



Beautiful Broken Girls

Kim Savage

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Remember the places you touched me.

The parts of Mira Cillo that Ben touched are etched on his soul.

Palm. Hair. Chest. Cheek. Lips. Throat. Heart.

It was the last one that broke her. After her death, Mira sends Ben on a quest for notes she left in the seven places where they touched—notes that explain why she and her sister, Francesca, drowned themselves in the quarry. How Ben interprets those notes has everything to do with the way he was touched by a bad coach years before. But the truth behind the girls' suicides is far more complicated, involving a dangerous infatuation, a deadly miracle, and a crushing lie.

Beautiful Broken Girls Details

Date : Published February 21st 2017 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Byr)

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Author : Kim Savage

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Mystery, Contemporary, Fiction

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From Reader Review Beautiful Broken Girls for online ebook

Shelley says

Source Publisher

Genre Young Adult, Contemporary, Mystery

Rating 3.0

My Thoughts

"Whey you touch things, they can break."

Beautiful Broken Girls, by author Kim Savage, is her follow up novel After the Woods. The story surrounds two sisters (Mira & Francesca Cillo) who commit suicide, and a next door neighbor (Benvenuto Lattanzi), who manages to find a way into one of the girls hearts before the girls choose to end their lives instead of facing their demons.

Ben receives a letter (8) days after the girls are found dead:

"Everyone wanted to touch us, including you. So, remember the (7) places you touched me. That's where you'll find the truth. Start at the beginning." Mira sends Ben on a hunt for clues to what really happened to her, and Francesca with each clue representing the (7) body parts that Mira allowed Ben to touch. Palm. Hair. Chest. Cheek. Lips. Throat. Heart. The author actually breaks the story up into (7) parts as well with each part representing a body part.

Full Review @ Gizmos Reviews

<http://gizmosreviews.blogspot.com/201...>

Penelope (Penelope's Picks) says

I put a rating because I had to, but even now I'm not quite sure how I feel about this book. Very hard to describe.

Erin Dunn says

<http://angelerin.blogspot.com/2018/02...>

Since I enjoyed After the Woods by Kim Savage so much I had to pre-order Beautiful Broken Girls. It's pretty sad that I just now got around to it though. Shame on me! I really wanted to like this book more than I actually did. I did like it, but I think it would have been more enjoyable for me had it not been for the religious aspect of it. Sometimes I don't mind that, but personally in this one it just didn't fully do it for me. Other than that, I liked Beautiful Broken Girls and I really wanted to find out what happened to the Cillo

girls. I was very intrigued and I wanted to figure out the mystery right along with Ben! I love Kim Savage's writing style and I would recommend this one for the mystery aspect.

#IntriguingAndMysterious

ambsreads says

This book was the romanticisation of way too many things. I can't even put into words. It tried to be 13 Reasons Why but pushed christianity and "mystery" on the readers. Reviews also say the sexual assault was handled poorly.

Ellie says

Beautiful Broken Girls

Kim Savage

★????

Pros:

- ~ A gorgeous cover
- ~ An interesting premise that incorporates religion
- ~ Aspects of magical realism, if that appeals to you
- ~ The twist is surprising and unexpected

Cons:

- ~ The magical realism came the FUCK out of nowhere
- ~ Everything is frustratingly underdeveloped and under-explored
- ~ Like, honestly, there is so much shit in here I can't even list it all
- ~ I had no sympathy for any of the characters
- ~ STOP ROMANTICIZING AWFUL THINGS PLEASE
- ~ AND SHAMING THOSE THAT AREN'T AWFUL, LIKE BEING FAT OR POOR

It was all anyone needed to know, that the girls weren't crazy, just good. Too good for this world.

No... I'm pretty sure they were just crazy.

This has got to be the strangest book I've ever read. Last year I gave Savage's debut *After the Woods* a go and finished feeling underwhelmed and irritated with the ending (not to mention some disgusting stereotyping). I thought I'd give this one a chance—people change, writing improves, it was a debut after all—especially as that gorgeous cover would've looked great on my bookshelf. But where *After the Woods* was very much YA fare, enjoyable enough with its usage of YA trope building blocks, *Beautiful Broken Girls* was just plain weird.

