



The Shortest Way Home

Juliette Fay

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Sean has spent twenty years in Third World war zones and natural disaster areas, fully embracing what he'd always felt was his life's mission. But when burnout sets in, Sean is reluctantly drawn home to Belham, Massachusetts, the setting of Fay's much-loved *Shelter Me*. There, he discovers that his steely aunt, overly dramatic sister, and quirky nephew are having a little natural disaster of their own. When he reconnects with a woman from his past, Sean has to wonder if the bonds of love and loyalty might just rewrite his destiny. Completely relatable, *The Shortest Way Home* is another perfect serving of a slice of life from the irresistible Fay.

The Shortest Way Home Details

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From Reader Review The Shortest Way Home for online ebook

Amy says

I absolutely loved this book. I've been a fan of Juliette Fay since reading the first few chapters of her debut Shelter Me. Juliette is one of those writers who has a way of getting inside her characters, with the unique ability of making them come to life on each and every page.

Due to Sean's mother passing away from Huntington's disease, there is a 50% probability that Sean might inherit it. This prompts Sean to devote his life to helping and caring for others as a nurse in third world countries. After being away from home for a consecutive six years, he decides it's time to take a break. Upon his return home, Sean ends up finding out his Aunt Vivian, who raised him for most of his life, is starting to experience memory problems. His sister, Deidre, who is quite bitter that Sean left her alone to care for their aunt and their nephew Kevin, is ready to move and start her own life. And then there's Kevin, who for all intense and purposes, has been raising himself since his father died. Because Sean thought he was going to die from Huntington's in his mid 30s, he never planned on having to deal with "family" stuff. Maybe it's time that Sean's family needs him more than the rest of the world?

Right from the start, I was drawn to the characters in the story, each of them having shortcomings and traits often found in everyday life. It's tender, filled with humor, stimulating, and just fills your heart with love. The book covers important issues such as family loyalty and responsibility, friendship, love and taking leaps of faith. A thoroughly enjoyable read.

B the BookAddict says

This second of Juliette Fay books does not disappoint. Sean has spent his entire adult life nursing in Third World war zones and natural disaster areas. It's been 20 years since he was home; where he reluctantly heads after severe back pain and burnout set in when he is 43. Home is a place where his mother died when he was a very young child and his father abandoned them when Sean was 10. Home is his idiosyncratic Aunt Vivvy who grudgingly raised he and his siblings. Diedre, his sister, now an aspiring actress who makes a drama of everyday life and Kevin, his 10 yr old nephew, who is quietly battling a few calamities of his own. Kevin is the son and living image of Sean's now deceased brother Hugh and a boy who unobtrusively steals his way into his uncle's heart.

Sean finds himself reluctantly assuming the role as head of his diverse family unit. Added to this mixed cast of characters, there are his boyhood friends, Cormac, owner of a successful bakery and Rebecca, the shy and reclusive girl born with a peculiar facial deformity, and now a competent masseuse. Janie, the main character in Shelter Me, Fay's first novel plays a very small part.

Struggling with ongoing physical discomfort, Sean also contends with the unfamiliarity of ordinary life; he finds himself hopelessly out of touch. Life in Third World countries means he lacks the even the most commonplace aspects of life like a cell phone and an email account. A variety of problematic issues become evident; not the least being, Auntie Vivvy's slide into Alzheimer's, Diedre's desire to leave the family home, Kevin's sensory difficulties and the re-appearance of their errant father. And then there's George, the female

canine protector of Aunt Vivvy.

I found this book refreshing; no mystery, no fantasy, no over the top romance; just a literary slice of life. Sean was intensely likeable; the type of 43 yr old male you'd actually like to meet. Told with empathy, humour and lots of Juliette Fay's inimitable wit, I found *The Shortest Way Home* extremely readable.

Sharon Chance says

"*The Shortest Way Home*" is a novel that has many different personalities! It's a story about family loyalty, it's a story about one man's journey back home, it's a story about parenting, it's a love story, and it's a story about how one family deals with a devastating disease and how it affects them all.

Juliette Fay introduces her readers to the charming Irish-American Doran family in this fascinating novel. Sean Doran's homecoming from years abroad working as a disaster relief nurse is not the joyous peaceful occasion that he expects. He finds that his sister Diedre is wrapped up in her own dramas, his stalwart Aunt Vivian is slipping towards Alzheimer's, and his young nephew Kevin is practically raising himself. Although it's a role that he doesn't want, Sean finds that he must take the reins of the family and take care of those he loves. And along the way, he finds he needs to take a little time to take care of himself as well.

