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Velma Brendle has never done anything more outstanding than putting on a good meal at Velma's Place, but she takes good care of her customers, neighbors, and friends in this slice-of-life literary work of fiction that deals with domestic violence with a strong theme of forgiveness.

Velma Still Cooks in Leeway Details

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From Reader Review Velma Still Cooks in Leeway for online ebook

Aneta says

One of my favorite reads! I happened upon this book on another's goodread list and realized I had read this book years ago and loved it. So I added it to my list. Very realistic and heartfelt.

Jeni says

I really enjoyed the storytelling in this book, and found the characters believable and even likable. "Velma" tells the story of her life in a small town in Kansas. The story unfolds rather slowly, and may not hold the attention of some readers. But the plot is much like many people's lives, with both expected responses from folks, as well as characters that change their minds, make bad choices when you expect them to be "good," and wear their Christianity like a Boy Scout patch.

There is a redemptive quality in the tale, which I liked, without tying up all the loose ends neatly and flashing the gospel with neon lights (which I don't like). Better than much Christian fiction, I would recommend this. What kept me from giving it more stars is probably that I felt a little manipulated in how I should feel for the various characters, due to their circumstances. But at least they were "real" in that they could be likable without being perfect or overly sweet or spiritual.

Deb says

What Happens:[return]Velma, in the form of a rambling journal, tells us about the last year of her life. Velma runs a little diner in the small town on Leeway, KS. During the course of the book she deals with a dying relative to comes to stay with her while he waits for the inevitable. Then there is also the saga of her next door neighbor's daughter, who ends up pregnant after a date rape situation. Velma is like the rock that her neighbors and relatives turn to for help, but she herself falls apart sometimes. She has her faith and church to turn to for support, but even that has its problems, as some of the people in the church are far from perfect. [return][return]Style:[return]Velma of course is the sole narrator. The story moves along at a fast enough pace, and towards the end there are some twists and turns that really build drama and suspense. Velma's musings are what makes this story stand out though, some of her reflections made me pause as a reader and even copy down some quotes for my own journal.[return][return]How Good Was It?[return]Excellent! A compelling story that is thought provoking.

Christie says

A friend of mine recommended this book, so, without any idea of the premise, I gave it a read. And I could not put it down. I found myself shaking my head in agreement with so many conclusions Thelma had drawn and questioning my faith and beliefs in so many things. Upon finishing the book, I started thinking about how I was living my life and how I treat others. I did not expect to feel or think anything in particular, so it was kind of a nice surprise. And the timing of reading this book comes during a tumultuous time in my life...I really needed it without even knowing it!!! I will probably read this one again and get something totally different out of it.

Evelyn says

SCC book club read.

p. 77 "Its a peculiar thing to get old. You're being pulled at from all directions, past, present, and future. You find yourself answering to more than one group of people because you get messages from folks that have come and gone from the different stages of your life."

P. 78 "Now that I'm old enough to look back on the seasons and see pieces of our lives that were missing. I think the noise of this house is really my own. It's my heart trying to tease out the unspoken things in this family that should have been spoken."

p. 155 "What I love most about babies is how fresh they are. It doesn't matter how they were conceived-in loving embrace between husband and wife or in a sinful heat between drunks. The baby comes out steaming like a perfect pudding, and all you can do is clap your hands and feel our whole self open up...A baby brings into this world his own portion of hope."

p. 264 "So much of your life you go through on a daily basis, with everything seeming good enough. A bad thing happens here and there, but overall life is fine, and you get into a certain frame of mind about dood and evil. You see things in a kind light, figuring that you're doing the best you can. Then some big, terrible thing happens, and it blows to pieces all the sense you had before, about how life works and how well things are going and how decent a person you've managed to be. Suddenly, all the day to day goodness and trying hard just get cancelled out completely."

Kim says

I had trouble deciding how many stars to give *Velma Still Cooks In Leeway*. I try not to hand out five stars too frequently, to keep them for the really great books. Four stars doesn't seem enough though.

I keep a list on my phone of books recommended from various sources, and found this one a week or two ago when I was trying to decide what to read next. There are no details on the list, so I had no expectations other than the fact that it must have interested me at some point, since I put it on the list in the first place.