The main story is that these two beautiful, broken girls (har, har), sisters Mina and Francesca, have accidentally fallen off the local quarry pool cliff and drowned. Ben, Mina's kind-of boyfriend, has been left posthumous notes from Mina, to be found at various places where he'd been allowed to touch her. Not only did I find it kind of bizarre that Ben remembers in EXACT detail where and when and how and why he touched her, but **it also made me not really believe he loved her?** It was more, er, well, erotic obsession than love. He himself calls his feelings for her an obsession and fixation, even before her death. So his big scavenger hunt for his dead girlfriend's poetry notes **feels cheapened by the fact that it's pretty much dick-powered.**

On one hand, I wasn't buying their romance-from-the-dead, and on another, it was all weird. What I think went wrong was the fact that the book itself deviated so much from, well, standard YA fare. The writing tried very, very hard to be literary but it was straight up purple (including alliteration!). We are inundated with lines like:

The toast popped exuberantly, it seemed, and she placed it on a plate, dragging the knife across the rough surface, the butter melting fast into sharply defined crevices.

His last thought before sleep was of violet gas rising from the pickle water and himself, flat on the ledge, a stick man, the lines of his body drawn in pencil, clear and colorless, waiting for the gas to meet him. He let himself be heavy as the gas swirled around his head, trunk, and legs, growing a vibrant shade of eggplant as the color filled him.

A thin stream bled from identical holes in her palms and crested the creases of her cocked wrists.

He was a beautiful boy, broken, angular, and sharp as a blade, with long muscles in the bones of his hands, curving around his scapula, cording his neck.

Every so often, a gust moved the wings of his hair, or he shifted, vertebral nubs snaking up and down his back.

I mean really. Who uses "scapula" in conversational description? What is a "vertebral nub"?

And there's so much focus on little details. Overstressed symbolism. Everybody is fixated on these meaningless little things so the authorial hand can build an unhinged sort of atmosphere. But guess what??? I didn't have jack squat sense of atmosphere. Aside from coloring the whole book violently purple, the only thing the writing did for the story was draw me out of it.

And the story. Oh boy. Maybe the writing could be forgiven if the story made a lick of sense, but it didn't. Beautiful Broken Girls tried this weird, floaty sort of magical realism. Holes sprouted in people's hands out of nowhere, girls were born with "gifts", they can talk to birds, they want to be canonized, like... just... what...?

I expected a quiet suspense novel about an accident/suicide/murder, not some weirdo catholic saint magic.

Mira was okay at first. Distant, I guess, the way boys liked her. But I never felt sympathy for her, and towards the end I started actively hating her. Her sister Francesca was so supremely horrid, and she thinks she's Jesus H. Christ. That she's like catholic saints, who drank putrefied-leper-flesh water and licked spiders off prison cell floors, because she fucking volunteered at the fucking soup kitchen. She thinks that she's making "restitution for the sins of others" by volunteering???? What the fuck....????? Was she supposed to be awful? Was she supposed to be batshit? Was she supposed to be a martyr? I've got no clue. The end of the book is insistent on reinforcing that the sisters were too fucking good for this world, SO????

And you know what I really just can't get over? There is cruelty in the voice. It's not there to be addressed, or to be overcome. It's just there.

It's there in the way the single fat character is named Piggy, how he's a loser with girls but also sleazy as fuck, how the narrative makes sure you know of his thick hips, jowls, soft belly and "reptilian eyes". It's there in his family, whose only description is:

[Piggy's] mother would be sacked out with the rest of his overweight family in front of the TV, except Mr. Pignataro, who rarely left his Gentlemen's Club, not even to sleep sometimes, according to his son.

It's there in the way the people at the soup kitchen are described by Francesca as strung-out junkies and overweight men there for a free handout. **For being saintly, Francesca is completely awful, and Mira is not much better.** Bitch killed a kitten.

