



## Left to Chance

*Amy Sue Nathan*

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No one knows why Teddi Lerner left her hometown, but everyone knows why she's back.

Twelve-year-old Shayna—talented, persistent, and adorable—persuaded "Aunt Tee" to return to Chance, Ohio, to photograph her father's wedding. Even though it's been six years since Shay's mother, Celia, died, Teddi can hardly bear the thought of her best friend's husband marrying someone else. But Teddi's bond with Shay is stronger than the hurt.

Teddi knows it's time to face the consequences of her hasty retreat from family, friends, and, her old flame, but when she looks through her viewfinder, nothing in her small town looks the same. That's when she truly sees the hurt she's caused and—maybe—how to fix it.

After the man she once loved accuses Teddi of forgetting Celia, Teddi finally admits why she ran away, and the guilt she's carried with her. As Teddi relinquishes the distance that kept her safe, she'll discover surprising truths about the people she left behind, and herself. And she'll finally see what she overlooked all along.

## Left to Chance Details

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Author : Amy Sue Nathan

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## From Reader Review Left to Chance for online ebook

### **Piepie says**

Excellent - I loved this book and I didn't want to put it down! Highly recommended.

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### **Sonja Yoerg says**

I love stories about extraordinary characters as much as the next person; it's easy to get caught up in the lives of monied world-travelers, ingenious detectives, or even a good old-fashioned serial killer. But there is a special satisfaction in being pulled into a story about ordinary people, especially those from small towns. Maybe it's because I'm a small town girl myself. Maybe it's because most of us, when it comes down to it, are wonderfully ordinary.

It's not easy to write about small lives but Amy Sue Nathan knows exactly what she is doing and does it extremely well. Teddi, our protagonist, returns to Chance, Ohio, after a six year absence and is reminded, often painfully, of what it is like to live in other people's pockets. Teddi's sense of humor is sharp, her grief over her best friend's death is raw, and her list of regrets is long. Through Teddi's eyes and those of the other nuanced, memorable characters, Nathan weaves a touching, well-paced story. But the real benchmark of any small town story is always its honesty and I'm here to tell you that I believed every word.

Lovingly rendered and generous in spirit, this novel is an absolute pleasure.

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### **Trevor says**

\*I received an ARC in exchange for an honest & unbiased review. Thanks to GoodReads First Reads, St. Martin's Press & Amy Sue Nathan for the opportunity.\*

Teddi Lerner has left her hometown, Chance, Ohio, for reasons unknown. Teddi now resides in California as a wedding photographer. She returns to Chance when her twelve-year-old "niece" Shay, contacts her with news of her father's remarriage & she is asked to take the photos. Shay is the daughter of Celia, Teddi's best friend, who passed away from cancer. Teddi isn't eager to have Miles & Violet as clients, but her love for Shay is stronger. Celia's death still holds a tight grasp on the family, as well as the rest of the residents of Chance. Celia's brother Beck is certainly feeling the hurt- as it's clear he still harbors a grudge over Teddi's departure. Teddi must come to terms with the resentment towards her, including owning up to the mess she made when she left her loved ones behind.

During Teddi's stay in Chance, she attempts to strengthen her bond with Shay, apologize to Beck, deal with her boyfriend Simon, & even reunite with her childhood friend, Cameron. But most of all, Teddi must learn to face her demons after all & explain the true reasons for abandoning Chance. Teddi will also have to make the decision of labeling priorities & defining what is truly important in life.

I really liked Nathan's choice of having Chance be a small town; the townspeople definitely knew what was up & the dialogue felt authentic to the situations. Though I do have to admit, most of the dialogue, especially

in the middle, felt tedious & irrelevant. You know how there's some conversations that fuel the story, pushing the characters further to their destinations? And then there's some conversations that just take up text; not necessarily empty words, but certainly mediocre & don't add much to the story? LEFT TO CHANCE was a bit like the latter. A lot of time was spent setting the scene, a.k.a. spending too much time on describing food/clothing. Nathan tried to invoke heavy emotions & show how the characters were handling Celia's death, but I never really FELT IT. I wish there were more scenes with Shay, because I felt like she still had more to discuss with Teddi.

LEFT TO CHANCE reminds me of a desirable outline sketch- there's lots of potential here, but it falters as the novel progresses. The most important parts- Celia's death & Shay- get overshadowed by the other aspects of Teddi's life. Because these things aren't dealt with to the extent I would have liked, I lost some enjoyment for this. Although the book is only 272 pages, it took me several days to complete because my attention wouldn't hold. I didn't feel invested in any of the characters & by the midway point, I wasn't interested anymore. I'm a bit disappointed that the ending is rushed & is wrapped up with a tidy bow.

