



The Last Time We Say Goodbye

Cynthia Hand

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*There's death all around us.
We just don't pay attention.
Until we do.*

The last time Lex was happy, it was before. When she had a family that was whole. A boyfriend she loved. Friends who didn't look at her like she might break down at any moment.

Now she's just the girl whose brother killed himself. And it feels like that's all she'll ever be.

As Lex starts to put her life back together, she tries to block out what happened the night Tyler died. But there's a secret she hasn't told anyone-a text Tyler sent, that could have changed everything.

Lex's brother is gone. But Lex is about to discover that a ghost doesn't have to be real to keep you from moving on.

The Last Time We Say Goodbye Details

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Author : Cynthia Hand

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From Reader Review The Last Time We Say Goodbye for online ebook

Ai Haibara says

[image error]

C.G. Drews says

IF YOU NEED ME, I'M THE ONE CRYING IN THE CORNER. I really didn't expect to get this emotionally involved. And to be truthful? I wasn't...not until the last 50-pages and then I couldn't stop reading. I think that's my heart over there, broken on the ground. Yup. Someone get the sticky-tape.

There's a lot of back-flashes to the past, in diary form. Lex is this wizard at maths and she's NOT good at writing (har, har, after her diary? I do not believe that) but when her therapist says to write out her feelings...she does. The book definitely doesn't give everything at once. **I WAS DESPERATE FOR DETAILS.** But I had to wait till the *last freaking page* for all the answers. That right there, is good writing. I felt the first 100-pages dragged a little. But once the story got going...it was an emotional rollercoaster.

It's really focused on those who get left behind after a suicide. It just makes me cry. Like the mother who basically said her life is over now that her son is dead. She's in her 40s. Her husband left her. Her kid is dead. What's left for her? So Lex isn't only trying to recover, she's trying to keep her mum afloat too...and she has a secret. ERK GAWSH. That secret *hurt*.

Lex had a real cold, mathematical outlook on life...but I was never mad at her. I've read that kind of attitude a lot (most recently in All Fall Down) where the main character had suffered loss and looked (to the world so so bitter). Usually, I'm "meh" about it. But I STILL connected to Lex! The author brilliantly wove Lex's mathematical and logical personality into emotional moments that *hurt*. I really really felt for Lex.

(I'm totally screwing up this review. I LOVED THE BOOK A LOT. IT'S JUST HARD TO EXPLAIN.)

The book also touches on the fact that depression isn't always super obvious. Like no one really thought Ty would kill himself that night. They knew he was down, but they didn't know he was *running on empty*. **LET ME CRY.** I think it's really important that the author wrote it like that. Depression doesn't make sense. It's really hard to live with.

Also this book hints at being paranormal... It's not. Just to clear that up. I got confused for a moment and was mentally reshelfing it. **BUT NOPE.** Good ol' fashion contemporary.

I pretty much loved this book. I wasn't 100% engaged the entire time, and I felt the REAL punch came at the end. Like the book was a prelude for the fantastic, emotional ending. **I GOT ALL SNIFFLY.** Life is unfair and this isn't a happy book. It doesn't "fix" all the things. There are some gut-wrenching twists. There are some horrific mistakes. There are some horribly good math pick-up lines. Do I say I "enjoyed it"??! IT FEELS WRONG. **I just know this is so moving and emotional and...gah. I NEED TISSUES.**

By the way...the American cover is better, unlike our UK/AUS version which looks like butter and oranges. -

Hailey (HaileyinBookland) says

3.5*

I thought this was a solid book, it dealt with the topic of suicide well, but I just felt like the plot fell a little flat. I just wanted more I guess.

Emily May says

I agree with Tatiana. This book is just so dull. It's hard to string together a few sentences of comments about it. The thing about The Last Time We Say Goodbye is that it's yet another teen issue book about suicide, but the characters are forgettable and the narrative feels flat and lifeless.

You might have more luck with it if you haven't already read a bunch of YA books about suicide/death.

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

I'm torn in two equal parts. I loved and hated it in equal measures. I'm enlightened but I'm still confused and now I don't know what to do with myself let alone this review. So I'll probably just rant away to my heart's content and hopefully by the end of this review, I'll be more stable.

