



# The Best of Us

*Sarah Peckanen*

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## **The Best of Us Sarah Pekkanen**

An all-expense-paid week at a luxury villa in Jamaica—it's the invitation of a lifetime for a group of old college friends. All four women are desperate not just for a reunion, but for an escape: Tina is drowning under the demands of mothering four young children. Allie is shattered by the news that a genetic illness runs in her family. Savannah is carrying the secret of her husband's infidelity. And, finally, there's Pauline, who spares no expense to throw her wealthy husband an unforgettable thirty-fifth birthday celebration, hoping it will gloss over the cracks already splitting apart their new marriage.

Languid hours on a private beach, gourmet dinners, and late nights of drinking kick off an idyllic week for the women and their husbands. But as a powerful hurricane bears down on the island, turmoil swirls inside the villa, forcing each of the women to reevaluate everything she knows about her friends—and herself.

## **The Best of Us Details**

Date : Published April 9th 2013 by Washington Square Press (first published January 1st 2013)

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Author : Sarah Pekkanen

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Genre : Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Fiction, Contemporary, Adult Fiction

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## **From Reader Review The Best of Us for online ebook**

### **BJ says**

This was my first book by this author and I will definitely be checking out her other books. The story was engaging and the characters were interesting. I always seem to enjoy stories about groups of friends who gather together many years after college or high school. One of my favorite movies is *The Big Chill*, so there you go. In this story there is Tina, Allie, Savannah and Dwight who were all friends in college. Dwight's wife, Pauline, who doesn't really know any of the other women, plans a week long birthday celebration for her husband and invites all 3 women and their significant others to Jamaica for a week while a hurricane is bearing down on the island. Makes for great drama. Thoroughly enjoyable read.

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### **Leonel says**

The premise of Sarah Pekkanen's "The Best Of Us" sounded so interesting that I couldn't wait to read it. A group of college friends decide to vacation together in a villa in Jamaica to celebrate one of their birthdays. My friends always schedule reunions during our birthdays so I can totally relate to the concept. (On a side note, I wish Ms. Pekannen didn't choose the homophobic country of Jamaica, but that's neither here nor there) I started this book a couple of times because found the first chapters a little slow. It finally gets its groove about thirty percent in, but I am thinking maybe the reason why I just can't get into the book is that the characters are unlikeable. Almost halfway through, I do not find myself rooting for any of the characters, and then they all start behaving badly while they are on vacation. I kind of understand that, but it just made me care less about them, and I even thought some of their actions were very reprehensible that they would be life-changing in the way that I would never associate with them again. But this is supposed to be a beach read and it gets the drama juices flowing, I guess. It was an effort to like this book, in my opinion.

<http://luhathoughts.blogspot.com/2013...>

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### **Tamara says**

This is my first Sarah Pekkanen novel and I really enjoyed it. This is the exact type of beach read that I love and would shop for when I needed a good healthy dose of "chick lit".

I immediately felt that I could relate to the characters and found myself drawing comparisons between myself and Sarah's characters. I found her writing style to be fluid and I loved that throughout the story her characters became multifaceted. They continued to evolve throughout the story and just when I thought I was ready to give up on one, the character redeemed themselves. I am thinking of Savannah and Gio specifically.

After finishing this book I immediately downloaded another Sarah Pekkanen novel, as well as some of her short novellas. I would definitely recommend this book to my girlfriends. I feel rather lucky that the book I happened to win in a drawing is a book I would have been happy to purchase. Sarah has gained a new fan!! Thanks GoodReads for making this reader so happy!

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## **Kelly Kofron says**

I hate myself for reading this book.

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## **Cheryl says**

Pauline is throwing a huge spectacular party for her husband, Dwight. She has invited all of his friends for an exotic birthday party in Jamaica. The guests include Tina and her husband Gio. Tina needs this vacation. She has not had a break from her children in a long time. Then there is Allie and her husband, Ryan. Allie is keeping a secret from Ryan. Finally there is Savannah. She arrives alone. This is due to her husband cheating on her. Everyone's secrets come out when hurricane Betty sweeps in.

