



## Somewhere to Begin

*Mika Jolie*

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## **Somewhere to Begin** Mika Jolie

A runaway bride. A broken warrior.

Dutiful. Subservient. Perfect. Colbie Bennington has been trained from a young age to be obedient. But walking down the aisle with purple welts on her forearm was never a part of her dream wedding.

Away from the chaos of her life, she's looking for a fresh start. Her quiet and mysterious landlord isn't part of the plan. But his hard-muscled body and smoldering smiles are difficult to ignore.

Too trapped in a mental war to be at peace and too damaged to be at war, romance is the last thing on Navy Seal, Zander Serrano's mind.

Colbie is a wounded bird.

Everything he should stay away from.

Yet, for the first time since returning from war, he feels emotion, hot all-consuming.

Two broken souls.

Each with their own scars.

The attraction is undeniable. Unexpected.

Will they heal each other?

Or destroy themselves beyond repair?

## **Somewhere to Begin Details**

Date : Published September 20th 2016

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Author : Mika Jolie

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Genre : Romance, Contemporary Romance, Sociology, Abuse, War, Military Fiction

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# From Reader Review Somewhere to Begin for online ebook

**Moriah says**

*\*This review can also be found here on A Leisure Moment\**

*\*\*I received an e-copy of this book in exchange for an honest review\*\**

Runaway bride? Yes, please! I love weddings. I love looking at wedding photos, going to weddings, feeling the love in the air—but that's not how Colbie's story began. Colbie ran from the day that was supposed to be the happiest day of her life, and I had to know why. The cover initially drew me in (ehem, I love wedding photos, remember?), but I wanted to know what happened next. Where'd she run to, who found her, and where her story go after that?

I had really high expectations for this book because of the runaway bride factor. Some of those expectations were met, but not all of them. I liked Colbie when I met her. Who wouldn't like a girl that can rock a pair of chucks with a wedding dress? She was sweet and kind, and basically anything that you could want in a main character. However, I wanted a little bit more. At times, Colbie was almost too perfect. Sure, she was running away from her problems, but I couldn't blame her. If I were in her shoes, I would run away, too, even if I did get as far as the altar. She had her faults, yes, and that's one of the reasons that I liked her mother. There were times when Colbie was around her parents that I wanted to slap some sense into her distant mother, but I also got where she was coming from. The whole idea of the book was for Colbie to find herself after leaving an abusive relationship, but she didn't act like she wanted to heal at times. Still, her love of reading and all things literature and her friendship with Delia and Paige made up for the moments where she wasn't the best in my eyes.

The story began with war—the traumatic event that left Zander Serrano with an amputated leg. His growth was more gradual. He started off cold and distant, and slowly started to become someone new because of Colbie and tried to get past some of his internal scars. I liked that he wasn't perfect, and I guess it could be assumed that he balanced out Colbie's near perfectness. He wasn't my favorite male lead, but I did enjoy what he brought to the table, as far as the story as a whole was concerned.

The romance started almost instantaneously. So if you're into insta-love—or more like insta-lust—then snatch this one up. The time in the story seemed to fly by. That could be because I read the book so fast, most of it in one day, or because time wasn't really discussed. It sounds nit-picky, but did the seasons change? Is it sweater weather? I knew she was wearing a summer dress, but according to a random timetable that's mentioned briefly in the inner dialogue, three months had passed. Anyway, I wanted a little more concerning the emotional connection the couple had. Their physical attraction was undeniable, but the emotional stuff they talked about didn't seem as evident. By the end I did get how they fit as a couple, though, and liked how things turned out.

If you're one of those people—\*cough\* me \*cough\*—that loves weddings, a second chance at love, and new adult literature, you should give this one a gander. It takes place in Princeton, and I was itching to hop on a plane to New Jersey just so I could see the town. Also, I would love to know what happened with some of the secondary characters and wouldn't mind getting their stories. While it wasn't my favorite

contemporary romance, I did enjoy it and had to finish it, and I think you will, too.

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### **? Jeri's Book Attic ? the Romance Bibliophile ? says**

The first maybe 20% of the story of Somewhere to Begin (Poison & Wine series #1) by Mika Jolie felt a little “bumpy” to me which made it a little bit more difficult for me to engage with the story.

But at around 25% the story started to take off at a reasonable pace and the story flow was steady and good until the end. I liked how the characters developed together with the story.

At times I felt that Zander was a little too reluctant but I got where he was coming from – Colbie on the other hand was a little more difficult – but once I had a closer look at her parents – well lets say. She turned out great DESPITE the place she came from.