LEFT TO CHANCE is a decent domestic read, but barely skims the surface of promised emotional subjects & a novel that I went "auto-pilot" on. (Basically a book that didn't make me question anything or change my perspective.) I can see this becoming a hit later this fall, & is on the lighter side of the genre (though I suppose that varies for each individual), but this just wasn't for me.

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### **Pam Jenoff says**

Have you read any of Amy Nathan's wonderful books? Start with Left to Chance, which is the story of Teddi, a woman who left her hometown years earlier under mysterious circumstances. Teddi returns at the behest of her twelve year old niece, Shay, to photograph the wedding of Shay's father (her mother, and Teddi's sister, died years earlier.) You will root for Teddi as she confronts family and friends, her old love, the truth about the past and herself in this tale of homecoming and second chances. Charming!

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### **Amanda NEVER MANDY says**

\*\*I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.\*\*

I was hoping this book would be a nice light and enjoyable read, something to quickly pass the time and pull my head out of reality for a moment. It was extremely light but not the level of enjoyable I was after. More Hallmark movie that you get up and leave the room on to start a load of laundry and then forget you were even watching a movie to begin with. Maybe you eventually wander back in to finish it or maybe you decide to take a nap and hope something more engaging is on after you wake up.

The writing was decent, the story was basic and it would be perfect for a reader that liked to be quietly entertained without any loss or gain.

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### **Judy Collins says**

Amy Sue Nathan returns following The Good Neighbor and The Glass Wives with **LEFT TO CHANCE** –

can you return home, unchanged?

*“A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.”* – George A. Moore

**Teddi Lerner** left Chance, Ohio years ago. It was not a place for wimps; however, she was on her way, regardless. The place that had haunted her for the past six years. The town she grew up in, and ran from, on the day of Celia’s funeral.

**Teddi is a successful wedding photographer** for Hester Hotels and is called home to photograph the wedding of her best friend’s (Celia) husband, Miles. They had a daughter, Shayna who is now twelve years old. This is the only reason she is back. This is what mattered most.

Everything has changed in the small town. There is also Celia’s brother, Beck. Beck, of course, looked better at thirty-five than at twenty-nine.

**Beck held a grudge.** She did not blame him. But Teddi had allowed herself to believe he would forgive her.

She had always photographed things that grew. Babies, kids, flowers, relationships. Those things also died. She also had forgotten what it was like to be with people who knew things about her besides what she had chosen to tell them.

**Does she know** what true friendships and deep relationships meant? Letting someone in, letting her down, and possibly letting her go.

**From an unexpected friendship,** secrets of the past, guilt, and emotional courage— a warmhearted charming story of love and loss and what it truly means to return home.

**Redemption.** Facing the past and overcoming obstacles. A Hallmark story for those who enjoy happy endings and discovering the truly important things in life.

For fans of Sonja Yoerg, Barbara Claypole White, Patti Callahan Henry, Joanne Demaio, and women's contemporary fiction.

*A special thank you to St. Martin's Press and NetGalley for an advanced reading copy.*

JDCMustReadBooks

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### **Susanne Strong says**

3.5 Stars.\* (rounded up)

Teddi hightailed it out of Chance 6 years ago. She left in the middle of her best friend Celia’s funeral and gave no explanation. Since then she has never looked back. In her mind, she didn’t have a choice. Now, she is asked to return by twelve-year-old Shay who has always considered Teddi her “Aunt Tee.” Teddi is a famous wedding photographer and Shay wants her to photograph her dad, Mile’s wedding. Mile’s first wife, was Teddi’s best friend: the one and only Celia. The idea of returning fills Teddi with dread, seeing Miles, seeing Beck, Celia’s brother and Teddi’s former boyfriend, who she abandoned without a word. Not to

mention, returning to the place filled with reminders of Celia, her soul sister. Chance and those she left behind is something she has never wanted to face, yet now, she has no choice, for Celia's daughter has called her home and it's not the reason she thinks.

As we all know, there are consequences for every action that we take and this is something that Teddi learns very quickly upon her return to Chance. Those she left behind give her lots to think about upon her return to her hometown, things she would have preferred to keep buried, yet what Teddi discovers is that sometimes she too, has to take a chance, on life, friendship and love as well.

I found "Left to Chance" to be an endearing, quick, easy read. It was a book about friendship, love, loss and letting go. I admit that it left me wanting however, as the ending wasn't what I was hoping for - but perhaps that's just me. It was ok and I think many readers would be happy with it, but I was hoping it would go another way. I would however recommend it and would definitely read Amy Sue Nathan's other novels.

