

"Trust, A Novel" is a story of a woman struggling to gain control and make sense of her life. You begin to genuinely care about Tori and hope that through her struggles she finds happiness and peace.

Trust, A Novel: Author's Preferred Version

By Jackie Adams

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Chapter 1

I'm sitting at a table in Kalico's café waiting for my friend Sophie to arrive. My coffee is strong, and I'm enjoying the warmth of it cradled in both hands as I watch out the window the raindrops hit the pavement forming small puddles. The café smells like freshly baked bread and brewed lattes.

The café has an oversized room with a large crowd. There are a lot of conversations blending all their voices into their own harmony. As I escape my problems realizing that each of these people has their own lives, their own families, and their own stories. Maybe I'm not as alone as I feel.

My sister's words come back to me, "They must not see outside themselves."

Do I see outside myself too much? Do I ever explore inside myself? Or am I always escaping myself? With these questions I feel uncomfortable. I decide to start making myself more of a priority, soon. Right now, I'm uncomfortable thinking about me while I wait, fidgeting. I turn away from the crowd and back to the rain outside the window. Maybe if I was to get close to myself, I might discover the reason why I feel as if I'm wanted dead. Where is Sophie? Did she get lost? Did something happen to her bus? What time is it? As I begin to worry, I hear her.

I turn in the direction of her voice and see her waving her hands. "Tori, I'm over here! Let me grab my Hazelnut, girl."

I smile at her, relieved that she's safe. I take in the crowd around her. She gets a few envious stares from women as the men try to avoid looking at her. She gains attention everywhere I've been with her. She's too humble to notice.

She comes to the table and sets her coffee down. She puts her lightweight, yellow rain jacket on the back of her chair. As she sits down, she says, "Tori girl, you wouldn't believe what happened on my way back here! I think the bus driver had one too many espressos. The lady thought she was running a bus-athon. Woo!"

As Sophie positions herself comfortably, we both laugh. This is what survivors do. We make light of a heavy situation. Laugh when we want to cry. Beautify when we need a reason to keep believing, even if it's self-created at our own expense. Searching when we...

I'm cut off by Sophie. "Tori, you always look like you're lost in thought," Sophie waves her hand in front of my face. "Earth to Tori."

I sigh, "Huh, sorry!" I look at her light brown eyes. Her face has a sudden change, a more serious look. She pulls her chair in closer to our table, leans in, and we better position ourselves for a more direct conversation. I have so much to say to her, but I'm not sure where to start.

"Sophie, there's something I need to tell you." I nervously set my coffee down and folded my hands in front of me.

She tilts her head, “Every time I hear those words the tragedy of life unfolds.” Her shoulders tense waiting for what I’m about to say.

“Oh, so you’re a philosopher wrapped up in poetic wisdom?” We both smile, and I suddenly would rather escape again than tell her about the drama taking place in my life. I can’t control these issues happening, and I feel guilty needing the help to stop them.

“Sophie, seriously! I’m in trouble. Major trouble! Normally, I could take this on alone, but my son is starting to be affected by what’s taking place. Webster can be all eyes and ears! I think it’s all disguised with the intent on driving us both insane!”

Sophie’s posture straightens, “What do you mean, Tori? I see her face become weary with concern.

I repeat everything in my head that has happened, trying to put it into words while still trying to accept it myself. “It’s like someone’s hiding behind a disguise to drive Webster and I both crazy! The problem is I don’t understand it so I can’t explain it to you.” I realize I’m having problems on where to start and still it sounds ludicrous. Even trying to explain it, makes me feel incompetent and embarrassed.

All my thoughts are whirling with flashbacks, and so much has happened it’s all making it more difficult to replay what’s going on. I start feeling an overwhelming sense of distrust, anxiety, danger, and I realize if I try to tell Sophie she will probably think I’m insane.

I clam up and quickly start to change the subject. I ask her, "How is Myles doing?" I feel relief in the attempt to change the conversation rather than to challenge her sanity. I don't want to feel trapped in honesty, to be held accountable for her feeling jaded like I feel I have been. Depriving me my peace of mind within our friendship.

"DON'T DO THAT, TORI!" Sophie's voice is louder than I expected. It's too stern, and she looks like she's just as surprised herself.

I'm offended, "Do what?" I ask, buying some more time, and hoping it's enough.

"Never mind the discussion like you never started it then having the nerve to play stupid," she says with sarcasm.

"I'm not ever minding it. I'm learning things about myself I never realized. For you to understand what I'm going through, I'd have to tell you more than parts. I understand my life has been nothing more than just that, parts." I start to feel even more alone than I had earlier. I feel detached. Detached and branded for everyone's opinions and thoughts.

I'm feeling baffled and unsure. Now that I've realized this I just want to go home, hide under my covers, listen to the rain, and let my brain drift off sleep to a more vibrant denial of hope. Hope until it happens again. Either to me... or much more... to Webster. I have to stop it!