Both have to deal with a lot of issues from their past before they can even dare to attempt to think about a future. I liked the secondary characters that brought a lot of charm to the story. Sometimes it felt as if they were carrying the leading characters to the place where they were supposed to be.

This author has a great way to approach the story and keep it real for the reader.

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### **Ka'leneReads says**

Really GoodRead!

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### **1-Click Addict Support Group says**

Colbie and Zander's story captured my attention right from the beginning and refused to let go until the very last word! Two broken souls with scars, some external but many internal, had me falling in love with their

tenacity to live life.

Zander feels like he's in a living hell and, as hard as he tries, he can't seem to make it out of it until he literally collides with Colbie. She is his saving grace, his second chance at life, his way to redeem and forgive himself. I can only imagine everything Zander has gone through with his SEALs. Despite surviving, he's lived with the pain of losing his brothers and reliving the nightmares on a daily basis.

Colbie's nightmare came from the one that was supposed to love, cherish & protect her. Though I have never gone through that experience, I've seen someone close to me go through it and it was heartbreaking. When Colbie makes up her mind to leave that situation, she does it on her own with no help and support from her family and that just pissed me off!!

As Colbie and Zander's lives intertwine, I got to see Colbie flourish to become the beautiful person she is meant to be. Zander is a bit more on the rough side, but Colbie helped him to see that he was worth more than what he valued himself. Zander helping Colbie see that she no longer has to run and hide from her past because he will always be there for her was just beautiful. I must say that Zander's brother Max had me cracking up! He made sure to give Zander a hard time and a run for his money!!

Seeing their friendship flourish was beautiful, but seeing their love grow and trump everything that was thrown at them was just breathtaking. Be prepared to laugh, cry, swoon and fall in love with Zander and Colbie! ~ Kara, 5 Beautiful Stars

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## KathyAnne says

### **"I'd much rather have someone stand by my side as I save myself"**

Yes!! This one line won the entire book for me. It sends a strong message to the reader that healing comes from within ourselves. Other people can be a catalyst in our journey to healing but YOU have to do the work. This is something that I personally believe in so it really struck a chord and had me totally invested in Colbie's journey to healing herself.

That is what Colbie and Zander were for each other. A catalyst or support for one another so they could find a way to heal and finally come to realize they were both deserving of so much more than what they were settling for due to their tragic experiences.

Colbie is moving on from an abusive relationship and parents that care more about their social standing than their daughters well being. So proud of her walking out the way she did! It's never too late. Sometimes we have to just take a stand and finally put ourselves first and put the expectations of others away. This is not always so easy to do, it takes courage. And I was proud of Colbie for finding the strength to do what she had to do to start a new life for herself.

Zander is suffering from PTSD and the loss of part of a leg. He is a broken man and has many scars both inside and out. Colbie quite literally crashes into Zander's life when he saved her from a car crash and decided to stick by her side. It was like they both came into each others lives at just the perfect moment, when they were both in need of a little help to start their lives anew.

Another quote that truly resonated with me:

**"Every scar earned should serve as a reminder of who you are, who you could become and who you'll never be again,"**

Wow... such a powerful statement! I collect quotes that inspire and this one is definitely going into my

collection. It's a keeper...

So glad I found this author... these are subjects that are difficult to tackle but she told the story in such a descriptive way that it felt very real.

This is a beautifully written story of two people on a journey of recovery. And along this journey they find each other. :) I would recommend it for those who love women's fiction with a side of romance. The romance is good but the journey of healing is what makes this book totally rock!

I will definitely be reading more by this author.

ARC copy was provided by Barclay Publishing

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## **Michele says**

When broken hearts collide...

Two lost souls with broken hearts and spirits:

Zander, "We all need somewhere to begin. She might be yours".

Colbie, "Of course, she was lost. But sometimes in the wind of change, one tended to find their true direction".

This is a novel of courage, strength and the power of love.

"We're all rebels at heart deep down. Even those who don't think they are."

All the feels.

Every. Single. One.

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## **Claire - The Coffeeholic Bookworm says**

One look at the book cover, I fell instantly in love. After reading the prologue, I was sold. Twenty four hours after completing the book, I'm now a big, big fan of Mika Jolie and I already love her!

This is how I imagined Zander:

Yes, ladies and gentlemen. Zander Serrano was a war veteran who fought in Afghanistan and lost his leg

during the war. He was consumed by guilt after all his comrades died. Only two survived, him and his friend Ben. Imagine a whole army of brothers and you end up burying all of them. Gosh, I could hardly imagine the pains and suffering and trauma he'd been through. I understood his aloofness and his brooding attitude towards people. To me, it was his coping mechanism, only it made him more miserable. Until he had a black out and met Colbie in a car accident.