I appreciate that an author for once decided to focus on a sister grieving over her brother who killed himself and I believe Ms. Cynthia Hand was able to realistically portray this. It works because the story is in Lexie's POV as she narrates her grieving process and at the same time confesses her inner thoughts in her journal as a requirement of her therapist.

The matter of fact approach makes the story very genuine and I find Lexie very relatable. I love that she's a math wizard, a really cool geek and I love that her humor is still very much intact in spite of grief. The mysterious elements throughout the novel also kept me intrigued and eager to finish the book.

In the end, I was able to fully grasp the intention of the novel and that is to emphasize that nobody can be blamed over a suicide except for the person who committed it and I'm very glad for Lexie when she finally comes to terms with her brother's decision and ultimately reconnect with her family, her friends, her boyfriend and especially with herself through this unexpected plot twist.

You can simply stop reading here. I actually encourage you to do that.

Oh wow! You decided to read on. Thank you but good luck!

Why I hated the book (and I know I'm being unfair but well life is unfair, right?) is because it led me to the

conclusion that there are no specific symptoms we could detect to determine a suicidal person. Suicide victims vary in their manifestations. Some show obvious signs. Some just don't and I hated this information presented in the book especially on the increasing suicide rates among teens. I hated that all these things were just thrown out there and I hated that particular part of the plot where suicide seemed to become an easy alternative to solving any teenage problem. I hated that it appears to be something that can be contagious, something to be envied and "emulated".

- ? Depression=Suicide
- ? Failed Exam=Suicide
- ? Victim of Bullying=Suicide
- ? Broken Family=Suicide
- ? Broken Heart=Suicide
- ? Dare/trend/whim=Suicide
- ? Needs attention=Suicide

And I know these are facts but what was I supposed to do with this information when seemingly, in the end, it's still the person's decision and there could have been nothing to be done to help him change his mind. This gloriously sucks! It makes me want to punch someone and I know the book focuses on the person's grief but I couldn't help it because the plot inevitably touched these matters. (view spoiler)

Phew! That helped. I'm feeling a lot better now. Ultimately, the only thing we can do is to be the best person we could be every chance we get with people who matter to us. It may or may not change their decision but it's all we could really do because after all, we never know when it's the last time we say goodbye.

Cynthia Hand says

UPDATE 9-6-14

I have ARCs! Please don't email me asking for them (ask my publisher, instead), but stay tuned for a few contests where I will be giving them away.

CH

UPDATE 6-25-14

It's here! The cover and the description were revealed today! Check it out!!!

UPDATE 6-2-14

Soon, very soon, people, there will be jacket copy, an official cover, and ARCs. The cover is amazing and I love it. Squeee!

Also, a tentative release date of Feb 8, 2015, which makes sense because the book's first scene is in the first week of February.

Another update soon to come!

CH

UPDATE 1-20-14

Okay people I can tell you a title. Woot. There's no official date yet (although I am guessing early winter 2015) and no official cover (although they are working on something SO COOL) but I will give you the title. You had it here first.

The title is:

THE LAST TIME WE SAY GOODBYE

Now I must go back to revising it.

xo

CH

(old news below)

Just signed the contract for this book this week! It will be out Winter 2015, and it's a YA contemporary stand-alone. I can't wait until I get to tell you the title and what it's about.

CH

Wendy Darling says

One of the most beautiful parts of the Unearthly trilogy was seeing how Cynthia Hand wrote about grief. Reading this novel is an incredibly painful experience, particularly if suicide has touched your life in a significant way, but I wouldn't trade this book, with all its blurry, unfinished truths and messy, gut-wrenching feeling, for a thousand more showy, "clever" stories on the same topic.

A simple, emotional tribute to those who leave us all too soon. And a small reassurance to the rest of us that we're not alone in our sorrow. **4.5 stars**

Giselle says

The Last Time We Say Goodbye is the story of a girl who's been left behind. Her family is broken, her heart is broken, and her life will now never be the same. After her brother dies, Lex is now defined as this tragic girl with a dead brother; someone to pity, or to avoid completely which is not uncommon in these scenarios - people are simply uncomfortable towards death. If this wasn't enough for Lex to deal with, there's these nightmares that make her relive it all nightly...

