



The Snowball Effect

Holly Nicole Hoxter

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Lainey Pike can tell you everything you need to know about the people in her family just by letting you know how they died. Her reckless stepfather drove his motorcycle off the highway and caused the biggest traffic jam in years. Her long-suffering grandmother lived through cancer and a heart attack before finally succumbing to a stroke. And Lainey's mother; well, Lainey's mother hanged herself in the basement just days after Lainey's high school graduation. Now Lainey's five-year-old brother is an orphan and her estranged older sister is moving back home to be his guardian. Meanwhile, Lainey's boyfriend is thinking about having a family of their own, and her best friends are always asking the wrong sorts of questions and giving advice Lainey doesn't want to hear. As she tries to pull away from everything familiar, Lainey meets an intriguing new guy who, through a series of Slurpees, burgers, and snowballs, helps her to make peace with a parent she never understood.

The Snowball Effect Details

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Author : Holly Nicole Hoxter

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Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Death, Realistic Fiction, Teen

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From Reader Review The Snowball Effect for online ebook

Ashley says

Originally reviewed on my blog, Books from Bleh to Basically Amazing.

The Snowball Effect by Holly Nicole Hoxter had a lot of potential. There was a lot to the story that I liked. I actually really loved reading about where the title came from, kind of the idea that you can't dwell on the past, can't try to go back to what it was, because your perception of the past is always changing and because you are always changing, you aren't going to be effected in the same way again.

But overall, this book was one big disappointment after another. Lainey has an awesome boyfriend who loves her and wants to start talking about marriage and starting a family, but she isn't ready for that. Which is fine. But instead of really talking to him about it, explaining how she feels, she pretty much ignores him, kinda maybe hooks up with a new guy and never actually breaks things off with old boyfriend. Not cool. If you are unhappy in a relationship, work it out or break it off. Don't start a new one without finishing off the old.

But what made me madder than anything else was the way that Lainey and her estranged older sister, Valerie treat her younger brother, five year old Colin who has an unspecified mental illness. Lainey's mom committed suicide after her husband's death leaving Lainey and Valerie to care for Colin, a boy she had taken in as a foster child and decided to adopt. I get that the sisters are pretty young (Lainey is 18, Valerie a few years older), especially to now be responsible for a 5 year old with mental health problems BUT that does not excuse the way they treated him, or the way the mom treated him. They are very harsh, often yelling and screaming at him for things he can't really control. And it's just did NOT sit well with me. I have a hard time enjoying a book when I am so angry about the treatment of a character. I know it wasn't the focal point of the story- Lainey's growth as a person is, but it was handled so abominably that I just couldn't really enjoy the book.

I never really connected with this one. It felt gimmicky and forced. There were things added that felt like drama-increasers, things that didn't really have a point or purpose other than to (blatantly) push the plot a certain direction, or give Lainey something else to dwell on. And, pretty much every character was super annoying, whether I liked them or not. I wouldn't want to ever meet any of these guys in real life. It was an overall fine book, just one that didn't really work for me.

Samantha says

Have you ever read a story where it felt like you were actually part of the characters lives? The Snowball Effect is one of those kinds of stories, and Lainey Pike is one of those kinds of characters.

Eighteen year old Lainey is your somewhat typical jaded teenage girl, except she has bigger issues to deal with. Her stepfather died in a motorcycle crash, her grandmother died shortly after that, and her mother fully lost it and hanged herself in their basement...two days after her high school graduation.

Sounds like a lot to deal with, right? Well, there's more...Her mother left behind another child, Lainey's brother, Collin, is five years old and has sever behavioral problems, and now there's someone else to add to

their dysfunctional family, Vallery, Lainey's long gone older sister. Vallery hasn't been in Lainey's life since she was a very young child, and Vallery never even knew Collin existed, until now. And now, Vallery is back and in charge of Collin, but not willingly and definitely not patiently.