I liked the girl friendship relationship between Tina, Allie, and Savannah. However I don't know if my friendship would be as strong as theirs if it involved infidelity. Also, I did not really feel like they were the best of friends. The way that they treated each other was kind of mean.

In fact, I felt that everyone in this book was self-centered except for Pauline. What Pauline was going through, I felt sorry for her. In addition, that she did seem kind-hearted and everyone just walked all over her.

Also, I could not believe how quickly everyone just changed right away. It was like since they were in another place they did not have to account for anything. Sorry for say but Jamaica is not like Vegas where the saying goes "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." The ending was pretty predictable. Overall though this was not a bad book. It is a quick read.

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## **Colleen Turner says**

Whenever I see a new book by Sarah Pekkanen is coming out I am sure of two things: (1) I will be reading it soon after it comes out and (2) I will love it! There are only a few authors I have come across that seem to be able to actually make me laugh and cry over and over again throughout the story and that can create characters that either feel like they are inside my head, experiencing the same feelings and issues I am, or are people that I wish I was friends with. None are perfect but all feel very real. The characters in *The Best of Us* are no exception.

When an invitation to celebrate their college friend Dwight's 35th birthday on an all expense paid trip to Jamaica is received, neither Tina, Allie or Savannah can think of a good reason to turn it down. Tina, a mother of four that finds herself exhausted the moment her eyes open every morning, is hoping some relaxation and time alone with her husband, Gio, will allow her to feel like a woman again, not just a mother who is constantly failing everyone. Her best friend, the always optimistic and caring Allie, needs something to take her mind off a devastating revelation regarding her birth father, information that could mean a painful, debilitating future for her and which is making it hard for even her to keep her spirits up. She hasn't been able to confide her worries to her husband, Ryan, and is hoping the trip will clear her head and allow her a week to forget about the future. And their spunky friend, Savannah, is trying her best to get over her husband's infidelity and her possible divorce by making herself even sexier than usual in an attempt to make

herself feel desirable again. Maybe a Jamaican fling is just the thing to get her groove back!

When Tina, Gio, Allie, Ryan and Savannah arrive at the airport they are beyond excited to discover they will be traveling on a private plane and that Pauline, Dwight's wife, has spared no expense to make this trip as wonderful as possible for all of them. Every tiny detail has been carefully planned and, while the others find Pauline to be haughty and hard to get to know, she is determined to make sure everyone has a great time. She figures if Dwight, a man who has always seemed on the outside of every other group, is able to have a once in a lifetime birthday with his friends, he might not realize that Pauline, and their marriage, are not all they appear to be.

While this group of old friends celebrate a week in paradise, with endless supplies of gourmet food and the best booze you could hope for, old secrets and desires begin to surface and everyone's carefully constructed facades begin to crumble. By the time a hurricane sweeps through to clear the landscape around them, mistakes have been made, deep seeded truths have been revealed and each of the woman have reevaluated everything they thought about their lives and those of the people around them. With all the uncertainty that swirls around them, even as they board the plane to head back home, it seems one thing is glaringly true for all of them: unless you can be honest with yourself and accept who you really are, you cannot be truly happy or be all you can be for those you love.

I am always shocked at how relatable Sarah Pekkanen's characters are! While I do not agree with all the choices the characters in *The Best of Us* made I can say that, seeing the situation through their eyes, I am able to at least understand why they made those choices. My favorite character and the one I related to the most was Tina. Being a mother who often feels like I am somehow failing someone no matter what I do (when I'm at work I don't have as much time for my son and husband, when I'm home and doing stuff around the house I am missing out on something my family is doing, God forbid I try to take an hour for myself...it can be exhausting!) and I can completely relate to her feelings of wanting to escape it all and then the guilt that instantly encompasses her. I also felt such kindred spirit when she was incredibly excited to be on vacation with other adults one minute and then instantly home sick for her children the next. I have felt that a number of times and it was usually through Tina that I experienced my weepy moments reading the book. The other tear worthy moments for me revolved around Pauline's storyline involving her disabled sister, Therese, and it really helped explain her more prim, closed off personality.