As you can expect, this novel is full of emotional turmoil. It's dark and depressing, yet very powerful. Important, even. We're dealing with death, grief, depression, denial, and everything in between, and these emotions are all very real and unflinching. Lex was given a journal to help with her grief, so we get to feel

through her own words exactly what she's going through - the anger, the sorrow, the borderline overwhelming *hurt* - as well as exactly how much she loved her brother with her stories of their past together. Even knowing the eventual outcome, I loved getting a glimpse at these simpler times when she was carefree and happy. It allowed us to understand the bond she had with her brother, and it made us see who she was before this tragedy. The topic of suicide is heavy throughout the novel, and incredibly well-handled. I found it to be a very realistic portrayal of depression - in both herself and her brother. Especially when it comes to the guilt that comes hand in hand with tragic events like these. You always blame yourself for not being there, for not helping, for not seeing what is now so clear. *If only...* Except it's never that simple. Seeing Lex go through the blaming and the guilt and all the other stages of grief made this all the more authentic. It's heartbreakingly real, but it's a tunnel she's slowly climbing out of.

Through her journal entries, we start to unravel the events that happened on the night of. So we can finally see why she feels so guilty - why she blames herself so much. These "past" entries are bittersweet because it's full of love and romance and sweet moments, but you know it's leading up to something terrible. For this reason, it makes you want to keep at arm's length to save your own heart. Like, you should know better than to get too attached to the way things were, you know, especially in the romance department. But there's still a lot of room for hope. Hope that she will eventually stop blaming herself, that she will give herself a chance to try and be happy again, no matter how impossible that seems right now.

Dark books like these do tend to be a hit or miss for some. It requires you to become emotionally invested, which is not always easy knowing from the start that it will bring tears and heartache. If this is your thing, however - if you like to inflict pain upon yourself like I do - this one is very well-written with some deep characterization. It's a raw look at a family coping with death.

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at Xpresso Reads

Melanie says

A lot of crying was involved.

That actually might be an understatement.

You know what else made me want to cry an ocean? Celine's review. And you all should check it out because it's wonderful and she summarises the beauty of this book so perfectly:
<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

It may only be January but I'm so incredibly sure that this is making my Top 10 books of 2015. It tore me apart, this book, with its **perfect blend of numbing words and tangible pain**. I know I'm buying myself a hardback of this when it finally releases just so I can cuddle with it and bookmark all my favourite bits. (Though let's be honest, that would just be bookmarking every page.)

Masooma says

2.5 stars

My first reaction when I turned the final page:

This book is a bag of cliches, has a down-in-the-doldrums heroine and the mainstream story dealing with death and depression.

The Last Time We Say Goodbye is the story of Alexis Riggs who has lost her younger brother to suicide, the plot is set around her struggle against the darkness that diffuses all around her after her brother pops his clogs and her idea that she is somewhat blameworthy in Tyler's suicide. Side by side, Alexis's love story also spills with a record of her childhood memories. Twin themes of forgiveness and acceptance also tag along.

The protagonist is pretty cliché. She follows the tradition of such novels having heroines who have their interests embedded in a particular subject, have parents with nil interest in their children's mental health, have a therapist; who they slowly realize is right and one way or the other crawl out of the black hole of their black-out.

In Alexis's case, she's a math maniac, her therapist is Dave who recommends she writes in a journal to vent out her feelings and her mother just washes down her pain with the aid of valium and alcohol and her father's role is mostly useless.

The writing style is light, slightly peppered with humor and served with mathematical facts.

Having said all this, there is one factor that needs attention viz; the emotions are described pretty strongly in a few scenes which earns a badge of credit to the novel.

To sum up, in a mathematical equation:

bog-standard story + hackneyed character = average read.

Ari says

Wonderfully written and absolutely touching!

Do you know the feeling you get while and after you hold your breath for long? How time seems to stop for a while, how your heart beats faster and faster, how sharp everything becomes after the fuzziness washes over?

This is how this book feels like.

And it is wonderful, and dangerously heartbreaking.

There is nothing in this world quite like the feeling of true happiness, or deep sadness, or shattering grief.

There is nothing like the words that can really get to you, or the stories that you feel like wanting to take them into your arms, hugging them breathless and never wanting to let them go.

