



Before I Go to Sleep

S.J. Watson

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As I sleep, my mind will erase everything I did today. I will wake up tomorrow as I did this morning. Thinking I'm still a child. Thinking I have a whole lifetime of choice ahead of me...

Memories define us.

So what if you lost yours every time you went to sleep? Your name, your identity, your past, even the people you love- all forgotten overnight. And the one person you trust may be telling you only half the story.

Welcome to Christine's life.

Before I Go to Sleep Details

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Mohammed Arabey says

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“We’re constantly changing facts, rewriting history to make things easier, to make them fit in with our preferred version of events. We do it automatically. We invent memories. Without thinking. If we tell ourselves something happened often enough we start to believe it, and then we can actually remember it.”

okay now the movie oh my freaking lord !!! they ruined it , they ruined everything !!who ever made that movie i can tell that he didn't even read the book , i love nicol Kidman but the movie wasn't that great it was boring really !

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## F says

I Loved this book!

Such an unusual and sometimes frustrating (but in the good way) way to tell a story.

Straight into the story & suspense.

THAT ENDING

Could. Not. Put. Down.

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## Emily May says

*“What are we, if not an accumulation of our memories?”*

I've had my eye on this book since before it was released and last night I decided it was finally time. I really wanted a psychological thriller that would keep me guessing. And did it deliver? Well, let's just say I was up until 2am, partly because this book is unputdownable, and partly because it's a little hard to turn the light off and go to sleep afterwards.

Before I Go to Sleep is about a woman called Christine who wakes up every morning with no memory of who she is. Through labeled pictures and the help of her husband, every day she pieces together her life and learns of the accident that made her this way. But then a visit from a mysterious doctor leads her towards the private journal she has been writing to herself - a journal that tells her things might not be as they seem and the one person she should be able to trust could be lying.

Personally, **I found this book so thrilling**. I loved almost everything about it. Christine was a complex and interesting character - I was pulled so far inside her mind that the novel's events literally made my heart pound. I love how creepy the novel is and I very much enjoyed almost but not quite figuring out the reveals at the end.

For me, the best kind of thrillers are those where the story is strong enough that it isn't ruined by an astute reader. In other words - if you guess what is going to happen, it doesn't *really* matter. And I think this is one of those books. Towards the end, I started to figure things out, but rather than being disappointed, it made me hang on the author's every word in anticipation and horror.

Also, the reveals are multi-layered. So there is not just one big twist/reveal, but many things to discover over the course of the book. I like this much more.

The biggest complaints from people who didn't like this book are a) it is as realistic as The Time Traveler's Wife and b) it gets a little repetitive around the middle. Both are true, but neither bothered me. I'll tell you why.

The book gets a little repetitive when Christine must first read her journal every day to understand

everything. The book obviously doesn't go into details each time, but I can understand why people didn't like it. I, on the other hand, didn't mind. In fact, I thought it dragged out the suspense even more and had me mentally freaking out over what would come next. **I was never bored for a second.**

As for being realistic, the author manufactures a fictional type of amnesia in order for the story to work - an amnesia in which Christine remembers almost nothing of her short term memory, but is able to retain her short term memory for the length of her waking hours. It is reset overnight. But, to be honest, I absolutely love reading about weird rare illnesses, particularly psychological ones. And there are so many strange, unbelievable illnesses out there that it wasn't difficult for me to suspend disbelief and imagine that a rare amnesia of this sort could exist.

If you think, like me, you could overlook the issues above, I don't see why you wouldn't like this. Very different, very unsettling, and very enjoyable.

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## Joe says

I only read reviews on Goodreads after I have read a book. I do this because after reading those reviews I wonder if I have read the same book as those reviewing it. Most start by giving a somewhat lengthy explanation of the plot of the book. Why? tell me what you thought. I know what it is about. I want to know what you thought of it. At this point I get really crazy because the opinions almost always are positive. I wish these people were my high school English teachers. I would have gotten A's for anything I wrote. This book has one thing going for it- a clever premise. After that it sinks quickly with an annoying narrator, bad writing, and a predictable ending. I used to wonder what many people get out of reading bad books. I now know. They think they are good books. Good luck. That is why James Patterson is making a fortune.

