



Monsoon Season

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Riley refuses to call herself a battered woman - she doesn't fit the profile. When her boyfriend Ben hits her, she doesn't know what to call it. She does know to pack her things and run to the one place that feels safe - home. Riley discovers she's pregnant and her emotions become tangled. She can't shake the fact that she's still in love with Ben... A horrific accident then turns Riley's world even more upside down, forcing her to accept help from those around her. Before she can begin to heal, she must learn the difference between being independent and being alone. A gripping emotional drama, perfect for fans of Anne Tyler and Anita Shreve.

Monsoon Season Details

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From Reader Review Monsoon Season for online ebook

Lucy says

I enjoyed this book more than I expected to. I did expect to enjoy it, but I also expected it to have a little less real substance.

It was an easy read. The chapters were split up between different characters which gave you different sides of the story. The voices seemed pretty authentic to me, and I found I really felt like I was having a conversation most of the time. The only real problem was that I found I liked all the characters, sometimes against my better judgement, except where they didn't get their own voice. Maybe this just shows how well written the voices were but it does also suggest a lack of variety.

Sometimes I did find Riley to be a bit of an idiot. She made some rather shaking decisions. But I liked her and wanted everything to work out ok. I just wished she would take someone's advice once in a while.

I didn't like the synopsis given by the publisher, which is why I have used one from goodreads. It suggested the story had less depth than it really does and is certainly less compelling than the one from goodreads. I can see it appealing to a wider audience, but it is a bit spoilerish.

Mjl says

A bit of a confused read. The book is nominally about Ben and Riley and the messy, unpleasant details of their breakup. And initially that is the focus but then there's a car accident, a different breakup and a wedding and you're left wondering what the point of the book is....or did the author run out of steam 100pages too soon and resort to poorly constructed gapfill to meet a word target?

There were good things: the writing is intelligent; the book deals with uncomfortable topics in a sensitive, compassionate way; and the multiple perspectives was an interesting vehicle to learn more about the characters and their impact on each other. However, eventually the injudicious use of the different points of view as well as the expanding peripheral cast detracts from the central theme and the tragic story of the main characters.

Deb says

Monsoon Season is O'Rourke's first novel, a portrayal of a young relationship with some serious problems. It's a simple story, but thankfully this book is anything but simple. It tells the story of Riley and Ben, a couple in their early twenties. Riley is leaving Ben and going back to her parents' home across the country because Ben has become abusive.

O'Rourke does a fantastic job portraying the ups and downs of this blossoming relationship, from first date to first sex to – sadly – first sign of violence. Ben's own father was an abuser, and Ben struggles to accept the idea that he may be capable of the same kind of abuse. Riley, on the other hand, struggles with her love for Ben and feels empty without him. O'Rourke introduces a lot of really complex issues and I like that she doesn't try to resolve them all.

The writing feels very real, very conversational, and O'Rourke has a good eye for the details that make a difference in a story. One weakness, however, is the frequent switch in narrators. I'm not sure why O'Rourke chose to have so many characters narrate the book, when it really becomes confusing to the reader and it's really not necessary to view this story from so many different perspectives. Another is that O'Rourke tells a lot of childhood anecdotes, not only from Riley and Ben's perspectives, but again, from the many different narrators. I appreciated that these characters had a history, but these side stories didn't always seem relevant.

There are issues that could have been explored a lot more, like the idea of whether Ben can actually overcome the violence he picked up from his father. There's also a lot left unsaid between Riley and her family, and Ben and his family. If you need a book to clean everything up in the end, this isn't the book for you -- but I like books "messy" and I really enjoyed it.

I like a book that makes me think, and this one did.

Note: I received a complimentary copy of this novel from the author in exchange for an honest review. Full review at <http://thebookstop.wordpress.com/2013...>

Sitatunga says

Highly engaging characters, compelling plot development, beautifully evoked scenes .. it had me hooked from the start.

Casee Marie says

Riley is a Massachusetts girl fresh from college when she boldly moves across the country to Arizona, separating herself from her family in an attempt to find her own footing in life. Amid the fervid unrestraint of Tucson's monsoon season she meets Ben, and the two discover a comfortable life together. They live simply and love passionately until Ben's spasmodic and unpredictable temper pushes Riley to a place from which she refuses to return. Stricken by the sting of his abuse, Riley once again separates herself from the life she knows and leaves her unstable Tucson world for home and family in New England. But allowing a love to die, she discovers, – even an illogical, rampant young love – isn't made any easier by walking away. As she comes to grips with the consequences of her choices and learns to reestablish her life, a tragedy close to home will shake her world anew. With determination, and with the help of her true friends and family, Riley will have to learn how to weather a monsoon season of her very own.