There is nothing quite like reading a book that makes you laugh - a true, deep laugh from the very center of your being.. Or the ones that can shatter you into thousands of pieces, leaving you with a mind full of what ifs.

“The Last Time We Say Goodbye” is a sad book. A beautiful, wonderful story about grief, about the pain of losing someone dear, about all the things you could have done to keep your loved ones safe. And I hate sad books. I really do. They can make my eyes leak this stupid warm, salty water, running down my face. And if not, they still make my heart ache.

But there's beauty in them too, isn't it?

In the fact that without being ‘hopeless’ you wouldn't ever know what ‘hopeful’ feels like. In the fact that words have the power to create – to create emotions, to create new worlds and make you into new people. Words have the power to shut down the world around you or to make you really see it. Words can be as powerful as regrets.

So, you know.. Sad books are not for sad people.

But maybe they are, because there is so much beauty in this world, so much love, so much everything, that people should NEVER be this sad.

I knew Cynthia can write about grief with a passion, I loved Hallowed the best because of that, but I think I might not do grief that well these days. I hate death, I hate feeling scared of it, I hate the people that have died in my life and have left me with this hollow in my heart that I can't seem to be able to fill even years later.

But the truth is that this story is wonderful, it is filled with sorrow but it also has moments of happiness, of cuteness. It is bitter-sweet in a way that breaks your heart and some times puts it back together.

This is not a story about death, as much as one about forgiveness – Alexis (or Lex) needs to forgive her father for walking away, her mother for being so weak, her ex-boyfriend for giving her everything, her friends for feeling her despair, her brother for being so selfishly depressed, herself for not being there to save him. And she feels like she needs forgiveness to... For all the words left unspoken, for all the things that she could have done, for all the life her brother could have lived, for all the tears that have dried up.

The cover-art is perfect, the tagline hits a soft spot, the title is spot on, the story inside is beautiful. I think that every detail is perfect. Even perfectly sad. All in one this book here is absolutely great, not only for fans of Cynthia Hand, but for everyone who likes to read emotional stories.

* ARC received from the publisher for review.

** Full review can be found at: [Reading After Midnight](#).

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Victor Almeida says

Tem um caroço na minha garganta. Quero deitar no chão abraçado com esse livro e ficar ali.

Amei essa leitura, acho que ficou claro, né? Me surpreendi com a rapidez e o dinamismo do livro, mas o que mais me deixou preso e encantado foi a percepção e a vulnerabilidade da autora. O domínio das palavras. A sinceridade e a sua verdade crua. Eu estou apaixonado pelos personagens, eu estive de luto com eles, eu cresci junto a eles ao longo da jornada, eu vivi cada palavra. É um livro lindo.

A temática de suicídio e todo processo de luto e cura foi abordado aqui de uma forma muito real, emocionante e valorosa. Não foi escrito pra te entreter e emocionar, foi escrito pra gritar essas palavras na sua cara. É uma leitura indispensável.

Sendo um pouco técnico, só tenho a dizer que amei a narrativa, a sucessão dos acontecimentos, a relação dos personagens, a ambientação... tudo. É um livro muito gostoso de ler, apesar de te deixar com uma dor no coração ao acabar. Alguns chamam de sensibilidade, eu chamo de arte.

Glass says

Brilliant and heartbreakin!

All of us know Cynthia Hand because of her brilliant *Unearthly* trilogy - my favorite paranormal young adult series about angels. It came as a surprise when I saw that her new novel will be more on realistic side. Truth to be told, I was worried because I ended up disappointed with several authors who took turn from paranormal to realistic fiction. But this is Cynthia Hand, so shouldn't have any doubts from the start. *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* deserves more than five stars.

Not the easiest book to read. I finished *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* at three in the morning and I just sat there in my bed, completely wrecked, fighting with the urge to go into the next room, wake up my sister and tell her how much I love her and how happy I am that I have her and that I'm sorry for every time I hurt her feelings. I don't remember the last time a book made me cry - this was such an emotional and heartbreakin story about love and loss. Letting go and forgiving are two hardest things to do, especially if the person we need to forgive is ourselves.