While so much of the story is heartfelt and tender, there were also plenty of the witty, snarky character moments I have come to love in Ms. Pekkanen's stories and they really helped to level the heavier actions and moments. Savannah is the life of the party and that friend that everyone seems to have, the one that has to always be the center of attention but that you love anyways because she has a big heart. She made a lot of mistakes and seemed to be at the center of every late night drinking binge, but when the reader gets a peek into her battered heart and mind after her husband's infidelity, you just cheer her on in discovering who she really wants to be.

Reading a Sarah Pekkanen novel can be a very cathartic experience: you will laugh, cry, then laugh some more and, by the time you turn the last page, you have not only gone on an adventure with her characters but have gotten the chance to put yourself in their shoes and maybe thought a little bit more about what you might be going through at that particular point in time. Set against the idealic paradise of a private villa in Jamaica, *The Best of Us* is a vacation in a bottle and a chance for every reader to vicariously enjoy the trip while also possibly thinking of how they might react experiencing the same problems as the characters.

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## **Trevor says**

This was my first Pekkanen novel & I have to say I was pleasantly surprised by how enjoyable this was. While there's nothing real substantial here, it's not mindless. A worthy "beachy" read.

There wasn't a particular character that I connected with the most, but I did empathise with them. Each character has faults & I liked how Pekkanen showed both the mistakes & trying to move past them. Allie is grappling with the knowledge that she has a 50/50 chance of developing ALS, while starting to have diminishing feeling for her husband & a new found affection for someone in her past. Tina is a typical overworked mother who begins to feel guilty about spending time away from her kids. Savannah is trying to escape from the betrayal of her husband's affair while starting up a fling with one of the locals. Pauline is the outcast of the group; the one who is perhaps most misunderstood.

I really enjoyed the Pauline-Therese storyline. I also liked the character's pasts sprinkled in so we could get a more thorough understanding of their intentions. I appreciated the roles the husbands played in this. While there are many cliches & eye-rolling lines, Pekkanen kept me engrossed enough to finish. She really does have a nice writing style. A semi-predictable ending; the themes to take away from here make for a nice wrap. I look forward to checking out Pekkanen's other works.

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## **Christina (Confessions of a Book Addict) says**

Pauline is married to Dwight, a billionaire, and what do you get your billionaire husband on his birthday when he has everything else? You invite his college friends to spend his birthday in a private villa in Jamaica. Pauline does this very thing and pays attention to every single detail of the trip. There's helicopter rides, a private beach, a chef, waiters, unlimited drinks, hot tubs, infinity pools, and of course, Jamaican sunshine. All of Dwight's close friends attend and everything is going swimmingly, until there's alcohol feud antics and drama made worse by an impending hurricane. This trip forces each person to come to grips with their lives and many secrets unfold. Sarah Pekkanen's *The Best of Us* is quintessential summer reading.

Read the rest of my review here:

<http://www.confessionsofabookaddict.c...>

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## **Sandra says**

**\*\*Thank you to NetGalley\*\***

*The Best of Us* by Sarah Pekkanen is simply in a word.. awesome. Having just finished reading *The Opposite of Me* for our book club (which we had the pleasure of having Ms. Pekkanen join us via Skype to discuss with us) it was a real treat to have been able to get her latest novel through NetGalley... Thank you!

This book is about 4 couples who go away for a week to an exclusive villa in Jamaica to celebrate a birthday. During the time together we learn that these couples are not as happy as they appear (or at least one of them isn't ). With a hurricane bearing down on the island, emotions run high and soon the couples are facing their own emotional hurricanes. As a woman I found myself sympathizing with almost all of the female

characters... we all have secrets of some kind or another and some we never share with others. All of the women were dealing with emotional upheaval and had a story to tell and most always it was shared with the other women and not their own husbands. The husbands were supportive and most were completely clueless about the struggles their wives were going through. Most of the women were looking for something more, either in themselves or in their relationships and it took crises for them to figure out what they were looking for was right in front of them all the time.