I noticed this in After the Woods as well. (Remember those asides about how Russian women were whores and their babies were born addicted to crack? Yeah. Remember how fucked up that adopted Russian kid was, how in his introductory description his eyes are feral and blue like a husky, how he was an addict and probably violent—not because of anything he'd done, but just because? That wasn't awful to read or anything.) I just don't get why. Not only does it make me dislike the narrating character, it also makes me distrust the author. Perhaps it shouldn't—death of the author, and all. But I can't help how I feel, whereas the author can help how certain things are described. Which leads me to my biggest issue:

Ben was sexually molested in childhood by his baseball coach. It is a major part of the red herring of the mystery and if that might be upsetting or discomforting to you, please be advised. I'm not going to tag with spoilers, as we learn this quite early in the book.

Personally, I was confused by the way this was presented. A lot of Ben's trauma, anger, and fear shine through in the way he thinks and the decisions he makes. I felt his anger, his pain. Even the people who support him don't believe him when he says it's happening to other people. So on that hand, I feel his living as a survivor was portrayed well... but for the most part, it's maddeningly underdeveloped. While I appreciate the reality that you can't just "overcome" trauma and it's not to be used as a narrative device, I also... didn't get why it was there? Ben doesn't grow at all. He doesn't really have to deal with his problems, and the end of the book just illustrates that he literally only runs away. Not to mention, **the novel constantly finds a way to couple his feelings for Mira with his abuse.**

As he told his parents, and the police, and everyone who would listen, he didn't even remember the old coach messing with him, and it was better that way. Mira, on the other hand. Mira was real to him, maybe more so in death.

Mira loved him more for the damage inflicted on him, the kind of damage that her touch might heal. Mira imagined that the bad coach had hollowed out parts of Ben for Mira to fill.

[...] she still loved him, for his beauty, and his wounds.

(emphasis mine) This is a really gross way to treat sexual abuse survivors. And you know, I take offense to the constant romanticization of trauma, abuse, and "brokenness". I didn't come here looking for an excellent portrayal of assault survivors and self-love, it's a murder mystery for goodness's sake, but I sure as fuck didn't sign up for this shit!

In the end, Beautiful Broken Girls never manages to say anything, or to use valuable page time for anything worthwhile. I didn't feel impacted by a boy's post-sexual abuse struggle, nor the sufferings of two sheltered

girls, nor the mystery plot. If this book had anything to say, it went the fuck over my head, and all I was left with was a half-baked Virgin Suicides with some weird Catholic overtones.

I think it's time Kim Savage and I part ways.

A free ARC of Beautiful Broken Girls was provided by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux via Netgalley in exchange for honest review. All opinions are uninfluenced and my own. Thank you!

Deanna says

My reviews can also be seen at: <https://deesradreadsandreviews.wordpress.com>

3.5 stars

I was really intrigued after reading the description for Beautiful Broke Girls. This was my first book by Kim Savage, though I had been wanting to read "After the Woods" for quite some time.

The story begins in August 2016. One night Mira and Francesca Cillo rode their bikes, then walked for about 15 minutes in the darkness to the quarry.

Not long after that their bodies are pulled from the quarry.

The death of the sisters hit everyone hard. Especially since there was the senseless death of another teen not long before this tragedy. Mira and Francesca's neighbor, Ben was taking it especially hard as he was in love with Mira.

Was it suicide? Did they fall? Or was it something else?

Then a few days after their bodies are found he receives a note. It is from Mira. This first note sends Ben on a hunt for seven more notes that will apparently explain what happened. Each note represented a part of Mira's body that Ben had touched palm, hair, chest...The story is broken down into each of these seven parts.

"Everyone wanted to touch us. Including you. So remember the seven places you touched me. It's where you'll find the truth. Start at the beginning "

With each note Ben discovers more and more about the sisters and their strange lives. He finds himself with more questions than answers.

"Everything is in God's plan"

I liked Ben's character and the story-line was interesting, though I ached for him and what he'd been through. There were not many likeable characters in this novel. I was really into this book at first but then I started to feel a bit overwhelmed. Honestly, it was very different from what I was expecting after reading the description. There was a lot going on and it could be a bit hard to follow at times. Magic realism, religion, and saints. It's kind hard to explain as I don't want to give anything away.

The novel has some dark subject matter and I felt some things were romanticized, things that in my opinion shouldn't be. But at no point did I want to stop reading, I was invested in the story. I did enjoy this novel, just not as much as I was expecting. Though some things may not have worked for me, they may not bother other readers.

