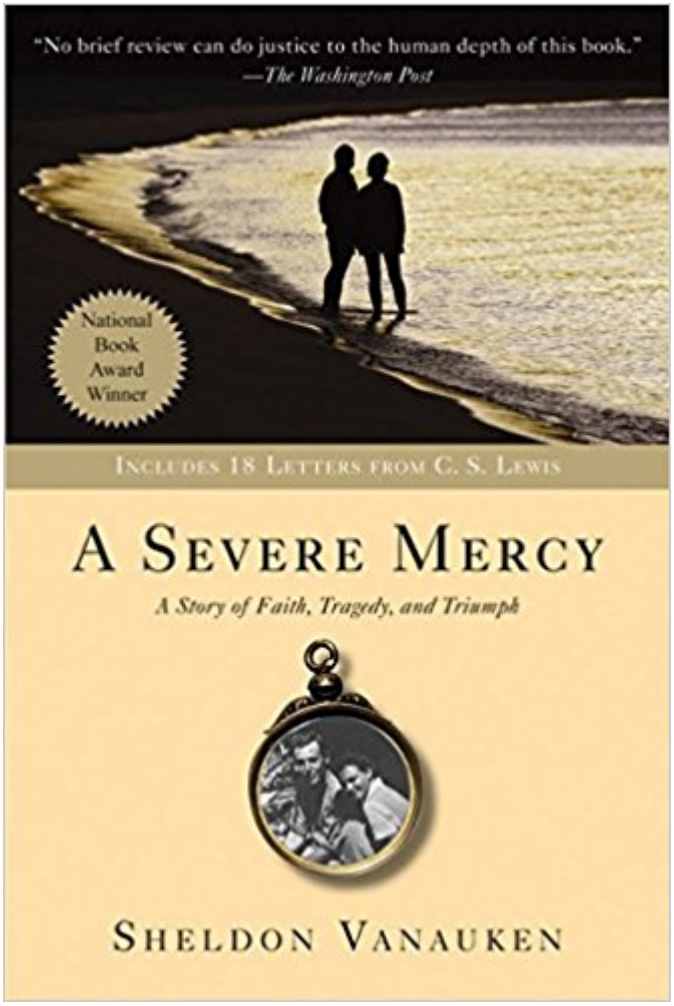
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A Severe Mercy



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Synopsis

A heart-rending love story described by its author as Ã¢â ¬Å“the spiritual autobiography of a love rather than of the loversÃ¢â ¬Â• about the authorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s marriage and search for faith.
Ã Â Vanauken chronicles the birth of a powerful pagan love borne out of the relationship he shares with his wife, Davy, and describes the growth of their relationship and the dreams that they share. A beloved, profoundly moving account of the author's marriage, the couple's search for faith and friendship with C. S. Lewis, and a spiritual strength that sustained Vanauken after his wife's untimely death. Replete with 18 letters from C.S. Lewis, A Severe Mercy addresses some of the universal questions that surround faith--the existence of God and the reasons behind tragedy.

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Customer Reviews

A Severe Mercy, by Sheldon Vanauken, is a heart-rending love story described by its author as "the spiritual autobiography of a love rather than of the lovers." Vanauken chronicles the birth of a powerful pagan love borne out of the relationship he shares with his wife, Davy, and describes the growth of their relationship and the dreams that they share. As a symbol of their love, they name their dream schooner the Grey Goose, "for the grey goose, if its mate is killed flies on alone and never takes another." While studying at Oxford, Sheldon and Davy develop a friendship with C.S. Lewis, under whose influence and with much intellectual scrutiny they accept the Christian doctrine. As their devotion to God intensifies, Sheldon realizes that he is no longer Davy's primary love--God is. Within this discovery begins a brewing jealousy. Shortly after, Davy acquires a fatal illness. After

her death Sheldon embarks on an intense experience of grief, "to find the meaning of it, taste the whole of it ... to learn from sorrow whatever it had to teach." Through painstaking reveries, he comes to discover the meaning of "a mercy as severe as death, a severity as merciful as love." He learns that her death "had these results: It brought me as nothing else could do to know and end my jealously of God. It saved her faith from assault. ...And it saved our love from perishing." Replete with 18 letters from C.S. Lewis, A Severe Mercy addresses some of the universal questions that surround faith--the existence of God and the reasons behind tragedy. --Jacque Holthusen

Ã¢â ¬Å“No brief review can do justice to the human depth of this book. It invites us to explore a beautiful dollhouse of love and to witness the destruction of a relation too exquisite to last.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Washington Post)Ã¢â ¬Å“Here is a book for anyone who has truly loved another person.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Christianity Today)Ã¢â ¬Å“[A] deep, uncompromising story about human and divine love.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Los Angeles Times)Ã¢â ¬Å“A towering and noble work in its own right, wrought by a real craftsman . ..Ã¢â ¬Â• (New Oxford Review)Ã¢â ¬Å“A gem of a book . . . delivers an extraordinary impact on the reader.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Eternity)

I read this at the suggestion of a friend who knows me as an insatiable devotee of C.S. Lewis. Mr. Lewis is a great and interesting writer, but the various editions of this book with jackets screaming "18 LETTERS BY CS LEWIS (oh, and some book by a guy named Vanauken)" do it a terrible disservice. Vanauken’s love story with his wife is profoundly interesting, their acquaintances in America and England fascinating on their own merits, and Vanauken’s elegy to his wife is a heartbreaking masterpiece of catharsis. By most critical accounts, he was never again as great a writer as he is here, but A Severe Mercy stands firmly on its own as both great autobiography and spiritual memoir.

Absolutely phenomenal book. Aside from being beautifully written and a great story, the book gives some great insight into the difficulties that accompany not only the loss of a spouse/loved one, but also the accompanying struggles with faith. Important for pretty much anybody living in our time. Highly recommend it.

I liked it from the start, and all the way through, but the why of my liking it evolved. Their marriage was deeply interesting to me, their conversion more so, the deeper conversion through loss most of all. I do not believe I will ever forget this book.

A must read book; this is a non-fiction book that reads like a novel. And with C.S. Lewis thrown into the mix, how can the reader go wrong?

This is a true story about a couple working through the trials of life they experience. It gives unique insights of CS Lewis as he relates to them, interacting with their anguish. It is a story of a couple who learns to love their Creator, but not in the kind of church background I was familiar with. Very insightful and challenging.

For those who treasure C. S. Lewis, this is a find. It's been around for a while, but I just recently was given a copy, and could not put it down. The picture of Oxford University at Lewis' time is very personal and satisfying, and the letters from Lewis to the author make this a very unusual book. The honesty of the author took my breath away. His true love story is unforgettable and heart-breaking.

While first reading this book I thought it was a story of two young selfish people. But that is what most of us are when we begin life independently of parental figures. Then it began to unfold to a sweet love story. Comfortable and truthful (they thought) with one another. Then they "discovered" God. Truly a wonderful book. I am glad that Sheldon decided to put their story to paper. So many hours spent thinking about "things". I will cherish this book and perhaps reread.

I was intrigued by what seems to me the deepest level of intimacy that a couple could have. He said he wrote with a focus on their relationship, not so much on them. They called themselves pagans at the time, which prevented God from being first in loyalty until she converted, and then he wanted the old "Davy" back, and the irony that the only seeming way he could be converted was for her to die. She wanted him to convert and he only wanted her happiness. They had some amazing adventures together before she died unexpectedly young. There are some great images of their shared times together.I am a fan of C. S. Lewis and to know of their close relationship and his letters to them was a big plus.

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