I am definitely a Sarah Pekkanen fan... her writing flows easily and her characters are believable. The description of the villa in Jamaica made me want to book a vacation immediately! Loved it and I look forward to reading her other books. One more note.. I find the title of the book very interesting because in my opinion the vacation brought out the worst in the characters. As with *The Opposite of Me*, the title plays an important part of the story...What IS "The Best of Us"

Review can also be found at:  
<http://gigi02.wordpress.com/>

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## **Chrissy says**

*But then again, didn't all marriages carry thousands of hurts?*

### **THE REASON:**

I chose to read *The Best of Us*, when it was sent to me for the purposes of providing a completely honest review, because I really tend to gravitate towards strong women's fiction. I love reading about the development of personal relationships from a female perspective, whether they be romantic or friendship, and the description of *THE BEST OF US* promised something that was heartfelt, beautiful, and highly engaging.

### **THE PLOT:**

Dwight was a hopeless dork in college, unarguably thin and awkward but undeniably destined to greater things in the future. After Dwight strikes it insanely rich after the creation of a magnificent dot-com business, he and his wife decide to invite a few of his old college friends on a spectacular all-expense-paid vacation to Jamaica -- complete with finely catered meals, perfectly planned activities, and the promise of a wonderful, relaxing atmosphere of friendship and fun. Who could possibly say no to that trip?

Tina is especially excited, since she was always close to Dwight in college -- she and even had an unforgettable little make-out session with him once. Tina is now married to the perfect man, but she is overburdened with the chaos of juggling a house full of young children and is hence desperate for the time away from home...

Allie and her devoted husband can't wait to make the trip either, since they've both been abundantly blessed with good luck and great circumstances -- so why not celebrate it in this glorious vacation? But, Allie has recently learned a family secret that has her intensely worried about her own future, especially her health. While she's ready to have fun in the sun, will she really be able to steer her mind away from the panics of her current problems to enjoy herself?

Savannah, known for her beauty, wealth, and diva attitude, will never pass up another opportunity to enjoy

the more lavish things in life, of course -- but she too has a secret that she's not quite ready to share with her college friends. Her own husband won't be coming to Jamaica, but Savannah isn't sure that she regrets his absence in the least. There won't be any harm in flirting with her old college pal Dwight while she's here, right?

Dwight's wife, Pauline, feels particularly uneasy around these three women who have such an interesting history with her husband -- especially since she doesn't know them in the least and doesn't expect to have anything in common with any of them. While she plans every instant of the perfect Jamaican vacation for her husband's vacation, she must juggle the fear that one of these women may be having unexpected relations with her husband -- while all the while dealing with the terrible secret that she, herself, has been hiding from Dwight. Can she really keep her focus for this week in paradise?

And then, by the time the group learns that a hurricane has veered from its original path, heading straight towards their perfect party on the island, it's really too late to escape. And soon each of these couples is faced with tremendous decisions about their relationships and their futures -- if, that is, they can weather the horrific storm that looms ahead...

#### **MY OPINION:**

I was absolutely, positively in LOVE within this novel, from start to finish. I adored the author's skill in crafting an amazingly interesting story with characters that developed honestly and delicately throughout the course of the novel. And, although she alternated between several different couples, each with their own serious struggles and secrets, there was never a point where I felt uninterested in any segment of any particular character's story. I was emotionally invested in each of the story lines, which made for the kind of engaging reading experience that kept me flipping (virtual) pages until insane hours in the middle of the night, just to learn what would happen next.

I was pleased that the author didn't aim to sugarcoat over any of the weighty issues that the women dealt with in their own personal, often secret, struggles. And, although most of the predicaments worked out for the best by the end of the book, it certainly was not without a realistic degree of pain and suffering from each of the women involved in the story.

I was surprised by the fact that I found myself most interested in Pauline, despite my first impression that led me to believe she might end up being the weakest character in the novel. I could really identify with the way that she felt like an outsider in a group of close friends, working so hard to meticulously create a perfect vacation for her beloved husband, while ultimately questioning her position in the relationship as well as her husband's feelings towards her as a woman and a partner. Her reasons for hiding her secret from her husband were heartbreaking and realistic, and I felt that she probably came in the furthest in really evolving in her relationship as well as her own perception of herself.

*But thousands of kindnesses existed in marriages too. The important thing was that the kindnesses triumphed over the hurts.*

#### **MY VERDICT:**

Five glowing stars. Give this one a try when it hits shelves on April 9, 2013.