I enjoyed this story. Fay keeps the story moving along at a fast clip, and she weaves all the characters together with the various stories that all blend together to create a captivating read that is just perfect for this fall season. I also learned a lot about Huntington's disease and sensory processing disorder, two conditions that affect members of the Doran family in the story.

I highly recommend this book for those who enjoy intricate storytelling, a good love story, and a great family-oriented story.

Susan (The Book Bag) says

I had already read one of Juliette's books, *Deep Down True*. I thoroughly enjoyed it and have her books on my 'must be read' list. When this one came along to review, I just had to read it.

I loved this story for a lot of reasons but there was one in particular that I kept thinking about the whole time I was reading it ~ the main character in *The Shortest Way Home* is a male. It seems like it has been quite a while since I have read a book from a male's perspective. It was refreshing.

Sean suffers some burnout and decides to go home for a little bit to regroup. Things don't go as smoothly as he had thought they would and he found himself with more responsibilities than he had ever had to face before. There are a lot of family issues and problems that have to be dealt with and he finds himself having a hard time walking away from the family who now needs him.

This is a wonderful story with a lot of great characters who are just trying to figure it out and who hope to, maybe, end up happy. Like I said before, I enjoyed reading this from a male's POV but I liked all of the people in the story. I would probably have to say one of my favorites was Sean's nephew Kevin. Kevin just wanted to be a normal sixth grader but he has some sensory issues. I really felt for Kevin as he tried to fit in while dealing with those issues. He really was a wise little boy.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and Juliette has done it again with another fabulous book. I have to confess that I stayed up way too late reading this book. It was a hard one to put down!

Thank you, Juliette for another great read!

Nancy says

I was surprised by how much I enjoyed this book. It's not a fast moving story nor is it evocative or highly moving. It quietly educates the reader on a number of common and uncommon maladies along with a message of looking close to home for the best place to serve.

The protagonist is Sean, a 43 year old man, who has been spent the past couple of decades running himself ragged in war torn and health ravaged countries. As a registered male nurse, he has dedicated his life to help the less fortunate and put himself in harms way to better the lives of others. Sean believes he is a ticking time bomb. His mother was diagnosed with early onset Huntington's Disease and died young. His father then abandoned the remaining three children for the Merchant Marines and the bottle. They grew up with their mother's sister, a spinster satisfied with keeping others distant and cold.

Huntington's Disease is genetic and not found statistically higher in either gender. Children of people with Huntington's Disease have a 50% chance of having it themselves. The age of onset is typically by early forties. It is degenerative and incurable. It affects the body but especially the mind. There is now a test for the disease but this is one aspect that was not covered in the book, there are repercussions for possibly having it before onset. One family I knew had five children before the mother was discovered to have the disease. The impeccably dressed and beautiful young woman with all the social graces spiraled to an obsessive, bad tempered and overweight woman with no memory of her husband and children and threw food at her caregivers. The father wanted to plan for the children and the care of his wife was financially ruining him. He didn't dare have them tested for fear they would be uninsurable once the results were revealed to the insurance company. Eventually, he divorced his wife so she could be placed into the custody of the state and drove the children to Canada where they were tested. Only the father knows which of the children will develop Huntington's Disease.

Sorry for the detour.

So Sean is summoned home. He is now confused and reasonably certain he dodged the Huntington's bullet. So what does he do now? At this point, Sean grapples with faith in God, the bigger picture, and "now what". His aunt seems to be developing possible Alzheimer's. His younger sister is tired of being the caregiver and wants to have a life. His younger brother, who lived life hard, died of pneumonia years before but has a son who is now 11 years old. The boy has some interesting quirks. Kevin is a great vehicle for educating the readers on a few different differences of the nervous system that are not uncommon and affect many children and adults. I loved the way the information was presented. Sean wants to understand Kevin better and ends up discovering more about his brother. For good measure, the grown children's father makes an appeal to enter their lives again.

For having a male protagonist, the book is still perfect Chick Lit. There is a romance developing and a couple of mild sex scenes thrown in for good measure. Nothing blush worthy, just good, clean fornication.

I can't just justify that last sentence.

It's a great book to savor on vacation or cozy nights under a quilt. I really enjoyed it.

