



The Summer of Letting Go

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Just when everything seems to be going wrong, hope and love can appear in the most unexpected places.

Summer has begun, the beach beckons and Francesca Schnell is going nowhere. Four years ago, Francesca's little brother, Simon, drowned, and Francesca is the one who should have been watching. Now Francesca is about to turn sixteen, but guilt keeps her stuck in the past. Meanwhile, her best friend, Lisette, is moving on most recently with the boy Francesca wants but can't have. At loose ends, Francesca trails her father, who may be having an affair, to the local country club. There she meets four-year-old Frankie Sky, a little boy who bears an almost eerie resemblance to Simon, and Francesca begins to wonder if it's possible Frankie could be his reincarnation. Knowing Frankie leads Francesca to places she thought she'd never dare to go and it begins to seem possible to forgive herself, grow up, and even fall in love, whether or not she solves the riddle of Frankie Sky.

The Summer of Letting Go Details

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From Reader Review The Summer of Letting Go for online ebook

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Algonquin Book and Edelweiss.)

15-year-old Francesca/Frankie still feels guilty over the fact that she was supposed to be watching her brother when he got swept out to sea and drowned. When she meets a little boy at the swimming pool who looks just like her dead brother, and was even born the day that Simon died, she begins to wonder if this little boy (also called Frankie) is the reincarnation of Simon.

But does Frankie even believe in reincarnation? And is it really a good idea to start looking after Frankie, after her negligence caused her younger brother's death?

This was an okay story about a girl searching for peace and acceptance after her younger brother's death.

Frankie was an okay character, although I was surprised that she took on a job looking after a child when she was the one looking after her little brother when he drowned. I was even more surprised though when it seemed that she hadn't learned her lesson, and didn't watch Frankie properly at the swimming pool!

The storyline was okay, but I did get bored at points. I was also quite surprised at the direction the storyline took with regards to reincarnation! There were a couple of other things going on, but the thing with Simon and Frankie was the main storyline.

There was some romance, but not a lot, and we did get a bit of a love triangle going on. I wasn't 100% impressed with the way this romance progressed, crushing on your best friend's boyfriend is one thing, but acting on it is certainly another!

The ending was okay, but I just didn't really love this book.

Overall; okay YA contemporary,
6 out of 10.

Isamlq says

This is what I think might have happened after *Invincible Summer*. Lordy, do you now how hard I cried after that one? Still, this was like that but less sharp because it is "the after" we're made to deal with: how her mother for all intents is absent; how her father maybe, might be, could be not the guy she wants (needs) him to be. And how maybe, might be, likely she's less in her own estimation as well. So things are sad and heavy, but not completely because we know it's all going on and being felt... it's all just left unsaid.

There's one aspect in this that I would have loved a bit more of: her finding that unexpected connection. Lo! It's not the romantic one that propels her out of her rut to face what's become of her familial unit. Anyway, it is through that connection that the odd, yet sweet, comes in to play. There's a boy, see? But it's fact that there WAS as a boy in their past that makes the current one stand out all the more. Simon's memory drives her forward while keeping her family rooted so that there's a growing gap between her and the rest of them with her trying to piece the possibilities together of who Frankie *could be*... at the same time grappling with the realities of who her parents *weren't*.

If those things weren't enough (and I think this is where my problems with SoLG began... because those two

things up there? Well, they're enough, believe me,) we have this side story of our lead girl as best friend but pining after her bestie's boyfriend. *So, there is in fact a Boy*. See? The typical drama of 'will I ever' and 'why not me' run their course here making her head space all the more complicated yet not one ounce more interesting because let's face it... it's drama that we've all seen before. Except if I'm being honest, there's one actual moment in this side of the story that had me feeling Polisner's words. It's that bit on growing up then apart; wanting and not wanting it simultaneously. There's *truth* in how it was said, and it had me sad-sighing:

“I miss us. I know I was just at her house, but were not quite us anymore. Something is off between us. There's a crack turning into a chasm. It keeps stretching wider and wider.”

Kelly Hager says

I know you've all heard me speak of *The Pull of Gravity* over and over again, and how much I love it and how perfect it is. Hopefully I've already gotten you to read it (if not, no time like the present!).

But why am I talking about Gae Polisner's first book in a review of her second? Because as much as I loved *The Pull of Gravity*, this book is even better.

Francesca blames herself for her brother Simon's death. She was supposed to be watching him the day he drowns, and ever since, her family has completely splintered. Everyone fell apart and they did so in different directions.

And when she meets a little boy, Frankie Sky, and becomes his babysitter, her life turns around. She won't tell anyone because she knows how ridiculous it sounds but she thinks that maybe Frankie Sky has a little bit of her brother's soul. The more she researches reincarnation, the more possible it seems.

