

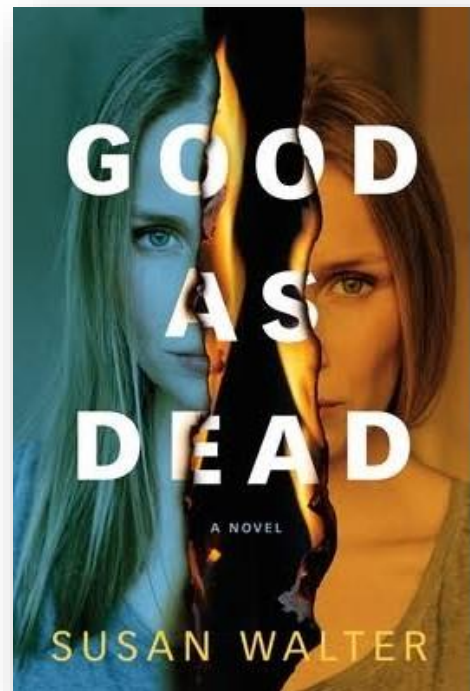


Book of the Month

***Good as Dead* by Susan Walter**

Book Review by Sherrie Welch, Friends of the Starkville Library Board Member

Just imagine: You and your husband have just parked outside your tiny apartment and he is walking around the car to open your door and help you out when another car comes barreling into you both, killing your husband and injuring you seriously. You and your teenage daughter are contacted by a stranger who returns your purse while you are in the hospital recovering from your injuries, offering a "settlement" which includes use of a beautifully furnished house in a much nicer neighborhood and a seemingly limitless credit card for charging expenses. The only requirement for you and your daughter is to give no information about the accident to anyone, including the police. This would involve concealing the existence of the video automatically taken by the dash-cam installed in the car by your husband while your daughter was learning to drive. This video, which neither of you have viewed, would identify the car responsible for the accident, if not the driver. Would you accept the "settlement" which would be illegal, but would basically ensure your currently extremely shaky financial future? Could you both handle the constant feelings of guilt and anxiety, and the unending need to lie to protect your new life? The decision must be made immediately. This is a story about a widow and her daughter who chose to accept the "settlement."



The story is told from the alternating perspectives of the main characters, allowing the reader to better understand how the arrangement reshapes each of their lives. The persons affected include Holly, the widow and her daughter, Savannah; Jack, a successful Hollywood producer and actor with a reputation to protect and his son Logan, the persons responsible for the accident and proposed "settlement"; Evan, Jack's personal attorney and fixer who acts as the go-between for the parties; and Andy and Libby, Holly and Savannah's new neighbors across the street who are curious about the newcomers and attempt to

befriend them. Logan is a volunteer assistant coach on Savannah's new high school track team taking a year off before entering college who charms his way into her life. Logan's trust fund, containing the only money Jack can access without his wife's knowledge, is paying for the "settlement." Andy is an investigative reporter turned struggling Hollywood screenwriter who is peddling his current screenplay to Jack on the day of the accident, which presents unforeseen complications for both sides. Unable to resist doing some internet research into Holly and Savannah's situation, Andy learns how Holly's husband died and the name of the person who owns the house Holly and Savannah are living in, and debates whether he should discuss this with them. Holly desperately wants this new life to succeed for the sake of her daughter's future but is increasingly haunted by her perceived betrayal of her husband and need for atonement. As the characters on both sides see their lives begin to unravel, one thing is clear—there are no winners in this deal.

Regardless of whether the reader would have chosen to accept the "settlement" offered, this story serves as a reminder that choices have consequences, both good and bad, which we cannot accurately prepare for or predict.

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