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## Alex says

I think I tend to judge books more harshly when I listen to them because I can't skim the text or skip parts that bore me. BUT I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE THAT'S JUST MORE HONEST.

Before I Go to Sleep is a highly improbable novel that's practically a fantasy. A very slow, drawn-out, horribly written fantasy. Christine, the protagonist, wakes up in a strange bed with a strange man. He tells her he's her husband, Ben, and she has amnesia -- she cannot form short-term memories. Think Memento. Hey, in fact, this book is just like that movie! Determined to figure out the mystery of her past, Christine sees a doctor in secret and keeps a day-to-day journal. That's pretty much all you need to know.

The bulk of the book is Christine rereading her journal. Which is just ENDLESS accounts about how confusing and terrifying things are. Ugh, we get the point. Perhaps that would be realistic, but it's hardly INTERESTING for the reader. Throughout the book, one finds out (as Christine does) that her husband is lying to her about how she got amnesia (she was attacked; he tells her it's a car accident), her son (he says they have no kids; they had a son), her best friend moving away (nope), etc etc. Obviously something is creepily wrong, and yet Christine is like, "Hmmm. GUESS I'LL JUST STAY HERE WITH THIS CREEPY LYING DUDE."

We also discover that Christine was having an affair when she was attacked. WHICH IS ALSO WHEN I CALLED IT THAT BEN WAS ACTUALLY THE DUDE SHE WAS SLEEPING WITH. I didn't quite know how that was going to work, but when Claire (her best friend) was all, "GIRL THAT AIN'T BEN", I was like, "WHAT REALLY YOU WENT THERE, YOU FUCKER???"

BASICALLY, the dude Christine was having her affair with was super obsessed with her to the point of LUNATIC CRAZY and when she tried to break the whole thing off, he went BATSHIT and TRIED TO DROWN HER IN A HOTEL BATHROOM. Then, because her memory was so shoddy and awful, her loving husband Ben (apparently in this world "loving" means that he's a handsome successful vegan architect) is all like, "I CAN'T HANDLE THIS. I MUST LEAVE BECAUSE I LOVE YOU TOO MUCH AND THIS I AM CAUSING YOU SO MUCH DISTRESS. I'M GOING TO TAKE OUR SON AND LEAVE YOU IN THIS REHABILITATION CENTER." So then Crazy Dude, who's been staring at her through windows and shit this whole time, swoops in and...manages to convince the staff that HE's Ben (????????????) and is all, "YUP I'M TOTES BEN. I'M GOING TO TAKE MY WIFE HOME NOW." So she's been living with CRAZY UNHINGED DUDE this WHOLE TIME and he's been masquerading as her husband!

I can't really go into how much I thought the plot sucked (it did; a lot, in case you were wondering) because my brain might implode. But one thing I do want to vent about is: HOW IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE TO GET SOMEONE OUT OF A REHAB CENTER BY PRETENDING TO BE THEIR HUSBAND???? DO PEOPLE NOT CHECK RECORDS ANYMORE???? WHAT IS THIS SHIT??? DO REHAB CENTERS JUST LET ANYONE WALTZ OFF WITH CRITICAL AMNESIACS???? WTF????

That aside, MAN, this writing was AWFUL. The audiobook narrator did not help. She had this grating voice and whenever she read Claire, I wanted to throw my iPod out my car window. Christine is a HORRIBLE character. I mean, I was SO SHOCKED that the author was a man (haha, jk, not at all)! Once again, we have a female protagonist with no autonomy. And this time it's because her horrible cheating made it so! Ladies, no sex for you outside marriage even though dudes do it all the time, because your lover will probably try to asphyxiate you on a tile floor and then stalk you for years and years only to kidnap you and keep you hostage with him in his love shack. ISN'T THAT ALWAYS THE CASE?

