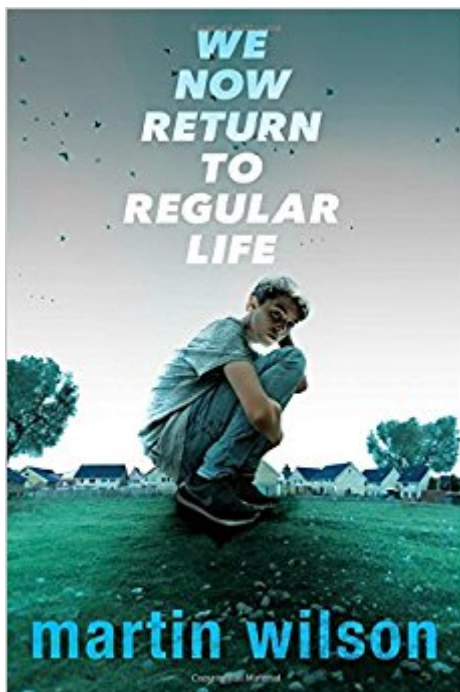


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# We Now Return To Regular Life



## Synopsis

The Face on the Milk Carton meets The Impossible Knife of Memory in this ripped-from-the-headlines novel that explores the power of being an ally and a friend when a kidnapped boy returns to his hometown. Sam Walsh had been missing for three years. His older sister, Beth, thought he was dead. His childhood friend Josh thought it was all his fault. They were the last two people to see him alive. Until now. Because Sam has been found, and he's coming home. Beth desperately wants to understand what happened to her brother, but her family refuses to talk about it even though Sam is clearly still affected by the abuse he faced at the hands of his captor. And as Sam starts to confide in Josh about his past, Josh can't admit the truths he's hidden deep within himself: that he's gay, and developing feelings for Sam. And, even bigger: that he never told the police everything he saw the day Sam disappeared. As Beth and Josh struggle with their own issues, their friends and neighbors slowly turn on Sam, until one night when everything explodes. Beth can't live in silence. Josh can't live with his secrets. And Sam can't continue on until the whole truth of what happened to him is out in the open. For fans of thought-provoking stories like The Face on the Milk Carton, this is a book about learning to be an ally even when the community around you doesn't want you to be.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Deeply compassionate and full of hope, this book is proof that we can survive both horrific

harm and our earliest, most awkward stabs at self-determination. *We Now Return to Regular Life* is a graceful, moving testament to love of all kinds. •National Book Award finalist Laura McNeal, author of *Dark Water* “An extraordinary book about first regret and finding redemption.” •Aaron Hartzler, author of *Rapture Practice* and *What We Saw*. “Martin Wilson’s *We Now Return to Regular Life* is brave, bold, and giant-hearted. It’s packed with raw emotions and is as compelling as any literary thriller could hope to be. Five pages in, there’s no turning back. Why? Because this is an astoundingly good book.” •Patrick Ryan, author of *The Dream Life of Astronauts and Saints of Augustine* “Populated with wonderfully complex and empathetic characters, Wilson’s novel is beautifully written, displaying the perfect balance of heartbreak and hope.” •Booklist, starred review “The whole story unfolds in a fast-paced, near-cinematic sweep of Alabama heat, religion, and family drama...complex and heart-rending read.” •Kirkus Reviews “A moving and believable depiction of a damaged survivor and what his return means to those around him.” •Publishers Weekly

Martin Wilson grew up in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where both of his novels take place. He is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and the University of Florida, and his work has appeared in *Tin House*, *One Teen Story*, and other publications. His first YA novel, *What They Always Tell Us*, was the winner of an Alabama Author Award and a Lambda Award nominee. He currently lives in New York City, where he works as a publicist at a publishing house.

Martin Wilson has a real gift for writing beautiful books on difficult topics, and his second novel shines as brightly as his first.

A really interesting read with well developed characters. I would have loved a little more of Sam’s perspective though.

Grade: A Sam returns home after three years of captivity no longer the mischievous boy he once was. His return throws his sister Beth’s life into turmoil as she wrestles with guilt. Also feeling guilty, his friend Josh, who never told all he knew about the kidnapping. Sam’s recovery, through the points of view of Beth and Josh, unravels cracks in all their lives and maybe a way forward, if they can learn to trust each other. *WE NOW RETURN TO REGULAR LIFE* was one of my most anticipated August debuts, and Martin Wilson did not disappoint. I was thoroughly invested in the

three teens and their struggles. While Sam was the main character as the stories revolved around him, I didn't know or understand him as much as I wanted. Wilson probably didn't want readers to know Sam more than he knew himself, Sam's recovery will take a lifetime. I didn't want *WE NOW RETURN TO REGULAR TO LIFE* to end. All the characters had so much more story to tell and I would love if Wilson wrote a sequel. The book did have a logical ending, I just didn't want to say goodbye to the characters.

