

# Quick Facts for *Split* by Swati Avasthi

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## Hardcover Information

**Reading Level:** Young Adult

**Release date:** March 9, 2010.

**Hardcover:** 288 pages

**Publisher:** Knopf Books for Young Readers

**ISBN-13:** 978-0-375-86340-0

**Price:** \$16.99

### Book jacket synopsis:

16-year-old Jace Witherspoon arrives at the doorstep of his estranged brother Christian with a re-landscaped face (courtesy of his father's fist), \$3.84, and a secret.

He tries to move on, going for new friends, a new school, and a new job, but all his changes can't make him forget what he left behind. His mother is still trapped with his dad. And his ex-girlfriend is keeping his secret – for now.

Turns out there are some things you can't just walk away from.

Swati Avasthi gives us a riveting portrait of what happens *after*. After you've said enough, after you've made the split – how do you begin to live again? Readers won't be able to put this intense page-turner down.

### Book jacket praise:

"The first great fear faced by every teenage boy is that he will not measure up to his father. The second is that he will. In her debut novel, Swati Avasthi boldly tackles the second of these, and succeeds admirably. *Split* is powerful, heart-rending, and stunningly real."

~ Pete Hautman, author of *Godless*, National Book Award Winner

"Swati Avasthi has created something rare in *Split*: a story in which every character is fully dimensional, real, unpredictable and unforgettable. She tells the truth unswervingly – even when it would be far easier to lie – yet leaves the reader feeling satisfied. And as if that were not enough, she has written a book that I absolutely could not stop reading."

~ Catherine Ryan Hyde, author of *Pay It Forward* and *Diary of a Witness*

"A great novel...full of compelling characters and a knock-your-socks-off plot... A wonderful read, start to finish."

~ Julie Schumacher, Minnesota Book Award Winner and author of *Black Box*

**Book recognition:** Selected for IndieBound.org's Spring Kids' Indie Next List (<http://www.indiebound.org/kids-indie-next-list>).

**Trade journal reviews:**

***Kirkus Reviews (March 1, 2010)***

Avasthi, Swati

**SPLIT**

This portrait of a family shaped and scarred by abuse asks how both victims and perpetrators can move forward. After a 19-hour drive from Chicago to Albuquerque following a beating at the hands of the father he both loves and fears, Jace Witherspoon shows up at the door of his estranged brother, Christian. Reluctantly, Christian invites Jace to stay in his tiny apartment, and, as Jace builds a life in a new town, each brother is forced to confront his own history. Evocatively specific sensory detail and spare, revealing dialogue bring Jace, Christian, their parents and Christian's perceptive girlfriend, Mirriam, to life with a sometimes warm, sometimes painful realism. When it is revealed that Jace himself beat and began to strangle his girlfriend the night he left Chicago, the narrative neither forgives Jace's violence nor brands him as irredeemable. Readers seeking sensational violence should look elsewhere; this taut, complex family drama depicts abuse unflinchingly but focuses on healing, growth and learning to take responsibility for one's own anger. (Fiction. 14 & up)

***Publisher's Weekly***

Split Swati Avasthi Knopf, \$16.99 (240p) ISBN 978-0-375-86340-0

This powerful, never maudlin debut paints a visceral portrait of a 16-year-old on the run from an abusive father. After being kicked out of his family's house in Chicago, Jace flees to his estranged older brother Christian's apartment in Albuquerque, N.Mex., but starting over isn't easy. An array of expected emotions surface, from Jace's hatred toward his father, to hope that his mother will leave her abusive marriage, and resentment over Christian's having abandoned the family years earlier. But it's the less anticipated side of Jace—gradually revealed over the course of the novel—that makes this story so gripping and heartbreaking. He still loves his father despite the terrifying abuse his family has suffered and is ashamed of his own violent tendencies; readers learn Jace attacked his girlfriend when he was still in Chicago, and both brothers fear that Jace could follow in his father's footsteps. When Jace finally turns his back on his past to forge a new future, readers will fully understand the difficulty of the decision. As Avasthi demonstrates, leaving a bad situation and forgiving those responsible is easier said than done. Ages 14–up. (Mar.)