To add to everything else in Lainey's already chaotic life, there's Riley, her adorably sweet boyfriend, who wants them to move in together and start a life of their own. But now that Vallery is back and they're sharing the responsibility of Collin and for everything else, Lainey has way more to deal with than she ever has.

Now, Lainey has to get to know Vallery all over again, and get Collin to not only behave, but behave for Vallery and come to trust her. Then there's the task of trying to find a way to forgive her mother for being mentally absent and leaving her. But how easy can it be to make peace with a dead woman?

There was so much about *The Snowball Effect* that I absolutely adored and it's hard to know where to start! Lainey is one of those characters that is so easy to relate to. She's frustrated with her siblings and her job, she has her friends and relationships to deal with, and it's all complicated.

Holly Nicole Hoxter has an adorable hit on her hands. The story did tend to jump around a bit, but it made up for that with its realistic look at a teenager's way of coping, while trying to move on and improve their life, plus dealing with whatever else life throws their way. Then there's Riley, whom I absolutely adored! He's kind and sweet and totally loves Lainey, no matter how she treats him. Talk about a fantastic boyfriend! There's also the relationship that Lainey, Collin, and Vallery forge with one another, and I found it to be realistic and beautiful.

But there's more to *The Snowball Effect* than the story itself. Hoxter's writing flows so beautifully, and she has a talent that few writers have. There are few writers that have the ability to take an incredibly sad situation, such as the loss of a loved one, and make it so hilarious, yet moving. This is an author that I not only look forward to reading more from, but I also know will go far.

Watch out for Holly Nicole Hoxter, she's a talented author and an awesome storyteller. *The Snowball Effect* actually reminded me somewhat of a Sarah Dessen novel, and that is always a good thing! I definitely recommended this to all teens, and adults, that enjoy a good, realistic, entertaining story.

Nick Davis says

The *Snowball Effect* by Holly Nicole Hoxter, was an interesting novel. I was gifted this book way back during my birthday and it took me a month to get to it, and a month of slow reading to finish it. It's not that long a novel, just the last couple of months got extraordinarily busy for me.

The novel follows the life of Lainey St James, a 17 year girl who recently lost her Mother, who had committed suicide, yeah I know charming premises but hang in there. Up to now, and the mostly through the first part of the book her life is, as she views it, totally perfect. She never felt close to her Mother and feels nothing over her dying. Then slowly everything starts to fall apart.

Now the way that Holly does this is very interesting, at the beginning I really disliked Lainey, a 17 year old coming off as 40, and seemed to be channeling Juno. Everything she had was all so together, even the boyfriend Riley was too perfect. Then her Sister comes along to become the Guardian of Collin the adopted ADD baby, then bit by bit Lainey loses control of her life, as she finds out she is more like her mother than

she realized. The tipping point is when she meets the Slurpie Guy Eric, and starts to learn there is much more to life.

The story is charming, with lots of humor injected into it. This is a story about ordinary people getting on by and living while life stuff happens to them, about taking small chances and the changes it can make to you as a person. It deals nicely with all the stages of grieving, and wraps up with Lainey going through a life changing journey.

On the way she breaks up with Riley, dates Eric, has an alcohol fueled melt down, gets into an ice cream fight, goes on a surprise vacation to Florida, comes back again, finally grieves for her mother, learns some life lessons, becomes a little wiser and puts her life back together again.

While this isn't really a book I would pick up, I am after all more of a Discworld irrelevant fantasy type person, it does make an engaging read and a fine dialog novel. I can actually see this being an indie movie just be the way it plays out – although Juno Lainey at the beginning would get to me a little bit. This is a gentle, fun, loving story about life and the people that are in it with you. Go pick it for your wife, girl, your daughter, or maybe even for yourself, it is good read.

