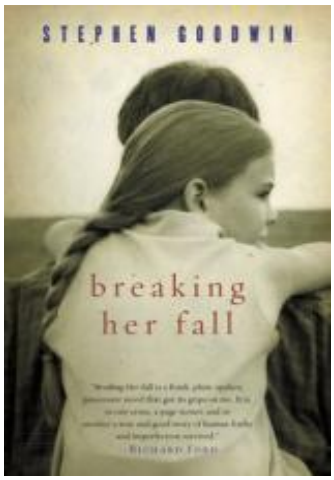
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Breaking Her Fall

by Stephen Goodwin



About the Book

On an ordinary summer night, Tucker Jones picks up the phone, expecting to hear from his fourteen-year-old daughter Kat. Instead it's another parent, who reports that Kat is not, as promised, at the movies, but at a party--and makes a shocking allegation about her activities there. Furious, Tucker races to the party. Kat has departed, but a full-boil interrogation ends with one of the teenage boys sent crashing into a glass tabletop. Rage turns instantly to remorse, and Tucker is rrested. He could easily lose his home and his business. But, most importantly, will he lose his daughter?

Breaking Her Fall charts the passage of a family through an all-too-imaginable crisis with extraordinary realism and transcendant grace.

Discussion Guide

1. In what way does Washington, D.C., form a meaningful backdrop for the novel? How do class hierarchies affect the plot? What observations does Tucker make about suburban versus commercial aspects of his community?

2. Are money and sex equally powerful in **Breaking Her Fall**? In what way do finances influence Tucker's power struggle with Kat's mother?

3. In your opinion, what motivated Kat's actions at the party? Who appears to be ultimately responsible for what happened? How would you have responded to the late-night call from John Fogarty?

4. How does Kat's heartache compare to that of the adults in her world? Are her coping skills much different from theirs? Does Kat mirror or defy her parents' example?

5. How would you characterize Lily's marriage? Why is Tucker more attracted to her than to Christine?

6. Is Tucker's relationship with Kat typical of most fathers and daughters? Does Tucker use a different approach in raising his son? Does Lily's parenting style reflect gender distinctions in a child's upbringing, or are these distinctions shaped more by environment?

7. Is Tucker's relationship with Kat typical of most fathers and daughters? Does Tucker use a different approach in raising his son? Does Lily's parenting style reflect gender distinctions in a child's upbringing, or are these distinctions shaped more by environment?

8. How do the novel's characters define justice and morality? What seems to drive their sense of ethics?

9. When Tucker went to Jed's house, was he trying to rescue his daughter or control her (or both)? Will he ever be comfortable with the notion of his daughter's sexuality?

10. Why might the author have chosen oral sex as the basis for Kat's upheaval rather than another form of sexual behavior? Do you define it as "real" sex?

11. What is the significance of Lily's father in **Breaking Her Fall**? Did he impart any of the same attitudes to Lily that Tucker tries to evoke in Kat? Does Tucker's relationship to his own parents, particularly his mother, offer any insight into the generation by which he and Lily were raised?

12. Do you perceive Jed as a villain or a victim? Do you predict any transformation in his father's personality after this incident? Would Jed and Abby have been successful parents?

13. How does that one night (along with its resolution) encapsulate Kat's life with Tucker?

14. How have attitudes toward dating and sex changed since you were Kat's age? Why is fourteen a particularly charged age for girls?

15. In what way does Kat break her father's fall?

Author Bio

Stephen Goodwin is a professor of creative writing at George Mason University and the author of three previous books. A former director of the literature program at the National Endowment for the Arts, he has served two terms as president of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation. He lives in Washington, D.C.

Critical Praise

"... a frank, plain-spoken, passionate novel that got its grips on me...."

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