



## **The Storm Within**

*Darlene Deluca*

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They say 'lightning doesn't strike twice.' But they're wrong.

Claire Stapleton is living proof. First, she loses her beloved son to war. Then, her husband to another woman. As the life she's known implodes, she struggles to pick up the pieces – to fit in. And in a small community like Whitfield, that's harder than she ever dreamed.

Overnight, Claire falls from toast of the town to talk of the town. Long-time friends rally around, but confused and off-balance, Claire finds herself traveling a lonely, unfamiliar road without a map. And there are no detour signs to help her get back on the right track. Spiraling on a self-destructive path, Claire fights to find her way – and a reason to start over.

They say, 'what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.' Could they be right?

## **The Storm Within Details**

Date : Published August 24th 2013 by CreateSpace (first published July 29th 2013)

ISBN : 9781490379231

Author : Darlene Deluca

Format : Paperback 317 pages

Genre : Fiction, Drama

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## From Reader Review *The Storm Within* for online ebook

### **Pypa says**

This is a book about what can happen to any of us if the pressures of real life spiral out of control. No sugar coating. Just the bare truth. Well done!

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### **Marti says**

**The Storm Within** by Darlene Deluca was a great book. I didn't mean to read the entire book in one sitting, but I did. I found myself feeling for Claire so much. She lost her son, then her husband, and then her way. Too much sorrow, too much kept in and too much time leads to devastation for Claire.

This novel was a great eye opener reminding all of us, that we are not alone, and we are needed. Claire was in rough shape. She felt unloved and alone. She was lucky she had all her friends and daughter help her. It was harder than people around her realized for Claire to start all over again.

I liked the language of the book and the careful crafting of the story. The book read quickly and grabbed you just as quickly. I was happy to note that this was the first book of a series (Women of Whitfield). That means there will be more to enjoy. What an awesome way to start a trilogy!

BTW – LOVED the symbolism of the tree at the end!

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### **Pamela Carroll says**

I was pleased when I found I won this book as a giveaway and I was not disappointed once I read it. The story itself was modern and I could easily relate to much of the anguish of the main character. Life throws many things at us. It's up to us to use coping skills to deal with them. There are times escapism is easier than dusting off a coping skill and putting it to good use. Some days it's second nature to slide into denial due to an intensity of a spiral from escapism behavior. The author shares such a scenario with taste, a dab of humor and shows the necessity of a support group sharing the love. Good job, DD.

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### **Lady Vigilante (Feifei) says**

Before I begin, I was given an ARC of this book for an honest review.

*“This tree is like us, dear friend, lots of individual branches going every which way, but with deep roots, and a trunk that's a little bit twisted, but fused together forever.”*

This is it. This is the book I've been waiting for. The one that tapped at my feelings, wore down my defenses, and broke me down, piece by piece. Never have I been so emotionally invested in a book before,

literally shouting out and cheering on the heroine as she struggles and survives all the obstacles life throws at her. I'm only 19, I've never been married and I don't have any kids, but while I read this book, I *felt* like a wife, a mother, an alcoholic, a loner, and everything else Claire was, **I was**. This isn't one of those nice, sweet happily-ever-afters; this is an intense, eye-opening journey of one woman's life and how she crashed and burned. How she found the courage and strength to survive and move forward. This is Claire's story.

*"A thousand memories flashed through her mind. Their wedding, vacations, playing with kids in the backyard. They'd had happy times. Lots of them, in fact. So much history... gone."*

Claire is barely living after losing her son, Ben, to the Army when she is smacked with divorce from her husband for thirty-two years. As a result, her life (what's left of it) crumbles completely, and she turns to wine and alcohol for comfort. Personally, I am against drinking, but for Claire, I just can't fathom the pain and anguish she must feel. Pain and sorrow for her lost son, regret for what could've been with Elise, and bitter resentment towards Stan. I completely understood her desire, her need to be numb for a while. After all, no one can run on autopilot forever. The one time I thought Claire may have a second chance at love, he turns out to be vengeful bastard. My heart broke for Claire, and I felt her embarrassment and hopelessness.