I do look forward to reading more from Kim Savage, as she is definitely a talented writer.

Thank you to NetGalley, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and Kim Savage for an advanced copy of this novel in exchange for my honest review.

Stacee says

It sort of breaks my heart to give this 2 stars because I wanted to love it so much. The synopsis was intriguing and I really enjoy unreliable narrators.

It started out strong. I was captivated right away. Ben seemed like an interesting character and I loved the idea of the notes and finding out what really happened...and then it sort of went to shit.

The timeline flips back and forth. The past chapters tell us what's actually happening with the Cillo girls and it wasn't at all what I was expecting. Not that it was bad {yes, I'm being vague on purpose}, but it did have a lot of things stuffed into the story. For me, it was just too much. I found myself getting bored and completely losing interest in a resolution.

I can definitely see how people will love this, but it was lacking a spark and sense of mystery that I was hoping for.

Huge thanks to Farrar Straus Giroux for providing the arc free of charge

Jessica says

So, first off, kudos to the designer of this cover because it's a thing of beauty. My heart belonged to this book before I even gazed eyes upon the synopsis. Still, it was ultimately the synopsis that did me in. I love stories that hint at a mystery beyond death. The idea of someone leaving you notes to discover the reason behind their demise has always fascinated me and, quite honestly, is one of the YA concepts that I'll read no matter what. It's not hard to imagine that I was pretty excited to dive in to Beautiful Broken Girls. I only hoped that it would live up to the hype that my brain was already generating for it.

Which is where we come to the difficult part, and that's the fact that I'm still not sure entirely how I feel about this book. I'm a bit on the fence because, well, this story confused me more than I'd like to admit. Beautiful Broken Girls starts out fairly strong. We're introduced to Ben as he's mourning the loss of Mira who, as we slowly uncover, was a much bigger part of his life than he'd like to admit. I liked Ben. He was a little broken, a little angry, but full of the kind of resolve that only exists when you truly cared about someone. His quest to find out what happened to Mira was harsh at the best of times, but he soldiered on despite all of that.

Ben's relationships with the other characters in this story, specifically his family and his group of guy friends, were also pretty well laid out. I understood his frustration that people kept trying to put him in a bubble because of his past trauma. I felt for him that he couldn't express his feelings, because it looked to the outside world that he was overreacting. While I wasn't a huge fan of the majority of the other boys in this story, I liked that they weren't caricatures of what someone believes boys would be. They were raw, and honest, and sometimes kind of obnoxious. Just like real life.

The disconnect for me, came when Mira and Francesca's story began to unfold. I'm not entirely sure what I was expecting the reasoning behind their suicide to be, but the choppy and vague story that was laid out for me left me feeling a bit frustrated. I don't want to give anything away, for readers out there who are interested in this book, but I can confidently say that I wanted much more backstory. It drives me mad when characters are given a special trait, or an interesting existence, and there is absolutely no explanation as to where it stemmed from. Since I had no insight into Francesca's past, she simply felt shallow and spoiled to me. I had no empathy for her whatsoever. Which meant, unfortunately, that since Mira kept playing into her delusions I kind of began to hate her as well.

As it stands, Ben ended up being the best part of this story. The ending was okay, although not quite what I was hoping for. I just really feel like the middle of this book needed much more explanation and much less of Ben's flashbacks. It was tough for me to build a relationship with any of the other characters, and it ended up hurting my connection with book. Did I mention that my feelings are all over the place? I can definitely offer this book a three star rating, and say that there's much of it that is going to interest other readers out there. If you're looking for a book that blends mystery with some darker emotions, you'll want to pick this up.

Linda Strong says

They found the two young sisters at the bottom of the quarry. They were clutching each other, bound together for all eternity. Did they stumble during the night and fall to their deaths? Perhaps foul play, although who would want to hurt them? Joint suicide pact?

Ben had loved Mira and he grieved so hard. When a letter came to him a few days after the girls were found, written by Mira, he wasn't prepared for what she had to say. Remember the places you touched me.

As Ben remembers the seven times he touched Mira, the life she shared with her sister, Francesca, comes front and center. Each place that Ben searches reveals another letter, a note, telling him of their strange existence.