Thank you to NetGalley, St. Martin's Press and Amy Sue Nathan for an ARC of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Published on NetGalley, Goodreads, Amazon, Twitter and Instagram on 12.13.17.

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### **Theresa Alan says**

What I liked about this novel was the premise: photographer Teddi Lerner fled her small town of Chance, Ohio, six years earlier and landed a job photographing weddings around the world, sometimes for the rich and famous. However, she always kept in touch with her best friend's daughter, who is twelve when Teddi returns home to photograph Shay's father's second wedding.

Shay is the only person Teddi kept in touch with, however. Teddi's own parents move around the country in a camper, so her dead best friend's kid is the only one she texts and FaceTime's with in Chance. It's difficult for her to come back because she has to face the people she hurt by leaving so abruptly. She also has to face the death of her friend up close instead of from a distance.

What I didn't love about this book was that I felt the author at times was reaching to evoke emotion that, for me, did not succeed. There was a little too much swallowing and gulping, thump-in-throat sort of stuff.

Nathan does do a good job of portraying what it's like to be unwed nonmother trying to understand and navigate the world of twelve-old-girls.

Thanks to NetGalley for the opportunity to review this novel.

For more of my reviews, please visit: <http://www.theresaalan.net/blog>

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### **Kristy says**

After six years, Teddi Learner returns to her small hometown of Chance, Ohio to photograph the wedding of her best friend's husband, Miles. Miles is getting remarried after the death of his first wife, Celia. Celia and Miles had one daughter together, Shayna, who is now twelve. Teddi and Shay had a somewhat superficial relationship after Celia's death--a yearly visit in Chicago, Skype calls, etc. But Shay's now nearly a teenager and she's personally asked Teddi to come to town--a place she's never set foot in since her beloved best friend passed away. When she arrives, she finds Chance has grown, and so has Shay, who is struggling with her father's remarriage and fitting in within her teen friend circle. Further, Teddi's memories of Celia are as strong as ever, and so are her feelings for Celia's brother, Beck, whom she was seeing when she fled town after (okay, pretty much during) Celia's funeral. Teddi has a new life now, photographing weddings all over the country for Hester Hotels. She left Chance behind and never looked back. But now that she's here, she can't help but notice all (and who) she left.

I enjoy picking up novels like this sometime because they let me indulge in my Lifetime / Hallmark movie side (I'm a sucker for those, especially at Christmas time). This book was an excellent diversion and while I certainly could predict some areas, it surprised me in others.

*Nathan gives us some great characters, particularly Teddi and Shay.* Teddi is complicated and a little annoying, at times, but she comes across as realistically human and flawed. Her love for Celia is incredibly strong and you can feel her loss and heartache come across the pages. The novel is a real testament to female friendship. At times you want to push or prod her a bit, but she's also stronger than she thinks. As for Shay, my heart often broke for the poor girl, struggling at the age of being between a girl and a teenager, with the added difficulty of having lost her mom.

*Nathan also does a good job of portraying the eclectic cast of characters in small town Chance,* with some good foils popping up for Teddi. Some of my particular favorite appearances included Teddi's cousin, Maggie, and childhood friend, Josie. Because it's a small place, Miles' wedding is the talk of the town, and we see how it brings up some bitterness and long held issues among some, including the immediate family.

Overall, I enjoyed this one. The hardest part was some melodrama in the plot and theme, which got to be a little too much at times. Some things seemed to be blown a bit out of proportion and there can be a lot of different plot threads going on at times. However, *there are some really lovely and powerful moments and some incredibly funny ones*--much of which stem from the strength of the characters. There's a bit of a picture perfect ending, but not the one I expected. *This was a sweet, touching tale in many ways* and exactly the read I needed at this point in time. 3.5+ stars.

You can read my review of Nathan's novel **THE GOOD NEIGHBOR** here.

I received a copy of this novel from the publisher and Netgalley (thank you!) in return for an unbiased review. It is available everywhere as of 11/21/2017.

Blog ~ Twitter ~ Facebook ~ Google+ ~ Instagram

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### **Susan Peterson says**

"It had been stupid to think that tying a knot in the past would stop it from fraying into the future." Teddi Lerner left her hometown of Chance, Ohio six years ago, without saying goodbye, on the day of her best friend's funeral. Her homecoming is less-than welcoming, her hometown has changed, and the people she

left behind are hurt and confused by her disappearance. I loved Teddi Lerner, and watching her struggle and evolve throughout this story had me smiling at times, but also put tears in my eyes. This story is poignant, heart-warming and humorous, as it deals with friendship, loss, and returning home. Left to Chance is a book that readers will find hard to put down, a book that will leave dishes unwashed and floors unswept...written with honesty and love...with true-to-life characters and emotions...a story that will capture your heart.