Katie O'Rourke's debut novel reads in a wonderfully unique way; her lyrical prose and the unstructured path of her story make Monsoon Season a refreshing journey through the art of literature. I found myself absorbed in the unfolding drama of Riley and Ben's tumultuous relationship, guided through the quickly shifting scenes and perspectives with ease. O'Rourke doesn't tie the novel's narrative down to one format; some scenes play out in Riley's voice, others in Ben's, while others still are seen from the perspectives of the people around them. Such an exploration of the mode of novel-writing could have distracted readers, but O'Rourke is so strong in her ability, so confident in her direction, that the story only gains momentum from it. I had no difficulty in following along; on the contrary, I felt connected to the unique flow of the novel. Monsoon Season's structure contributes, in a way, to the emotional upheaval and resolute determination Riley feels in escaping a potentially disastrous situation. In Riley the reader finds a very strong-willed and companionable protagonist, a girl at once relatable and admirable. Ben, on the other hand, must suffer the

results of his own mistakes, and the reader feels the ebb and sway of the impossible connection he and Riley share.

What would have been a consistently compelling story between Riley and Ben is extended into something a bit fuller, a bit richer, when O'Rourke pulls back from their lives to examine the situations of those around them. Riley's parents and siblings and their relationships are explored in a way that temporarily leaves a romantic drama behind to touch on the poignancy of family. Ben's mother is given focus as she herself deals with the aftermath of an abusive marriage and the fear of its genetic inheritance. Donna, Riley's friend and roommate in Tucson, explores her young life and burgeoning romance. Laura and Jack, Riley's childhood friends, discover how unexpectedly life can bring joy and sorrow, love and loss. O'Rourke handles every separate thread in such an assured way, and with such a lovely use of language, that the story glides evenly, allowing the reader to experience seemingly everything at once. *Monsoon Season* will effectively entertain the reader, touch their heart, and leave them reflecting on our intense vulnerability in life and our ability to overcome it.

(Review © Casee Marie, originally published on February 6, 2013 at LiteraryInklings.com. I received a copy of the book for the purpose of review.)

Deborah Whipp says

I'm not even sure how to categorize this book, thought I guess emotional drama is close enough. Told from multiple points of view, it centers around Riley, who leaves her boyfriend after he hits her and then deals with an ensuing pregnancy and a family emergency. Frankly, I found it meandering and depressing. Riley was a bit of a dull character and I wasn't sure how the multiple POVs really helped. Also, knowing very little about physical abuse, I found it interesting how instantly everyone was willing to write off Ben - including his own mother - and would have liked to be more informed about this subject, including recidivism and whether there is any hope for children who grow up in abusive homes and then later display that tendency.

Tricia Drammeh says

Riley doesn't seem like the type of girl who would fall into an abusive relationship. She's from a "good" family, is educated, highly intelligent, and confident. She doesn't seem the type who would go back to her abuser, or who would miss him once she was separated from him. But this is what Riley does. Because it can happen to anyone, even to those you would least expect. As the author delves into Riley's past and her family life, we uncover elements of dysfunction that might lead to future unhealthy relationships, but isn't that true for almost all of us? We all have issues and baggage. Why is it some of us end up in abusive relationships while others do not? Abusers and their victims don't always fit a certain mold, and this is one of the most thought-provoking themes in this novel.

We meet and get to know Ben--the abusive boyfriend. We find out about his past and what might have led to his outbursts of anger. And, we learn enough about him that while we might not condone his behavior, we can have compassion for him as a human being. We also meet Riley's parents, her best friends, and her brother. We meet Ben's mother and discover her hidden pain.

I'm so appreciative of the way O'Rourke tackled the issue of domestic abuse. I've read works of fiction that have tried to explore this issue, but most rely on stereotypes. The meek victim cowering in the corner, believing she deserves the abuse because she grew up watching it happen to her own mother. The cruel

abuser taking delight in tormenting his victim. Sure, victims and abusers like these exist, but it's important to show the reality of domestic abuse. Not all victims are the same. Not all abusers are the same. There are various shades of domestic abuse. It's not all black and white.