I really wanted to like this one much more than I did. The title, the cover, the book blurb all drew me in. It failed to live up to my expectations ... maybe because it was aimed at a much younger reader. I almost gave up when I started skipping pages, scanning for something that would draw my attention.

I really liked the character of Ben. Mira and Francesca didn't elicit much compassion or interest from me other than the thought of needless deaths for two teenagers who had so much life left to live. There's also the hint of paranormal with this story.

This one just didn't hold my interest.

Many thanks to the author / Macmillan Children's Publishing Group / Netgalley for the digital copy of this book. The opinion(s) expressed here are unbiased and entirely my own.

Lala BooksandLala says

This was disturbing, but so well written. The ominous vibe it gave, the word choices, the slow reveals, the way we would be let in on something just before the main character discovered it himself, the fucked up and unlikeable cast of characters...This is definitely not a book for everyone; you're not going to find character growth, justification for bad behavior, a thrilling climax or a clean ending. If you need those things to appreciate a book- skip this one.

As the synopsis suggests, content warnings for child abuse, self harm, suicide and eating disorders.

Allison says

A totally different kind of book than After the Woods. Less thriller and more....Virgin Suicides-esque? Definitely not a bad thing. A really beautiful and haunting 2nd novel.

This is an achy book, if that makes sense. My heart ached for a while after reading it, due in part to Savage's writing and in part to the narrative itself. I'm a sucker for stigmata and living saints and old timey Catholicism. I'm also an Italian-American and a lot of the scenes hit home for me, especially in regards to the patriarchal brand of protectiveness.

I'm not sure this will appeal to everyone, as it's more of a meandering novel than the usual plot-driven stuff, but it's gorgeous and worth a read.

Rachel says

This book was... Dumb. I know that's not a nice thing to say, I don't like the fact that I hated the book so much and I feel bad leaving a negative review. But. I cannot in good conscience recommend this book. Writing was clunky and awkward and the story was weird and not in an interesting way. The characters were ridiculous. I don't understand the creative choice of focusing on Ben, who was a total dumb ass. Don't get me wrong, the two sisters central to the story of this book weren't much better but at least they were more interesting? Why not just have the book be about them and Connie? Instead of this wack 13 Reasons Why bullshit in the form of short, vague notes that made zero sense anyway. None of the religious nonsense was explained. I don't like how it was insinuated that (view spoiler). I just felt like after I finished the book, what was it trying to tell me about child victims? Absolutely nothing, I guess. So it was just an overall gross way to have a book about child abuse/molestation. I finished the book thinking um, okay: (view spoiler) I just felt like the author wanted to throw in as many "triggers" as she could (eating disorders! depression! child sex trauma!) and adding in religion to make it faux deep. the book wasn't deep, it was stupid.

Kelly Gunderman says

Check out this and other reviews on my young adult book blog, Here's to Happy Endings!

Actual rating: 2.5 stars

Before reading *Beautiful Broken Girls*, I didn't actually have the chance to read Kim Savage's debut novel, *After the Woods*. I did, however, hear nothing but amazing things about that book, so it really sparked an interest in her new book. **When I got an ARC of this one, I was over the moon, and when I started reading, I really expected it to have really great characters, a mysterious plot, and be the type of book that would be really memorable long after I had finished reading.**

Unfortunately, *Beautiful Broken Girls* wasn't any of those things to me - in fact, I found myself annoyed by the flat, cookie cutter like characters, and almost bored by the plot in this book, which I assumed would be thrilling and a fun mystery to have to unravel as the book went on, but was clearly mistaken.

Beautiful Broken Girls starts off with authorities removing two bodies from the quarry - twin sisters Mira and Francesca Cillo. Apparently they had drowned in the quarry, and no one in town knows why - including Mira's ex-boyfriend Ben, who began noticing changes in Mira's personality long before the girls ended their lives.

While the rest of the town simply starts to come to terms with their deaths and stops asking questions, such as why they would do what they did, their deaths still bother Ben, who is determined to get to the bottom of it. **When a note for Ben shows up, instructing him to go to the places where the two of them had touched to find more clues, Ben sets out to figure out what happened, collecting the little pieces of Mira's secrets, one by one, until things start to make sense.**

Only Ben begins jumping to conclusions as he unravels the mystery, accusing the girls' father of something horrible. Did he do what Ben is accusing him of? Or was it something else altogether, something that Mira and Francesca could never get over?