But as interesting as that is, it isn't the point of the story.

The point is how Francesca (or Beans, as she is known to her family, best friend and beloved Frankie Sky) learns how to stop blaming herself for what happened to her brother, as well as the relationship she forges with Frankie Sky. And oh, how I love Frankie Sky. That little boy is pure magic and every scene with him was an absolute delight.

This entire book was an absolute delight.

I cannot possibly say enough good things about this book, so I will just say this: buy it when it comes out in March. Buy it from Amazon or Barnes & Noble or whatever bookstore you frequent. Buy a copy for a friend, so you have someone to discuss it with. (Or talk about it with me; I'd love that.) This makes an excellent present, as well. Do with that information as you will.

Highly, highly recommended.

Lindsey Kay says

One of the things that most parents lay awake at night fearing, is that inevitable moment when your child will face the kind of loss that could break even an adult. You hope, of course, that your child never has to face those kinds of things.

I can remember the first time I realized that my dad's two younger brothers had died in a car crash when he was sixteen. My dad was speaking about it to a large group of people and broke down in tears. I was sixteen, myself, at the time, and I can remember thinking, "wow, he's still really broken up about it. Hasn't he, like, dealt yet?"

Of course, some things are very hard to deal with. So I approached this book with a fair amount of trepidation- both because as a parent, I resist the idea of children suffering, and because watching my own father deal with his childhood suffering, I still feel a bit of woundedness for his sake. (I learned to feel wounded once I got over being a self-involved brat of a teen- something that is very hard to do.)

The Summer of Letting Go starts several summers after the protagonist, Frankie (sometimes known as "beans") loses her brother to drowning. Frankie is still dealing with a lot of heaviness that she doesn't know how to carry, but when she finds herself wanting to be strong for a young boy who seems like the shadow of her brother, she learns that she is far more capable than she'd allowed herself to believe.

It's a story about love, about loss, about fear and uncertainty, but most of all about letting go of pain enough to hold on to faith. I don't want to write too much more because I would hate to spoil the simple beauty of it. Suffice it to say I found myself holding my breath with Frankie many times, I found my heart absolutely broken in the most piercing and lovely ways, and at the end of the book I felt the pounding of hope in my chest and it was such a delicious relief.

Throughout the book there is this line, "even the ocean cannot drown our souls." I have a tattoo of the Latin word for "mercy" on my back, but I'm tempted to add that line to it.

So poignant, beautiful, understated and absolutely moving.

Highly recommended.

Ash Wednesday says

3.5 STARS

Let me lie and thief and screw up until I rot away in hell, but don't just let me be no one, nothing, except that other girl. Because that other girl, the sad-eyed one staring back from the photograph on my computer, I don't want to be her anymore.

I'm having a hard time rating this because it started off rocky for me with a lot of frowning and raised eyebrow moments followed by a strong middle that ended on a bit of a whimper. It took a great deal of empathic calisthenics on my part (yes, there's such a thing) to get along with the heroine because some parts of her story had the potential to be devastatingly heart wrenching one moment, only to be off-set by questionable actions and hazy rationale in the next turn.

For the last three years, Frankie "Beans" Schnell has been carrying the guilt of her younger brother, Simon's drowning and, by extension, the gradual ruin of her family. A distant, apathetic mother, a father who may or may not be fooling around with their Angelina Jolie-esque neighbor mixed with the perfect gorgeous best friend with the perfect gorgeous boyfriend she secretly covets... it's going to be an interesting summer. But apparently, not interesting enough, as in one of her stakeouts trying to catch her dad and the neighbor, she meets a young boy Frankie "Sky" Schyler who reminds her of Simon a little too vividly.

Okay, **NOW** it's going to be an interesting summer.

Beans and Frankie Sky's friendship played around with paranormal and religious themes but wasn't really the point of interest of the story (for me anyway). Save for Frankie Sky's propensity for lolpeak (I had a bit of trouble not imagining him as a lolcat at times) and some research lapse on pediatric cardiology (view spoiler) I found their story sweet and the role each of them played in each other's growth (especially Beans') was truly touching. But my favorite storyline was that of Beans' family. I liked how Polisner depicted each member's hurt over Simon's death, how they acted on it and how it impacts each other. I found it the emotional core of this book, especially Beans' relationship with her father and the dilemma their situation brings.

Maybe that's what I'm secretly hoping for. Because if Dad could make such a huge, horrible mistake and still be a good person, then that would mean, technically I could be too. I could still be worthy of loving, even if I let my brother drown.