Princess Bookie says

My Thoughts: YES! YES! YES! It's been a little while that I read a book that I absolutely loved. I had seen a few buddies reading this a few months ago, and knew I had to give it a chance from their words on goodreads. I'm so happy I did. It was a great book. We meet Lainey who is 18 but has her whole life ahead of her. She gets thrown into a world of responsibility. Her mother takes her own life which leaves her 5 year old brother and a sister she never knew. We also meet her perfect boyfriend. I really liked Lainey's boyfriend. I loved their relationship and he just seemed so together, I wish I could have dated him at 18. She also meets another guy, who she is drawn to. She is so confused between the two. I also really liked him as well. That's usually what happens, you get stuck between two great guys!!! They are complete opposites! Honestly I'm happy who she chooses in the end. Lainey has to deal with everything, money, family, boys, best friends, drama, confusion, hurt. I could totally relate to Lainey. She did hold it together most of the time. I would have probably broke down if I had been through everything at her age. I really liked this book. I love the idea of snowballs. I loved the characters. I loved the way she treated her brother. She was just a special girl. Please read this book! It's wonderful!

Overall: Loved It! It's wonderful. Cover: It's awesome! I love the way the author's name is across the cups. It's one of the more creative covers I've seen in a while!

Paige (Arya) says

The Snowball Effect by Holly Nicole Hoxter 2 of 5 stars.

Lainey Pike can tell you everything you need to know about the people in her family just by letting you know how they died. Her reckless stepfather drove his motorcycle off the highway and caused the biggest traffic jam in years. Her long-suffering grandmother lived through cancer and a heart attack before finally succumbing to a stroke. And Lainey's mother--well, Lainey's mother hanged herself in the basement just

days after Lainey's high school graduation.

Now Lainey's five-year-old brother is an orphan and her estranged older sister is moving back home to be his guardian. Meanwhile, Lainey's boyfriend is thinking about having a family of their own, and her best friends are always asking the wrong sorts of questions and giving advice Lainey doesn't want to hear. As she tries to pull away from everything familiar, Lainey meets an intriguing new guy who, through a series of Slurpees, burgers, and snowballs, helps her to make peace with a parent she never understood. (Book blurb)

Despite the fact that this is twenty thousand miles away from the books I generally love, I thought this would be a good read. By the time I made it to the middle I was hating it, then in the end... it surprised me.

Hoxter's prose isn't lyric or spectacular, but she does have a very consistent voice for Lainey that makes you really want to like her. Unfortunately, I was a bit annoyed with her throughout the book. Her attitude and irritation with her family was a bit tiring, and her treatment of the boyfriend who would quite obviously jump off a cliff for her was far from understandable. The characters were well pieced together, though, even if Lainey was severely lacking something throughout the majority of the book.

As far as whether I would suggest this book to someone... probably not. I'm sure there are going to be people who enjoy it immensely but I just don't think you would be missing out on anything by not reading it. But that's my opinion.

Review by Arya @ A Sea of Pages (<http://seaofpages.blogspot.com>) <

Sarah says

The Snowball Effect by Holly Nicole Hoxter is one of the few books I have read this year that fits the teens I serve almost to a T. I live in a socioeconomically poor area, a city with a high teenage pregnancy rate, and a fairly high rate of teens of drop out of high school or never go to college. They will find that this book fits their lives much better than many of the books I have enjoyed this year.

Synopsis: Lainey Pike can tell you everything you need to know about the people in her family just by letting you know how they died. Her reckless stepfather drove his motorcycle off the highway and caused the biggest traffic jam in years. Her long-suffering grandmother lived through cancer and a heart attack before finally succumbing to a stroke. And Lainey's mother—well, Lainey's mother hanged herself in the basement just days after Lainey's high school graduation.

Now Lainey's five-year-old brother is an orphan and her estranged older sister is moving back home to be his guardian. Meanwhile, Lainey's boyfriend is thinking about having a family of their own, and her best friends are always asking the wrong sorts of questions and giving advice Lainey doesn't want to hear. As she tries to pull away from everything familiar, Lainey meets an intriguing new guy who, through a series of Slurpees, burgers, and snowballs, helps her to make peace with a parent she never understood.