The book is divided up into several sections, into the places that Ben had touched Mira - palm, hair, chest, cheek, lips, throat, and heart. **While the majority of the book is told from Ben's point of view, the ends of each section has a little glimpse into the lives of the Cillo sisters - Francesca, who was trying to convince those around her that she was a saint, so that she could win the affection of a certain someone in the church, and Mira, constantly looking out for and taking care of her sister.** I thought this was a nice touch, as it was written in a way to allow you to get a look into the lives of all the main characters in the book, but at the same time, I didn't really feel like it was enough to really *get to know* the characters well enough. The brief look into the lives of the Cillo sisters did make me feel a little more connected to them, but not enough to really find myself drawn into the mystery that was their lives.

As far as Ben goes, I didn't really connect with him, either - he was quick to jump to conclusions, and he didn't seem to value the thoughts or opinions of anyone else around him. It's obvious that he cared about what happened to the girls, especially Mira, and this is partly fueled by the fact that he was abused by his coach in the past. While this isn't really discussed much in the book, it's brought up a few times. I kind of wish we could have had a bit of an idea of what Ben's character was like before the abuse occurred, so we could see how it had shaped him as a person, but that happened before the events of the book, and there weren't any flashbacks for Ben.

The mystery that Ben is attempting to unravel is lackluster at best; it wasn't really all that interesting, unfortunately - I had hoped it would have been one to keep me up reading until the early morning hours, but I felt a little bored by it.

Does this book have an emotional scene or two? Yes, it does. While talking about that here would ruin the mystery for others, just let me say that when I learned what happened with the Cillo girls, I felt incredibly sad about it. It wasn't what I was expecting, but it was understandable, the way it pushed the girls to do what they did.

Just because I didn't care for this book doesn't mean I'm not going to go back and read *After the Woods* - I heard so many good things about that book that I'm still super excited to read it. I wish this would have been better - I was hoping for more of a thrilling novel, but if you are one for a book with a milder mystery to it, then this might be one for you.

Note: I received an ARC of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Alexis (TheSlothReader) says

I received an ARC of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

The only positive thing I can say about this book is that Ben's storyline was at least interesting.

Now onto the long list of things I did not like about this story.

Firstly, the characters. None of them were developed and they all featured one large character trait that constituted their entire personality. There was the two crazy ones, the mean one and the sorta nice one, there was the grossly stereotyped fat character, the stoner one, the main character, the teacher-like figure, and that's it. Every other character had no personality and were utterly undistinguishable from the other characters, especially Ben's group of friends. I honestly could only name the fat character whose name is Piggy by the way and how he's a sleazy, pervert like 75% of fat characters in literature. The rest of them I've already forgotten about. None of the characters served any sense of development throughout the story.

Clearly the author was trying to write a story about unlikeable people, but it never felt like she commented on the fact that they were all crazy. Instead, her overly flowery writing just romanticized them all to high hell except for the characters that the main characters deemed undesirable (i.e. fat, homeless, or ugly characters.) There are times in the text when characters have horrible thoughts or voice horrible thoughts and not a single other character ever contradicts them in any way. I'll talk more about this later on in my review when I get to the romanticization of Ben's childhood molestation.

The next thing I strongly disliked about this story is that it was very different from what the synopsis said it would be. Since I did receive an ARC of this, I could have gotten an incomplete synopsis but this synopsis made it seem like the story would be a contemporary mystery in the vein of Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why*. It's not. Instead, the Cillo sister's chapters which take up half the story are all magical realism with a hint of Christian fanaticism because one of the sisters thinks she's turning into a Saint. But really she's only doing this to impress the pastor character because she's in love with him. I don't feel like this book is marketed the right way because half of the story has this magical realism element that is never, in any way, ever explained. These "miracles" are happening to the Cillo girls, but you won't be getting any explanations as for why. None at all. Most of the book is just the pastor character telling them that "Everything is in God's

plan." I can promise you that if I had known that I'd have to read that over 60 times throughout the book, I wouldn't have asked for it.

