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Beautiful Ruins: A Novel

By Jess Walter



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The #1 *New York Times* bestseller, now available in paperback—Jess Walter’s “absolute masterpiece” (Richard Russo, Pulitzer Prize-winning author): the story of an almost-love affair that begins on the Italian coast in 1962 and resurfaces fifty years later in contemporary Hollywood.

The acclaimed, award-winning author of the national bestseller *The Financial Lives of the Poets* returns with his funniest, most romantic, and most purely enjoyable novel yet. Hailed by critics and loved by readers of literary and historical fiction, *Beautiful Ruins* is the story of an almost-love affair that begins on the Italian coast in 1962...and is rekindled in Hollywood fifty years later.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Adriana Trigiani Reviews *Beautiful Ruins*



Beautiful Ruins is a glorious read for book lovers. From the moment you pick up the novel, it conjures a world that you long to enter. The teal-blue Ligurian Sea laps against a jagged coastline filled with candy-colored houses and open windows. At first glance, you're dying to get inside those houses and find out what's going on.

You needn't worry. Jess Walter has written a sumptuous epic about the real people who make art, spinning illusion for fun, profit, and meaning. There are screen actors, a novelist, and Pasquale, an innkeeper, who keeps his patrons fed and watered on homemade wine and dreams. Among all the shimmer and hope are the lost souls who long to create something, anything. And just as Jess Walter introduces us to these characters, he follows them for fifty years. The journey will delight and captivate you.

You will be crushed when the novelist, Alvis, tracks down a woman whom he believed saved him in his youth, only to take a long walk down a dark hallway into a room where everything he believes and all his hopes shatter in one exchange. Jess Walter can break your heart in one conversation.

If you love the ancient charms of the Italian coast on the Ligurian Sea, if you long for Edinburgh and its cold rain and distant hot sun, and if you love stories of the dream factory that is Hollywood, you will not be able to part from this book until you are finished reading it. Even then, for months afterward, you'll keep it close so you can reread a passage here and there that moved you.

It's all here, the illusion and reality, the joy and the shame of the creative life, of life itself. The ingenue Dee, the producer Michael, and the D-girl Claire take you into the world of making movies, the expectations and disappointments, and in an ingenious turn, the author pins the hem of the action with real Hollywood stars, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, who are engaging in a drama of their own in Rome.

Jess Walter has quietly and expertly built a career over six novels that puts him at the forefront of great American writers. *Beautiful Ruins* is the emerald among the pearls.

Review

"A monument to crazy love . . . Walter [is] a believer in capricious destiny with a fine, freewheeling sense of humor." (*New York Times*)

"Walter is a very, very funny writer and can do Hollywood satire with the best of them. But this is also a novel with a live, beating heart, full of sympathy for its characters and agut wisdom...You'll want to explore these Ruins." (*Newsday*)

"Walter vividly draws a world both tender and cutthroat, where ambition battles reality, daydreams fight doldrums and sometimes win." (*Interview*)

"A marvel, an absolute gem of a beach read that is both hilarious and heartbreaking." (*Huffington Post*)

"Expertly scratches the seasonal itch for both literary depth and dazzle." (*Entertainment Weekly*)

"Entrancing...Walter's turns of phrase are as brilliant as his plot twists, making for a compelling, fun read." (*People*)

"Lyrical, heartbreaking, and funny . . . Walter closes the deal with such command that you begin to wonder why up till now he's not often been mentioned as one of the best novelists around. *Beautiful Ruins* might just correct that oversight." (*Kansas City Star*)

"Beautiful . . . A shining, imaginative tale . . . *Beautiful Ruins* shows novelists how it is done." (*The Plain Dealer*)

"His [Walter's] characters are long-suffering, prone to failure and sometimes at death's door. But the verve and enthusiasm of this novel, from its let's-go-everywhere structure to the comedy in the marrow of its sentences, are wholly life-affirming." (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*)

"A beautiful narrative . . . This writer is a genius of the modern American moment." (*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

"A novel shot in sparkly Technicolor. . . . reimagines history in a package so appealing we'd be idiots not to buy it." (Library Journal (starred review))

"Well-constructed...quirky and entertaining tale of greed, treachery, and love." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"This is a blockbuster, with romance, majesty, comedy, smarts, and a cast of thousands. There's lights, there's camera, there's action. If you want anything more from a novel than Jess Walter gives you in *Beautiful Ruins*, you're getting thrown out of the theater." (**Daniel Handler, author of *Why We Broke Up* and creator of Lemony Snicket**)

