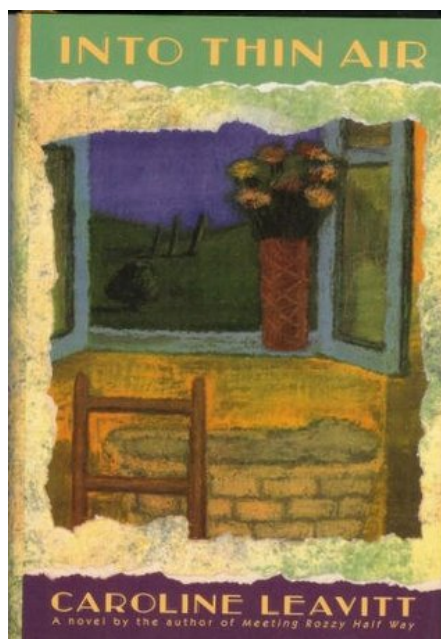




Into Thin Air

Caroline Leavitt

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From award-winning author Caroline Leavitt comes a touching, bittersweet story of a young wife's quest for fulfillment, and the husband and newborn daughter she leaves behind. Into Thin Air explores the complex emotional bonds of families, the intricacies of love, and the impact on people's lives when they are unwilling or unable to connect with each other.

Into Thin Air Details

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Mystica says

A story of abandonment and the effects that this has a decade later on all three parties involved.

We have Lee very young, in love and married and all of a sudden pregnant. A pregnancy she never planned, she did not even think of it till it became so apparent that you could not avoid it. The husband who adores her, and for whom the pregnancy was the crowning glory of his life. That his wife was going to have his child. It was sad seeing the joy, the anticipation of this young husband, when all along you read and felt the despair of the young mother at the same time.

Just after the birth Lee abandons the baby and disappears. Immense time and money is spent on trying to find her and then it peters out because of lack of any evidence that Lee was taken by force. Jim tries to make a life for himself and succeeds in doing so, all the time balancing looking after the baby and trying to forget his wife.

Many years later, Lee is now in another relationship which also has a partner who seems to feel for her much more than what she feels for him. This all of a sudden triggers in her a need to see the family she left behind and she makes the journey back to find that Jim has settled into a second marriage and to all intents the family is secure and happy. How Lee coming into this marriage creates dissension and strife not just between Lee and Jim's second wife but the trouble created by Lee for their daughter who finds the situation too difficult to handle. A dead mother now resurrected?

Lee seemed to be a spoilt girl who wanted only what she wanted and had no qualms about reaching in and taking it, despite adverse repercussions on anyone else. Lee was not willing to think of the bigger picture - the welfare of her daughter and move on. She felt she was owed something by the whole and thought of herself only. Jim obviously hadn't got over her abandonment and obviously felt something for her because he kept making excuses to his wife which were for the most part lame and inexcusable.

The story drew one in because you did want to know what the outcome was going to be. It was settled in a not so satisfactorily manner but then again that is life.

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

This is a stunning novel, so beautifully written. Don't overlook this one. My head does not fathom the low rating of some reviews. Maybe it's about personal taste. Whatever, I **LOVED** this book, I think Caroline Leavitt has written a timeless book here that stirred up so much emotion and thoughts in me as I read it. I like a book that can challenge me in that way, to actually **THINK** about the scenarios put in front of me.

The book is in a nutshell about a young 19 year old woman called Lee, she gives birth to her first baby but leaves the hospital the day after, leaving behind her husband Joe and her baby daughter. A massive appeal is run across America to find her, she is listed as disappeared, she leaves behind her a wake of grief and unanswered questions as Joe tries to carry on life without her, raising his baby daughter he calls Joanna alone, with a broken heart.

Every week he went to the international bookstore and bought six different newspapers from all

over the country, pruning the pages for stories. Lee could be anywhere. Every body that was found made him terrified because it could be hers. He examined every picture of a crowd, circling faces that might be hers. He felt an odd camaraderie with what he called the "others", the people with missing sons or daughters, with husbands who left. People did show up again, he told himself.

Lee meant to disappear, there was no doubt in her mind. We hear cleverly from her perspective and then Joe's, which gives the reader both sides of the story but can tear loyalties inside you. I flipped between whose side I was on all through the book. At times Lee made me angry, being so selfish, so uncaring, never contacting anyone to say she was okay. Then I would feel empathy for her, this young, scared teenager not ready for all that life had thrown at her. Then I would want to give her a good talking to about her responsibilities, and so on. Divided all the way in my heart.

When she had thoughts of Jim, a sudden river of grief and pity swelled within her. She kept remembering his sad, slow face, the face she had helped to create. The only way she could ever give him back those years was to tell him about her half of them.