Also, everything was SO SLOW. The fight scene at the end when she's trying to escape from Ben/Mike and she's all like, "I should've probably hit him again..." when she FINALLY manages to wrench herself free from his violent attack and you're like, "NO SHIT SHERLOCK" and then he GRABS HER AGAIN AND THROWS HER TO THE FLOOR. COULD'VE JUST BEAMED HIM IN THE HEAD AGAIN WITH THAT STOOL AND SAVED US ALL A LOT OF TIME, YOU WORTHLESS EXCUSE FOR A CHARACTER. Oh, this is a good segue into the gratuitous violence of the book. All the scenes with violence in them (few, but they are pretty intense) are UGGGGGGH. It was like, "and then I cracked my head against the radiator!" "and then he shoved me to the floor and my arm twisted behind my back!" "and then his hands were around my throat and I couldn't breathe!" I was SQUIRMING on the train. I CANNOT DEAL. And, I know why this book had to be narrated in first-person present, but IT WAS SO AWFUL I CANNOT EVEN.

Bee tee dubs, the character of Claire makes NO SENSE to me at all. She's supposed to be Christine's BFF and she just doesn't talk to or try to see her anymore? WOULDN'T THAT BE A LITTLE SUSPICIOUS???? If my best friend got AMNESIA and couldn't remember anything, I WOULD BE THERE EVERY SINGLE FUCKING DAY. EVEN if I slept with her stupid husband, I would NEVER lose contact with her. CLAIRE, YOU ARE OFFICIALLY THE WORST FRIEND EVER. CONGRATULATIONS.



Dear Adam -- you suck as a son. Dear Ben -- you suck at still being in love with Christine and letting some dude pretend to be you to steal her out of the clinic. This book is really just a presentation of THE WORST PEOPLE TO HAVE IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR MEMORY.

Congrats, SJ Watson. I'm so glad your first book is a PILE OF SHIT.

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### **Mandy says**

Omg! I am totally speechless. This book was amazing. It had a great plot about a woman who has amnesia and cannot remember her memories from day to day. She begins to keep a journal and remember certain events in her life. From there the book is amazing! I definitely recommend this! If you want a page turning, psychologically thrilling, fall out of your chair book - read this!!!!!! So damn good!

Side note: I've got to see the film!!!!!!

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### **Carol says**

#### **DO NOT TRUST BEN, but OMG who to trust?**

**BEFORE I GO TO SLEEP** begins with a daily existence of the creepy unknown and continues with amazing suspense each day throughout the entire story as amnesiac Christine unravels the mystery of her past.

As bits and pieces of her memories unfold, the shocking truth and terrifying moments of "*the accident*" come together to disclose a great twist within a unique storyline.

A bit far-fetched here and there, but who cares.....super entertaining! Could Not Put It Down!

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### **Mo Shah says**

Argh. What a frustrating book. I want someone else I know to read it so I can discuss it with them, to see if they agree with my conclusion. Sarah, you should read it and let me know what you think.

I really really liked this book in the beginning. The concept, while not strictly novel (I can recall maybe half a dozen stories where amnesia like this features prominently) is utilized to great effect. The mystery is initially built quite satisfactorily, and you're drawn in as a reader.

Fairly soon, however, the concept frays a bit and you have to suspend a little bit of disbelief to get through the book. There were holes that I saw - not insurmountable ones, but still distracting. I saw the ending (I won't ruin it) coming from a mile away, only because you know with a book like this it *\*needs\** a twist of some sort, and there was only one particular twist that made sense. Even so, the ending was a let down, because what should have been something emotionally laden was handled like an afterthought.

With a bit of editing and some revision, this could have been a much more engaging book. The first half works really well, and then it sort of deflates for me. Too bad it didn't finish as strong.

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## **Raeleen Lemay says**

### **Read for Book Riot's 2017 Read Harder Challenge: #2 Read a Debut Novel**

I feel like this book would be a great introduction to the thriller genre for somebody who hasn't read any yet, but now that I've read a few great thrillers, this didn't quite live up to the hype. The general plot for this book is super interesting, but in execution it was a bit weak, and not nearly as suspenseful as I was hoping it would be. This book is basically only like 15% thriller, and the rest is just... other. Not that that's a bad thing, but I was hoping for more suspense. I feel like the movie handled the big twist better than the book did, and the pacing of the movie was also better. Overall, this was a very MEH read for me, but I'm glad I finally read it!

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## **Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says**

I can overlook a lot of bogus-tude for a good story, but this one exceeded my implausibility tolerance threshold. The analytical portion of my brain wants to give this an even lower rating, but it did hold my interest, so I have to be fair. It has a sinister edge that keeps you reading---at least until you start figuring everything out long before it's revealed.

