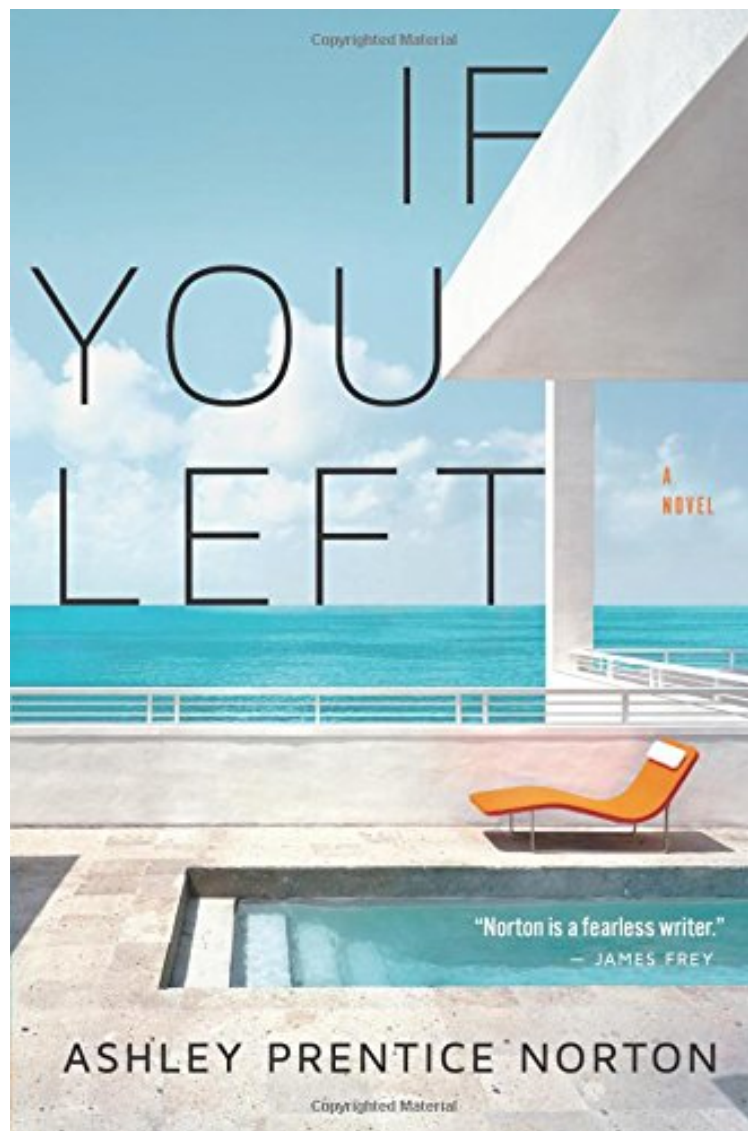


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If You Left

Ashley Prentice Norton

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Ashley Prentice Norton : If You Left before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised If You Left:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Darkly Witty and Unabashedly Honest By Art, Books, and Coffee If You Left is a raw, darkly witty, and poignant look inside the head and world of a woman struggling with bipolar disorder and the toll it takes on her family and those around her. Althea is a woman that has her problems. Not only is she stuck in a marriage that should have most likely ended years ago, but is also has a severe mental disorder that

clouds her mind when things get too much to handle. In this book you will follow her down a path that, though paved with good intentions, tends to get more complicated as she moves forward. Her marriage is at times toxic and her relationship with her child is hanging on by a thread...if it was even there to begin with. She wants to make things right, but for this summer, Althea will make decisions that will change everything. The only real question is that when all is said and done, will Althea be end up where she wants to be?I am going to be honest with you all. I had mixed feelings this book. I truly enjoyed the unique and forthright voice of Althea. There was something so fascinating about being inside this woman's head. The mental dialog, second guessing her every feeling, and snide comments kept me flipping the pages to see what would happen next. She is a truly complex character. The author twisted and turned a story about a woman with bipolar disorder to create something that is a sincere and at points a bleak snapshot of her life. There is no sugar coating anything in this book. The author lays it all out there for everyone to see and in a way the story became very addictive to me.However, I wanted more for her at the end. Don't worry. There are no spoilers here. I will just say that I really hoped for a different turn of events for Althea, even if that was just in one small aspect of her life. Yet, there is a truth to the end of the book that respects the core fundamentals of who this characters is. Though I think many readers will find it a let down, I really felt that it did honor the character. In a way, this is how it should have ended...like it or not.I know that there are reviews all over the board with this book and I think that is because this book is so unabashedly honest. Personally, I liked getting inside the characters' heads and taking a look at their summer of change. I laughed at the dark humor. I was shocked by some of the actions and reactions to situations that were presented. All in all, I think that once I got beyond what I wanted for Althea, I could see the beauty behind this highly dysfunctional family.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One StarBy Jean Zolmanvery strange book did not finish it was not enjoyable0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is one of the worst books I have ever readBy C.Ann CagleThis is one of the worst books I have ever read. It was mostly about sex instead of having a mental disorder.

A seductive novel about a privileged but damaged Manhattan wife whose main source of stability — her marriage — comes under threat, from forces both without and within. For most of their marriage, Althea has fluctuated between extreme depressive and manic states — what she calls “the Tombs” and “the Visions” — and Oliver has been the steady hand that guided her to safety. This summer, Althea decides that she will be different from here on. She will be the loving, sexy wife Oliver wants, and the reliable, affectionate mother their nine year-old daughter Clem deserves. Her plan: to bring Clem to their Easthampton home once school is out — with no “summer girl” to care for her this time — and become “normal.”But Oliver is distant and controlling, and his relationship with their interior decorator seems a bit too close; Clem has learned to be self-sufficient, and getting to know her now feels like very hard work for Althea. Into this scene enters the much younger, David Foster Wallace–reading house painter, who reaches something in Althea that has been long buried.Fearless, darkly funny, and compulsively readable, *If You Left* explores the complex dance that is the bipolar marriage, and the possibility that to move forward, we might have to destroy the very things we've worked hardest to build.

"A woman suffering from bipolar disorder reaches a crossroads in her marriage and her life in this irresistible, tightly plotted novel. Althea Willow seems to have everything. Her husband, Oliver, owns a highly successful sunglasses company, and Althea is known for her controversial photography. If only she could relate more to their adopted 10-year-old daughter, Clem, she thinks she might just get this family thing right. Unfortunately, her affliction is in the driver's seat, and she's a slave to her symptoms, and a host of insecurities. Things come to a head when, after a decision to redecorate their East Hampton vacation home, Oliver brings in his beautiful French colleague, Claire Bissot to help. Althea is mortified, sensing they're more than just coworkers, and Oliver's past affairs only fuel the fire. Things really heat up when Althea hires Maze, a young painter who brings out a desire in her that she thought she'd lost. Norton (*The Chocolate Money*) writes Althea with a sure hand, unsentimental in her portrayal of a woman who is ruled by her illness and her codependent relationship with Oliver, yet desperately yearns for more. The lean narrative is unflinching, which only makes Althea's story, and her eventual self-enlightenment, even more poignant." -- Publishers Weekly