Told from the perspective of a girl whose brother committed a suicide, *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* is at the same time story about those who were left behind and a boy who took his own life. Don't expect some magical romance that will make everything better for Lex and help her to move on. Lex has to find way to

deal with things on her own and that is exactly what she does, everything is focused on her inner struggles and interaction with her friends who don't know how to get to her.

This is not autobiographic novel. That is something that Cynthia Hand points out in the note at end of the book, but it probably wasn't easy for her to write about something like this. I just want to say thank you for writing it.

Final judgement? Heartfelt, deep and beautiful young adult novel that will make you appreciate your siblings more and feel pain for those who lost them. Absolute must-read!

Happy reading,

Jeanne says

Raw, honest, realistic, and heart wrenching are words that come to my mind when trying to describe this book. I've read other books with the same subject matter, but none of them felt as real or as authentic as this one. This novel isn't watered down, and that's what makes it special. My friend Maida said in her review that Ms. Hand's writing is flawless, not a compliment she hands out every day, but I agree. (I will always read your 5 star picks Maida, even if they make me cry and eat a pound of chocolate.) I don't know how to express into words how perfectly she conveyed the emotions and grief process a family goes through in the weeks and months following a loved one's suicide, but trust me, she did. I was especially touched by the message of forgiveness throughout the story, and it ended on a hopeful note even though it wasn't an easy read. The author's note at the end broke my heart even more, but I'm glad I read it, and I'm thankful to her for sharing her personal story.

This was actually my first book by Cynthia Hand, but it won't be the last. I'm looking forward to reading her *Unearthly* series soon.

Sue (Hollywood News Source) says

Review also posted at [Young Adult Hollywood](#).

I am a pretty sad person, I cry over books, even when they are not *that* sad and even more so, when they are depressing. And *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* made me cried from the very start until the end. FYI, more like gross sobbing.

Cynthia Hand's *Unearthly* trilogy is one of my favorite YA series, but the conclusion failed to impress me, so it's safe to say I had my doubts. My fear did not lessen when I noticed the premise is quite similar to *Love Letters to Dead* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. They all revolved into writing a journal and diary, while I have nothing against those titles, they unsuccessful left me unsatisfied and detached. Thanks all the saints, I was so wrong because this book is so different. And that felt so naturally good.

It tells a heartbreak story of a teenager girl slowly navigating her life after the suicide of her brother. That is something someone cannot *just* get over in one snap. It takes a lot of time. And I believe that is what makes this book feel so mundane and simply touching. The protagonist, Lex struggle with *that* guilt and the blame.

No flowery words would ever be enough to describe how raw and grounded The Last Time We Say Goodbye is. And from writing paranormal to contemporary books that dealt with mental illness, Hand's transition was very smooth. She perfectly captured the grief and angst. The emotion would hit every reader right into the gut.

This is the kind of book, every reader would like to read. It would leave a very lasting mark somewhere within you.

Vitor Martins says

Essa é uma história extremamente bonita. Me emocionou de um jeito que nenhum outro livro YA conseguiu. Senti as dores dos personagens, sofri e me importei com eles e torci até a última página para que tudo ficasse bem.

É um livro que faz chorar sem precisar de fórmula. Fala sobre família, luto, perdão, culpa e quando você vai percebendo a grandiosidade dessa história, é impossível não se emocionar.

shady boots | #WatchPOSE says

Gurl.

Guuuuuuuuuuurl.

Let me tell you whahahappen. Whahahappen wuz, I was on a public transport on the way back home from outta town when I finished this book. When I tell you I was bawling my eyes out in that minibus, I was *bawling my fucking eyes out* in that goddamn minibus, gurl. I swear to god.

Okay, so, here's the thing. I've kinda been avoiding contemporary YA because, even though I haven't *read* many of the new stuff, there seems to be a common thing going on where authors are exploring death in a kinda quirky, lyrical type of way, mixing it in with surrealism and wit and charm and whatnot. You could argue that that's been a part of contemporary YA for a long while, but I feel like *The Fault in Our Stars* really ignited it into what it is now. When I read contemporary YA, I want something real. That's kinda the whole point. I love fantasy YA, of course; it's all I've read in the past several months. But with contemporary I don't want anything that's all whymysical and shit. I want straight up raw realism. I know that once upon a time, I gave TFiOS five stars, but I don't doubt that my opinion would change if I reread it. Which I won't, cause I just don't feel like it. I only reread books when they're a series, and I need to catch up on what happened so I can finish said series.