"[N]othing less than brilliant, a tour de force that crosses decades, continents, and genres, to powerful and often hilarious effect....A masterful novel of love, loss, and hard-won hope that satisfies on every level." (**Ben Fountain, author of *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk***)

"Within a page-turner of a plot, these triumphantly vulnerable characters leap off the page to take up permanent residence in your inner life. The effect is so powerful that to be untouched by *Beautiful Ruins* might well be like having no inner life at all." (**Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, author of *36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction***)

“A brilliant, madcap meditation on fate. . . . Walter’s prose is a joy-funny, brash, witty and rich with ironic twists. He’s taken all of the tricks of the postmodern novel and scoured out the cynicism, making for a novel that’s life-affirming but never saccharine.” (*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review))

“A novel with pathos, piercing wit and, most important, the generous soul of a literary classic. . . . Walter has planted himself firmly in the first rank of American authors.” (Boston Globe)

“A literary miracle.” (Maureen Corrigan, NPR's Fresh Air)

“*Beautiful Ruins* is satisfying and delicate, a spectacular story of love, frustration, selfish intent, and the patience of the human heart.” (*The Stranger*)

“[A] high-wire feat of bravura storytelling. . . . [Walter’s] mixture of pathos and comedy stirs the heart and amuses as it also rescues us from the all too human pain that is the motor of this complex and ever-evolving novel.” (*New York Times Book Review*)

“His masterpiece . . . an interlocking, continent-hopping, decade-spanning novel with heart and pathos to burn, all big dreams, lost loves, deep longings and damn near perfect.” (*Salon*)

“It is a powerful and lush book.” (Selma Blair, the New York Post)

“A great getaway of a novel.” (*People*)

“*Beautiful Runs* is itself a showcase for Walter’s outrageous literary gifts in virtually every genre and style. . . . No wonder critics have been outdoing each other with superlatives. . . .” (*Nashville Scene*)

“[An] enchanting novel. . . . Sweeping effortlessly back and forth between Italy and current-day Hollywood, and between various modes of storytelling, Walters builds a world that won’t soon let you go.” (Paula McLain, author of *The Paris Wife*)

“Combines satisfying, old-fashioned storytelling with a modern sensibility.” (Becky Aikman)

From the Back Cover

From the moment it opens—on a rocky patch of Italian coastline, circa 1962, when a daydreaming young innkeeper looks out over the water and spies a mysterious woman approaching him on a boat—Jess Walter's *Beautiful Ruins* is a dazzling, yet deeply human, roller coaster of a novel. From the lavish set of *Cleopatra* to the shabby revelry of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, to the back lots of contemporary Hollywood, *Beautiful Ruins* is gloriously inventive and constantly surprising—a story of flawed yet fascinating people navigating the rocky shores of their lives while clinging to their improbable dreams.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Peggy Hahne:

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information currently can get by anyone in everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even an issue. What people must be consider

whenever those information which is in the former life are difficult to be find than now is taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one the resource are convinced. If you obtain the unstable resource then you get it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen inside you if you take Beautiful Ruins: A Novel as the daily resource information.

Margaret Wright:

Reading can called thoughts hangout, why? Because while you are reading a book especially book entitled Beautiful Ruins: A Novel your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely might be your mind friends. Imaging each word written in a reserve then become one contact form conclusion and explanation which maybe you never get before. The Beautiful Ruins: A Novel giving you one more experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful information for your better life with this era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

Mac Cutter:

Do you have something that you prefer such as book? The book lovers usually prefer to pick book like comic, short story and the biggest the first is novel. Now, why not trying Beautiful Ruins: A Novel that give your satisfaction preference will be satisfied simply by reading this book. Reading routine all over the world can be said as the opportunity for people to know world a great deal better then how they react in the direction of the world. It can't be mentioned constantly that reading behavior only for the geeky man but for all of you who wants to be success person. So , for all you who want to start studying as your good habit, you are able to pick Beautiful Ruins: A Novel become your personal starter.

Karolyn Kaufman:

As a student exactly feel bored for you to reading. If their teacher requested them to go to the library as well as to make summary for some reserve, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's soul or real their leisure activity. They just do what the teacher want, like asked to go to the library. They go to presently there but nothing reading very seriously. Any students feel that reading is not important, boring and also can't see colorful pics on there. Yeah, it is to get complicated. Book is very important for you personally. As we know that on this era, many ways to get whatever we would like. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore , this Beautiful Ruins: A Novel can make you sense more interested to read.

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