If I listed all the laughable incongruities and convenient coincidences, I'd ruin it for people who just want an absorbing escape read. If you're capable of turning off the eye-rolling, "hey, no way!" part of your mind, you'll probably love it.

S.J. Watson, I wince in your general direction. I scoff at your predictability. But hey, 'gratties on the movie option.

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## **Luffy says**

I'm astounded that *Before I Go to Sleep* isn't one of those books that raked in 4.00 stars on average. It's so damn good and the suspense is unrelenting towards the end.

Unfortunately for me, the epub file that I downloaded contained too small letters. Adjusting them whenever I chose to alternate between books was a pain but it was still doable and worth it... Christine is an amnesiac who is trying to relive her past. The book begins slowly and the tension escalates slowly.

Christine is not alone. She has a husband, and keeps a diary of her thoughts. The book's chapters are from multiple times. I thought this format was in itself overplayed in books, but it didn't annoy me enough to dock one star from my rating of the book. I recommend this book heartily.

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## Cassy says

Sometimes I get flipped around while I sleep. My head ends up where my feet should be. As I wake up and wave my hand in the air for the nightstand, the freak out begins. *Where the heck am I?* It only lasts a few seconds before I figure it out, but the depth of my disorientation during those few seconds is always surprising to me.

So, the book and I were off to a good start when, on the page one, Christine wakes up confused in a strange room. Unfortunately for her, it is not as simple as seeing the room in reverse. Every day she has to reacquaint herself with her husband, her house, the person in the mirror. Christine has a form of amnesia wherein, after an accident, she lost the ability retain memories past a day. As Christine starts keeping a journal to help her remember, she discovers some unsettling discrepancies between what her husband tells her, what her doctor knows of her history, and her own reemerging memories.

I bought this book at a favorite indie bookstore, Murder by the Book, where the staff is super knowledgeable and enthusiastic. No matter what book I carry to the cashier, two or three people behind the counter will share their favorite aspect of the book and start rattling off other books in the genre that I have to read. You don't even have to ask them. They just start talking.

When I bought this one to the check-out, there was a dead silence. "What? Does it suck?" They started grinning. "Is it so bad it's good?" Crickets. "Talk to me!" Finally, someone took pity on me. He explained the ending is so amazing and unexpected that they all agreed to keep their mouths shut and not spoil it for anyone. What a jerk.

If you read the book expecting a mind-blowing ending, you might be disappointed. The whole time I was reading, my mind was running on all cylinders trying to solve the mystery. I was coming up with crazy ideas – I mean really outlandish ideas. *The aliens wiped her memory after she stumbled on a plot to steal all the antelopes in Uganda. Then they disguised one of their own as her husband to spy on her next door neighbor!* Stop looking at me like that. The guy at the store said it would be totally unexpected.

When I finally got to the end, I was let down by how simultaneously unrealistic and ordinary it was. Honestly, it reminded me of another book, (view spoiler). My recommendation: read with more tempered expectations for the conclusion. Even if it was not the best ending of my life, it wasn't horrible either. I just ruined it for myself with the hype.

Having written all that, I enjoyed this book! I suggest you focus Christine's *journey* throughout the book. I was in sync with her as she vacillates between trust and suspicion toward every character – including herself. Plus my husband was out of town. Even if a book is only remotely creepy, there is something about reading it in an empty house that makes it seem like the scariest thing ever (see *The Little Stranger*). I also didn't have any plans that weekend, which meant I could read this book in two long sessions and get wrapped up in everything. If I had read the book without those two conditions, the rating may have dropped to three stars.

You know what is coming next: my report from an event with the author!

Right off the bat, Watson admitted he had not done many of these events. He advised us that if we heard a tremor in his voice, it was not his British accent – it was jet lag mixed with terror. Aww! I loved him already.

Watson talked about how he had a "real" job testing children's hearing. When he decided to focus more on

his writing, he took step backwards in his health services career by taking a more junior job and cutting back his hours. What a bold move! He was inspired to write this book after reading an obituary about man who, after a surgery to cure his epilepsy, lost the ability to make memories.