First off, this is not a happy go lucky story. In fact, for the most part it is a realistic story, kind of depressing, kind of hard because Lainey's life is hard, and not filled with a lot of options for its characters. It was very authentic. Lainey is essentially parentless. Her father has had no role in her life for almost her entire life. Her mother recently committed suicide and her stepfather died by driving his motorcycle off a bridge, on accident. She is left alone with her younger adopted brother, Collin, who is a handful to put it lightly. Her

older sister, Vallery, who she barely knows, suddenly shows up after their mother's death, assigned as Collin's guardian. This is a very dysfunctional family on so many levels.

Lainey has graduated high school and she is planning on attending the local community college with her boyfriend of four years, Riley, but somehow she is feeling dissatisfied with life lately. She is irritable, her car keeps breaking down, and her job at a mall kiosk is far from satisfactory. While reading this book, all I could think was how easily this scenario, or something so similar, fits many of the teens I serve. I am in teen central during the afternoons and I cannot tell you how many teens I see come into the area, being trailed by younger siblings, no parents at all in sight. How they even got to the library is often a mystery. This is the story of a girl with not many options for her future but that isn't the point. She isn't looking for options necessarily. She is just trying to get by.

Into her life enters a new guy who becomes the catalyst for some changes, not necessarily for the better. This new guy does not give her new options, he is not necessarily any better than her boyfriend of four years, he is just new, someone to have some type of hopes about. I'll be totally honest, for much of this book, Lainey was a bit of a bitch. But heck, she has had so many deaths in her life recently I could forgive her. She hadn't really grieved at all so it was hard to see her in so much pain but yet persevere because the family needed money, they needed food on their table. Lainey was the parent essentially for Collin, even if she did share those duties with Vallery, a person who is pretty much a total stranger to her. Lainey is still stuck with her high school crew. Yes, she is one of those people who I never envy, those people who never leave their hometown and twenty years down the road, you know they are still hanging out and drinking with the same crowd from high school. It's rather pathetic and sad and Lainey is in some ways headed down that path herself. But the thing is, she doesn't seem to mind too much. Yes, she wants something different but even by the story's end, she is not sure what.

This book is very different from many of the YA stories I have read this year, and that is to this book's benefit in my mind. I wish it wasn't quite so long because many of the teens in my area are more reluctant readers. And sadly, the length does not necessarily enhance the book, it just merely allows Lainey more time to whine and to dawdle.

I will say, I did feel hope for these characters by the end of the book. They seemed to have formed a more cohesive unit. And yeah, maybe their futures weren't all that much brighter but there was a sense of family and peace about them finally.

The Snowball Effect is a good down to earth read. This is unfortunately the kind of lives many teens are leading. I think they will find themselves on the pages of the story very easily and maybe it will motivate them to keep going with high school, not get pregnant, or maybe, and this is just as good, it will be a comfort to see themselves on the pages of a story.

Jenny / Wondrous Reads says

From just reading the above summary, The Snowball Effect probably sounds like quite a depressing book about death, suicide and other such depressing parts of life. While it does touch on the deaths of Lainey's immediate family members, it's more about surviving what life throws at you, and appreciating what, and who, you have left.

Hoxter's writing is engaging and easy to become engrossed in, though it's her characters that are the true stars

of the story. After Lainey's mum dies, older sister Vallery comes to live with Lainey and her younger brother Collin, who suffers from behavioural problems. Lainey's long-term boyfriend, Riley, is also in the mix, and he's the kind of guy I think anyone would be lucky to have. They end up forming a really tight family unit, and learning to trust and depend on each other. Hoxter writes each character with such care and precision that you're left feeling as if they could be your own family, friends and neighbours, rather than fictional people born from someone's imagination.

I don't have many problems with *The Snowball Effect*, besides the way Lainey treats Riley. As soon as new boy Eric comes into the picture, she seems to forget about the years she's spent with Riley, as well as everything he's done for her and her family, and treats him horribly. I know everyone makes mistakes, and the grieving process can affect people in different ways, but I just didn't understand why Lainey would be so rash with her strong, loving relationship. It didn't seem to fit with her overall personality - why build a life with someone to forget them because of a chance meeting with a stranger? It didn't make sense to me, but it does serve its purpose, as you'll find out later in the book.