The book is very character driven and all the book's characters are fantastically developed. It's a book that focuses on relationships, thoughts, feelings and it's magical how Caroline Leavitt writes an entire novel **JUST** focusing on this mostly how it never for one moment becomes boring. I devoured and sucked up every single word in this book, I took in each paragraph and was in no rush to finish this book.

Lee is carrying on with her life as is Joe, everybody is moving on. **Or are they?** Who is lying to themselves? Can life really go on and be happy after such devastation. New people enter the lives of Lee and Joe, they play their part in the overall story that develops. I so want to share so much with you, but it really would spoil where the book ends up heading.

Don't try to imagine the ending of this novel, just read it and go with each word, don't rush it, relax into it, let it take you to it's final destination. It may or may not be the last stop you wanted, each reader will want a different ending. But it's so beautifully written, I felt what each character felt through this entire book. Caroline Leavitt has good insight into human nature and the human heart. Amazing stuff.

A very enjoyable read, one of my favourite books of the year and one I won't forget. If you want to know what happens to Joe and Lee and little Joanna, if you are interested in knowing the impact Lee's leaving has on other people including herself then do read it. It really is a fantastic book that outlines brilliantly the impact that choices can make on an entire lifetime and how we wear the consequences of those choices like brands forevermore.

A spectacular novel from the heart, I loved it. Sublime writing. Again, I don't understand the one and two star ratings at all. But you decide for yourself, let me know what you think.

I received a copy of this novel thanks to the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Deb says

Stunning

Stunning

I am in love with this author's writing...like poetry or music...engaging all your senses and creating honest characters so real that you can feel their emotions; you can hear their hearts beat.

Janet says

I absolutely loved this book! Caroline Leavitt did a great job with this story. The characters were interesting and you care about what happens to them. Good plot and a great read. I had a hard time putting this book down.

Heidi says

It was a good book about a couple who had a baby early in their lives-one ready, one not. The struggles with decisions made and relationship struggles become apparent. I kept wanting I read more with this book; it was a page turner. This author is good with sharing the realities of life and emotions.

M says

Has there ever been a less sympathetic character than Lee Archer? In a book that takes on way too many characters and way too many issues and not nearly enough subtlety, characterization, development, or craft, Lee is a selfish and angry young lady who, for reasons unbeknownst to me, catches the eye of not only every guy in her high school but in particular one sad sack of pathetic named Jim. Jim is your stock character wussy loser boy who is so crazy about Lee despite or perhaps because of how outright cruel and obnoxious she is. Lee is desperate to flee her distant father and even more distant stepmother (I don't blame them, myself) so she allows Jim to fund their getaway, though Jim insists they marry because otherwise Lee will just leave him once they make their escape. Aside from the irony of this, as will be discussed, I feel like, hello?? Jim? If this is what it takes then maybe this she devil isn't worth it. Ok, so I guess there IS a less sympathetic character than Lee.

Not surprisingly, Lee does abandon ship despite the binding marriage and, forget that, does so the morning she gives birth to her baby girl. Leavitt, you are no Kate Chopin, and not only is this plot a challenging one to work with (how are we actually supposed to root for someone who does this??) but nothing redeeming happens ever for anyone ever. Lee shakes this all off and roams around for nine years, Jim moons about, refusing to move, following every lead for a bunch of years in the hope that he could reunite with the most self centered snot nose to ever live. In the meantime, we are treated to about a dozen other characters and the POV shifts accordingly and in short there is little to redeem this novel as well. It took on too much, and any one of the plots, if dealt with effectively, might have worked, but as it stands, we have abandonment, cancer, foster child, death, divorce, love, strife, betrayal, infidelity, and probably more things if I bothered to finish

it.

Kat says

this is about a girl that ran away with a boy from high school, they got married and moved to another city where he went to college. she got pregnant tho she didnt want the baby he was so excited about it. her father married another woman and neither of them wanted her and had no contact with her

his parents loved him, his father owned a market and wanted him to take over the business but he finished college and became a pharmacist

when she was in the hospital after she had the baby she had arranged to secretly run away which she did. her husband was frantic, had the police , detectives and the media looking all over for her. she went from state to state to avoid being caught. she did various jobs.

he never found her, the baby continued to grow, he had the neighbor lady across the street baby sitting. he would go out looking for his wife, never finding her. he became over protective of the baby.

he had a car accident looking for his wife and ended up in the hospital. one nurse took a liking to him and when he ran into her years later in the market they took up a relationship with her finally moving in with him.

she found a job in a restaurant, but she became a good cook but they wouldnt let her cook only waitress. she found a judge who loved her but she couldnt love him back. his sister adopted a unruly girl which she bonded with. the girl was killed in a car accident which led to her leaving and going back to find her daughter. her daughter and husband went on with their life, he married the nurse and the daughter didnt want anything to do with her. she eventually moved back to where she was but the judge had moved along too.

