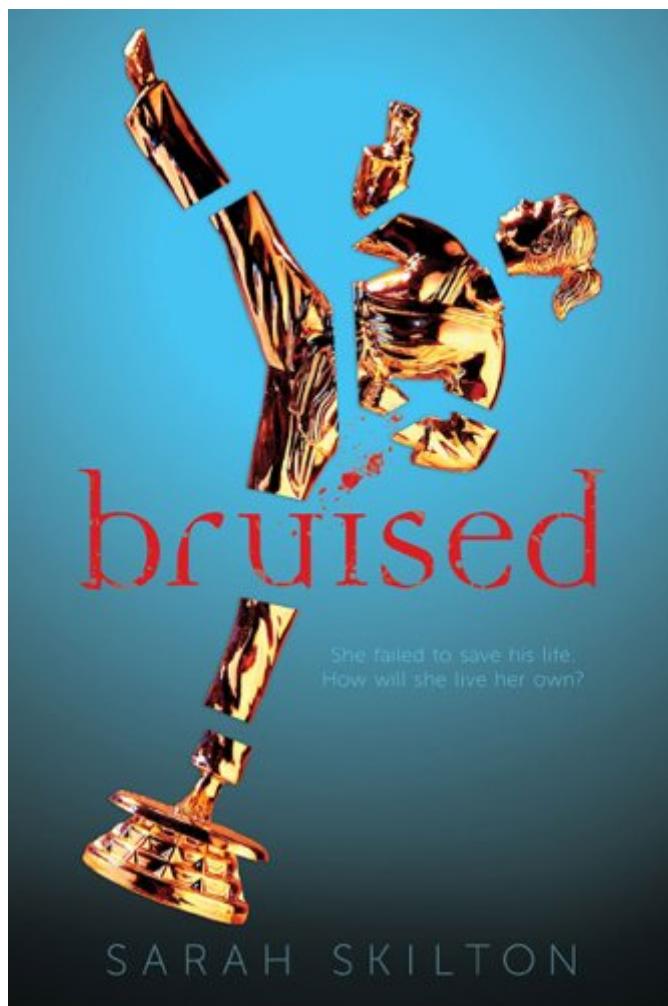


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## Bruised



## **Synopsis**

When Imogen, a sixteen-year-old black belt in Tae Kwon Do, freezes during a holdup at a local diner, the gunman is shot and killed by the police, and she blames herself for his death. Before the shooting, she believed that her black belt made her stronger than everyone else--more responsible, more capable. But now that her sense of self has been challenged, she must rebuild her life, a process that includes redefining her relationship with her family and navigating first love with the boy who was at the diner with her during the shoot-out. With action, romance, and a complex heroine, Bruised introduces a vibrant new voice to the young adult world--full of dark humor and hard truths.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Grade: B+ Tae Kwon Do black belt Imogene freezes when a gunman tries to rob a diner and he winds up dead. She can't forgive herself for not using her skills. She angry, so angry she's getting into fights. Underneath her fury, fear and nightmares from that night. She's pushing everyone away, but can't seem to stop herself. Imogen is such a well rounded character. She sees the world in black and white, is quick to anger and slow to forgive. She's resentful that her father has become

wheelchair bound, furious her brother slept with her ex best friend, but maddest at herself for failing to prevent the gunman's death. I liked her a lot, although she wasn't always likable. She was super judgmental about her friend wanting to lose her virginity and mentioned several times she rarely cursed (usually after she swore). Sarah Skilton gave Imogen a great voice, sarcastically humorous even in the depths of despair. Skilton showed, never told which gave the book great pacing and emotion. She included a diverse cast of characters in an unobtrusive manner.\*\*Minor spoiler\*\* not about the plot, but it happens late in the story. I strongly objected to the minor subplot where Imogen tried to get Ricky to hit her and was appalled that he actually did, at her behest. I don't think it's ever appropriate to use males hitting females as a positive part of a relationship.

Excellent, well-written book! Ms. Skilton is a wonderful writer, and a courageous author, who is willing to explore gritty, sensitive subjects. Imogen is a strong, well-developed character, with an important story to tell, that resonates with anyone who has suffered the aftereffects of a violent tragedy. All of this done in an intelligent, well-researched manner. I'm an author myself, I've have done critiquing/editing for years, and this--not even my general reading genre--is an engaging, insightful read. Enjoy!

What makes this novel work is the likable, earnest 16-year old character, Imogen. She is passionate and committed in all her relationships and in everything she does. She demands perfection from herself and is consistently let down when those around her are willing to settle for much less. This is a story of how her self-image of achievement, determination, and strength of character is suddenly bruised (indeed, almost completely shattered) by a traumatic incident she is accidentally caught up in. Her road to sympathy, understanding, and self-discovery is fraught with uncertainty, fear, alienation, and near despair. Seeing herself and those she loves with new eyes makes for very interesting reading, and I found myself pulling for her at every downward, precarious turn she takes. You don't have to be a young adult to appreciate the pain, the effort, and the drama of Imogen's growing-up.

Immogene, the main character, learns through her perceived failure to utilize her marshall arts skills to "save the day" in the diner does not mean she is a bad person. She learns that her quest for perfection through martial arts can't be realized because perfection can't be achieved by anyone. Life bruises everyone. The important lesson that Immogene and the readers of this book learn is that the journey is the important thing. We all have the ability to love ourselves and others and to forgive

ourselves and others. Sarah Skilton's use of imagery brings the characters to life and full development. I bought this book because I have a granddaughter who is a preteen interested in martial arts. I intend to give her this book as a "Nana inspected gift!" Ann Ezell May 14, 2013

Overall, I was very impressed with the writing style and complexity of characters in this novel. The main character, Imogen, is a black belt in tae kwon do, yet she freezes up in a situation where she arguably needs her skills the most. Imogen ends up taking a break from martial arts and reevaluating what the training principles mean to her. As she does so, she teaches self-defense to a guy she didn't really get along with and the two discover they have a bit of chemistry. I found Imogen's character a bit frustrating at times, but her "psychology," if you will, is consistent. You don't have to be an athlete or have come through a traumatic situation to relate to the characters. As a black belt myself, though, I can say that this is a must-read for those who enjoy sports-themed YA.

The author piques the reader's interest right away and never lets go. The story of one girl's topple from self esteem to self loathing and, ultimately, to confidence and self respect is one which speaks to all. The martial arts theme is an added bonus. It's clear that the author knows what she's talking about.

I purchased this book for my 11 year old granddaughter who is a black belt in ATA. It is a mystery that kept her reading this summer, and it involves the sport she enjoys so much.

Loved this story, even though I cried through half of it. Deep and emotional, it shows that love overcomes fear.

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