There's a raw hurt and desperation in Beans' thoughts as she comes to terms with her father's possible fallibility. Because fully functional parents, in our eyes, always start from that pedestal, that plane that makes you believe they hang the moon and have the answers to everything. Some paths to adulthood starts with seeing them as mortal and imperfect as you are, Beans is on that one. Every scene that is tangentially related to her issues with her parents were brilliant especially (view spoiler) and some of the ambiguity will probably piss a lot of people off but it is called *The Summer of Letting Go* for many reasons.

What I could not let go is how Beans figures in the Bradley-Lisette story line. I can't remember where I've seen/read how it doesn't really matter what we think or feel, it is in what we do that we measure the worth of a person and I found myself trying to isolate Beans' thoughts from what she actually does just to make this plot line tolerable. It's hard enough to stand by and listen to Frankie Beans' mental litany of her insecurities against Lisette but to actually suffer through her mooning over her best friend's boyfriend while being (slightly) guilty over it will certainly test your patience and empathy. I would've probably been more forgiving if her longing wasn't introduced as early as the first, freaking scene in the book or if the entire kerfuffle was resolved in a different, less unimaginative manner but as it echoes a message that I'm not entirely comfortable with, I can't make myself see anything else beyond what Beans did. I don't even get the fuss over Bradley, because, seriously? Crab-talk? Crab claws? THAT'S what turns you on?

This had a good story at its core but you'd have to forage through the cheap tricks of juvenile love games, inane crab talk and lolpeak without a lolcat to get to it. And your enjoyment of the story will probably hinge on how much of that you're willing to let go.

(See what I did there? ;p)

Also on BookLikes.

ARC provided by Algonquin Books thru NetGalley in exchange for an honest and unbiased review. Quotes

may not appear in the final edition.

Bekki Fahrer says

Not even the ocean can drown our souls.

This book could have been one big cliché. It could have been condensing and schmaltzy.

Thank God it wasn't. Instead, it was warm, real, and a beautiful journey. The slow burn of hope, ignited by a precocious little boy, brought life to a family living in the shadow of devastating loss.

There were interesting echoes in this book. It was reminiscent of Sarah Dessen in that the teens were written with reverence and respect, and were not caricatures of Teen archetypes. I also saw John Green's ability to write angst and self-blame without becoming annoying. What Gae Polisner did that these others aren't quite as polished in, was move your heart without manipulating your emotions overtly. The subtlety of this book is lovely. There is some resolution, but not everything is fixed at the end.

Also, as almost an afterthought, I really liked how the parents in this book had to learn how to be parents again. This is definitely a book about becoming human again after tragedy. So recommend.

Tom says

(nb: I received an Advance Review Copy from the publisher via NetGalley)

It's summertime, to paraphrase the song, and the livin' *ain't* easy, not for Francesca "Frankie" Schnell. It's the summer she turns sixteen, and it's supposed to be filled with frivolity and magic, but Frankie is sullen. She's healthy, yes. She's reasonably pretty, in a string-bean, not-busy way, and she has her best friend, Lizette Sutter to share adventures.

The first problem is named Bradley Stephenson. He's hot, and he's Lizette's boyfriend. This means Lizette is always busy. It's even worse, because Frankie has always had a huge crush on Brad. The situation—even when the three go out as friends—is nigh on untenable.

Problem two is that Frankie is convinced her father is having an affair with the sexy woman across the street.

Problem three...problem three is the killer. During a family beach outing four years ago, Frankie's little brother, Simon, was swept away in a strong current when Frankie was supposed to be watching him. She just walked back to the family beach blanket to get snacks, and when she turned back around, Simon was out in the water. She did her best to save him, but it was for naught. Ever since that horrible afternoon, Frankie has felt crushing guilt that it was her fault, and that her mother has ever since blamed her for Simon's death.

The bright spot in Frankie's life is the part-time job she falls into. She takes on a role as a mother's helper. The little boy is also named Frankie, which amuses him to no end. Young Frankie is a handful. He loves living dangerously, climbing trees, diving into the deep end of the pool, swinging impossibly high on the playground swing set. He's an energetic and smart little boy, and he looks exactly like Simon. He's even the age Simon was when he died.

As if juggling all the drama of her best friend, her best friend's lusted-after boyfriend, her father's apparent affair, and the ever-present guilt about Simon's death weren't enough tsuris for one girl, Francesca begins to wonder if there isn't some sort of connection between Frankie and Simon, something beyond her

comprehension. As she investigates, her world becomes an Etch-a-Sketch, with clearly demarcated lines and forms, which disappear as her summer moves toward its ending, as if The Universe shakes it. Then new lines and forms appear, and Francesca's world changes.

This book is totally addictive; I read it in one sitting. In Francesca—who narrates—Gae Polisner has created a young woman who can't seem to catch a break. Circumstance torments her, and all she wants is normalcy in her life, the normalcy she used to have. She needs it in order that she can grieve properly, then let go of her guilt. She needs it now.

