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Jennifer Graves , Emily Gray Clawson

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In December, 2009, Susan Cox Powell was reported missing from her home in West Valley City, Utah. As law enforcement tried to piece together what had happened to Susan, her husband, Josh Powell, became the only person of interest in the case. For Jennifer Graves, Josh's sister, the nightmare started long before Susan's disappearance. From her experiences growing up in the Powell family to the terrifying moment when she first started to believe her brother was a killer, she relied on her faith to stay strong. She devoted herself to the safety of Susan's boys, Charlie and Braden, whom she hoped to be able to raise as her own. When the boys were murdered by their father in February, 2012, Jennifer was more than devastated, but she had to believe there was a reason for it all---including the deaths of her beloved nephews. In *A Light In Dark Places*, Jennifer shares her struggles and her triumphs. In coming to terms with such tragedy she finally was able to embrace the truth that we all have the power to choose our own path---and there is always hope, no matter how dark things may seem.

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Cathy says

Jennifer Graves knows a good deal about tragedy. In the last 5 years, not only has her beloved sister-in-law Susan Powell disappeared to never be found, but her brother Josh killed himself and two children in a terrible fiery blast at his rental home in Washington. Jennifer has learned that the only place you can really put your trust during these kinds of situations is in a loving Heavenly Father who will never leave us to deal with these types of things on our own. This is the story of tragedy, yet also a story of survival, faith and love as told in Jennifer's own words.

I remember when Susan Powell was found missing from her home in 2009, it seemed almost too obvious as to what had happened to her, due to her husband Josh's very strange behavior. There are many details in this book that either were never released to the public from the police or that I simply no longer remember. I also remember how sad it was to find out the tragic end for Josh and Susan's two sons. This book makes that even more personal, because to Jennifer, they were going to be her sons one day. I liked how Jennifer talked about her early family life and the decision that she made when she was 14 years old that she would not follow in her father's path. I love how she talks about what a pivotal moment for her. I was able to read this book fairly quickly, it's well written, and very sad.

Mareena says

On December 7, 2009, a nightmare that eventually spanned two years began with a single phone call: "Susan never dropped off the boys." Susan Cox Powell was reported missing from her West Valley City, Utah home in December, 2009. As law enforcement diligently tried to piece together what had happened to Susan, suspicion fell on her husband Josh Powell, and he soon became the only person of interest in the case.

For Jennifer Graves, Josh's sister, the nightmare began long before Susan's disappearance. From her experiences growing up in the Powell family to the terrifying moment when she first started to believe that her brother was capable of murder, she relied on her faith to stay strong. She devoted herself to ensuring the safety of Susan's sons, Charlie and Braden, whom she hoped to be able to raise as her own.

When the boys were murdered by their father in February, 2012, Jennifer was beyond devastated. However, somehow she had to believe there was a purpose for it all - including the deaths of her precious nephews. In *A Light in Dark Places*, Jennifer shares her struggles and triumphs. In coming to terms with such tragedy, she was finally able to embrace the truth that we all have the ability to choose our own path through life - and there is always hope, no matter how dark things may seem.

This was such a poignant story for me to read - in my opinion, *A Light in Dark Places* is truly a wonderfully inspiring tribute to the memories of Susan, Charlie, and Braden. I give this book an A+!

Rena Mackley says

Wow. It's a privilege to tell you about *A Light in Dark Places*. This is a personal account from the viewpoint of Josh Powell's sister, the man who is suspected of killing his wife and later blew up himself and his two young sons. What a hard story to tell. But one with a purpose. Jennifer Graves and co-author Emily Graves Clawson write this biographical account in sequential events that kept me turning page after page. A fascinating read that grabbed my emotions, tastefully done with the right amount of details to portray an accurate account from her viewpoint, but without getting too disturbing. This book is meant to give hope to others locked in abusive relationships, but I would recommend it to any but the most sensitive adult reader.

Kathryn Svendsen says

This must have been a very difficult book to write. It documents the results of the legacy of abuse that has been handed down from generation to generation. It is clearly written, and shows the pain and anguish that the author (the sister of the suspected murderer Josh Powell) and went through in the two years after her sister-in-law disappeared. While her father, brothers and sister rallied around her brother Josh and slandered his missing wife Susan, Jennifer had the courage to stand up for her sister-in-law and friend.

One of the hardest things still, I think, is the lack of closure, as Susan's body has never been found, and while to those that knew Josh Powell could tell that he had killed his wife Susan, they could never get a confession from him or enough evidence to convict him. However, his suicide and the death of his two children by his hand is probably all the evidence anyone really needs.