Anyways, I digress. So yeah, I've been carefully avoiding contemporary YA because I didn't like the whole

whymical approach towards death type thing that's been going on nowadays. I also didn't like how it was too romance-centric. I'm going to tell you right now that this was exactly the YA contemp book I needed. *Exactly.*

I don't know what it is about Cynthia Hand, but I've felt it ever since I finished her wonderful *Unearthly* series. She has this uncanny ability to make me feel so much for the characters she creates. She's able to deal with dark topics like death in an emotional way while still adding a certain lighthearted charm to it. There's no way of me saying this without sounding cheesy as fuck but there's a certain quality to her writing that's just so goddamn *lovable* and warm, at least to me. The way she depicted grief in this book really struck me. Even though I've never experienced that deep of a loss myself--at least not yet--I still felt for Alexis. I still could relate to her because she saw the logic in everything, and she was strong but still vulnerable at the same time.

I just loved the direction this book went. It threw away the cliches, and the few cliches that *are* in it, the book *knows* these things are cliches, if that makes any sense. And what I loved the most was, hands down, that **it didn't focus on the romance**. I want to shout that from mountaintops everywhere. So many YA books about death have focused on how the main character finds a boy/girl who's enigmatic and helps them appreciate life or whatever the fuck else cliche thing you can think of, but this book genuinely focuses on Alexis's grief over losing her brother in such a way. The romance is just something on the side, but it still somehow plays a big part and it wraps up beautifully.

In my personal opinion, this will be going on my best reads of 2015 when the year wraps up. And I know that if I ever experience a devastating loss, I may reflect back on this book because of how it impacted me. Cynthia Hand has somehow made an *even more* emotional book than the *Unearthly* series put together, and for that, I give her tons of kudos.

Celine says

Years ago, I walked into school and something was different. I was, as usual, a bit early for my classes (I like being on time) and slowly walked to the stairwell, my thoughts already with today's lessons and my friends and the ridiculous amount of homework I still had to do. But the moment I left the lockers and walked into the hall, I knew something was different. There were only a few fellow students in that hall, and some teachers, wearing grave faces. The atmosphere was different, as though the entire school was holding its breath. The teachers escorted us to the auditorium, still with that grave expression. I saw a picture in someone's hand.

My first thought was: *oh no. Who died?* My entire body felt numb, all my thoughts focused on that one question. Who died? I looked at a teacher, who was clutching the photograph tightly. I still remember that moment, like a snapshot, even though it's years ago. I have no idea who that teacher was, but I remember that picture clearly. It felt strange to me, getting that call and then having to deal with the logistics like printing out photographs, figuring out how to break the news to the students, when those things are probably the last things on your mind.

The person that died was a boy, in his last year of high school. He had a little sister. She was in the same year as I was. All the students sat down in the auditorium, and it was the quietest I'd ever heard a room full of people. We were then told that this boy had flung himself in front of a train the day before.

My best friend's father has a job at the railways. This is something that occurs almost daily.

The father of a boy I knew hung himself in his own home.

I remember trying to hold back my tears when I heard that, and I remember people asking me if I was okay. I told them that this was not about me. I couldn't imagine what it must have felt like for them. The boy, his little brother.

The sister, her parents.

I still can't fully imagine, and I hope to never experience it.

But Cynthia Hand has shared that experience with us, and it *hurt*. *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* is not about the phone call, not about the terrible shock, not about the funeral. It's about the months after, when everyone else seems to move on with their lives but you can't. It's about the little things that remind you of that person, about the gaping hole in your chest that starts to unravel more every day. It's not about "moving on", but it is about learning to live with it.

I knew next to nothing about *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* going in, except that it was written by Cynthia Hand and therefore I had to read it. She is the author of the *Unearthly* series after all, which I loved. If I had to make a comparison, I'd say *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* is most alike *Hallowed*, because both books are essentially about grief.

