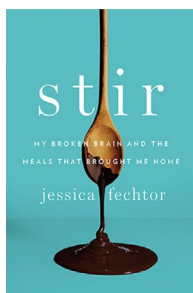


## Book Review

### Stir: My Broken Brain and the Meal that Brought me Home

By Reeve Currie



*Stir: My Broken Brain and the Meals That Brought Me Home*, written by Jessica Fechter, is an outstanding memoir about the ability food has to connect us to ourselves, life, and those around us. Written in an easy-to-read format with a sprinkling of recipes throughout, *Stir* quickly warms your heart and creates the desire to immediately run into the kitchen and begin cooking something delicious.

Fechtor, in this debut memoir, writes openly and honestly, giving the reader more than a glimpse into her struggle with recovering her body and spirit after an aneurism burst in her brain. As a twenty-eight year old woman, Fechter was in the best shape of her life as a marathon runner. She and her husband had just started trying to have a baby. In a whirlwind of events, she continually went in-and-out of the hospital with infections, mysterious problems, and eventually reconstructive surgery. She underwent brain surgery more than once and spent countless months in bed, too exhausted to get up. Previously, working towards becoming a PhD candidate in Yiddish, Fechter's life was suddenly put on hold as she dealt with a debilitating medical issue. *Stir* chronicles the year surrounding her aneurism and her fight to once again stand at the stovetop.

Fechtor has a way with words. A long-time lover of books, she is able to effortlessly describe a feeling or moment with few words. It is easy to imagine oneself in her shoes, walking along through each ER visit, frustrated right alongside her as she struggles to cook, walk,

or even stand. Woven throughout her painful experience are delightful memories of her childhood and young adult life. Fechter provides recipes of the food that accompanies those memories, as cooking played an important role in her recovery. Her desire and yearning to be able to make the simplest of meals helped propel her forward in the darkest days of her recovery. In the beginning this consists of writing a grocery list that her mom runs out to buy, only to return and find Fechter too exhausted to continue. However, by the end of the book you see her having a victorious realization about her own inner healing when she is able to host a mouth-watering dinner party for friends. Fechter says, "Being sick is supposed to come along with grand realizations about What Really Matters, but I don't know. I think deep down, we're already aware of what's important and what's not. Which isn't to say that we always live our lives accordingly. We snap at our spouses and curse the traffic and miss the buds pushing up from the ground. But we know. We just forget to know sometimes. Near-death forces us to remember. It pushes us into a state of aggressive gratitude that throws what's big and what's small into the sharpest relief. It's awfully hard to worry about the puddle of milk when you're just glad to be here to spill it."

One doesn't have to have a love of cooking or food to enjoy *Stir*. You also doesn't have to be proficient in medical terminology or aneurysms. As with most good memoirs, you are able to discover more about yourself as they read about someone else experiencing life. Fechter provides an excellent, inspiring read no matter where your passions lie. It is, after all, the little things in life that give life meaning.

## Movie Review

### *Beyond the Lights*

By Cassandra Shaw

*Beyond the Lights* is a movie that came out on November 14th, 2014. This drama, rated PG-13, was written and directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood. On opening night, the box office made 6.5 million dollars, and overall, a gross estimate of 14,612,840 dollars on January 23rd, 2015. *Beyond the Lights* received a 81% on Rotten Tomatoes. Gugu Mbatha-Raw plays Noni, Nate Parker plays Kaz, and Machine Gun Kelly plays Kid Culprit. Each role was played with a lot of emotion and each person had their own story to tell.

This movie is about Noni, who has amazing singing voice, also has a controlling mother. Noni's mother tried to live her life through Noni but was destroying who Noni was on the inside. Noni grew up to be a famous singer, her songs always hit the top of the charts. Her boyfriend Kid Culprit was a famous rapper, but wasn't faithful. Noni wanted to be loved for who she was, not for her beauty or for being half naked on the TV screens. There was only one guy who understood Noni, Kaz. Noni and Kaz met while Noni was heading towards her hotel room and Kaz was the officer standing outside her door. When she got to her room, Noni told Kaz not to let anyone in and he obeyed her word. That was until Noni's mother came and told him to let her in. When he let Noni's mother in, they both spotted Noni sitting on the ledge of her balcony, getting ready to jump. The only person that could get her off the ledge was officer Kaz. He stole her heart when he said the words, "I see

you." The next day after the incident occurred, Noni told the press that she wasn't trying to kill herself; she just had a little too much to drink. Kaz, on the other hand, knew that Noni needed help. Her fame took over her life. As time went by, Kaz was studying to be a politician, because that is what his father wanted him to be. But his love for Noni drove him in a different direction.

While Noni still doesn't have the courage to tell the truth about her pain, she was happy that Kaz was still by her side. In the middle of the night, Kaz and Noni left for Mexico for a couple of weeks. Their bond and love for each other grew stronger. Then the unthinkable happened. It was hard for Noni to live without money and the fame so she wanted to go back home. That decision to go back home hurt Kaz and they didn't speak for a week. Finally, it hit Noni to tell the truth and she did, on national TV. She decided she wanted to tell the truth because she loved Kaz and she didn't want to lose the person that loved her for who she was. That was something Noni always wanted.

This movie was amazing to watch and the message was very powerful: No matter how famous you become don't forget about the most important person in your life. That is YOU. To be fully happy, you have to love yourself first or nobody else will.