Edna Black says

I'm waiting to read this. I LOVE Juliette Fay's books and have read them all. Edna

Katie says

Juliette Fay does it again. I couldn't put down *The Shortest Way Home*. Fay employs believable dialogue to create characters that are astonishingly relate-able. I'm always surprised by how attached I grow to her characters, characters who live seemingly worlds apart from me, those with whom I would have previously thought I had nothing in common. The depth of her understanding of human emotion (and her ability to express it) pervades once more, though, in this new novel.

From the readers in small towns to those who have traveled the world, from the readers with close family to those with family long lost: this book is for you.

In short, *The Shortest Way Home* is a thoroughly enjoyable and engrossing read about love, the ties that bind, and the pursuit of happiness that I'll recommend to all my friends.

Miriam Downey says

Read my full review here: <http://mimi-cyberlibrarian.blogspot.c...>

Life is complicated. Life is messy. There is no way to escape either the complications or the messiness, so you might as well just make the best of it. That is the one sentence summation of *The Shortest Way Home* by Juliette Fay. If you have ever looked around at your life and thought "I gotta get out of here!" then this is the book for you.

Sean is a 40-something nurse who has been traveling from third world country to third world country for many years trying to do some good in the world even as he tries to escape his upbringing and the potential of a fatal genetic disease. He arrives home to New England for a short visit at the behest of his younger sister and finds himself caught up in family messiness. As Sean becomes more and more entangled in life back at home, he questions his purpose in life, the reasons for his wanderings, and his ability to change. It is a bit refreshing to have a male protagonist in this kind of family story; he is an interesting character as he tries to make sense of what life has become for his family, a family he has all but abandoned.

The Shortest Way Home has an abundance of characters, all with a lot of complications—all trying to negotiate through life's messiness. Each character is fully developed with intriguing life circumstances. One reviewer says that the characters are "wonderfully imperfect lovable people." The two characters I appreciated the most were Kevin, Sean's orphaned nephew and Da, Sean's long-lost father who arrives on the scene about half way through the book. Kevin is a pre-teen and has been virtually raising himself. He has sensory issues as well as ADD, but he has found a way to negotiate through life. The reader becomes so proud of him and the progress he makes, but the author doesn't turn him into an unbelievable hero-like character. He remains a clueless pre-adolescent. Da, on the other hand, reminded me of several people I have known; someone whose life fell apart in his 30s and he has spent the last 30 years trying to put himself

together again.

It is impossible to navigate in this brief book review all the topics that are discussed, “topics as varied as family loyalty, genetic destiny, responsibility, the duties of friendship and the strength of faith” in the words on one reviewer. Any one of these issues could be the theme of the book. In the hands of a less-skilled writer, the whole plot could dissolve into absurdity. A book I read earlier this year did just that, and as I looked back on that review, I realized how delicately Fay handles all the issues of *The Shortest Way Home*. I kept reading because I really liked the characters and wanted to know how things would be resolved. Of course, as in all of life, there is no absolute resolution, but the characters find a way to clear back some of the brambles that cover the path to happiness.

Some of the more interesting questions raised in the book deal with Sean’s concerns about faith. His Catholic faith had served him well throughout his journeys and his nursing had been, in effect, a healing ministry. He prays over all his patients. But, things have changed. He tells his friend Rebecca: “I stopped believing in a God who cared.” She suggests that perhaps he had seen too much suffering. No, he admits that “It’s way more selfish than that. I stopped believing in a God who cared about me.” He had stopped believing that he had been chosen by God to do good in the world. An beguiling theme in and of itself.

I can recommend *The Shortest Way Home* to readers of family fiction or problem fiction. It is the third book of a series about a small New England town. You might also enjoy *The World Without You* by Joshua Henkin that I read a couple of months ago—similar themes, similar resolution—same literary quality. *The Shortest Way Home* was chosen as one of the top five best books of 2012 in women’s literature.

The review on *The Book Reporter*: <http://www.bookreporter.com/reviews/t...>

Juliette Fay’s website: <http://juliettofay.com/>

Library Journal’s Best Women’s Fiction of 2012: <http://reviews.libraryjournal.com/201...>

Anne Trinkle says

Ugh. I so wanted to like this book. I stuck with it until I was about 75% through. And then I just could not tolerate the PLODDING ALONG OF THE PLOT any longer. The characters were well done and the narrator was excellent but you got the distinct feeling that the author was like a kid who was just trying to fill up so many pages. Like GET TO THE POINT!!! Ugh. I was so bummed not to find out what happened to Kevin or Sean or any of the characters, but I just couldn't listen to one more minute. I got to the point where Sean's Dad shows up but by then I just didn't care anymore. Maybe if I had read it as opposed to listening to it, I would have different feelings. But I have to say, I'm not real patient with plots that go along slowly. I want something to HAPPEN on page 1 and keep HAPPENING until the last page. I'm all for character development but these characters were developed to DEATH. Get to the POINT of their lives, please, Ms. Fay.