***Booklist***

**Split.** Avasthi, Swati (Author) Mar 2010. 240 p. Knopf, hardcover, \$16.99. (9780375863400). Knopf, library edition, \$19.99. (9780375963407). Frustration is the emotion most prevalent in this novel about escaping the ravages of domestic violence—if that is even possible. After trying to prevent his father from beating his mother further, 16-year-old Jace is kicked out of his Chicago home. He arrives, swollen and bloody, at the doorstep of his brother in Albuquerque. It's been five years since 22-year-old

Christian fled the violent home front himself, and the brothers' reunion is defined by awkward negotiations of acceptance and suspicion. With ground rules set, Jace is allowed to stay and resume school, but the specter of their father continues to haunt them—as does the chilling uncertainty of what may be happening to their mother in their absence. Avasthi has a great ear for naturalistic dialogue, and although some interactions feel purposeful, they're usually couched in convincing details. Jace's own history of violence makes him a complex and tortured protagonist, and his process of letting go is heart wrenching. A nuanced and mournful work; Avasthi is a writer to watch. — *Daniel Kraus*

## School Library Journal

### Split

Avasthi, Swati (Author)

ISBN: 0375863400

Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers

Published 2010-03

Hardcover, \$16.99 (288p)

Playing Time:

LC Subjects: Brothers; Child abuse; Family violence

Dewey Number: FIC

Publisher's Grade Level: Grade 9

Reviewed 2010-03-01

Gr 11 Up After Jace Witherspoon is kicked out by his abusive father, he seeks refuge in Albuquerque with his older brother, whom he hasn't seen in six years. Their mother, also a victim of her husband's abuse, promises to leave him and join her children on Thanksgiving. Jace counts down the days while trying to start a new life and rebuild his relationship with Christian, but he's haunted by a terrible secret and the people he left behind. This gripping story is especially noteworthy because Jace is a victim who has also become an abuser: he hit his girlfriend during an argument the night he left Chicago. He is quick-tempered, proud, and charming, like his father. In contrast, Christian is more like their mother: restrained, deliberate, and humble. Their father's abuse has made Christian emotionally distant, but Jace's presence forces him to open up and confront his guilt about leaving his sibling behind. The brothers' growing relationship, as they turn to each other to escape from their father's shadow, is touching. Jace's narration is raw and intimate, dramatic and poetic; readers will feel his internal struggle keenly. The rest of the characters aren't as richly or skillfully drawn, however, and the plot occasionally lacks subtlety. The book contains graphic depictions of physical abuse, as well as adult language and underage drinking." Erin Carrillo, formerly at Alachua County Library District, Gainesville, FL

## Audio Book Information

**Reading level:** Young Adult

**Format:** 7 Audio CDs, unabridged

**Publisher:** Listening Library (Audio); Unabridged edition (March 9, 2010)

**ISBN-13:** 978-0307579942

**Reader:** Joshua Swanson

**Release date:** March 9, 2010

**Running Time:** 8 hours 17 minutes

**Price:** \$37.00

## Author Information

**Agent:** Rosemary Stimola (<http://www.stimolaliterarystudio.com/>)

**Schedule Swati Avasthi for events:** [dcimina@randomhouse.com](mailto:dcimina@randomhouse.com)

### Author Bio:

Swati Avasthi has been writing fiction since she read *Little House in the Big Woods* at age five. Emily Bronte, Harper Lee, and many others furthered her addiction. She institutionalized her habit at the University of Chicago, where she received her B.A., and at the University of Minnesota, where she is currently studying for her M.F.A. She has received a Loft's Mentor Series Award, a Marcella DeBourg Fellowship, University of Minnesota's GRPP, the Thomas H. Shevlin Fellowship, and her fiction has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her work has or will appear in numerous publications, including *The Portland Review*, *Water~Stone Review*, and *Special Gifts* (Wyatt-Mackenzie, 2007). Her first novel, *Split* (Knopf), was released in March 2010, and her second novel, title still pending (also Knopf), is scheduled for 2011. She lives with her riotously funny family - two large dogs, two small kids, and one (but worth two) husband(s) - in the Twin Cities.

**Author Name Pronunciation:** SWA-thee of-US-thee

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