



A Step Toward Falling

By Cammie McGovern

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Cammie McGovern follows up her breakout young adult debut, *Say What You Will*, with this powerful and unforgettable novel about learning from your mistakes and learning to forgive. The *New York Times Book Review* raved: “This is **a beautiful, big-hearted book** with important lessons embedded in compelling stories of two irresistible girls. **Expertly executed and movingly realized.**”

Emily has always been the kind of girl who tries to do the right thing—until one night when she does the worst thing possible. She sees Belinda, a classmate with developmental disabilities, being attacked. Inexplicably, she does nothing at all.

Belinda, however, manages to save herself. When their high school finds out what happened, Emily and Lucas, a football player who was also there that night, are required to perform community service at a center for disabled people. Soon, Lucas and Emily begin to feel like maybe they’re starting to make a real difference. Like they would be able to do the right thing, if they could do that night all over again. But can they do anything that will actually help the one person they hurt the most?

Told in alternating points of view, *A Step Toward Falling* is a poignant, hopeful, and altogether stunning work that will appeal to fans of books by Jennifer Niven, Robyn Schneider, and Jandy Nelson.

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A Step Toward Falling By Cammie McGovern Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—Emily knew when she saw Belinda, a classmate with developmental disabilities, being assaulted under the bleachers she needed to intervene, but she froze, and now she's doing community service and trying to figure out how to live with herself. Belinda is attempting to determine how to go forward after rescuing herself. Told in alternating sections of Emily's and Belinda's voices, this book explores how even good people can fail morally. Emily and Lucas (who was also present that night) are wrong, and that is made clear throughout; their inaction is understandable but inexcusable, and that subtle distinction is an important one. In addition, Belinda is written thoughtfully and respectfully. She has a distinct voice that reflects her cognitive disabilities but without condescension. Given that portrayals of people with developmental disabilities so often either depict them as perfect angels or use them as a device by which the neurotypical characters better themselves, Belinda's full-fledged personality is important for readers to engage with. The parallel romances are charming and appropriate, and while Emily and Lucas's treads the well-worn paths of smart girl plus hot, sensitive jock, it is not an unpleasant trope to revisit. The secondary plots of Belinda's family conflict and Emily distancing herself from her friends are well-executed ways to flesh out the two protagonists' growth. VERDICT Highly recommended for realistic fiction collections.—L. Lee Butler, Hart Middle School, Washington, DC

Review

PRAISE FOR A STEP TOWARD FALLING: “Universal human emotions and challenges link the characters across boundaries of gender, class, and I.Q. This is a beautiful, big-hearted book with important lessons embedded in compelling stories of two irresistible girls. Expertly executed and movingly realized.” (New York Times Book Review)

“Without evading or sugarcoating difficult topics, McGovern shows that disabled and able aren't binary states but part of a continuum—a human one.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

“Told in alternating sections of Emily's and Belinda's voices, this book explores how even good people can fail morally. Belinda is written thoughtfully and respectfully. She has a distinct voice that reflects her cognitive disabilities but without condescension. Highly recommended for realistic fiction collections.” (School Library Journal (starred review))

“Through alternating chapters, Emily comes to understand her inaction, prejudices, and failings, and Belinda learns to face her fears, find her voice, and take charge of her future. McGovern's ample experience with special needs youth is evident, as it allows this unique story shine from within.” (ALA Booklist (starred review))

“Cammie McGovern's second nuanced, thought-provoking young adult novel. A co-founder of Whole Children, a Massachusetts community center similar to the one about which she writes, McGovern obviously draws upon personal experience to create characters who are complex and fully realized.” (Chicago Tribune)

“So much love for this wise and powerful book. Most of all for Belinda—a girl with a cognitive disability who shows how full a life can be, and who loves *Pride and Prejudice* and *Colin Firth* as much as we do. For fans of Jennifer Niven and Jandy Nelson.” (Justine Magazine)

“Alternating viewpoints illustrate how braving the uncertainty of relationships, expectations, and life after

high school transcends class or ability. The sensitive overview of tough issues gracefully balances romance with reality. Fans of Jane Austen will appreciate this unconventional homage.” (Kirkus Reviews)

“Belinda’s voice is perfectly pitched: it’s clear that she’s thought her world through on her own terms. By including a wide variety of distinct characters, the novel shows that the presence or absence of a disability is just one of many aspects of who a person is.” (The Horn Book)