*"Where was character and honor? Was this the life of a single woman in her fifties? Was she to assume that every man she came in contact with was a sleazy scumbag?"*

I think the turning point of this story was Elise. She is the daughter I hope to be, and the daughter I hope to have. She was the strongest character in the book and her strength was indomitable. Without her constantly looking out for Claire, I honestly don't think Claire would have made it.

*"The Army didn't kill all of your kids, Mom. You still have a kid. I'm still here. You know, I could use a mom. A little help."*

Oh Elise!! There were many times I wanted to jump in the book and give her a hug. She already has a family, a job, a life, yet she still makes the effort to save her mom from destroying herself. Not many daughters in modern society would do that for their moms. Most would probably send them off to rehab or a nursing home, but Elise stays strong for her mother.

*"And you know what else? My kids could use a grandmother. Someone else to give a damn about them. You could do that, Mom. You've got the time and the money. And you're wasting it. You're wasting your life."*

What I love so much about Darlene's writing is that it sucks you in, from the very first page. Nothing is overstated or downplayed, and every word counts.

*"In that moment, Claire realized she was about ten years behind. Her relationship with Elise needed to evolve. Sure, she'd always be the mom, but Elise was a grown woman. They should be friends."*

While I was reading the book, I was overwhelmed by my emotions and how much these characters evolved. This book wasn't just about how Claire grew back to be a confident, responsible, loving mother and friend; this book was about mother-daughter relationships, relationships between men and women, marriage, and friendships. There were tough times in the story, and I almost thought that the characters wouldn't be able to overcome their differences.

*"Elise hadn't realized just how much her life had been defined by her little brother. Before Ben. With Ben. After Ben."*

It was extremely heartwarming to watch Claire heal, physically and emotionally, and see a deep bond form and grow between Claire and Elise. Claire's friends, especially Mary, were extremely crucial to her recovery and were always there for her, even during the hard times. In the end, it really didn't matter *who* Claire was before or *what* she did or *why* she did the things she did, but *how* she became the person she is today.

*"She shuddered a deep breath. Didn't matter. Those stares were for a woman who no longer existed. As of this day, that pathetic excuse for a living person was gone. **Be the person you want to be.**"*

I will definitely be on the lookout for book 2, which is Dana's story.

5 BREATHTAKING STARS!!!!

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### **Toni says**

Love, love, love this book! The characters are so real, and the way the author tells the story made me feel like I was really there. I experienced so many emotions-- fear, anger, disappointment, anguish, happiness and triumph -- all in one book! This is Darlene's best work yet. I can't wait to read the other two stories in the Women of Whitfield series.

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### **Julie says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! I completely empathized with Claire, the main character, and hurt along with her through the adversities she had to deal with. I really felt her pain, and was rooting for her to stay strong! I also really enjoyed the way that women's friendships were an important topic in the story. I so look forward to reading the following books in this series!

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### **Gayle says**

I picked this because it looked like an easy read and had a high rating. Well, I have to confess I found it quite ordinary. A story of an older woman's decline when the bottom falls out of her world. Not one to recommend - sorry.

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### **Lizzie says**

#### **Riviting and so true about the pitfalls of so many women around us, living in silence**

I admire Claire's triumph over devastating events she had to endure. Alcoholism and death must be dealt with, but only with the desire to begin again. Friends are a true blessing!

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## **Margaret Fraleigh says**

This is the first book I have read by this author.

I loved the characters and the story.

When I finished this book, I learned that there is a book #2 called Second Wind.

Can't wait to read about Dana's story.

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## **Michelle Grey says**

So fortunate to be a critique partner for this diverse and talented author. The Storm Within is a departure from Darlene's other work which all contain romantic elements. And, in my opinion, this book is her sweet spot. She delves deeply into the thoughts, actions and reactions of Claire, a woman careening headlong toward a precipice she doesn't even see.

Keep up the great work, Darlene. Can't wait for Dana's and Mary's stories!