I enjoyed *The Snowball Effect*; it's a good, solid debut to add to the list of 2010 releases. I'm not a fan of the cover at all, but that's besides the point. Don't let it put you off, though, because the content is so much better than what you might originally think, and Lainey is a character you'll definitely learn to love.

Maicie says

Teen Fiction

Lainey has just graduated from high school. Her mother commits suicide leaving her with her five-year-old adopted brother. Her older sister, whom she hasn't seen for years, is moving back to help put the family back together again.

A simple, sweet and charming story.

Angela says

A complex novel about family and death.

Lainey's family is unconventional - she hardly knows her older sister, Vallery, as she spent most of her life living with her dad. Her younger brother, Collin, is adopted and has behavioral issues ranging from being on the autism spectrum to ADHD. The three are thrust together to make a new family after their mother kills herself in the basement laundry room.

Lainey is angry and confused - about lots of things. How to feel about her mother and her siblings. Whether she really loves her longtime boyfriend or if he's just comfortable and convenient. Should she still enroll in business courses at the community college this fall? And why do her high school acquaintances (they were hardly friends) keep trying to desperately to stay in touch when all Lainey wants is to be left alone.

Lainey and Vallery are definitely the more well developed characters in this book. I was kind of frustrated that no one, not even his teachers, seemed to question if Collin's behavior was due to grief or abandonment

issues. Collin can't speak much for himself, but *someone* should have been questioning his behavior.

I loved Lainey's romantic turmoil in this book. I get really tired of YA books that imply/state the couple will be in true love forever. Sure, people probably feel that way in high school (I didn't date to speak of back then, so I can't speak from experience), but generally it doesn't work out that way. Lainey's personal crisis turns into a romantic crisis when she starts having sexy dreams about a mysterious guy who bought her a Slurpee - maybe that's not true love either, but definitely a sign to her that she needs some time to think about her relationship with long-time boyfriend Riley.

Czarina says

This was a pretty fun read. Well, except for the beginning, which was a bit sad and depressing. Lainey was also a bitch at the beginning, I mean, hey, she lost a lot of people in the span of one year, that was pretty understandable, but it got on my nerves sometimes. But at least she improved later on. She was pretty fun but a bit confusing with all her undecidedness. (*is that even a word? Undecidedness. It seems weird.*)

I liked Vallery. She's like the cool sister I always wanted but never had. My sister's cool, too, but not Vallery cool. *Let's just hope she never reads this.* I liked Vallery's personality; she's very relaxed and responsible at the same time. Usually, characters with a "cool" personality tend to be slackers that's why I kept waiting for her to drop everything and leave. Okay, she sometimes ditches her job, but she's doing a decent job taking care of her siblings, so that's something.

Now for Riley vs. Eric. Honestly, I liked Eric better than Riley. Eric's more fun and, fine, he has a beard. I dig guys with beards, okay? Riley is just not realistic. He's so perfect and loves Lainey so, so much it's sickening. No, wait, I take that back, I actually used to know a guy like that. They're this couple who've known each other for about 4 years now? I don't care. They think they will get married and be with together for forever, which is sweet, but they're kind of sickening when I'm around them for a long time. They're just like Riley and Lainey.

Overall, it's a good family book that deals with death and grief without it overpowering the whole story, which was fine for me.

Georgiann Hennelly says

Lainey Pike is more adult than most soon to be eighteen year olds. She works and takes care of her adopted brother. Lainey can tell you all you want to know about her family just by letting you know how they died. This story touched me emotionally in parts it was painful to read so that I had to take time away and read it in slow pieces. But I am glad I did finish reading it. Her mother kills herself which leaves Lainey with a five year old brother and an older sister she never knew. We also meet her perfect boyfriend. Lainey meets another boy and she is drawn to him too. The boys are complete opposites. Lainey has had to deal with everything from money, family, boys, drama and hurt. I could totally relate to Lainey. I really enjoyed this book

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Samantha Clanton aka "Harlequin Twilight" for TeensReadToo.com

Have you ever read a story where it felt like you were actually part of the characters lives? THE SNOWBALL EFFECT is one of those kinds of stories, and Lainey Pike is one of those kinds of characters.