Though this is a very sad and tragic story, it is not without hope. For, while Josh was not able to escape the cycle of abuse, Jennifer has been able to break that cycle and help many others to do the same. And she says that Susan's death has not been in vain either. Many who have heard about these events have spoken with her and have found the courage to get the help they needed to break that cycle too.

I gave this book 4 stars.

I received this book in exchange for a fair and honest review. All opinions are my own.

Sheila says

Even though I followed this story as it was happening, I was still so emotionally moved as I read, *A Light in Dark Places*. My heart hurt so much for Jennifer as I read the story of her life. I also felt such empathy for the people who loved Susan Cox Powell and her two boys. So much heartbreak revolves around this true story. *A Light in Dark Places* is written well and a very compelling read. Even though I knew the outcome of this sad story, it was good to hear Jennifer's side of the story and how her love and faith carried her through this great trial of losing her beloved sister-in-law and her precious nephews. It was also very intriguing to hear many facts that hadn't been shared with the public about the case.

Personally, I remember hoping and praying so long that Susan would be found. We kept seeing her beautiful smiling face on TV radiating with brightness and joy. It was nice to hear in Jennifer's words what a special

person Susan really was. This book is a wonderful tribute to Susan and her boys, Braden and Charlie. I really thought I would be totally depressed reading this book. I was so surprised that even though Susan and Jennifer's life stories tugged at my heart, I was left with a feeling of peace and hope that Susan is now with her precious boys in Heaven. Thank you Jennifer for sharing yours and Susan's story.

Aimee (Getting Your Read On) says

I knew going into this book that it was going to be hard to read. So emotional and such disturbing events. I actually debated for quite awhile before committing to review this because I just wasn't sure I wanted to delve into this. It's almost like an accident on the freeway or something where you don't want to see but you just can't look away.

I am really glad I read this book though. I have such admiration for Jennifer Graves and what she is trying to accomplish by writing this book. The things she has been through are so heart wrenching. So, so sad. But she is pushing forward. She has found light in all the darkness that surrounded her and now she is trying to tell a story that could save others from the same fate.

Reading this book was hard. It made me sad and it also made me angry. Nobody should have to endure abuse in any form. It takes bravery to tell this kind of story. It's so personal and so devastating. Jennifer Graves was raised in a twisted home full of darkness but she was able to break the cycle and rise above it. Her beautiful family is a testament to her and her husband that cycles can be broken and one person can make a difference.

Jennifer is speaking out for the voices that no longer can. She is telling her story to help those who may be suffering similar things. Her message is clear. There is hope. There is help. Please get help before it's too late.

I feel like I walk away from this book with a better understanding. I walk away with a greater appreciation for the husband and family that I have, determined to never take that for granted. I walk away with more compassion and empathy and hopefully knowledge that can help me if the day ever comes that I need it.

May God bless you, Jennifer Graves, and your family. Thank you for sharing your message with me. I won't forget.

Jordan McCollum says

I live in Utah, so I saw quite a bit of the Susan Powell case in passing. Soon after the horrifying conclusion, one of my critique partners, Emily Clawson, had a daunting new project: she was friend with Jennifer Graves, Josh Powell's older sister, and Jennifer needed to tell her story—and she needed Emily's help to do it.

For over a year, I caught snippets of the direction and message of this memoir. Finally this weekend I cleared out the time to sit down and read it Sunday afternoon. Even though I was familiar with the story and the premise of the memoir, I couldn't put it down, and I finished the whole thing in one afternoon.

Although it deals with very dark and disturbing behaviors and the most difficult ordeal Jennifer has ever experienced, the book's message of hope resounds loud and clear. The cover implies that Susan was a light in dark places, but I come away feeling like it's really Jennifer who continues to fight, to try to cast light in dark places, who carries a message of hope for anyone trapped by a dark past.

(I received a copy of this book free for review, but I'd already purchased it at full price plus tax. What do you make of that, FTC?)

Shauna says

This book truly is "a light in a dark place."

Written from the heart and filled with many emotions it is not only a "healing writing", but also an inspiration to those who might be going through a similar situation of living with abuse.

This story is a light to show others the way to safety.

Beautifully written your mind will be intrigued and your heart will be filled with compassion.

Susan Powell went missing in 2009.

Her husband, Josh, was thought to be guilty but was never convicted.

