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Side Effects May Vary



Synopsis

For fans of John Green and Rainbow Rowell comes this powerful novel about a girl with cancer who creates a take-no-prisoners bucket list that sets off a war at school—only to discover she's gone into remission. When sixteen-year-old Alice is diagnosed with leukemia, she vows to spend her final months righting wrongs. So she convinces her best friend, Harvey, to help her with a crazy bucket list that's as much about revenge as it is about hope. But just when Alice's scores are settled, she goes into remission, and now she must face the consequences of all she's said and done. Contemporary realistic-fiction readers who love romantic stories featuring strong heroines will find much to savor in this standout debut.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up—Sixteen-year-old Alice is in the final stages of leukemia. While her body is being decimated by chemo, she reconnects with her longtime childhood friend, Harvey, and enlists him to help her complete a Dying-To-Do List. Revenge on her ex-boyfriend who cheated on her? Check. Revenge on the girl he cheated with? Check. Visiting the memory-laden but run-down amusement park of her childhood? Check. Ready to die, Alice is completely shocked when her cancer suddenly goes into remission. Faced with life, she now has to deal with the kind of person she has become (not the nicest) and the kind of person she wants to be. On top of everything, how will she handle the complicated love she feels for Harvey? Caring for him feels impossible because she doesn't trust the reprieve from cancer that she's been given. Growing up is hard, but growing up with the

threat of a recurrence of cancer is even harder. The narrative demands that close attention be paid, as chapters alternate between the points of view of both Alice and Harvey, as well as between Then (when Alice had cancer) and Now (when she is cancer-free). Honest and unflinching, this is a compelling story of one teen's struggle with cancer, love, and living. A worthwhile addition.

—Ragan O'Malley, Saint Ann's School, Brooklyn, NY --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Sixteen-year-old Alice is diagnosed with leukemia, but following a year of grueling chemo, she decides to end the unsuccessful treatment. Everyone is waiting for her to die: her parents; loyal Harvey, the boy who has loved her since childhood; and Alice most of all. But she has made her peace, having ticked items off her bucket list, most of which involve mean-spirited revenge pranks on those who wronged her (including her ex-boyfriend, Luke). But then, miraculously, she goes into remission. Now what? Debut author Murphy switches points of view between Harvey and Alice, and between Then and Now; all this back and forth gives readers much-needed insight into the complexity of Alice and Harvey's relationship. In the now, Alice's greatest fear in life has become expectations, and she pushes patient, long-suffering Harvey away. What's interesting—and refreshing—about this book is that, yes, Alice has cancer, but she is not a likable girl, and readers' emotions will be all over the map even as they continue to root for her ultimate act of redemption. Alice and Harvey's relationship is raw, honest, moving, and unapologetic in its depiction of their individual, and collective, pain. Grades 9-12. --Ann Kelley --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Alice has a problem. And it's not that her cancer is killing her. It's that her cancer is gone and she's going to live. While she was sick she sought payback on some people she felt had wronged her, aided by her best friend, Harvey. Now she's going to deal with some consequences. The story is narrated by Alice and Harvey, in chapters that vary between the past and present. The voices are strong and clear. The plot progresses logically and cleanly. My problem is with these two main characters: Harvey is a doormat, and Alice is hideous. She must be the least sympathetic cancer patient ever. There is absolutely nothing to like about her. I simply could not find any redeeming feature within her at all. And because of that I found it hard to like the book very much either. Which is too bad, because I found the premise intriguing. Three and a half stars.

For the most part, this was a pretty good book. You have to really be focused on what's going on

though because if you blink, you might miss some major drama. I liked reading this book mostly but I wouldn't say it was one of my favorites. With that being said, I would DEFINITELY GUARANTEE YOU that this book was a better cancer story than the fault in our stars. I was never a fan of cancer based books but this one was pretty interesting. I would definitely recommend it if you liked the fault in our stars.

