

It Starts with Us

by Colleen Hoover · Language: EN

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Overview

It Starts with Us is a contemporary romance novel by Colleen Hoover, continuing the story of Lily Bloom and Atlas Corrigan from the bestselling *It Ends with Us*. The book picks up shortly after the events of the first novel, with Lily navigating her new life as a single mother and business owner, while Atlas, her first love, re-enters her world. The narrative alternates between Lily's and Atlas's perspectives, offering a deeper look into their pasts, their present struggles, and the possibility of a future together. The story explores themes of healing from trauma, the complexities of co-parenting with an abusive ex, and the courage it takes to choose love again.

The central arc follows Lily and Atlas as they tentatively rekindle their relationship while dealing with the lingering presence of Ryle, Lily's ex-husband and the father of her daughter. Ryle's jealousy and volatile behavior create tension, forcing Lily to confront her fears and set firm boundaries. Atlas, meanwhile, grapples with his own insecurities and the weight of his past, including his relationship with his estranged mother. The novel balances romantic moments with realistic portrayals of emotional recovery, showing how both characters have grown and learned from their pasts.

The book matters because it offers a nuanced portrayal of love after abuse, emphasizing that healing is not linear and that healthy relationships require communication, trust, and mutual respect. It also provides closure for fans of the first novel, answering lingering questions about Lily and Atlas's fate. While it is a work of fiction, it resonates with readers who appreciate stories about resilience, second chances, and the power of self-love.

Key Takeaways

- Healing from past trauma is a gradual process, and it's okay to take time to trust again.
- Setting clear boundaries with an ex-partner is essential for your own emotional well-being and your child's safety.
- Open and honest communication is the foundation of a healthy relationship, especially when navigating complicated histories.
- You can love someone and still recognize that they are not good for you; distance is sometimes necessary.
- Past relationships can shape you, but they don't have to define your future choices.

- It's important to prioritize your own happiness and the well-being of your children over societal expectations.
- Reconnecting with a first love can be beautiful, but it requires both partners to be in a healthy, stable place.
- Forgiveness is possible, but it doesn't mean you have to allow someone back into your life.

Chapter Summaries

Part One: Lily

Lily is adjusting to life as a single mother to Emerson, running her flower shop, and dealing with Ryle's occasional visits. She runs into Atlas at a restaurant, and they exchange numbers, rekindling their connection. Lily feels conflicted about her feelings for Atlas while trying to maintain a cordial relationship with Ryle for their daughter's sake. The section establishes the delicate balance Lily must maintain between her past and her present.

Part Two: Atlas

Atlas reflects on his past, including his homelessness and his relationship with Lily as a teenager. He is now a successful restaurant owner, but he still carries guilt and longing for Lily. He decides to reach out to her, and they begin texting and meeting in secret. Atlas also deals with his mother's reappearance in his life, which brings up painful memories. His perspective reveals his deep love for Lily and his hope for a second chance.

Part Three: Lily and Atlas

Lily and Atlas begin dating openly, but Ryle becomes increasingly hostile and possessive. He makes passive-aggressive comments and tries to undermine their relationship. Lily struggles with guilt about moving on, especially because Ryle is the father of her child. Atlas supports her, but he also fears that his past will scare her away. The couple navigates the challenges of blending their lives while dealing with external pressures.

Part Four: Confrontations

Ryle's behavior escalates, leading to a confrontation at Lily's apartment where he accuses her of betraying him. Lily stands her ground, asserting her right to move on. Atlas arrives and defends Lily, leading to a physical altercation. The incident forces Lily to make a firm decision about her boundaries with Ryle. She realizes that she cannot let fear dictate her happiness.

Part Five: Resolution

Lily and Atlas solidify their relationship, with Atlas moving into Lily's home. They discuss their future, including the possibility of having a child together. Ryle eventually accepts the situation, though he remains distant. The novel ends with Lily and Atlas planning a life together, having overcome their pasts and embraced a hopeful future. The final scenes emphasize their

commitment to each other and their family.

Themes

- Healing from trauma
- Second chances
- Co-parenting after abuse
- Setting boundaries
- Self-love and growth
- Communication in relationships

Notable Quotes

- "Sometimes the hardest part isn't letting go but learning to start over." — Lily reflects on her journey of moving on from Ryle and embracing a new chapter with Atlas.
- "You are my favorite person, Lily. You always have been." — Atlas tells Lily how much she means to him during a tender moment.
- "I don't want to be the reason you're not happy. I want to be the reason you are." — Atlas expresses his desire to make Lily happy, not to complicate her life.
- "We all have a past. It doesn't define who we are, but it does shape who we become." — Lily reflects on how her experiences have influenced her growth.
- "Love is a choice. It's not something you fall into; it's something you build." — Lily realizes that her relationship with Atlas is a conscious choice she makes every day.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is It Starts with Us about?

It Starts with Us is a contemporary romance novel that continues the story of Lily Bloom and Atlas Corrigan from *It Ends with Us*. It follows Lily as she navigates single motherhood and a new relationship with Atlas while dealing with her ex-husband Ryle's jealousy. The book alternates between Lily's and Atlas's perspectives, exploring themes of healing, second chances, and the complexities of love after abuse.

Is It Starts with Us worth reading?

If you loved *It Ends with Us* and want closure for Lily and Atlas, yes. The book offers a satisfying continuation with emotional depth and romance. However, it is lighter on plot than the first novel and focuses more on character development. Fans of Colleen Hoover's writing style will enjoy it, but it may not stand alone as strongly.

How does It Starts with Us end?

Spoiler: Lily and Atlas end up together, with Atlas moving into Lily's home. They discuss having a child together, and Ryle eventually accepts the situation, though he remains distant. The novel closes with Lily and Atlas planning a future, having overcome their pasts and embraced a hopeful, loving life together.

Who should read It Starts with Us?

Readers who enjoyed It Ends with Us and want to see Lily and Atlas's story continue. It's also for those who appreciate contemporary romance with emotional depth, themes of healing from abuse, and realistic portrayals of co-parenting. If you're looking for a light, plot-driven romance, this may not be the best fit.

How long does it take to read It Starts with Us?

At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it takes about 6-7 hours to read the entire book. Most readers finish it in a few days, depending on how much time they dedicate to reading. It's a quick, engaging read typical of Colleen Hoover's novels.