Pauline Tilbe says

I happen to believe that anything written by Juliette Fay is a win. I believed that since I read *Shelter Me*. She develops characters and shows you the side that is imperfect and impatient, the depth of a character that you don't always get in a contemporary novel.

As much as Huntington's was a big piece of this story, the sensory issues that Kevin lived with were so

enlightening. I really learned a lot about that. I felt like it tied in well with the whole family dysfunction and dynamics. I'm a nurse, so I identified with Sean in that way. I felt overwhelmed by all the issues he was dealing with for his various family members, in the same way that you might feel overwhelmed in real life. About the time that I was half way through the book...I felt like I wanted to stop. Not because it wasn't good, but just because I wanted to be in the middle of this story for a while longer..I wanted to put the brakes on this story to stay in it.

Now I'm done and I'll likely be thinking about it for a long time.

Trevor says

This was an okay fast read. Fay's writing is good, but the execution- or lack of, left me with a slight disappointment in the end.

Sean is returning home after 20 years of being a military nurse. His brother died six years ago (the last time he was home) & now his life is revolved around Aunt Vivvy (who raised his siblings & himself), sister Deirdre (who spends a great chunk of the book acting in plays) & Kevin, Sean's eleven-year-old nephew. There are also his school friends: Chrissy, Rebecca, best friend Cormac & wife Barb. Sean is trying to get back into the swing of things after being gone so long.

Sean's mother died of Huntington's when he was twelve & he's aware there is a 50/50 chance he will get it too. While there were some facts about the disease, not much detail is in here. For someone who doesn't have much knowledge of this disease, I would have liked Sean to have put a greater consideration into getting tested, & then possibly have some insight into what that whole process looks like. The genetic disease was one of the things that drew me to this because I was curious to see how someone would deal with that (I know, I'm horrible!), but the book didn't dive deep in that direction. For that, I have to admit, I'm a little bummed.

Kevin was my favorite character. I liked how the author went into detail about sensory processing disorder (for which I have a bit more knowledge) & liked how much Sean did to help him out. Actually, this book dealt more with Kevin than it did of Sean coping with the possibility of getting Huntington's. Most of this book was character driven & how the people from Sean's life are all trying to make the best out of their situations.

There were some parts that really dragged & I found myself wanting to skim over the pages. His short-lived romance with Rebecca was nice, but I wished it would have lasted longer. I also wished the "reuniting" with his Da would have taken a different direction. In the end, Sean is faced with a difficult decision: should he go back to Haiti & all the places that need his medical aid or should he stay & be the father Kevin needs?

Like most domestic fiction, the ending is predictable, but worth traveling down the road for once. I most likely will not pick this up again, but it was nice to immerse myself in Sean's world for a few hours.

Stephanie says

What a fantastic novel! I admit that I haven't read anything else by Fay, but will now search out her previous works. I really loved this story, despite its predictability. The characters were all very likeable and engaging. Although I have nothing in common with the protagonist: male, 40s (almost there, but not quite!), bachelor, nurse in war-torn countries, and self-centred, I really liked him and felt connected to him. This has to be due

to the author's style of writing and ability to make her characters accessible. As mentioned, the plot was predictable, but the journey was nevertheless enjoyable. There are some sarcastic and witty one-liners throughout the book that are so rare and timely, that I appreciated the experience of laughing out loud on occasion, but not being bombarded with attempts at humour.

Andrea says

Fans of Juliette Fay's other novels, "Shelter Me" and "Deep Down True" will adore this one as well! Sean Doran, a registered nurse, returns to his hometown after several years of medical mission work in war-ravaged, poverty-stricken countries. He wasn't expecting his stop to be a long one, but he quickly realizes his family needs him. His nephew, Kevin, is struggling emotionally and his aunt is exhibiting signs of Alzheimer's. But before Sean can try to pick up the pieces, he needs to readjust to the American way of life with e-mail, cell phones, and the idea of being tied down to one place.