This book is not all about abuse. It's about relationships between families, friends, and significant others. It's about secrets, hard decisions, and dealing with depression and trauma. It's an emotional read without being over-the-top. The dramatic scenes are realistic and believable. And even the author deals with some pretty heavy issues, there's hope for the future as we watch Riley evolve and grow.

There's so much about this novel that was spectacular. It's a book that stays with you, and changes you just a little bit. This is another one of those books I wish I would have read as part of a book club. I'd definitely recommend this to just about any reader over age 18.

Leish says

This book starts out with Riley on her way home. We are aware that her boyfriend, Ben and her had a fight. We aren't aware of the circumstances for several chapters until we finally learn that he was an abuser. I think that the hold-out for this reveal was kind of perfect. O'Rourke gradually introduced it to the reader, so I wasn't sure if I should feel sorry for Ben or not? I began to feel like the battered woman because I was making excuses for Ben. I came to my senses eventually, but I found that the way she wrote about the abuse was so interesting.

I liked how O'Rourke also introduced the key people in Riley's life. We got to learn more about her and more about these people. I was most interested in reading her father's section because he was kind of hard to read. But after reading that, it's obvious that he loves her very much and was just worried about her.

It's hard to believe that this is Katie O'Rourke's first novel. It was a story that really makes you think about what you would do in that situation, and it was just beautifully written. I highly recommend this one!

*This book was provided for review on Confessions of a Bookaholic... All thoughts and opinions are my own.

Mary says

After finishing college, Riley moves away from her loving family in Massachusetts to Tucson and meets Ben. They fall in love and move in together. Slowly problems appear and Riley realises that she is in the classic violent relationship... and she is pregnant. She moves back to her parents' home to escape and heal, only to have an accident create more havoc in the family.

I found this story very low key as it closely follows the classic outline of family violence up to a point. There seemed to be little dramatic tension. Perhaps this was because so many viewpoints were included and there was a great deal of switching around. I'm not sure if this was supposed to illustrate why and how the various people in a survivor's life bring their different responses to relationship breakdowns and violence issues but I found it confusing and often irrelevant.

I also found it concerning that no one articulated that the times of greatest danger for women in violent

relationships are when they are pregnant and when they are attempting to leave. Writing about intimate partner violence and not bringing these facts to the attention of the reader is not ok with me.

Mary White says

Monsoon Season is the story of Riley and Ben, two young adults who meet and fall in love. Author Katie O'Rourke handles the burgeoning relationship with deft hands, showing in moments and gestures how the two become acquainted and enamored. Here, Riley's hand meets Ben's amidst sparks and spasms; there, he reaches down and readjusts the blankets to cover her cold feet. Facets of their personalities emerge as we follow their movements. They spend hours playing board games and staying in, and days exploring the surrounds of Tucson, where Riley has moved from the east coast after graduating college. The terrain is foreign and new, as is the landscape of the relationship.

And yet Monsoon Season begins with Riley on a bus, en route to her childhood home and separating from Ben. From the intimacy of their fledging love, the novel's lens widens to include a supporting cast. Donna, Riley's roommate who has stood by as one friend after another abandons her for romantic pursuits. Laura, Riley's childhood friend who got married young, after an unexpected pregnancy. Ben's mother, Teresa, still dealing with the repercussions from her own marriage. And Riley's parents, Mark and Carol, a seemingly normal middle-aged couple who may have more problems than they let on. As the young couple's circle widens, as the past and present come together to illuminate how they have found themselves in their current state, we begin to understand the complexity of their relationship (of all relationships), and the influences they've absorbed. And like the cracked Arizona earth unable to withstand the torrent of a monsoon, Riley finds herself at the center of a storm, life launching an onslaught from all sides. In the end, she must either drown or dry herself off.

Monsoon Season is touching and feels honest; at times, the prose is lyrical and knowingly observant. Part coming-of-age, part love story, part family drama, it is peopled with vivid characters and tells a story that pulls at the heart and engages the mind. This is what it's like to love someone, to make a mistake, to start over. These universalities and their nuanced delivery are the strength of Katie's O'Rourke's debut novel.

Jennifer Joyce says

The first part of Monsoon Season is told from Riley and Ben's perspective but then continues the story from the viewpoints of those around them too. I found it interesting to see how an abusive relationship affects the friends and family of the couple, especially Ben's mother, Teresa. I would have liked to have seen more of Teresa as she had been in Riley's position herself. How would Ben turning out like his father affect their relationship in the long run?