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## **Mary Asbury says**

### **Very Good Book**

I thought this book was so true to life.

I would definitely recommend it to any one.

It had my emotions all over the place.

I am looking forward to reading the next in the series

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## **Lisa says**

This book brings out so many emotions. You can't help but fall in love with each character. I found myself loving and hating Claire. Feeling sorry for her and hurting along with her. The story moved quickly. This is the first book I read from this author and would like to read some more of her books.

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## **Teen says**

\*\*I received an ARC from the author in exchange for an honest review of which I so appreciated\*\*\*

I sat down to spend a couple of hours to begin this book thinking that I'd dedicate a couple of hours over the

next few days to finish the story. Best laid plans and all that, right? Right! Needless to say, I started and finished it in one sitting because I could not stop reading...the story had me that engaged.

(I did stop for 30 mins to slap a meal together for the husband, left him sitting at the table, and then disappeared into the pages, again. BTW..I have no idea what I cooked for him)

Such a deep and emotional story of one woman's anguishing descent into despair and her journey towards triumph over adversity following the death of her soldier son and the subsequent death of her marriage. But, it doesn't end here. More challenges come her way. Claire is not weak....just weakened. I love that she was portrayed this way. But,

truly, how much adversity can one woman face before her strength gives out and her will to face reality and the pain wanes? And, when she travels down the wrong road, what will it take for her to turn the course of her life around to redefine herself and trust the woman she truly is?

You will find the answers to these questions in a beautifully written story told from Claire's POV that is ripe with emotions, inner turmoil, suffering, denial, and, ultimately, her courage and acceptance. As the reader, I was drawn completely into the emotions of Claire. At one point in the story...my chest felt tight. I felt anger and shame.....I empathized with Claire....I felt her confusion, pain, and fear. ....all barometers for an expressly, well-written book.

No one can travel this type of journey alone and Claire is no exception. Therefore, be prepared to meet Claire's tenacious BFF, Mary, (I love her) who is "in her face" at every turn as well as a daughter, Elise, who refuses to give up on her mom even though their relationship is somewhat distant. What does it feel like to watch your mother dissolve in front of your very eyes and feel helpless to stop it? Elise's POV is written so poignantly I felt her fear and uncertainty, the sense of helplessness yet her determination. At first, I didn't like Elise very much.....then she won me over.

I had only one disappointment with the book and that was my unrequited thirst for revenge on a couple of the characters who did Claire SOOOO wrong..one of which is the sleazeball bastard of a husband.... But, that is just the badass in me who believes in an eye for eye. Oh, well!

This story is about pain and courage, choice and determination, sorrow and strength, and...in the end, the power of the love of friendship and family.

I look forward to reading Dana's story next in the Women of Whitfield series. You found your niche, Ms. Deluca. Take note!

Edited to also comment that I love the book cover. Beautiful and Perfect!

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## **Sandra says**

I have been reading the 'first book' from a lot of different series by different authors and this is an author that I definitely want to follow. This book actually took me by surprise as I had ordered it quite some time ago when it appeared as a free kindle book and it 'got lost' in my library of books. I saw it one day when I was browsing through the titles looking for something to read, and the name appealed to me as I wondered what it was about. What a great surprise!

I won't go into the details of the story but it contains a bit of everything, some sorrow, surprise, camaraderie,

family issues, adorable grandchildren, loving daughter and the value of having true and faithful friends.

The name "The Storm Within" is a great name because it has some suspense in it and also it solidifies Murphy's Law which we often hear quoted - "Sometimes when one thing goes wrong, everything goes wrong" and I am quite sure that the heroine in this story, Claire Stapleton, must have felt that way.

Thanks to Darlene Deluca for a great read.

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### **Jane-Elyse says**

This first in a trilogy had me impatiently waiting for the second book. The women of Whitfield and their deep friendships drew me in until I felt nearly like I was one of them. Deluca created a wonderful community in small-town Kansas. Her women are bright, savvy, and ready to support each other without anyone having to ask. You will want these women to be your friends, too.

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