Fay's characterization is beautifully done. I particularly loved her portrait of Kevin, a fifth-grader suffering from sensory perception disorder, and Rebecca, a massage therapist with a congenital cranial defect. "Shelter Me" fans will appreciate that some of its characters make cameos (Janie, Tug, Barb, Cormac), so we get updates about their lives.

A really touching novel with some laugh out loud moments! A must read!

Bonnie says

A review copy of The Shortest Way Home was kindly provided to me by FSB Associates for Penguin Books.

Expected publication: October 30th 2012 by Penguin Books

Visit my blog for a chance to win a copy of this book!

'From the time he was fifteen Sean had known he would head out and do as much good as he could in the time that was left, while he waited for his mother's diagnosis to become his own.'

Sean has known since an early age that he had a 50% chance he would develop the same disease that took his mother: Huntington's disease. Not wanting to waste the life he had left he devoted his life to being selfless and helping others as a nurse in various foreign lands. Deciding that he needs a break because he's getting burnt out from working so hard, he finally realizes that he's old enough that he may have actually dodged a bullet and he doesn't in fact have Huntington's disease. He beat the odds. But this comes with the realization that he molded his life around the fact that he may very well not have many years to live and he begins to wonder just how different his life could have been if he had made different choices, if he had actually gotten tested and known for sure if he had the disease or not.

Sean returns home to visit his Aunt Vivian, sister Deidre, and his late brother Hugh's son Kevin. He's shocked to find that his Aunt Vivvy appears to have alzheimer's or early signs of dementia, Deidre is completely absorbed in making it big as an actor and is never home, and that eleven year old Kevin appears to be raising himself. Kevin is an extremely self-sufficient child and isn't neglected; however, he finds his behavior to be strange until a friend mentions he exhibits signs of having a sensory processing disorder.

Reluctant to alter his roaming lifestyle despite the obvious need for his presence to be closer to home, Sean still fully intends on leaving again once he's been able to get everything straightened out.

There was a lot of detail given regarding Huntington's disease and sensory processing disorders. Both diseases/disorders I knew very little about to begin with but it was extremely interesting to learn more about. It wasn't overdone and didn't venture off into medical jargon that didn't make much sense, it was well explained and quite informative.

This is a hard book to put a label on. There were a few religious angles but they weren't so abundant that I would label it a 'Christian Fiction' because there were also a couple sex scenes. The bits of romance that were thrown in weren't overdone and was nicely intertwined with the story but not so much I would label it a 'Romance' either. Definitely one for Adult Contemporary fans with a 'deeper' message. I found all of the characters to be quite charming which was a real treat. Once I passed the halfway point I was so absorbed into the story I couldn't put it down. I suppose it could be said it was a predictable ending but I still raced to finish. Overall this was a surprisingly funny and lighthearted read despite the serious subject matter, I found myself laughing often.

Viviane Crystal says

Sean Doran has been working as a nurse in areas devastated by hurricanes and other natural disasters as well as countries ravaged by poverty, illiteracy, and disease. But now he seems to be suffering from a massive case of burn-out, complicated by searing back pain that cripples him. He has no commitments to anyone and knows it. So he decides to return home to a small Massachusetts town, home where his Aunt Vivvy, his sister Deirdre and his nephew Kevin live. And it's a visit he dreads!

This family is paralyzed by fear of the unknown, manifest in his mother's death years ago from Huntington disease, a hereditary disease that works fast and furious before it kills. There's a test to find out if Sean and his sister have the disease but each has opted not to know being more of a sane decision than living knowing one is a walking time bomb.

The first thing Sean has to absorb is that life has progressed for his former friends, both male and female. He is surrounded by people who have tangible, loving relationships and who love living in that state with its good and bad times. Sean will slowly begin to form a connection to a former high school sweetheart and a massage therapist who is able to work miracles on his bum back. Kevin, it turns out, has a sensitivity condition that he has learned to cope with, mainly because there's hardly anyone else who knows he's alive. It's quite a collection of problems for someone trying to "rest a bit" before packing up to help others in need in some devastated spot in the third world.

The Shortest Way Home is an adult "coming of age" tale, a story where Sean learns to not only serve others but also discovers it's quite different when one discovers love is in the mix, including his long-lost father who reappears after desertion over twenty-five years ago. Once he learns that in each situation, he is faced with new choices. No, it's not easy but it's told in such a practical, real, and endearing fashion that the reader will have a different type of reading experience, one that elicits hope and care for the characters herein as well as one's own life. Tender yet funny, sincere yet gritty, this story is beautifully crafted and a delight!