“This book might lead to an interesting discussion about responsibility, about standing up for someone, about doing the right thing.” (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA))

“McGovern uses her experience working with youth with special needs to illuminate the everyday thought processes and internal lives of young adults who function differently in society. She gives readers characters, not archetypes. It’s a poignant, warm, compelling book that insists that mistakes and redemption can go hand in hand.” (The Globe and Mail)

“A sensitive exploration of frailty and strength, setback and recovery. Ultimately, it’s a story of young people reexamining themselves, their preconceptions, and their possibilities, and readers will recognize their vulnerabilities and applaud their commitment.” (Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books)

“Beautifully written. Although this story has its dark side, to be sure, it also is a story told by McGovern with much love and humor. Everyone who reads this book will be touched and forced to question her/his own stereotypes.” (Examiner.com)

“Readers will fall more in love with the characters the more they read.” (TeenReads.com)

“It’s hard not to fall in love with McGovern’s story. A beautiful portrait of a real teenage world that is capable of hopefulness and healing. Fans of Rainbow Rowell and Jandy Nelson’s brand of realistic YA fiction should find a new favorite in Cammie McGovern’s lovely *A Step Toward Falling*.” (BookBrowse.com)

Praise for *SAY WHAT YOU WILL*: “This is a book to read, savor, and pass on and on until it has gone around the world twice.” (Ron Koertge, author of *Stoner & Spaz*)

“A unique and unforgettable love.” (Teen Vogue)

“Exhilarating and heartrending. This novel is stunning.” (ALA Booklist (starred review))

“Readers will be surprised, moved, amused, worried, hopeful, and grateful.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

“McGovern’s triumph is how well she normalizes and highlights the variety of disability experiences among teens and their often circuitous journeys toward claiming their voices and right to self-determination. Ultimately, a deeply engaging and rewarding story.” (Kirkus Reviews)

“A beautifully written story about two teens who find each other in spite of what might seem like insurmountable problems.” (Examiner.com (5 star review))

“It’s a little bit ‘Perks of Being a Wallflower,’ a little bit ‘Eleanor & Park’ and a lot of something else entirely. A young adult book with grown-up lessons.” (Metro US)

“Wonder meets Eleanor and Park in this authentic romance with beautifully crafted characters.”
(IndieBound.org)

From the Back Cover

Sometimes one mistake can change everything.

Emily doesn't know why she froze. Or why Lucas did too. Afterward, she thought of different ways to rationalize it. But the truth is, they could have helped Belinda, and they didn't. It's a mistake they'll both have to live with.

Sometimes doing nothing is the only way to cope.

Belinda doesn't want to talk about what happened. Because when she does, it feels like it's happening all over again.

Sometimes good can come from bad.

Emily and Lucas's punishment is community service at a center for people with disabilities. People like Belinda. Soon they feel like maybe they're starting to make a real difference. Like they would be able to do the right thing if they could do that night all over again. Like they could help not only those at the center but also each other.

But when Belinda returns to school, Emily and Lucas have to figure out if they can do anything that will actually help the one person they hurt most.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Clyde Harlan:

The knowledge that you get from A Step Toward Falling will be the more deep you rooting the information that hide in the words the more you get interested in reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but A Step Toward Falling giving you enjoyment feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in selected way that can be understood by means of anyone who read the idea because the author of this book is well-known enough. That book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We advise you for having that A Step Toward Falling instantly.

Jeffrey Barclay:

Information is provisions for folks to get better life, information these days can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even a huge concern. What people must be consider when those information which is in the former life are challenging to be find than now is taking seriously which one is acceptable to believe or which one the actual resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you have it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen throughout you if you take A Step Toward Falling as the daily resource information.

James Buscher:

Why? Because this A Step Toward Falling is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap that but latter it will zap you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who write the book in such incredible way makes the content interior easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book have got such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I have been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

Cathryn Walker:

What is your hobby? Have you heard in which question when you got scholars? We believe that that problem was given by teacher on their students. Many kinds of hobby, Every individual has different hobby. Therefore you know that little person including reading or as looking at become their hobby. You should know that reading is very important along with book as to be the thing. Book is important thing to increase you knowledge, except your own personal teacher or lecturer. You discover good news or update concerning something by book. Amount types of books that can you take to be your object. One of them is A Step Toward Falling.

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