The storytelling and writing were just not good. So many reviews of this book call the writing beautiful and I just don't agree. There would be prose that were kind of beautiful and then the author would immediately take me out of that by talking about the insides of someone's body, but in a horrifyingly creepy way. Like this quote:

"More and more, he found himself thinking about the insides of Mira, healthy, pink organs and long, smooth muscle wall. The parts of Mira no one saw, whose actions were involuntary and unguarded. He imagined glistening blood cells, villi waving like sea anemone, velvety mucosa. Turn Mira inside out, smear his hands inside." (LOC 2108)

Yeah sorry but I don't personally find science textbooks to be "beautiful writing." I honestly can think of like nine more beautiful ways to explain that exact sentiment. And this was the only example I saved because I saved it for multiple reasons, including how stupid of a relationship Ben and Mira had.

My other point regarding the storytelling is that it isn't cohesive at all. Aside from the fact that the ending is anticlimactic and doesn't explain a single thing from the book, I'm talking about this one chapter in particular. In Part 5, the main character Ben meets with his friends to discuss a theory he has with them about the Cillo girls death. He meets and talks almost individually with every single one of his friends, including his friend Kyle (who, by the way, is a weed-smoker stereotype through and through.) Except in the very next part, he meets up with Kyle and it's stated that "they hadn't seen each other since the day Ben had knocked Piggy unconscious" (LOC 2307) which is a reference to a scene that happens in the very early part of the book. So at this point, I'm really confused because literally Ben and Kyle had a conversation the very previous chapter that took place after the events earlier in the novel. It's clear that chapter still exists within the story because Ben mentions it but for some reason I guess the author forgot that she made Kyle be there. From then on, I did pick out other inconsistencies in the text but I did not save them to my file.

I guess I'll mention the little bit about how dumb and uninterested in Ben and Mira's relationship I was. Mira writes these letters to Ben urging him to go to all the places they touched. We're supposed to read their great and secret love story through this, but honestly it's just seven cases of super horny teenagers touching each other. They talk once in the beginning of the novel and then the next time they meet in a flashback they're in love, with no romantic development whatsoever. Not to mention that both of them believe the other to be a manic-pixie dream girl, which is only briefly mentioned by a ghost at the end of the text. Though honestly I couldn't explain to you what was going in that scene because the author didn't really explain it at all.

And now to the largest point of all, the one that literally set my teeth grinding. Part of the story is about Ben's name being found on a list by a local coach who turns out to be a child predator. For that reason, every one constantly refers to Ben as being "special" and "touched," words that for me have a connotation of those blessed by angels and good fortune. For me personally, this topic was never handled correctly. In the first half of the story, Ben's trauma is never mentioned in more than one sentence and never with more feeling than one would comment on whether Ben had the flu. Now, as someone who actually has been the victim of similar trauma, you could see why this might bug me. A trauma that leaves many people with some level of emotional scarring. Fast forward to the end of the novel, where Ben's trauma suddenly becomes his only character trait. You can also see why that annoys me as well. Ben had the most personality of any of the characters and suddenly he's reduced to nothing more than anger he feels at this trauma that is never mentioned in more than one breath. No multitude of complex emotions like many survivors actually do feel. Nope, Ben's other characters traits disappear all so that he can move the plot forward with his anger. The

final point I'm going to make is that Mira, Ben's love interest, is constantly romanticizing his childhood trauma.

The quote I pulled was this one, "Mira loved him more for the damage inflicted on him, the kind of damage that her touch might heal. Mira imagined that the bad couch had hollowed out parts of Ben for Mira to fill. A co-mingling that might suffocate Mira's own wrong urges"

Sure, the author used the word "wrong" that one instance. After the thirty-five romanticized words before it. It's not enough to have one word to describe the incorrect thoughts of your character, not when the entirety of the novel is made to make Mira look beautiful. Ben is constantly romanticizing her, talking about how she's the most beautiful thing he's ever seen. Mira's own chapters, constantly pitch her as a beautiful, quirky soul who just wants to help her sister. There's a scene where she smothers a cat that's just totally glossed over. By not having Ben acknowledge how disturbed the Cillo's really were, the air of romanticism remains. There never was a realization that the girls were bad which meant that all Mira's thoughts remained beautiful and quirky in the eyes of readers. I'd like to point out that childhood molestation isn't beautiful or quirky.