Alexis' brother Tyler shot himself. In *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* we see her try to move on, try to make sense of it all, go through all the emotions that accompany loss. Hurt, confusion, self-doubt, guilt, terrible sadness, anger. She slowly grows throughout the novel, slowly starts to accept that this is her reality now, and very, very slowly begins the healing process. She's seeing a therapist, and gets the assignment to write about her brother. Not his death, but his life. The book is told in alternatively Alexis' point of view and the things she writes down, which read almost like a diary entry and contains a whole story of its own. We get to experience her memories of Tyler: the happy ones, the sad ones.

There are a lot of things in *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* that I love and wholeheartedly approve of: the strong family relationships, for one. Alexis' parents are definitely not absent during the novel. Her parents are divorced and Alexis lives with her mom, and we get to see two grieving processes at the same time: one from a mother, the other from a sister. But even though the relationship between Alexis and her dad isn't very good, he is still present in the novel. We get to see flashes of his grief and his love for Alexis, even when she feels very hateful toward him. *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* is not just about grief, but also about family.

Normally I would write extensively about the characters, the positive way Alexis' therapist is portrayed, and Hand's beautiful writing style, which really allows the reader to connect with and feel for Alexis. But the truth is, I'm pretty much out of words. I think this is a very important book for both readers who haven't experienced anything like this and those who have. I have a feeling it may be very easy to connect with and to show that you aren't alone in your experiences. In the end, I simply love this emotional and heartfelt story and I'll be eagerly awaiting Hand's next novel.

~Thank you, HarperTeen, for the review copy~

Thomas says

As someone who went through a series of losses this year, I could not have read this book at a better time. One close friend hurt me in particular, and I spent so much time thinking that maybe if I had been a little better, he would have stayed. Maybe if I had said one more kind word, or if I had changed something about myself, he would not have abused me the way he did. But Cynthia Hand's story reminded me that instead of blaming ourselves for things outside of our control, we should strive to treat ourselves and those around us with kindness and compassion, no matter how much we hurt.

The Last Time We Say Goodbye revolves around Lex, a high school senior whose brother died by suicide. Before Ty killed himself, Lex felt happy: she had a goofy boyfriend, dreams of attending MIT, and a good group of friends. But Ty's death changes everything - Lex breaks up with Steven, her mother takes up drinking, and her already dysfunctional relationship with her father takes even more of a nosedive. When she starts to see Ty's ghost, Lex realizes that she needs to put all the pieces of her grief together, or she might drown in her sorrow otherwise.

Lex's intelligent and honest voice sucked me into *The Last Time We Say Goodbye* right away. On the outside, she still has some aspects of her life together, but on the inside, she feels relentless pain. Lex's descriptions of the gaping hole in her chest, the anger she possesses toward her family, and her regrets over what could have been, all pierced me and lodged themselves into my heart. Her renewed friendships with Sadie, her relationships with Damian and Steven, and her family situation all received a sophisticated amount of development. By the end of the book, I had splayed myself across a public couch at my college, mesmerized by Hand's prose and torn apart by its ability to evoke emotion.

Hand treats mental illness with the care it deserves. Instead of fetishizing a sensitive topic, she centers the story on Lex's grief and her recovery process. Ty remains a shadowy yet fitting part of the book, and Hand humanizes him alongside the rest of the characters. Lex and the people she interacts with come across as three-dimensional and unified in the pain they share over Ty's death.

Overall, a stellar book about the loss of a loved one. Hand delivers her story in a simple and quiet way, and the strength of her prose shines. Recommended to fans of YA realistic fiction, or to those interested in a bittersweet story with themes of grief and hope. And remember: if you need help, please reach out. People care about you. I care about you.

Whitney Atkinson says

I enjoyed this book! The characters were very fleshed out and I especially liked Lex and the way her mind worked in the aftermath of this tragedy. It didn't linger on the pain, yet it was a reminder of how deeply death can affect a family. And despite how I generally liked how this book panned out, it was just a bit too generic for me. Every suicide book has turned into a "this person left clues behind when he/she died!" and it kind of glamorized the death a bit, which I find distasteful. Other than that, and other than how the evolution of the characters was pretty predictable, it was still an enjoyable read that had me shed a tear or two in the privacy of my darkened room at 1:30 AM.