Josh's sister, Jennifer, spent months, even years trying to fully understand what really happened and to get Susan's boys into her home and out of a potentially harmful situation.

And that situation proved to be traumatic...

Plagued with family abuse from her father, Jennifer feels torn between emotions...anger, guilt, shame, protectiveness... to name just a few.

She admirably tells her story in hopes of helping someone else break the chains of abuse like she has.

This story will captivate your heart!

Kathleen Dixon says

We hear so often the tales of abuse, of marital violence, and of murder. Usually I don't follow them. I prefer (if I'm going to read or watch anything of this sort) the stories to be fictional. Then I can get caught up in the tension and have my fear and compassion stimulated while knowing that it's not true, that no real person was actually experiencing those dreadful things. Of course, I know that real people do. And I've read about them in the past. And I don't want to link myself to their pain any more.

Nevertheless, when I received the email from Inspired Kathy of the blog I Am a Reader, Not a Writer about this Book Blast and Blog Tour, and I read the initial information about the book, I was drawn to read it.

This is the blurb:

In December, 2009, Susan Cox Powell was reported missing from her home in West Valley City, Utah. As law enforcement tried to piece together what had happened to Susan, her husband, Josh Powell, became the only person of interest in the case.

For Jennifer Graves, Josh's sister, the nightmare started long before Susan's disappearance. From her experiences growing up in the Powell family to the terrifying moment when she first started to believe her brother was a killer, she relied on her faith to stay strong. She devoted herself to the safety of Susan's boys, Charlie and Braden, whom she hoped to be able to raise as her own. When the boys were murdered by their father in February, 2012, Jennifer was more than devastated, but she had to believe there was a reason for it all—including the deaths of her beloved nephews.

In *A Light In Dark Places*, Jennifer shares her struggles and her triumphs. In coming to terms with such tragedy she finally was able to embrace the truth that we all have the power to choose our own path—and there is always hope, no matter how dark things may seem.

I was a little concerned that I might find the book too overtly Christian. By that I mean that it might focus too much on the power of prayer or have some Biblical reference every second page. I find such books too simplistic and unable to be relevant to the average person's life. Yet, while it's clear how much her faith means to her, Jennifer Graves neither wrote as if she were trying to convince the reader that faith is necessary, nor as if she assumed that her readers had the same belief as her. Her beliefs are simply part of her life, but stated matter-of-factly. To me that's really good, because it makes the book one that a non-Christian can enjoy.

This book has all the hallmarks of a thriller. The reader is caught up in the tension, in the highs and lows, and in the backstory as it is gradually revealed. And even though we know the ending before we start reading, we can't help but be drawn into the story. This poignant example highlights the power of the narrative:

A couple days later as I was doing laundry, I caught myself humming happily. The sound was so foreign that it stopped me in my tracks. I put the laundry basket down and leaned against the wall. When was the last time I'd been happy enough to hum like that? I couldn't even remember. Had it really been since before Susan's disappearance? Suddenly, I realized what a burden had been lifted. Knowing the boys were out of that house had changed me. My shoulders were straighter. I was smiling. And humming. I closed my eyes and offered a silent prayer of gratitude.

"Thank you for getting the boys to safety."

I picked up the laundry basket and carried it upstairs. I felt fifty pounds lighter.

It was amazing what hope could do.

I like that the author never became bitter. I also like that, the blurb notwithstanding, she doesn't try to tell us that there's a reason for her sister's disappearance and her nephews' deaths. She does, however, show by her own example that it is possible, no matter what awful things have happened to us, no matter what tragedies have befallen those we love, to "choose our own path".

Dawn says

I received a free copy of this book for an honest review.

I remember hearing about this tragic story off and on over the past few years. When I first heard the story my reaction was the same as most people: camping in January? Yeah, right. He had to be guilty. And, of course, after Josh killed his boys, the reaction was one of horror. How could a father kill his own children? I jumped at the chance to read about it and possibly learn how in the world this could have happened.

A Light in Dark Places is well written and Jennifer makes the reader understand what she went through. I felt her pain and frustration although I still can't imagine going through all she went through and keeping my sanity. She is a strong woman.

This isn't just the story of Josh and the disappearance of Susan but also about the cycle of abuse and how it tends to get worse with each generation unless the cycle is broken. It's about the abuse Jennifer and her siblings endured at the hands of their father and how it affected each child in a different way. Jennifer has proven that with faith and a strong support system, it is possible to break that cycle and be a loving, non-abusive parent.

