



What We Leave Behind

Blurb

A separation. A grief. Two brothers who spent forty years surviving the same house in different rooms, and never quite found their way to each other.

When Daniel moves into a flat in Guildford with a box of action figures and a guitar he sold years ago and somehow got back, he begins the slow work of putting things in their right places.

His brother Michael, still inside the loss of Helen, needs something more specific - Ray, a programmer who made a game Michael loved at thirteen; Pete and Sarah, who show up and make things easier without making a performance of it; and Karen, who brings wine, tells the truth, and has been waiting twenty-two years to say it.

And then there is Claire. Who always heard the music from the other room. Who never stopped.

What We Leave Behind is a novel about the things that persist. The ones you buried. The ones that found their way home.

Author Steve Wilde, **Genre** Fiction, **Date** October 2026, **Formats** ebook, pages (ebook)

Available at Amazon [HERE](#) (ebook).

Further info from the author

Questions about the book

Is this autobiographical?

Partly, in the way all fiction is. The feelings are real - the dynamics, the quality of attention, the specific texture of growing up in Surrey in that era. The house in Cheam isn't a house I lived in. But the boy filling notebooks in it is recognisable to me. I'd say the novel is emotionally autobiographical rather than factually. The facts are partially invented. The truth underneath them isn't.

How long did it take to write?

The ideas behind it have been accumulating for a long time. The novel in its current form took several years. The hardest parts weren't the dramatic scenes - those came relatively quickly. The hardest parts were the silences. Getting the weight of what isn't said exactly right, without over-explaining it, took longer than anything else.

Why men? Why is this specifically about male silence?

Because it's what I know, and because I think it's underwritten. There's a lot of fiction about women's interior lives and not enough about men's - not in a way that takes them seriously rather than pathologising them. Daniel and Michael aren't case studies. They're people. I wanted to follow them with the same attention a novelist would give to any interior life, without making their maleness the point or the problem. The silence isn't because they're men. It's because of the specific house they grew up in and the specific habits that house produced. It happens to be a very common house.

What do you want readers to take away from it?

I want them to call someone. I don't mean that sentimentally - I mean it practically. The novel is about the cost of the conversations that don't happen and the possibility of the ones that still can. If someone reads it and calls their brother, or opens a box they've been keeping sealed, or picks up the thing they put down twenty years ago - that's everything I was hoping for. The book can't make those things happen. But maybe it can make them feel a little less impossible.

The title. What do we leave behind?

Everything. And nothing. The title is deliberately ambiguous - it's about what we leave for the people who come after us, what we abandon in the course of a life, what persists

after we're gone, and what we carry forward from the people who came before us. The question the novel keeps asking is: is that enough? And the answer it keeps arriving at is: not quite. But it's something. And something is where you start.

Is the character Daniel you?

He has things in common with me, yes. The music, the notebooks, the Surrey background, the years of managing. But he's also his own person - he makes choices I wouldn't make, has a history I don't have, arrives at things in his own way. The moment a character becomes indistinguishable from the author, the novel stops working. I needed Daniel to be able to surprise me, and he did, repeatedly.

What is the novel saying about grief?

That it doesn't have a shape we can predict or manage. The novel is saying that grief needs company more than it needs resolution. Not the company that tries to fix it.

Why the objects? Why does so much of the novel's meaning live in things?

Because objects don't lie and people often do. Not deliberately - but we perform, we manage, we say we're fine when we're not. Objects just sit there carrying what they carry.

The novel is full of technology - Why?

Because those things were real refuges for a generation of men who didn't have many other places to go. They are not nostalgia for their own sake, they're the physical locations where a particular kind of male interiority lived, and the novel is interested in what happened to the men who lived there.

The therapy scenes - were you worried about them feeling clinical or procedural?

Constantly. The risk with therapy scenes is that they become the place where the novel explains itself - where the author uses the therapist to tell the reader what everything means. The therapist is deliberately not that. She holds space. She waits. The work happens in the silences she creates, not in the things she says. You should have to work a little to be in that room. It shouldn't be entirely safe.

Personal Questions

Do you have a brother?

I do. The novel isn't about us, but it's informed by what I know about that relationship — the specific quality of growing up alongside someone in the same circumstances and arriving at completely different ways of surviving them. The dedication is to Graham, who was there for much of it and knows which stories are ours.

Did you ever stop making music the way Daniel did?

There were years when it went quiet, yes. Not as dramatically as it does for Daniel, not for the same reasons. But the experience of returning to something you'd set down and finding it still there - still itself, still waiting - that's real. The alchemy speech in Chapter Ten is the closest thing in the novel to a statement of what I believe about creativity. I mean it completely.

Is there a sequel planned?

Not planned. The novel ends at exactly the right moment - the beginning of what comes next, not the next thing itself. I don't think I need to write the motion. The reader can take it from there.

Who would you like to read this novel?

Anyone who has ever stood on a landing and said night then when they meant something completely different. Anyone who has a box of things they haven't opened in five years. Anyone who put something down and told themselves they'd grown past it. Anyone who has a father who showed up in the wrong way, or didn't show up, or showed up in a way they couldn't understand until it was too late. Which is, I think, quite a lot of people.

What are you working on next?

Something. It's too early to say more than that. What I can say is that What We Leave Behind taught me things about how to write that I'm still absorbing. The next thing will be different. But I think some of what I learned here - about silence, about objects, about the weight of what isn't said - will carry forward. It tends to.