



Ten Thousand Rocks

Ndirangu Githaiga

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A rocky marriage is tested in the wake of a devastating accident in the reflective novel Ten Thousand Rocks.

A couple's troubled marriage undergoes further challenges in Ndirangu Githaiga's novel *Ten Thousand Rocks*.

Will is settling into his job as the medical director for an insurance company when a catastrophic car accident brings his cushy life to an abrupt end. Where he once made life-or-death decisions for others, he now has to endure others making such decisions on his behalf. Meanwhile, Will's long-suffering wife Laura is left to pick up the pieces, pay off his debts, and deal with his cruel emotional outbursts.

Despite their new challenges, the accident may turn out to be the best thing that ever happened to the couple, whose marriage was undermined by a lack of communication. Will had refused to tell his disapproving parents that he and Laura were married even after nine years; he decided to accept a job in another state without telling his wife. And after the accident, Laura vacillates between crushing grief, soaring joy, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Her concerted efforts to help a man who does not always appreciate her are heartbreaking. But Laura's relationship with her in-laws also changes: they are forced to make important decisions about Will's future with Laura. Subtle moments build to a greater sense of understanding between them, easing Laura's burden.

The story begins from Will's perspective, then for its remainder switches to Laura's and those of the others who are responsible for Will's care. Minor players, including Will's coworkers, vanish from this array without explanation, though. Still, the multiple perspectives lead to a nuanced picture of the reasons for and the consequences of Will's accident—though how Will himself has changed because of his accident is somewhat muted in the process. Further, a shocking truth about Will's accident is revealed but never followed up on.

The final chapter takes place twenty years in the couple's future, though the time lapse is not sufficiently defined at first. In this conclusion, the issues that plagued Laura and Will's relationship are never directly addressed, nor is it clarified how much Will remembers of his life and actions before the accident. Laura, who was centered after Will's injury, receives less closure than he does; her story is ended in ambiguous terms. In the place of a neat resolution is a sense that an imperfect couple is still doing the best they can with the hand that they were dealt.

Ten Thousand Rocks is a reflective novel about the price of greed—and the rewards of kindness and perseverance.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (October 12, 2022)

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