I feel like that sums up all the things I hated about this book. Honestly, I don't think anyone should read this. Aside from my review, there are tons of one and two star reviews on this book that all talk about a lot of the same stuff as mine. Save yourself the time and effort and just skip this one.

Haven says

1.5 stars

An ARC was provided by the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

It felt a little strange giving *Beautiful Broken Girls* a lonely star (and a half, to make me feel a little less guilty) it's something so rare for me, I think I've only given 2 other books 1 star. Ever. Unfortunately, for this one I'll have to be honest and say it was a complete waste of time and I have no idea how I finished it. Let me tell y'all something, I came into this book excited as hell, ready for one thrilling adventure. I expected dark and disturbing, what I got was unnaturally tame and boring.

Beautiful Broken Girls is primarily about the mysterious Cillo sisters, Mira and Francesca, who have drowned in a quarry pool cliff. The story is told in the perspective of Ben, the Cillos' neighbor, who had an on-again-off-again secret love affair with Mira, and is now left to investigate the sisters' story through notes left by Mira in the places where Ben touched Mira. Sounds interesting, doesn't it? That's what I believed too, before I came to the realization that I was being CONNED.

The writing is lyrical and even beautiful at times, but for the most part, it was convoluted and unnecessarily detailed. It was a major hurdle for me throughout because there was hardly any dialogue, most of it was description bordering on purple prose. Bland, tasteless commentary on random things and characters in the story lead to nothing actually happening. Most of the book consists of Ben riding around on a bike, punching his friends, and creepily lustng after a dead girl, things that do not exemplify the girls' presence, or the mystery and twisted nature of their death and legacy. There are many thriller/mysteries that exempt themselves from humor or a lightheartedness that I usually enjoy, but these books are excellent in their writing, character depth, and story. *The Walls Around Us* and *All The Rage* are also darker books with a very serious tones, but they are never boring. The emotional, raw, and uncensored story-telling is what makes

them so engrossing. *Beautiful Broken Girls* has a lot of interesting concepts, while diving in we are introduced to Catholic undertones and a *Virgin Suicides*-type mystery, but because of the detached, confusing writing, we never get to see the success of these ideas.

There are two sides to this book — Ben's perspective and the individual sisters' perspective, told in flashbacks. Ben's narration is reminiscent of Clayton in *Thirteen Reasons Why*, which is not a good thing. While Ben's trauma and hurt is somewhat expanded on, it is not enough to make me feel sympathetic toward him and his pain. His character writing was solely based on his slightly unhealthy obsession with Mira and all the angst that comes with it. I liked the idea of a forbidden, secretive romance but Ben's attitude just ruined it for me. His narration otherwise was extremely stale and lacking in any sort of character. There were a few flashes of personality, when he's angry and traumatized and determined, but other than that, his point-of-view was insignificant.

The Cillo sisters were somewhat interesting to me, but I ended up severely disliking them after their... very questionable actions toward the end. They are fairly easy to dislike, barely any personality was uncovered, in fact, it mostly consisted of the words "attractive", "mysterious", "pure", and most dangerous of them all, "religious". My god, they were religious. They are religious and strange to the point of driving you insane, and I would have been okay with this if they were well-written characters. I would say this for their story-line as well, a ton of magical realism and religion was involved, and I wanted it to be executed well. Unfortunately for *Beautiful Broken Girls*, the presentation was all too tame and lazy, I couldn't focus on it.

Another few points I wanted to touch upon were the exclusion of key details that could have lead to plot or character development. Whatever happened to Mr. Falso's storyline? What about Ben's original allegations of the Mr. Cillo abusing his daughters? In the beginning it is stated that Ben was molested by a baseball coach when younger, why was this only brought up vaguely throughout the book and not used to create deeper themes in the storyline? There are so many random events just flying around that are hardly expanded on, these could have been used to propel the plot or development in character. So much wasted potential.

To wrap things up, *Beautiful Broken Girls* failed to send a message, or make any sort of impact. I would say to pass on this one if you were expecting it to excel in character development or formulate a stimulating plot.