Have you ever read a book and acknowledged that, yeah, it wasn't a perfect read, but it was the perfect read for you? That was case and point *We Now Return to Regular Life* for me. While this story is mainly narrated from the POVs of Beth, Sam's older sister, and Josh, his next door neighbor and friend, I could sense other unspoken views being told between the lines that felt as prominent as the ones put into written word. This form of storytelling can only be mastered by a select few and it was pulled off extremely well here; I can only imagine how difficult it was to bring the presence of multiple characters to life without utilizing their own voice. This was a book that was weighted with a sadness most of us cannot comprehend from personal experience, but also left us with a hopeful joy that humans are resilient and are able to overcome immense trauma with the support of a few loved ones. This story was plopped into my lap in rare form; I wasn't expecting it to come in the mail and when I opened it I realized I hadn't heard of it. I almost never have the opportunity to find such a hidden gem these days, but I'm so glad that I chanced upon this book because it changed me in ways I'm not sure I can put into words. *WNRTRL* is a book easily devoured in a single sitting, but time didn't allow me this luxury, and I'm glad because I was able to better digest the heavy stuff that I may have glossed over in an unintended rush. I felt I was experiencing this story from all angles; I'm still fairly young and remember most of my childhood and adolescence with great clarity, so I didn't feel far removed from our main characters and their myriad of struggles. I'm also a mother of young children, which caused me to feel with great sorrow what Sam's mother experienced in not only losing her baby boy for three years, but in having a shell of her precious son returned to her as if some sort of cruel joke had been played on her family. My point is that a reader at any age or walk of life can get something out of this book. I'm not certain what age range for young adults I would recommend this to; as some parents are more strict than others I think it's up to each individual. While a majority of the story had a juvenile overtone (there is only one scene in the entire book that is sensual and it is described in a very mild mannered way), the nature of the content does make it a fairly heavy and somewhat disturbing book for the more sensitive reader. Everything is done tastefully and handled in a classy way; nothing felt done for shock value or cheapening this

experience that other people have lived through, but I would feel guilty if I didn't suggest that each parent or reader consider if it's the right read for them before diving in. As per my usual reviews, I'm not going to go into plot details and spoilers, but there is so much to be learned through this story in terms of surviving trauma and the emotional toll it takes on everyone touched by such tragedy. I was completely caught up in this story; the characters made me feel like a part of their world and I was a little hesitant to put down the book, as I felt the mama bear in me not wanting to lose control and let these kids heal on their own as they needed to. What if they need me? If a book can make me feel THAT, I know there's something special here. There are plenty of aspects of diversity included and done at an age appropriate level which I think will please many discerning readers of the young adult genre today. Highly recommended for those looking for a book to make them feel; all ages welcome!

I have to give mad props to Martin Wilson. I've read both of his novels this year, *What They Always Tell Us*, back in March, and now *We Now Return To Regular Life*. He is amazing at creating complex characters that live very much in the 'grey area', which tugs your heart in many directions. This novel, a story of a boy abducted at 11 who reappears 3 years later yanks your heart all over the place. Why didn't he run away? Where was he? What happened to him? What is great is that this story is told from the POV of his older sister, Beth, and his 'friend' from across the street, Josh. Both may have played some part in his disappearance, but they both definitely play parts in his return and attempt at recovery. There is no magic recovery when your child returns after three years, especially if your other child has basically been ignored for three years. The dynamics between Sam, the missing child, Beth, his sister, their mother and stepfather seem very realistic. Even Josh, the last person to see Sam, and riddled with guilt about what he told and didn't tell the police seems true to life. This was yet another gut wrenching story from an author who likes to hint at "happily ever after", but likes to dose it with a big splash of realism...like it most likely won't be perfect, but might just be livable.

Very good book. You can't put it down. And, not to spoil it, the end is incredibly redemptive. Written from perspective of others instead of Sam is brilliant. Refreshingly different than other novels regarding abductions. Adults of all ages will enjoy and be intrigued. Well done Martin Wilson

His first book is one of my favorites. I've read it three times so far. I don't feel quite as strongly about this one, maybe because of the distance from the main character, but it is very well written, and I

just sped through it, wanting to know more. I hope Mr. Wilson has luck with his next book, and that it goes quickly for him. I look forward to what he has in store for us next.

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