Colbie Bennington was about to get married to the man who hit her, slapped and abused her, physically and emotionally. And when she couldn't take it anymore, she ran away from her own wedding, leaving her old life behind. And then bam! She got hit by a car and ended up in a hospital, with no one else visiting her. No parents, no friends, no ex-fiance. Which was okay with her. Because from then on, she knew, she was on the road to a new journey.

Colbie and Zander both had scars in their bodies. A bruise in her ribs, a scar in his arms, a dark purple spot on her body, a missing right leg. All these were visible to the eyes.. But what's really killing them were the emotional scars they couldn't get away from. Fear, guilt, torment, yearning.

The moment Colbie and Zander's world collide, I never wanted to let go of them. I was totally consumed by their feelings and I had this extreme desire to see how their love story would start or end. And I was not disappointed. As I've told Mika Jolie, right after reading *Somewhere to Begin*, I'm on cloud 9. I loved everyone in the book – Rafa and Paige's dodging their feelings was full of sexual tension; Max and Delia's past and present make them vulnerable in love and Zander's family was really "family goals!" Most loved character aside from Colbie & Z – it's got to be Delia. Oh gosh, this lady is a firecracker and a hoot! Her Google addiction is really something! LOL

What more can I say? I love, love, loved this first book in the *Poison and Wine* series and I can't wait to read more! Mika Jolie, I love you! You're the bomb!

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## **Carvanz says**

If ever two characters were wounded and in need of healing it was Colbie and Zander. Each with scars on the outside, each with even deeper wounds on the inside. Neither capable of healing themselves but as they open their hearts to one another they find a different healing.

I loved this couple so much. They are probably my favorite of all the characters I've read by this author. The fact that they were each broken and resistant to allow anyone inside their hearts was tragic. The transition from isolation to togetherness didn't happen overnight and I appreciated the gradual change not only in Colbie and Zander individually but in their growing relationship.

Zander, even while suffering from his issues, was still very much a strong hero. Watching him struggle against his past experiences was painful and heartbreaking. But when he finally allowed himself to open up to Colbie my heart overflowed. Colbie did not have a family history of love and support and I was flabbergasted at the direction her family took with her. She also has lived years in fear, pain and torment. That she never saw herself as strong bothered me. But in the end, she knew what she had to do and despite my heart feeling sick for her, I cheered her at the conclusion.

Overall, this is an amazing read of damage, pain, healing and the scars that are left behind. While all of that seems like this would be a high level angst read, I would actually consider it mild. However, the steam level

is definitely high and the romance was natural and beautiful and perfect for these two characters.

I'm very curious to see if or how the rest of these characters will get their stories. For someone who does not like to commit myself to a series, I've loved every one of these books.

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

Dual POV

Safe (view spoiler)

Triggers (view spoiler)

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## Elle says

I'm sitting here struggling about where to begin but first let me say I was sent an ARC copy for an honest review by the author. That being said, the cover of this book was so beautiful it made me want to read the book, I could care less what genre it would have been I just love it.

Lord have mercy...Y'all this book was like a package of Oreo's to me, oh so delicious and hard to quit. From the first page of this book I was hooked. The absolute detail and thought that the author put into this book left me mind blown. Yea, yea I know what you're thinking "She's an author, it's her job to be detailed", well my friends I'm here to tell you that Ms. Jolie went above and beyond my expectations of being the "average author". The spectrum of emotion continuously captured throughout the book managed to hit me to me core. It was real, it was raw and it was continuously awe inspiring.

Colbie won my heart at "red chucks". I'm a simple lady, it really doesn't take much for me to say that someone is a rock star which Colbie certainly is, although for many reasons outside of her favorite pair of worn red chucks. Colbie reached real rock star status when she grew a pair of cojones and walked out of her wedding. I mean its never to late to realize that your fiancé is a total douche. (Sorry guys I tried to make it thru a whole post without being offensive but lets face it, a douche is a douche there's simply no way around it)

.  
Zander.Zander. Zander. What do you say about a hot Puerto Rican soldier who comes home damaged and disconnected from life? Well if you're asking this specific blogger I would say "I'll take one please". All joking aside, Zander's story is an all to real story for so many of our men returning from war and not a joke at all. His story was heart breaking, the once charismatic and athletic man now finds himself with half a leg and more questions than God could probably answer.

Together these two are hotter than fireworks on the 4th of July. Their chemistry is just on point and has me over here jealous as hell. "Elle sexually depressed, party of one, your table is now ready." I mean come on, can I seriously not get me a Zander.