Eighteen-year-old Lainey is your somewhat typical jaded teenage girl, except she has bigger issues to deal with. Her stepfather died in a motorcycle crash, her grandmother died shortly after that, and her mother fully lost it and hanged herself in their basement...two days after her high school graduation.

Sounds like a lot to deal with, right? Well, there's more. Her mother left behind another child, Lainey's brother, Collin, who is five years old and has severe behavioral problems, and now there's someone else to add to their dysfunctional family: Vallery, Lainey's long-gone older sister. Vallery hasn't been in Lainey's life since she was a very young child, and she never even knew Collin existed. And now, Vallery is back and in charge of Collin, but not willingly and definitely not patiently.

To add to everything else in Lainey's already chaotic life, there's Riley, her adorably sweet boyfriend, who wants them to move in together and start a life of their own. But now that Vallery is back and they're sharing the responsibility for Collin and everything else, Lainey has way more to deal with than she ever has.

Lainey has to get to know Vallery all over again, and get Collin to not only behave, but behave for Vallery and come to trust her. Then there's the task of trying to find a way to forgive her mother for being mentally absent and leaving her. But how easy can it be to make peace with a dead woman?

There was so much about THE SNOWBALL EFFECT that I absolutely adored and it's hard to know where to start! Lainey is one of those characters that is so easy to relate to. She's frustrated with her siblings and her job, she has her friends and relationships to deal with, and it's all complicated.

Holly Nicole Hoxter has an enjoyable hit on her hands. The story did tend to jump around a bit, but it made up for that with its realistic look at a teenager's way of coping, while trying to move on and improve their life, plus dealing with whatever else gets thrown their way. Then there's Riley, whom I absolutely adored! He's kind and sweet and totally loves Lainey, no matter how she treats him. Talk about a fantastic boyfriend! There's also the relationship that Lainey, Collin, and Vallery forge with one another, and I found it to be realistic and beautiful.

But there's more to THE SNOWBALL EFFECT than the story itself. Hoxter's writing flows so beautifully, and she has a talent that few writers have: the ability to take an incredibly sad situation, such as the loss of a loved one, and make it so hilarious, yet moving. This is an author that I not only look forward to reading more from, but I also know will go far.

Watch out for Holly Nicole Hoxter; she's a talented author and an awesome storyteller. THE SNOWBALL EFFECT actually reminded me somewhat of a Sarah Dessen novel, and that is always a good thing! I definitely recommend this to all teens, and adults, who enjoy a good, realistic, entertaining story.

Sara Grochowski says

Title: The Snowball Effect

Author: Holly Nicole Hoxter

Publisher: HarperCollins

Date Published: March 23, 2010

Genre: Young Adult

Main Themes: Death, Family, Love, Emotional Problems

Pages: 356

Plot (from back cover of ARC):

"Lainey Pike can tell you everything you need to know about the people in her family just by letting you know how they died. Her reckless stepfather drove his motorcycle off the highway and caused the biggest traffic jam in years. Her long-suffering grandmother lived through cancer and a heart attack before finally succumbing to a stroke. And Lainey's mother - well, Lainey's mother hanged herself in the basement just days after Lainey's high school graduation.

Now Lainey's five-year-old brother is an orphan, and her estranged older sister is moving back home to be his guardian. Meanwhile, Lainey's boyfriend is thinking about having a family of their own, and her best friends are always asking the wrong sorts of questions and giving advice Lainey doesn't want to hear. As she tries to pull away from everything familiar, Lainey meets an intriguing new guy who, through a series of Slurpees, burgers, and snowballs, helps her make peace with a parent she never understood."

The Snowball Effect was seriously amazing! I don't even know where to start...

