. I guess this one did but it ended up totally different than what I was expecting... I just wish that instead of being a villain her husband could have been truly redeemed. Who knows. I guess I'm just tired of seeing Christian books with villains who can't change. Not all together a bad read. Berry is an author I would read again.

Nora St Laurent says

I'm so thankful I received this book as a gift. Christina grabbed my attention on the very first page. I read this book in one day! I was drawn into the characters and their situation hook, line and sinker. Christina Berry starts out the first chapter in the point of view of Craig Littleton, Denise's husband. In the next chapter, Christina describes the very same scene from Denise's point of view. This added such richness to the story, knowing each person feelings, what they were really communicating when they talked to one other, and how each viewed their marriage situation. I love it. It brought depth to this heart felt, touching story, where I sympathized with the characters and the dilemma's they faced.

After a serious accident, Denise discovers unbelievable things about her husband. Can all these things be true? Married twenty years, how could she not have known any of this?

God was asking the impossible from Denise. Her Pastor asked her these three questions. "1. Are you angry? 2. Do you love him? 3. The hardest. Are you going to forgive him?"

Denise responds, "Forgive him again, you mean. How can I?"

I was fascinated and intrigued by this unforgettable story of deceit, betrayal, forgiveness and true love. I couldn't put it down. I can't believe this is Christina Berry's first novel. She's an author to watch; I can't wait to see what she writes about next. You'll be wondering too.

Disclosure of Material Connection:

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising"

Nora St.Laurent

The Book Club Network www.bookfun.org

The Book Club Network blog www.psalms16.blogspot.com

Book Fun Magazine www.bookfunmagazine.com

Kelly Moran says

Author Christina Berry is a single mom and foster parent, carving time out of a busy schedule to write. The Familiar Stranger is her debut novel. She resides with her family in Oregon.

Denise and Craig's seventeen year marriage had been on the rocks for some time. He could be cold and distant, and she could be controlling and obsessive. With him working long hours and frequenting short temper, it left them both with a deep sadness. Then, while in church, Denise's cell phone rings and she is blown away when she finds out that Craig has been in an accident. With Craig having no memory of her,

their two sons, or their life together, Denise is determined to make this a fresh start for them all. She keeps vigil in the hospital and stands by him through his painful recovery. But secrets are emerging about his life before the accident, leaving Denise with more questions than answers, and wondering if she ever knew Craig at all. Why was he standing by the side of the highway in the first place? Who was the stranger with him? How many more betrayals will she uncover? Can she forgive a man who is so obviously changed? And then, suddenly, his memories come flooding back...

Admittedly, and though nothing provoked me to feel this way, I didn't have high hopes for this book. Honestly, I thought it was going to resemble a soap opera. How wrong I was. I was blown away by how powerful this book was. Told from first-person point-of-view from both main characters, Denise and Craig, this story will draw you in from the first page and hold you captive until the last. It sends a strong message of faith, (which will interest inspirational readers), has a puzzle to the plot as the secrets are revealed, (which will interest mystery lovers), shows the roots and troubles within a marriage, (which married persons can relate to), a bit of romance, and a strong dramatic element which fictional readers can revel in. I figured out where the author was going with the book about half-way through, but it did not deter me from reading as there were things I didn't see coming as well, nor was I disappointed with the ending. Revealing any more will ruin it for future readers, but trust me when I say that this was a very well-written, engaging, and bittersweet story- one in which shouldn't be overlooked.

Kelly Moran,
Author and Reviewer

Cafelilybookreviews says

Craig Littleton's decision to end his marriage would shock his wife, Denise . . . if she knew what he was up to. When an accident lands Craig in the ICU, with fuzzy memories of his own life and plans, Denise rushes to his side, ready to care for him.

They embark on a quest to help Craig remember who he is and, in the process, discover dark secrets. An affair? An emptied bank account? A hidden identity? An illegitimate child?

But what will she do when she realizes he's not the man she thought he was? Is this trauma a blessing in disguise, a chance for a fresh start? Or will his secrets destroy the life they built together?

I won this book in a giveaway and was interested to read it, having never heard of Christina Berry.

Christina - WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? lol

This was probably one of the most intriguing books I've read, in the contemporary Christian fiction genre. Just when I thought I knew what was going to happen, another unexpected twist would pop up and peak my interest all over again.

This isn't your typical struggling marriage saga that ends in happy ever after - this is some serious grit and suspense - an emotional roller coaster that kept me running back to this book to find out what was going to

happen.

I will definitely be adding Christina to my "favorite authors" list and can't wait to see what she does with future books.