"You're always rescuing me."

"I'm not a hero, Colbie."



She slanted her head sideways and met his gaze. "A nice way of saying don't get any ideas because you're not my knight in shining... whatever"

"Not even close"

"The thing is I'm not looking for someone to save me, "she continues, her face to the ocean. "I'd much rather have someone stand by my side as I save myself"

YES!! YES!! YES!! Can we please get some applause over here for that last sentence. That line is Oscar worthy! It gave me all the feels !!

The supporting characters which I didn't really mention add so much depth and comedic dimension that it puts this book on the next level. I can't wait to read the next book in the series that I really pray feature Zander's sexy as sin brothers Max and Rafe.. Yes, you read that right, there are 3 sexy Serrano brothers.

Y'all this book is entertaining, its educational, its humanizing, its sexy as hell and at the end of the day very worth purchasing and reading. Mrs. Mika Jolie you've got a fan for life. Thank you for this beautiful book about acceptance in all forms.

This book actually gets 4.5 stars from me !!

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## **KAS says**

My first Mika Jolie book and I was impressed! An enjoyable, fast paced, heart-rendering read, yet yummy, flirty and deliciously romantic! Fate brings two lost souls together and the only way they will tame their inner demons is to help each other heal, but they need to be willing to show each other their scars. Colbie and Zander pulled me in fast and held my attention all the way through. Quite interesting friends and family members give this an added humorous, fun to read dimension.

It is the "happiest" day of Colbie Bennington's life as she is marrying the "perfect man". Problem is everything is based on a lie. She wasn't happy and Kevin was far from perfect, and she has the scars and bruises on her body to prove it. Standing at the altar with the priest and her husband to be, she finally stands up for herself and refuses to marry the abusive jerk! She runs down the aisle, dashes from the church to her Mercedes in the pouring down rain, and then drives with no destination in mind, except to get far, far away from Kevin.

"She was stuck between who she was, who she wanted to be and who she should be. Her world was a mess."

Fate intervenes and along her road to freedom, Colbie meets Zander Serrano, a former Navy Seal, who just six months ago, came home from Afghanistan. He is a physically and emotionally wrecked, battle weary soul trying to deal with the loss of his leg and the devastating deaths of so many of his Seal brothers. Continuous flashbacks of his last combat mission and saddled with guilt because he is still alive, is making him a ticking time bomb. Not to mention Colbie is stirring up feelings in him he would rather stay dormant. He is an empty shell of a man with nothing to offer.

"For so long, being so close to death had been the only thing that made him feel alive. Then Colbie bulldozed her way into his life."

Zander is so ridiculously sexy and gorgeous, just looking at him makes Colbie blush, but the thought of Kevin's beatings has her terrified to even be touched by another man. A touch meant violence was next.

"Colbie reminded Zander of a butterfly with broken wings. Her eyes told a story of loneliness, anger and pain, leaving him to wonder if anyone ever fought for her."

I enjoyed the cautious dance that played out between the two as they maneuvered around each other. The attraction was lethal, but so were the deep scars they were afraid to share.

I hope there are sequels for Zander's two brothers, Rafa and Max. They are quite delectable!

\*I received a copy of this book, via Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review\*

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## Dianne says

Zander came home from the war a broken man filled with survivor's guilt. Mentally, he is still at war with himself, still re-living those frightening moments when he lost his friends, his allies and part of his leg. Gone is the fun-loving guy, in his place is a shell of the man he once was, incapable of being part of the human race and nowhere to begin.

Colbie always had to be the perfect society daughter, seen often, dazzling, but never controversial. Following the path dictated for her by both her family and the monster she thought she once loved, her wedding day has come and along with it, a backbone that gave her the strength to run as far as possible from the life she hated where she didn't matter to anyone except as elbow dressing or a punching bag.

Determined to re-invent herself from a puppet to strong and independent woman, she had no idea where to begin. Along comes fate and puts two damaged souls on a collision path to finding a reason to live, someone to love and **Somewhere to Begin**. Before the future can become reality, first the ghosts of the past must be dealt with, but are Colbie and Zander strong enough to support each other? Do they have the courage to trust again? To share or take a chance on love?

Once again, Mika Jolie had me almost in tears. She also had me angry, made me chuckle and had my heart racing in high gear for this couple who clearly were meant to meet. Mika Jolie knows how to create tender moments, frustrating moments and moments that will forever stay in your heart. Her ability to create dialogue that feels natural, tension that makes the air thick enough to cut. Dramatic scenes, backgrounds that come alive and characters that become real people to care about is signature Mika Jolie and this time out, there is no doubt she wrote from her heart to ours!