Denise says

3.0 out of 5 stars -- "Why didn't people belong to the ones who tried to love them?"

This is a story that triggers many emotions, but I found it hard to like the book because I despised nearly all of the characters or felt so sorry for a couple of them that I almost stopped reading it several times! Since I have a personal rule to finish what I start, I kept going only to find that mostly I was angry and frustrated with this whole sorry saga.

Lee leaves her newly delivered baby and her husband, Jim -- vanishing without a trace. Stunned and deeply in love with Lee, he frantically searches for her, going on long car rides and following any sighting or lead until he finally gives up and tries to create a stable home for his daughter. Meanwhile, Lee is on the road until she sets up with a fake name in a new place. What was she running from?

I'm not sure if we're meant to empathize with Lee or hate her. I felt the latter. Jim is a besotted fool and his obsession annoyed me. I couldn't see where any person would want a relationship with either of them. I guess it's all the question of forgiveness and the notions of mistakes and redemption.

I've read a couple of this author's other books and have liked them so perhaps this was the odd one that didn't ring true for me -- perhaps my compassion button was turned off. The messy, fractured family tale told here did not find that sympathetic or understanding reader in me and ultimately, I didn't care what happened to Lee at all nor will I wonder how things eventually turned out for Jim, Lila and Joanna.

I have a couple of other titles by Caroline Leavitt on my shelf and will read them. I hope for a return to the magic of complex and realistic domestic fiction that I'd found previously in her work. I noticed that this book was published in 1993 so perhaps that is part of it as it somehow did seem dated.

Thank you to NetGalley and Open Road Integrated Media for this e-book ARC to review.

Elizabeth says

Not bad. Gave you good perspective on what everyone was going through but it all felt almost like run on sentences, but rather paragraphs, skipping from one character to the next without any breaks within the chapters.

Susan says

I wasn't very sympathetic to the main character...

Megin V says

I didnt really like this book all that much. I felt obliged to keep reading even though it wasn't all that interesting. I just wanted to find out what would happen. I could not really feel sorry for Lee. She had a lot of bad things happen to her, but that is no reason to abandon a child. I didnt like Jim. I actually do not think I liked one character in the book besides Andy, he was the only one smart enough to leave lee and never talk to her again. This book was lame in my opinion. Do not start reading it because you cannot stop even though there is much disinterest.

Khalil Boulos says

One of the best books I have ever read. Caroline Leavitt is amazing and possibly my favorite writer ever. This will grab your heart and not let go.

Lora says

Favorite book of 1993...

Victoria says

I loved this book! I read *Girls in Trouble: A Novel* first and was excited to find this title in a used book store. Caroline Leavitt is a very talented writer, and my main complaint is, I don't know where to find her books in stores! I do definitely want to read them all though, as the three that I have read, I have entirely enjoyed! This book shared some similar themes with *Girls in Trouble: A Novel*, and was also an addictingly good read with solid characters and plot and a satisfying ending.

Leslie Lindsay says

Lately, I have been intrigued to read some of my favorite authors' earlier works--you know, see where they started, what elements were present in their early work and what remained in later work, etc. Last month, I came across Anita Shreve's *EDEN CLOSE* (her debut) and now one of Caroline Leavitt's early (her third?) published novel, *INTO THIN AIR* (1993).

We meet Lee, a young wife/new mother who literally walks away from her life, leaving her infant daughter and husband behind. Yet that may be the most shocking element of the entire novel. We dive into a heady amount of backstory learning about this young woman--her troubled past, her mother's battle with cancer, her father's remarriage, and her "wild" ways with boys. Feeling trapped, bored, and wavering, Lee marries Jim, a young pharmacy student.

But she is not happy. And while we often think of men leaving the families (not exactly the honorable thing to do but it happens nonetheless), *INTO THIN AIR* chronicles a woman leaving her young husband and infant daughter without a trace, a done very deliberately.

We worry. And most of the worry is centered on Jim and the baby. I found myself having little sympathy for Lee, yet I did wonder if she was mentally unstable and if there would be some big revelation that she had a major mental illness.

On a micro-level, the writing is good; Leavitt has an authentic gift with words, giving a realness to family and the dysfunctions that go along with them. On a macro-level I found *INTO THIN AIR* slow-moving and a bit too heavy on backstory, yet I was so intrigued with the story premise that I continued. Family, dysfunction, adoption, and more play into this novel set alternately between Baltimore and Madison, Wisconsin. Those elements will certainly stay with you.