I also like that Ms. Polisner gave Francesca the surname "Schnell," which means "quickly" in German. She's suffered enough, and Francesca wants the *status quo* with her mother to change *quickly*. She wants her grief to resolve itself *quickly*. She wants a boyfriend *quickly*. She wants answers to difficult questions *quickly*.

And by the book's end, things do change. The ending isn't necessarily what I expected or wanted, but by damn, it's the ending that fits. The malleability of the human soul—and the innocent spark of a little kid—bring that ending to fruition. "The Summer of Letting Go" is the perfect title for this book. It's a gem, filled with the mixed emotions we all feel: joy and pain, hope and despair, all contrapuntal, and the relief we feel when we let go the negative. Francesca finds her place on The Universe's Etch-a-Sketch. Here's hoping we all do, as well.

Most Highly Recommended

Sally Kruger says

It's been four years since Francesca's little brother Simon drowned. It was an afternoon at the beach when the tragedy changed her family's world. The guilt Francesca feels has changed her relationship with her mother and changed her normally outgoing personality.

With summer beginning Francesca knows her friend Lisette will be expecting her to hang out, but Francesca knows things will be uncomfortable since she has a secret crush on Lisette's boy friend. To complicate matters, Francesca is fairly certain that her father is having an affair with a woman who lives across the street. She knows that following the death of her brother, her father's affair is the last thing her fragile mother needs.

One afternoon Francesca follows the neighbor woman to the local country club sure that her father is planning to meet the woman there. She doesn't see her father, but she does meet a little four year old boy named Frankie. To her surprise, several days later, she has a job as a mother's helper watching over the active young boy.

As the summer passes, Frankie and Francesca become inseparable. Frankie's behavior and often random comments seem so much like Francesca's little brother that she begins to believe he may be the reincarnation of Simon. When her feelings about Frankie collide with family and friend problems, Francesca has more than she can handle. Can she deal with the powerful emotions that threaten to overwhelm her or will this confusing summer end up helping her put her life back together?

Author Gae Polisner explores love and loss and the reality that life goes on. THE SUMMER OF LETTING GO is the inspirational story of one girl's attempt to make sense of heartbreaking tragedy. Be sure to watch for its release in March of 2014.

Sherry says

Loved this book hard. So grateful to receive an e-arc from NetGalley. More thoughts after I reflect and process.

--this is still a book I think about often. I'm looking forward to handing it to students. I've already talked about it to staff and students and know they will fall in love with the book like I did.

Thank you Gae Polisner for writing such a beautiful heart-felt book.

Sarah (YA Love) says

This is a sweet and wonderful book. Full review to come closer to the release date.

Destiny says

Hands down the best book I've read this year! <3

Anna says

Crying so hard right now! More to come later, closer to publication. But this is *definitely* one of the best books I've read this year!

Actual Review

This book was wonderful and a very emotional reading experience. I always enjoy Gae Polisner's writing style and her characters are so easy to identify with, so easy to catch feelings for their situations in life. I loved the relationships between Francesca & Simon and Francesca & Frankie Sky. The only thing I wasn't so hot on was the resolution of the romance with the boy Francesca and her friend were fighting over. Overall, so worthwhile.

"I let go and stare at him as he whips past me in circles, his blond curls like Simon's blowing free in the wind. Simon. Is Frankie Sky part of him? Or is that totally crazy? I sit on the ground and close my eyes against the dizzying circles that spin in front of me and inside my head."

This. Jeez this is hitting me right in the heart! (My general reaction the whole time I was reading this book!)

I received a review copy from NetGalley in exchange for review, which in no way influenced my opinions. Thanks NetGalley!

Melissa says

Full review to come closer to pub date :)

Kerry says

This book is aimed at the teen market, and the love story component certainly suits that market. But 'The Summer of Letting Go' is such a touching and beautiful story it should be read by everyone. There is a Charlie St. Cloud feel to the story as Franky Schnell tries to deal with the death of her brother, but it differs in the quest to discover the link between Simon and her new charge Frankie Sky. Is Frankie Sky Simon reincarnated, are all the links truly coincidences? These questions and many others around Simon's tragic drowning are woven beautifully around daily life and interesting relationships between the characters. I really enjoyed this book. I was given a copy of this book to read and give my honest opinion.

Tabby Shiflett says

4.5 Stars

A YA coming-of-age story about grief, moving on, and life's beautiful surprises. This book is well-written and the water is a character in itself. The characters are realistic and even though this novel is set during contemporary times, the story is timeless (at times, I imagined it taking place in earlier decades). A really touching book.

Net Galley Feedback
