After the Fall

by Kylie Ladd



About the Book

In her page-turning fiction debut, neuropsychologist Kylie Ladd delivers a searing portrait of two marriages united and betrayed by friendship.

?I had been married three years when I fell in love,? begins Kate, a firecracker of a woman who thought she?d found the yin to her yang in Cary, her sensible and adoring husband. For their friend Luke --- a charismatic copywriter who loves women and attention in equal measure, and preferably together --- life has been more than sweet beside Cressida, the dutiful pediatric oncologist who stole his heart. But when a whimsical flirtation between Kate and Luke turns into something far more dangerous, the foursome will be irrevocably intertwined by more than just their shared history.

After the Fall follows the origin and fallout of the most passionate of affairs through the eyes of all four characters, unveiling the misunderstandings and unspoken needs that lie beneath our search for love and connection. The narrative moves effortlessly between past and present, painting a nostalgic picture of the two marriages at their most idealistic --- the exact moment when like turned to love --- and at their most volatile. Thanks to the boundless compassion with which Ladd draws her characters, one can?t help but root for them as they wrestle between newfound desire and remembrances of time past, all the while spinning toward an inevitable conclusion.

Steeped in psychological insight and raw emotion, **After the Fall** is an unsettling novel of the many ways we love and hurt each other.

Discussion Guide

1. After the Fall is largely narrated by four characters: Kate, Cary, Cressida and Luke. Why do you think the author chose this method rather than just one narrator? Does it alter your view of events? Do you think each of the narrators is equally reliable or believable?

2. Kate says, ?I work with artefacts, with relics. I know in my heart that there?s little that stays shiny forever, even with effort.? In contrast, Cary remarks, ?Familiarity breeds content; love plateaus but is none the less for that.? Which of these attitudes do you most identify with? And how do you think Kate and Cary?s occupations have influenced their views?

3. The word ?fall? is used in various contexts throughout the book. Why do you think we use the term ?fall? to denote both the beginning of something (?falling in love?) but also the end (leukemia patient Emma?s ?fall toward death?)?

4. Which of the four main characters do you most identify with? Which do you find the most sympathetic? Why?

5. A number of weddings take place in the course of **After The Fall**: Sarah and Rick?s, Cary and Kate?s, Luke and Cressida?s, Dan and Jane?s (where Luke and Kate first kiss), Tim and Joan?s. How has Kate?s attitude to marriage changed from the first of these to the last? Cressida?s? And what do you think of Kate?s pronouncement that no one should be allowed to marry before the age of thirty?

6. Was Kate right to have given Luke an ultimatum? What do you think would have happened if she hadn?t?

7. Kate says, ?Situations don?t arise; you create them. Luke must have told me he loved me a thousand times in our seven months together, must have risked his marriage at least half as many to meet me or call or make contact somehow. Why, then, choose that marriage?? Why do you think Luke made the decision he did? And why is it that Luke?s proposed compromise --- to stay with their spouses but continue to see each other --- satisfies him, but not Kate?

8. Cary and Cressida respond very differently to the discovery of their respective spouse?s infidelity: Cary decides to put it behind them and move on, while Cress is unable to forgive or forget, and moves out. Why do you think each reacts the way they do? Do you believe a marriage can survive infidelity?

9. Cressida gives up her fellowship to care for her father at the behest of her sisters. In what other ways has she been influenced by her family in the choices she makes? Do you think that has changed by the end of the novel?

10. When Kate and Cary first sleep together in Venice, Cary says, ?In the end it was her decision. It had to be, didn?t it? Kate had always set the agenda.? Do you find Cary?s relative passivity (and later his determination to forgive and forget) touching or annoying?

11. Were you satisfied with the ending of **After The Fall**? Did it finish the way you expected it to? Do you believe that the characters will be able to put the events of the novel behind them?

Author Bio

Kylie Ladd?s writings have appeared in *O, The Oprah Magazine*, *Reader?s Digest*, and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, among others. She holds a Ph.D. in neuropsychology and lives in Melbourne with her husband and two children. **After the Fall**

is her first novel.

Critical Praise

"A subtle, moving and perceptive story of love, loss and hope."

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