Two surprises: First, *Velma Still Cooks In Leeway* is a work of Christian fiction and second, it is really good. I gave up on most Christian fiction a while back because I found most of them kind of simplistic and not very well written. I loved *Christy* by Catherine Marshall, but most other Christian novels I've read have lacked complexity and depth.

In this book I found myself totally engaged and carried along. I highlighted several passages which I found meaningful.

I loved *Velma*. She reminded me of my mother at times. She is the narrator of the book, which is made up of her recollections of the recent and distant past and the friends, foes and family that inhabited both. Woven throughout is her very honest relationship with God and her struggles to make sense of life and people and pain in light of her faith. There was one aspect of the story that didn't quite make sense to me, but that finally came to light near the end in a fairly satisfying way.

I will look for more of Ms Wright's works to read - this one was really enjoyable. Four and a half stars.

Karen Williams says

A great honest book about how hard it is to live out your faith in the midst of life.

Here's a long quote that I have kept with me since I first read the book:

I have believed in Jesus nearly my whole life. That's not to say that I understand him much. I do trust him more than I used to. But it still bothers me that after all these years, Jesus hasn't offered an opinion or an explanation about my fevers and dreams. Some prayers you pray, and you really know the answer, but you just need some encouragement. Other prayers just take you toward questions and discomfort. I don't understand why this is so. But I've tried to build the habit of giving my fevers to the Lord. Some things you know you can't control anyway.

But these days I'm feeling at ordinary times the way I used to feel during fevers. Dizzy and slow and struggling to understand as scenes appear in front of me. Life itself has become a complicated dream, and I want more and more to slip out of it and find all the people who have drifted up into the chilly blue air. I suppose I know why it seems that everything important has slipped out of my grasp. A lot of bad things have happened lately. In fact, the past two years have tried Leeway's people to the end of their resources. I've watched people lose important things, and it's made me shut my lips tight and fret against God. It's made me wonder what could be so important about pain that it should visit—so often and so freely—the people I love.

I may never understand, truly, the events that hurt all of us so. But I've decided that life has patterns and those patterns repeat themselves. They don't go the same way twice, but the same ten or twenty lessons keep working their way out. It seems that, over the past few years, lessons about death and loss just kept repeating, like the chorus of a bad hymn, the kind with a clunky rhythm and odd words. An unlovely melody that plays through your mind for days afterward.

If my husband, Albert, were here, he'd say that I'll make myself crazy, thinking over events again and again, wondering what else I could have done. "You don't rule life and death," he'd say. That's Albert for you. I think men just naturally rise up from their hurts and defeats and move on. I suppose I never was good at letting go. Partly it's my personality. But partly it's my faith. I grew up expecting a lot from God. And, truth be told, this past year or so I've felt that God didn't come through as he should have. What a thing to wrestle with. How does a person get over it?

I've never considered myself a fanatic, just a serious Christian. But sometimes you come to understand a thing in a way you never have before. And it doesn't make much sense, but you know it's absolutely true. You can't prove that it's true. You can't sit people down and explain it so that they're just as convinced as you are. But the thing is truer than your own name. And when that kind of knowledge comes to you, you're responsible to accept it and believe it. It's yours—you didn't ask for it, but it's yours—and Heaven's watching to see what you do with it.

Well, I feel a revelation coming on. I think the Lord is working out an extra big pattern here. I've never felt so strange for so many days at a time, with or without fever. And I can't help but believe that before long I'm going to wake up and something important will have taken place. For now, I just need to pay attention.

Debby says

I don't like Christian fiction, because I find it cheesy, unbelievable, and cause me to question why my life hasn't turned out so cheery as those in the text. But, Velma, she can be believed, trusted, and not some sappy, "my life is turning out just the way I expected it to" heroine. Wright-Hampton has that reality driven sense of a life lived out in the midst of humans, their anxieties and fears, and how those lives interact with a relational God. My literary friends say the writing could have gone elsewhere, but what do I know of that stuff -- I liked it.

Jim B says

A surprising story, simply told, but with unanticipated complications, from the viewpoint of Velma, a Christian who owns a restaurant and whose life revolves around a small church in Leeway, Kansas. The imperfections of people in the church play out in misunderstanding, but people forgive and put the past behind them. Velma takes in her husband Albert's cousin Howard, befriends her neighbor Dor and Doris' daughter Shellye, remembers her German Gran Lenny. Each chapter ends with a recipe.