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### **DJ Sakata says**

Favorite Quotes:

I sashayed down Lark wearing my light blue sundress, as if I were the star of an elaborate tampon commercial. All that was missing was the voiceover.

To me, Cousin Maggie had been like a fairy godmother in sensible shoes. She seemed to know what I needed, and when I needed it. It was Cousin Maggie who handed me Are You There God? It's Me Margaret two months before I got my period when I was eleven. Cousin Maggie also gave me my first real camera for Hanukkah when I was fourteen. "You can make the world look however you want it to look with this," she'd said.

At least at a wedding there were drinks and hors d'oeuvres. When alone at a wedding I talked to the bartender, sipped cocktails, nibbled my way through the mashed potato bar. Maybe funerals should have cocktail hours too. Mini latkes with applesauce. Kosher wine to drown your sorrows. Monogrammed tissues. I'd draw the line at funeral favors.

I flinched to stop myself from looking for my best friend. How I wished that bittersweet was still a term best left for chocolate.

My Review:

I fell right into this cleverly written and delightfully engaging tale packed with witty humor and the irreverent and snarky inner musings of a woman returning to her small-town and attempting to atone for her cowardly and less than stellar exit six years prior. Poor Teddi, despite her best intentions she was forever on the back-foot and coming up a bit short. The storyline was superbly crafted and the writing was cunningly amusing yet also poignant and keenly insightful. The narrative was vividly detailed with humorous and revealing observations that kept me smirking. I adored these flawed yet appealing characters, they plucked at my curiosity and kept me intensely interested and in need of knowing every little thing about them. Amy Sue Nathan has a new fangirl.

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### **Laura Rash says**

Nothing like getting back to your roots & regrounding yourself. This is the theme of this book with a cadence that makes it seem an effortless read.

I won this early copy in a Goodreads giveaway

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### **Ellen Wiseman says**

I stayed up WAY too late reading this because I couldn't wait to find out what happened! A touching, beautifully written novel about grief, friendship and love in its many forms. I loved it!

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### **Amy says**

This was my first book by Nathan but I enjoyed it so much that I'll be adding her earlier work to my TBR. There was something so natural and authentic about her writing, I was almost immediately invested in Teddi's life and that of the residents of Chance, Ohio. This was full of poignant moments and plenty of life lessons that stick with you long after you turn the final page.

Teddi doesn't want to go back home but there's no way she can say no to Shay. When I say she left six years ago I actually mean she fled, leaving everyone she knew and loved because she was in so much pain and had no idea how to face it. Running away was easier. Her homecoming is awkward to say the least, the only person who seems truly happy to see her is Shay. I loved that Teddi's life was far from perfect, it was totally messy but she was finally willing to face her issues head on. She was brave, honest and she had a terrific sense of humor.

This book had it all, a fantastic small town setting, characters that felt like friends or people that you would want as friends, and wonderful, touching lessons about friendship, loss, love and life. It all had so much warmth, tenderness and heart behind it and I thoroughly enjoyed every second I spent getting to know these lovely characters.

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### **Sue says**

I have loved all of Amy Sue Nathan's books but this one is my favorite. Even though you can't really go home again and find life like you left it, you can learn to accept what's there and embrace it for what it was when you were there.

Teddi ran away from Chance, Ohio, right after Celia's, her best friend, funeral. She didn't tell anyone that she was leaving or where she was going. After she left she became a famous wedding photographer and tried to keep her memories out of her life - except for 12 year old Shayna, the daughter of her best friend. Teddi saw Shayna a few times a year but always in her locations, she never went back to Chance until Shayna asked her to come back and take the pictures at her dad's wedding. Teddi goes back very reluctantly but really isn't prepared for the animosity that Celia's family and many people in the town feel about her. As Teddi navigates her way through the changes in the town and the people in the town, will she be able to come to terms with the hurts that she's caused and to learn to embrace the town and her friends?

The characters in this town are so well done that you feel like they are your friends and this is a town that you'd like to live in. I would love to sit down and have a cup of coffee with Teddi and Josie. I laughed with Teddi and I must admit, I shed some tears over her pain at losing her best friend. This is a fantastic book about friendship and learning to accept the past. I highly recommend this book.

Thanks to the publisher for a copy of this book to read and review. All opinions are my own.

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