I definitely recommend *A Light in Dark Places*. I found it interesting, heart breaking, and easy to read.

Jolee B says

Obviously this story was one I already knew, but it was still interested to read it from the perspective of Josh Powell's sister, who wrote the book. I'd recommend it to people, even though it was sad and disturbing... so was the news coverage. It was a quick read and the author did a good job of bringing everything together and painting an honest picture.

Don says

A Light in Dark Places by Jennifer Graves and Emily Clawson is a courageous book. People who live in Utah and Washington may be familiar with the story of Jennifer's sister-in-law Susan Powell who went missing under suspicious circumstances in December of 2009. Her husband, Jennifer's brother, Josh Powell exhibited clear signs that he killed Susan, but not clear enough to be arrested by the police. The story became national news when Josh eventually killed his two young sons and committing suicide.

My wife knows Jennifer Graves through home schooling activities and Steven Koecher, another missing person that Jennifer's father Stephen Powell tried to implicate in Susan's disappearance, was a neighbor of mine, so I was familiar with the story before I read the book. Nevertheless, the book provides a perspective that only a family member could have. It must have been a trying experience to be raised in such a difficult family environment and equally difficult to write about it.

The story is a good example of how someones childhood can have an adverse impact under the influence of a bad father, as obviously happened to Josh, but at the same time it shows that under the positive influence of religion, people can make good choices, as obviously happened to Jennifer. Two people, raised in the same environment, end up living very different lives.

Josh became a selfish, controlling tyrant while Jennifer became a loving wife and home school mom. It should give hope to people growing up in difficult circumstances. When life gives you a hard situation, you can still make good choices and it is made much easier when you have religious faith and understanding.

As a society we would be better off encouraging greater religiosity instead of greater secularness that accepts pornography and other vices as normal. Such positive actions give us more people like Jennifer Graves and Susan Powell and fewer people like Josh Powell and Stephen Powell.

Melanie says

Many people followed the story of Susan Powell and her mysterious disappearance. It was interesting to read what went on behind-the-scenes with Jennifer. She had a sick feeling about her brother Josh early on and I can't imagine how that would feel to realize that your sibling could actually commit murder. As she goes into more of their family situation, I was impressed at how she was able to remove herself from them and improve her life. It sounds like she married a fantastic man that helps her through the rough times.

The ending to this story isn't a secret. I remember watching TV and seeing the headline flash across the bottom that Josh had blown up a house with his sons and himself inside. I hadn't been following the story closely so I didn't realize what exactly led up to that and it sounds like he felt cornered where the truth would come out and didn't want to face up to it. I felt devastated for Jennifer as she thought she would be able to raise her adorable nephews and give them a safe home only to have Josh perform one last, selfish act.

Jennifer shares the comfort she has received in her faith, knowing that the boys are now with Susan and they are all safe. Her story is inspiring and demonstrates that peace can be found in tragedy. I was also impressed with Susan's parents and how they've handled all that's happened and I hope they are also able to find peace.

Mel's Shelves

Hanna Snow Mueller says

Very emotional and raw. Jennifer Graves gives heart-wrenching details about the hardest thing her family ever went through.

Kathleen says

A Light In Dark Places is an intriguing true account story into what really happened in the high profile media murder case of Susan Cox Powell and her sons Charlie and Braden by husband/father Josh Powell.

As the sister of Josh Powell, Author Jennifer Graves thoughtfully shares the heartbreaking story of the dysfunctional family dynamic of domestic abuse and other disturbing events that occurred in their family, while finding the strength to stand her ground and fight for justice for her sister-in-law and nephews' murders.

You can't help but feel compassion for Jennifer as she shares the details of the traumatic events that unfolded

in her family, and feel inspired by her message of courage, love, hope, faith and peace that comes out of this senseless tragedy. Jennifer does a wonderful job of honoring the memory of Susan and her boys, while providing the reader with an enlightening and healing story of being able to stand up and overcome domestic abuse within a family/relationship.

The authors' inspirational message about breaking the cycle of abusive relationships is invaluable. It truly does take someone removing themselves from their abusive family's presence to stop the cycle. Kudos to Jennifer for having the courage to share this tragic story with the world.

A Light In Dark Places is an inspirational story that everyone needs to read, it will resonate with you for a long time.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of the book from the authors in exchange for my honest review and participation in a virtual book tour event hosted by I Am A Reader.

<http://jerseygirlbookreviews.blogspot...>