One of the audience members put him on the spot and asked about comparisons to the movies, *Memento* and *50 First Dates*. The lady was very nice, but everyone knew the underlying bite: did Watson rip them off? I thought he handled himself well. He admitted seeing *Memento* years and years ago. And he learned of and watched *50 First Dates* only after hearing it mentioned so much when his book was published. He pointed out a key difference between Christine and Drew Barrymore character's predicaments: Drew's story was set fairly soon after the accident. Her loved ones could pretend everything was normal, because she was still young. Christine had aged a couple decades. It wasn't possible to keep up such a charade with all the wrinkles on her face. He also spoke of how he intentionally avoided all amnesia-related stories as he wrote.

Let's review. Set aside time and read it alone. Savor Christine's psychological roller coaster. Don't stress too much about solving the mystery. Voila! You're in for a sweet summer thriller.

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## Jason says

My negative attitude is a ruse, I swear it. I am such a positive little outlooker. Nearly every book I read starts off with five stars in my head. It barely has to earn anything; it just has to hold on to what it started with. But wow, this book fell off a cliff or something! What the hell happened??

First let's back the truck out of these plot holes and start from the beginning.

The premise of this psychological thriller is fairly straightforward. The first person narrator has amnesia. More specifically, she has a mythical combination of several different forms of amnesia which happen to *co-exist simultaneously at the exact same time*. Maybe that should have been my first clue. She has retrograde amnesia as a result of a mysterious traumatic episode that occurred years earlier, and on top of this she has anterograde amnesia which affects her episodic memory: she cannot retain anything new. My second clue that this book would be an eye roller is that she has a short-term memory capacity of many hours—essentially an entire day's worth—and it is erased only when she falls asleep, which flagrantly stretches the definition of anterograde amnesia by a large margin.<sup>1</sup>

So this unreliable narrator with her unreliable memory is trying to piece together the details of her life while basically having to start from scratch every day. I love the idea of this. I love the idea that without memory retention, one cannot build experiences and without experiences, he cannot forge interpersonal bonds with others, which means he cannot develop relationships or attain any kind of emotional maturity or love. He cannot even experience the feeling of anticipation because it would require a preexisting sense of *future* combined with a knowledge of the past, both of which are conspicuously absent when you have to be reminded every morning that you have amnesia to begin with. There is no future, there is no past, there is no anticipation of anything. It is only the here and now. Because of my interest in this I was able to suspend my beliefs a bit regarding the nuances of the narrator's form of amnesia.

Still, Watson manages to muck it all up. The narrator's sense of mistrust, confusion, and paranoia are there, but the frustration of her existence is glossed over at each subsequent sunrise for the sake of plot progression. And the ending, OH GOD THE ENDING. It devolves so quickly to predictable *Sleeping with the*

*Enemy*—style fare that all enthusiasm for the psychological part of the story is lost. Truly, I think this could have been a decent novel, I really do. Watson's clichéd structure, though, leaves too much to be desired and the book simply does not live up to its potential.

<sup>1</sup>After writing this review, I came across a blog post by the author who sort of corroborates my assertion that the narrator's form of anterograde amnesia is somewhat of a fabrication. *Sort of*.

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## **Lou says**

**June 15th 2am 2011**

I am writing this down in my journal

I must do this otherwise I fear tomorrow I might not remember anything.

Anything about the book I read today or about me or my wife, well she says she is.

I woke up this morning and my eyes were cast upon a striking beautiful woman in an even more striking body wearing nice lingerie that fits like a glove.

I have no idea at that moment who she is, she says she's my wife but I don't remember being married! I am trying to piece together my life.

All this is too much to muster I have been told I was in an accident I had fallen over an egg and banged my head. Strange but I don't remember this, this is what she my wife tells me.

I need to write this in my oh so important journal otherwise I will run through the same routine again and not recollect her or the egg.

Oh yes that book before I forget this book has inspired me to write more into this journal as the female protagonist is in same situation as me. Her story is ever so more gripping, its tense I am almost glued to the pages her quest is heart warming and heartbreaking I felt tears of joy and sadness on the completion of her story. The story is in the first-person narrative and flows in a visceral fashion. They say it can be cured what we have if we piece together our past and write, I hope so.

The story was something fresh and different well worth the read. When I wake up tomorrow I must remember on reading this journal that I have to share these thoughts and write a review.

Review also featured on my webpage >here and also

Watch SJ Watson on Richard and Judy book club here

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