Amber Balash says

I really enjoyed this one for its authenticity and ability to wrestle with making love and grace real in our relationships. The storytelling starts off a little slow but was really powerful and meaningful - you come to care about and root for the characters.

I love how Velma lives out her faith - and uses her gifts to the best of her abilities even in the part where she 'loses' her love for her gift for awhile.

I think my book jacket had a misprint in it because of how it describes Velma's relationship with her husband, but I think the 'surprise twist' near the end is pretty obvious.

I think what I liked best about this book is that it's a book you feel rather than are merely entertained by. I have the desire to read it again slowly and ruminate on some of Velma's wisdom... I also want to try the recipes, and I love how those were intertwined in there.

Jhoosphe Wogel says

I LOVED this book. I loved the LANGUAGE of this book. The author's choice of words, the flow, were so poetic. Somewhere around page 50, Granny Lenn gives Velma a story. Granny Lenn who is full of disappointing life experiences shares a story of a little girl that doesn't talk to anyone but the night flower. Velma, a small girl of 10 or 12, asks Granny Lenn why the little girl didn't take friends into the night to see the flower and if GL were the little girl. Granny Lenn tells Velma that she never thought about taking anyone with her to the night flower and that she was indeed the little girl. Velma feels sad, but Granny Lenn continues telling Velma that SHE is the night flower. I cried. Granny Lenn had been dealt such a bad hand in life, so much sadness, so many drastic changes and disappointments that I felt ALL of it in that analogy.

Velma was forced to burn the journals of her Granny Lenn. GL didn't want all that dwelt upon after her death, but OH, to have read them. GL did allow Velma the poetry, and it shines through in her own journal, this book. Velma, too, had been dealt a lousy hand as well, and the ending of the book, just when I thought she was all alone, the grace and life-lessons that she bestowed on Mr. Carpenter were NOTHING but Jesus and his redemptive spirit.

This book is so artistically written that I thought Lee Harper wrote it herself. I highly recommend this book.

Enjoy!

Katrina says

The best thing about this book is that the author has the ability to make the reader care, really care, about the various characters you meet in the story. Equally impressive was the authors' ability to describe everyday life in a small town in a way that makes their seemingly ordinary lives, extra-ordinary. Added to that, the explicitly Christian beliefs of the main character (Velma) were believable because of her honesty in facing the struggles of life. Thanks to Hannah for recommending this!

Karen Powell says

The titular Velma is a good woman steadfast in her Christian faith, who finds herself both humbled and blessed by her neighbors. A Christian novel, there are themes of charity and forgiveness throughout. Velma befriends a troubled teen who find herself taken advantage by the men in her life. She takes in an ill cousin. She grudgingly extends charity to a rude poor man, but learns a valuable lesson from it. She sees her neighbors and church through hard times and hypocritical times, a remains a steady moral influence throughout. The title refers to her main joy and talent in life: cooking for her friends and neighbors in her struggling diner.[return][return]This is an uplifting novel that even those without strong faith can feel good about. Velma is not a goody two-shoes, but has a secret of her own that she initially keeps from the readers, a secret that makes her only more a sympathetic character. She is simply a person trying to do right by herself and others in this world, an admirable quality no matter which direction your spiritual tenencies bend.

JennanneJ says

Pleasantly surprised by this novel. I saw it recommended on a list of book club ideas and ordered it with no other knowledge of the book. It's a Christian novel, without being too sappy about it. Loved the characters. I got sucked right in to life in this small town. Things got dramatic after a lot of slow-living, which came as a surprise. Recommended for lovers of uplifting books - especially if you like them a bit more real life, and less sappy.

Margaret says

The main character Velma is a caring woman who listens to her friends and neighbors and is there for them in the good times and bad. Velma loves cooking in her restaurant and is dedicated to her church. These loves are evident as each chapter begins with a scripture from Ezekiel and ends with a recipe. My favorite bits are when Velma remembers her Gran Lenny and the journal she gave her "to sort out my thoughts and remember my dreams".