I actually wanted to read this after reading some of the reviews. I thought it would be great to read a book about a dying character who wasn't serenely trying to make peace with it. Even Alice points out that what she really wants is the last word. I thought that could be a great read and incredibly honest. But the fact is it's not just about getting the last word. She's just mean and she knows it. There's one part where she actually blames it on drugs and Harvey tells her it wasn't even real drugs that she took- it's just her. You feel sorry for her at some points through the story but it's really, really hard to like someone who knows they're being awful but can't or won't stop. You do however feel sorry for pretty much everyone else whose been trying to take care of and help her even as she makes them miserable. However that aside in the end I did enjoy the book. I did feel like Alice, Harvey and pretty much everyone else dealt with their stuff and moved forward appropriately and honestly. I even appreciated Alice. So if you can stomach a miserable (but brutally honest) main character then I'd recommend this one for a different kind of kids with cancer book.

I was always on the edge of my seat with this book. It was generally really good and I would have given it 5 stars if it wasn't for the fact that I got no closure whatsoever. The way this book ends is just plain wrong. Yes, Alice is a bitch and everyone hates her but having her point of view and Harvey's at the same time really helps to understand the book, the characters, their feelings, and the events that take place. I'm not even mad at the writing and how it switches back and forth. That's the problem for most people, the way this is written can be confusing if you don't keep track of the times you're reading about but I still enjoyed it. That ending though, not even going to lie I'm still a little bitter about it.

The Alice was uninteresting due to the fact that she was just filled with snark and not much else. Harvey's creepily entitled to his chance with Alice. There's this unnecessary animosity between Alice and her childhood friend. I just wasn't drawn to the characters in this book. I love the premise of the story, but it was poorly executed, I think.

Reviewing a book that captures a huge part of your heart and mind, that hits all your right buttons, that speaks on so many levels to you, is sometimes impossible to do. How do you really convey everything amazing about this book, without being able to give needed details due to spoilers? That's where I'm at with this one. I feel like I should say, I know Julie. But that in no way influences my intense love of this book. Honestly, I'd almost wish we weren't friends so maybe people would believe me that much more when I say this is one of those books you must read. No matter what. (But I love Julie, thus the almost). But this book. I connected so hard to Alice. I love this prickly girl who flat out gets revenge on people because she thinks she's dying, and she's angry, and hey she won't be around to handle the fallout. No, she's not a nice person in a lot of ways. But she goes through so much growth. I love the girl she becomes, the change in how she views the world. And, oh, god, the sweetness and connection between her and Harvey. I can see why readers might not like Alice. She does some awful things. But I rooted hard for her. And if I'm being totally honest, I saw part of myself in her. I think whether people want to admit it or not, everyone at least imagines what it'd be like to do what you want, regardless of the consequences. Then there's Alice, who really does it. I admire that. Even if it's in part because she won't have to handle the fallout. But I also just admire how take life by the horns she is, how determined she is. There is an immense strength in this girl, and I can't help but love her. And Harvey. Oh, sweet, sweet Harvey. I love this boy. To pieces. He is so stunningly different than a lot of guys in YA. At the start, he and Alice haven't talked in way too long, despite the friendship that used to be between them. There is such palpable pain there, and it drew me right in. Then comes Alice's diagnosis, and he's back in her life. He knows she's using him, but he doesn't care. And maybe to some that makes him weak, but to me, it just melted me for this boy, this person who cares about someone so much they take the time they can get, do what they can to help that person in what is likely their final months. Yes, she treats him really crappy at times, and yet, I could never hate her for it, or hate him for taking it. Something about these two, both apart and together, enamored me and broke me. For all the ways he's possibly weak, he's got this huge strength, and a breaking point of his own. He challenges Alice, and he challenges himself. And these two just... break me. There's no other word for it. Harvey is amazing. He's that solid thing you can fall back on, yet he's also that thing that will let you fall when it's best for you in the end. The pure brilliance of this book to me is not only the stunning concept, but how amazingly it's executed. Told in dual POV between Harvey and Alice, but also in a nonlinear fashion, with the past mixed into the present on both sides. It's a style that I sometimes can't wrap my head around trying to do, and Julie does it so, so, so well. I followed the overall storyline so well, adding these pieces of the past to the here and now, combining the stories and constantly feeling

my emotions shift and change. The voice is distinct and easy to fall into. Everything about this book sang to me. From the not so easy to swallow choices Alice makes to the raw yet sweet friendship and romance to the roller coaster of emotions throughout. I'm calling it now. This is my best book of 2014.

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