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## **Estelle says**

Review originally posted on Rather Be Reading Blog

3.5-3.8 stars.

There are many days where I sit around and pray for a very successful and kind friend to sweep me out of my routine 9-5 life and take me to a tropical island (all expenses paid!!), where I can frolic in the waves with friends, sipping margaritas, and chatting to all hours of the night.

(Note: Any of these friends can step forward at anytime... really.)

Sadly, I don't see this happening to me any time soon but I can be happy (cough hate cough) that it happened to this group of friends, while I drool over their opportunity of a lifetime. But in all seriousness, this group of college pals needs this trip more than anything. Case in point: Tina is feeling totally rundown as a mom; Savannah is reeling from her unfaithful (soon-to-be ex) husband; Allie receives some unfortunate news about her health; Pauline is tired of the persona she has built as Dwight's wife.

You can see how escaping from real life couldn't come at a better time.

Pekkanen does a great job of weaving the stories of these four women; I really liked seeing how differently each of their lives turned out and how their views on marriage and life-after-college were so vast. There is such truth in how everyone's relationship is so unique. How do you balance your own interests when you are a mother? Can you forgive someone who betrays you? Does your relationship have what it takes to go the distance? Is it ever too late to let your guard down?

While this crowd is chumming it up like they are back in college, tension builds in paradise when old feelings resurface, flirting speeds into overdrive, unwanted guests arrive, and that hurricane they hoped they would miss is heading right for their house. There's nothing like being in close quarters to really confront your problems. Despite the drama that ensues, Jamaica proves to be a turning point of every single person in this house — whether that's good or bad is up to you to find out.

The Best of Us is a book that is meant to be scorched in the sun, stained with your sunscreened fingers, and maybe even splashed with a little ocean water. I was practically salivating over the luxuries these characters were offered, and I literally could not wait to figure out how this little trip would change them all. There's a great balance to the sexy, sweet, tough, and nostalgic moments that fill the pages. I'm definitely looking forward to checking out more of Pekkanen's work.

Tequila shots, anyone?

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## **Andrea says**

This was one big belly flop.

Overdone drama, unlikeable characters, ugh.

Read Pekkanen's refreshing "Catching Air" instead.

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## Lauren says

After reading the heartbreaking yet spectacular *Skipping a Beat*, Sarah's sophomore novel, I have been determined to read more by her. However, I didn't get around to it until recently when *The Best of Us*, her newest book, ended up in my hands. Thankfully, *The Best of Us* was an amazing and well crafted tale that brought laughs as well as tears and pulled on my heartstrings constantly. So basically, I'm now beating myself up for not reading more by her sooner!

*The Best of Us* tells the story of four women, three friends since college and one newcomer, who are brought together for a friend's lavish, week long birthday celebration in Jamaica. For Tina, the trip means finally getting a break from her adorable but exhausting children and getting closer to her husband Gio. Allie, on the other hand, hopes the trip will put her mind at ease at a recent and shocking revelation, one that may change everything for her and her precious family. Savannah, a soon to be divorcee, hopes the trip will also provide distraction... from her impending divorce and the feelings she still feels toward her husband. Last but not least, Pauline, the organizer of the party and wife of the man who the party is for, hopes this celebration will serve as a way to get to know her husband's friends among other things. What will happen to each of these women and their husbands? Only time and more pages will tell in this shocking and page-turning tale that will have any reader dying to know what will happen next.

As mentioned before, I'm always a little hesitant to begin books that are told from multiple POVs. However, I'm happy to report this tactic worked quite well for *The Best of Us*. Sarah did a great job of digging into each woman's lives and bringing their unique voices to life. I felt that each was well developed, and truthfully, I came to root and like every one of them....even though they did all have their moments. What I liked most about Allie, Tina, Pauline, and Savannah, though, was that they were just average, ordinary women, trying to make it in this world. Each was faced with hard and sometimes deadly problems within the book (from tumultuous diseases to marriage problems to stay-at-home-mom blues) and the solution to them weren't always easy and cookie-cutter clean. Instead, it took work and some mistakes to make things work, which made *The Best of Us* even better, in my opinion.