I liked how Monsoon Season began with Riley leaving Ben, dealing with the aftermath of an abused partner deciding enough is enough. For Riley, leaving was hard but staying away is proving to be just as difficult as feelings can't be switched off overnight.

The style of writing was very easy going, despite the subject matter, and the pages slipped by without me noticing so I was very surprised when, after just two days, I was already 75% of the way through and I finished it the following day. I found Monsoon Season to be an interesting and thought-provoking read, showing an abusive relationship from all angles and the effect it can have.

Kristin Gleeson says

There's a quiet pace about this novel that moves the reader along like a mild river current. Underneath that mild current there teems the emotion of the various viewpoints to create a very compelling novel. The opening is beautifully crafted to set the scene and allude to the pent up emotions contained in the hub of characters in the novel. It's Riley's pregnancy that initiates the monsoon and we are drawn into the novel to see what damage such a storm will unleash.

This is a beautifully written literary novel that takes its time to create the tension, slowly and carefully and doesn't rush out backstory and facts in great lumps that hinder the pace. The backstory flows into the narrative seamlessly and enriches it. The dialogue is authentic and contributes in its sparsity to the distinct voice of the book.

Debbie says

A complex web of relationships explored that of Riley and Ben the main characters, but also those of their families and friends. Ben is the son of an abusive father, Riley has estranged herself from her own family. When Ben hits her she refuses to classify herself as an abused woman; she removes herself from the situation and runs back to home where she needs to re-establish her relationships with her family.

A weave of family and friend relationships this is not a fast-moving book with lots of action but a well written novel exploring the dynamics of day to day life.

Leah says

When I heard about Katie O'Rourke's debut novel, I figured it would be similar to reading a Sophie Hannah or a Brooke Morgan novel, with a damaged heroine and a plot that you don't generally see in Chick Lit. A darker sort of book, if you will. But if I'm honest, I'm not really 100% sure where I would slot in Monsoon Season. It's not a psychological thriller as I had assumed, it certainly isn't Chick Lit and there is no author I would be able to point to and say "It's like that". It's not really like anything I have ever read, and to be honest, I found it a bit baffling.

Monsoon Season has a pretty basic premise that's spelled out quite nicely in its synopsis: After Riley's boyfriend hits her, she flees Tucson for Massachusetts, then finds out she's pregnant, and then a major accident turns her life even more upside down (which, by the way, is a horribly clunky phrase "even more upside down"). And that is pretty much the novel. Which means, there are no surprises, and we pretty much know exactly how the book is going to go from start to almost finish. Which is disappointing. I never felt as if anything I read was particularly new, or particularly varied from what the synopsis offered. The novel would probably have had a bit more impact if we didn't know why Riley had ran away home, nor about the major accident that occurs.

I found the way in which O'Rourke wrote the novel to be a bit odd, too. It's told from both first-person and third-person, from multiple people, but none of the third-person perspectives actually add anything to the

novel. I can understand why we hear from both Riley and Ben, in first person, but I see no need at all for Donna's (Riley's best friend) perspective, Carol's (Riley's mother) perspective, Ben's mother's perspective, or Riley's brother's perspective. All detract away from the main focus of the novel which should be Riley and add nothing to the book.

When I initially heard about the novel, I thought it would be an excellent insight into a strong woman who doesn't stay with a man once he hits her. Now, before anyone takes that the wrong way, I do not mean those who do stay with men who hit them are weak, more that it's against the grain for someone to take a stand and leave, and I expected a bit more oomph from the novel. I think that the whole pregnancy thing was too much, and should have been taken out, because we just didn't get anything from that. I didn't feel connected to any of the characters. Actually, that's wrong. The only character I felt even the slightest bit connected to was woman-hitter Ben. He's the only one who actually had any emotion in the novel, would you believe? Riley was soulless, which perhaps is understandable after all she goes through, but I just never felt we got anything from her. I just didn't really get the novel, sadly. It just wasn't one I really got or liked, and that's a shame because it sounded so interesting.

Michelle says

I enjoyed the characters. I think I would have liked to hear more from Ben's mom. There were times I would get confused when the pov was changed. Riley and Ben were told in 1 st person, however everyone else was told in 3 rd person.