I received an ARC edition from Mika Jolie in exchange for my honest review.

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## **Morelia (Strandedinbooks) says**

**\*\*4.5 STARS**

My, oh my. A HUGE thank you to Mika Jolie for sending me a copy of her book in exchange for an honest review!

I am a sucker for military romance and upon reading the synopsis, I knew this was exactly the kind of book that would hook me in! It also doesn't hurt that this book has a stunning cover.

This story follows Colbie Bennington and Zander Serrano as they both deal with pasts that have scarred them and all they are looking for is, really, somewhere to begin.

Immediately, I fell in love with rough and tough Zander. He is a war veteran living with the guilt of his friends' deaths during the war. He fortunately made it out alive with another one of his friends, but he lives with the flashbacks and the loss of his limb and finds himself not worth much anything anymore.

Mika did a great job at portraying the life of a veteran with PTSD here. I appreciate the deeper look into his life and mindset and am glad it wasn't swept under the rug or that he was ultimately cured of all of his pain. However, he was able to slowly mend his broken heart.

Enter Colbie Bennington.

Colbie Bennington runs away the day of her wedding and finds herself in a small little town that leads her to Zander and his boisterous clan. Colbie comes from a rich family who give her the slightest inkling of care as Colbie also runs away from her abusive fiancée. She wears her scars both outside and in, scared of the future and anyone who shows compassion towards her. That is, until she moves in next door to Zander and finds herself attracted to this man like no other.

I really loved the relationship between the two MCs. It wasn't played out, it wasn't your typical romance story, it was instead perfectly timed and heartbreakingly realistic. I felt for these two and also rooted for them so hard. They had such strong chemistry and the sexual tension was through the roof! It was clear to everyone around them that they were head over heels for one another.

Additionally, the side characters--Zander's hot as sin brothers, Paige and Delia--made this story a thousand times more enjoyable. With friends like these constantly matchmaking, while also dealing with their mixed emotions towards a significant other, Zander and Colbie had no way of escaping their beautiful relationship. I cannot wait to read the brother's stories (at least I'm hoping their story is next)!

Absolutely loved this story and I can't even begin to explain how glad I am to have met these characters.

If you're looking for a military romance with two broken characters, a whole lotta swoon, a whole lot of sexy and some over the top best friends who will have you wishing they were your best friends, then this is your book!

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## **A Leisure Moment says**

Runaway bride? Yes, please! I love weddings. I love looking at wedding photos, going to weddings, feeling the love in the air—but that's not how Colbie's story began. Colbie ran from the day that was supposed to be the happiest day of her life, and I had to know why. The cover initially drew me in (ehem, I love wedding photos, remember?), but I wanted to know what happened next. Where'd she run to, who found her, and where her story go after that?

Read the rest of the review!

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## **Wendy Livingstone says**

I voluntarily read an ARC of this book.

This is the first time I have read any of this authors work, and I will certainly be reading more. This is the story of two broken souls which fate brings together. Zander is a shell of the man he used to be, and Colbie escapes from an abusive relationship. Can these two face their demons and heal each other? You really need to read this for yourself to find out!!

This is a fast paced story, which is humorous, intriguing, breathtaking, and an emotional read. This author has done an amazing job in writing this storyline, and I was hooked and enthralled throughout. I recommend this author's work for all, and cannot wait to read the next book in this series.

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## **Sassy Beta Reading & Review says**

I loved this book!!! It really tore at the heart strings and had me on an emotional roller coaster ride from the very beginning.

We previously met Zander and his family in book 2 of the Martha's Way series - Need You Now. Things have changed for this military man. He is no longer the fun loving, joke cracking, smack talking guy we originally met. After the horrors that he dealt with as a Navy SEAL, he has come home broken and feeling undeserving of the life he still possesses. His scars run deep, inside and out.

Colbie has scars of her own, thanks to those left by her ex-fiance. After breaking free from his abusiveness and cruelty, Colbie has finally decided enough is enough. She is determined to never let a man treat her like that again and will do anything to become a strong independent woman.

This story takes us on their journey of healing....realizing they can't do it alone. Scars run deep, but with the help of each other, they realize that they do deserve the right to be happy, carefree, and loved.

Beautifully written, this story is full of heartfelt emotions. I had a few heart twinges along the way and a few teary eyed moments as well. The characters are so easy to fall in love with. Their dialogue is so engaging. The descriptions to details are done nicely and easy to visualize.

Written as a multi pov and does have an HEA. Can be read as a stand alone.

Would I recommend this book? Absolutely!!

Would I read more from this author? Absolutely!!

Sassy Beta Reading & Review

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