Moving on, I really enjoyed the plot in this one as well. I'm always happy to read contemporary, especially when tropical vacations are involved. Like I said above, the book had a lot to do with each woman and her problems, and this really kept the book moving along. I was constantly dying to know what would occur next. Like whether or not Savannah would end up back with her husband, or what exactly Allie was facing. Plus I especially enjoyed the little twists and turns introduced half way through. One in particular really managed to shock me, but I won't say any more about that.

Sarah's writing was also fantastic. She did a great job of developing each character and keeping the book moving. However, at times, I did feel that the book was occasionally a little stilted, especially at first when everything was setting up.

In all, *The Best of Us* is an enjoyable new addition to the adult contemporary genre, and while I didn't enjoy it as much as *Skipping a Beat*, it's still something I highly suggest. I can't wait to see what Sarah has up next!

Grade: A-

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## **Joannah says**

This review refers to the NetGalley edition.

Four couples, each with secrets and undiscovered bonds. A dream vacation in Jamaica that turns dangerous with the arrival of a hurricane. Sounds exciting, no?

But this book is the REAL so-called "mommy porn" - two of our characters, Allie and Tina, are thirty-something moms living out their days stressing over balancing households and the demands of children. They are offered (and accept) a chance for an all-expenses paid, ultra-glam vacation in Jamaica to celebrate their old college friend's birthday. A beautiful villa, relaxing spa treatments, gourmet food prepared by an in-house chef, tropical adult beverages and even, at one point, some high-grade pot shared in a hot tub.

Forget 50 Shades, The Best of Us is mommy porn at its finest - I'll take a luxurious tropical vacation with good friends over Christian Grey any day. Even the hurricane was an exciting, dramatic event - the antithesis of the monotony of domesticity.

A good, fast read celebrating the bonds of friendship, the endurance of love under the demands of marriage and daily living, and reminding us all that sometimes we really just need a BREAK from it all.

Fans of Jennifer Weiner, Emily Giffin, Patricia Pearson, and Sophie Kinsella will likely enjoy this book.

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## **Laura Kay Bolin says**

<http://www.anovelreview.blogspot.com/...>

A group of college friends embark on a week long trip together to Jamaica to celebrate a birthday of one of their own. The ladies are excited to get a break from the reality of their daily lives. Tina is a mom of four and her days and nights seem like a blur. She needs to get a good night sleep and just a little time to herself. Allie recently found out her biological father and his father both died from a genetic family illness. Savannah has been hiding the news her husband cheated on her and is now in the process of a divorce. Last is Pauline, she is hosting the party for her husband Dwight's birthday. She is an outsider to the group dynamic, but she is putting an all out effort to make this trip a huge success hoping to win back some favor with her husband.

What could be more perfect than a group of friends spending a week together dining on gourmet dinners, languishing hours on the beach, drinking till all hours of the night? As the weather turns from perfect to a pending hurricane the groups begins to falter. Forcing each woman to reexamine herself and her priorities. Each of the woman seeing even her friends differently than before they arrived.

I immediately connected with Tina, what mom wouldn't! I related also to Allie. They were my favorite characters from the beginning, even their husbands. I could picture all of them so easily, their lives are so like mine. Savannah not so much. But I could respect how she was trying to push through better than ever and let's be honest there is always a Savannah in a friendship! You could see potential issues with someone like Savannah, so that really didn't shock me. But I was surprised most by Allie!

We try very hard to limit visits with others to just a few days, I swear no good comes after about day four! Not only are the characters dealing with their own issues and each others issues, but a hurricane makes a sudden change of course heading right to them. Reminding them all what matters most.

I love Sarah Pekkanen's writing! Her characters are always so authentic and their issues seem to easily connect to her audience. It's real life at it's best and worst. When I first read about the book I had this idea of a bunch of ladies getting together and hanging out at a resort living the life, maybe things get a little sexy. I was wrong. It's a story about couples, friendships, and finding your strongest self to get through the hard stuff.

I am definitely recommending **THE BEST OF US!** So as the weather gets warmer this will be a perfect book to throw in your beach bag as you head to the beach!

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