"Okay, let me tell you, Tori. I have twenty different bad circumstances on my plate right now, I have court, I have a belligerent ex who thinks he should be treated as a king by

everyone, who has been stalking me! My number is all over the place and I don't know how, where, or why." She grows quiet and I notice her eyes becoming teary as she stares off. I turn my head towards the direction she's zoned in on. She's watching a man walking a dog in the rain.

She says, "What's it like to be with someone simple like him? Right there next to him, Tori, away from all those bad things happening? Someone I can just bathe with and enjoy? Someone who can just enjoy me, too? Why is he even alone?" The man bends down and pats his dog's head.

I look back to Sophie and I try to comfort her with some hopeful words. When I reach for my coffee, I end up spilling it. We both stand up, fast! A young waitress comes over and starts washing our table. "Sorry," I quietly apologized to her.

"Sophie. Let's get out of here and have some fun! We both need it." I try to put on my best smile. I feel like my reality is always ruining other perspectives. I cause them to think too much. Sophie came in smiling and laughing and now she's in tears.

"No Tori! You always push away your problems." She wipes her chair seat with a napkin. Is she judging me?! How dare she? I am feeling impatient and exhausted. It's not a good combination. This is why I don't trust ANYONE!

I say, "You seem to know me sooo well! You know what? I'm tired of this." I step back from her as if I'm afraid of the consequences in voicing MY truth. I'm learning too much about myself in a day. I suddenly feel my body weighed down.

And this reflex, why am I doing this? Why am I stepping back as I blurt out MY hurt and MY truth?

I feel let down, exposed and hunted. She comes over to me and yanks me towards her. I jerk my arm away and take one look at her. I make my way to the door bumping into others. A few murmur to me under their breath. I roll my eyes and when I get to the door I look back and say, "I'm sorry I made you sad. I'm sorry I made you cry. Talking about this is only making it worse for you. You have your own problems. Nothing good will come of the rest of his conversation, Sophie. "You take care," I said as I walked out.

My heart is heavy. Alone, this has been the topic of my day, and perhaps it bothers me more than I realize. I look to the pavement thinking of all that's taken place as I take each of my steps. All these years of pretending I was being loved, and in return a shadow. Nothing more than exactly that, a figment. Everybody knows shadows grow bigger, taller, scarier, and in the dark under the moon they are monstrous. My shadow, my enemy, hogging my space, overpowering my realism, and leaving me worse than invisible.

The rain on my walk home begins to nurture me. I feel this, I can see this is actuality. I need time to heal, time to nature. Nature is where I feel a temporary freedom. My heroes calm me, with the sun hugs, the cloud knights, following the scorching reckless days and the goose bump breezes, caressing my skin with my eyes closed hoping the moment freezes in time. Something I can never lose. Nothing can taint. This gives

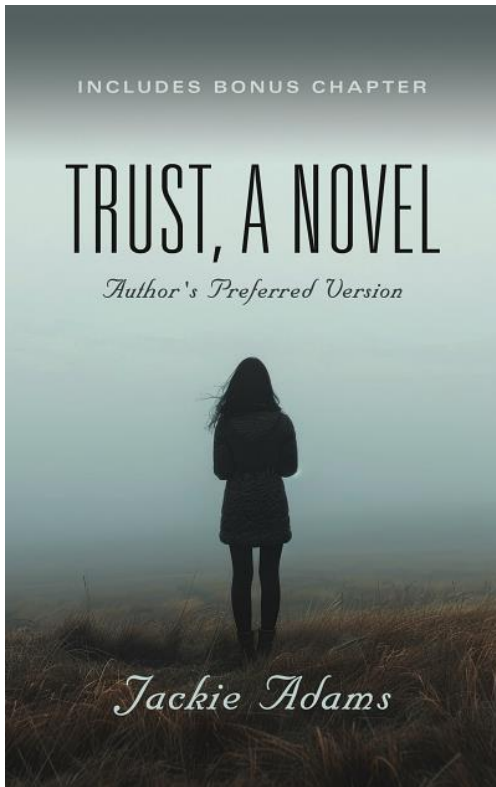
me more than a moment to appreciate the simplicity. The perfect gentleness on a day so needed.

Time doesn't really stop for very long, though. Soon reality exposes and swallows any recollection of the better. , Vile poisons of the bored and treacherous. How can I seek answers if I know what I mean, but I can't explain it to anybody else?

I know I'm not crazy nor am I lazy! I feel myself screaming the right words, when I open my mouth to tell, all I see is a mist, the overpowering perception of their thoughts, I, the problematic of the so-called inferiority complex.

The brain, the tongue teases, the puppet on strings. Their seed of denial planted in my thoughts. There they are bigger than life, at least bigger than my life.

I hear a horn blaring like crazy! I smell burnt rubber, and I hear a man screaming, "STAY OUT OF OUR WAY!!!" Followed by a woman's wicked laughter.



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