When I first started reading I wasn't sure if I was going to love it... it wasn't until I was up to about page 100 that I really started to fall in love with The Snowball Effect.

I really understood and related to the main character, Lainey. She was just such a realistic and believable character that even though many aspects of her life differed from mine, I could totally put myself in her shoes.

I loved the fact that Lainey was flawed. Sometimes she was a great sister, sometimes she was absolutely horrid. She loves her boyfriend, yet she can't stop thinking about an intriguing stranger.

Don't get me wrong, there were times when I wanted to jump right into the book and shake Lainey because she was being so ridiculous, but then I would stop and think - holy crap - I am Lainey. Holly Nicole Hoxter has gone and created a character that, in my opinion, every girl, and possibly even some guys, can relate to in some way or another. I give her major props for that... it takes some serious talent.

One of the most amazing things about The Snowball Effect was that, despite its seriousness, I was laughing aloud at parts. It has such a perfect combination emotions! There were definitely some really funny quotes in it that I'm sure my sisters and I will refer to and use later!

And The Snowball Effect... you may be wondering what that means exactly. Well, sorry, but I can't tell you. That would be a spoiler after all... but trust me, you want to know...! (And now you must read the book - or you will go crazy!)

The Snowball Effect is full of quirky characters and fun, but it has a depth that I really appreciated. I learned

some lessons from Lainey that I won't soon forget!

Ratings (Out of 10):

Plot: 10

Characters: 10

Writing style: 10

Romance: 10

Originality: 10

Total: 50/50 (A!)

If this book is not on your most anticipated novels of 2010, you better add it now! If it already is, you will not be disappointed. I really, really enjoyed this book and cannot wait for Holly Nicole Hoxter's next book! It really is painful to think about how long I'm going to have to wait for that one... Write like the wind Holly! :)

Liviania says

I won this copy forever ago, and thus needed to reread it before writing this review. It took me a little while longer to read it this time. Almost always, I pay more attention to detail and how things fit together the second time, whereas the first time I'm racing along because I must know what happens next.

What I really admire about Holly Nicole Hoxter is the way she makes Lainey Pike's grief so true while still making Lainey an appealing character. Lainey's goals in life are quite different than mine, which sometimes puts me off. She's just graduated high school, but she already knows she's marrying her boyfriend Riley as well as attending community college with him. But things in life always happen unexpectedly, and her stepfather, grandmother, and mother died in short order. Now she's parenting her troubled brother Collin with her estranged sister Vallery.

It's lucky for Lainey in this difficult time that she has Riley, who understands her moods and doesn't mind keeping an eye on Collin. Unfortunately, Lainey wants to hurt. Though she sometimes seems callous to the deaths, she's still processing them, especially her mother's suicide. Riley is too good at comforting her. Being around him makes her feel better, and she can't have that. What she can have is the new guy in town, Eric. He's a nice guy - if not Riley - and interested. He doesn't know what's going on, which gives Lainey a comfortable space.

But I find the family sections as compelling as the romance. Vallery and Lainey want to do well by Collin, but at the same time neither of them are close to being responsible parents, especially to a boy who had behavior problems even before he lost both of his adoptive parents in short order. It's interesting to see them try to act as siblings and parents at the same time - they accept their new responsibility, but it's a grudging acceptance. While much YA seems to happen in a shiny world where money is endless, Vallery and Lainey are quite aware that their jobs are not enough to support a family of three, which is an extra burden on top of all the messy emotions.

Things progress wonderfully, as the small things finally allow Lainey to grieve for each of the people she lost. The things that cause her transformation are logical yet illogical, which is very true. You never know what will finally push you over the edge - or if it will push you over in a good or a bad way.

In some ways, THE SNOWBALL EFFECT is a difficult book. There are no action scenes. A romance is

central, but it isn't a sweet and giddy or angsty and forbidden. It's part and parcel of a small, meditative world, where a teen girl is simply trying to move on when she's become an adult too quickly. THE SNOWBALL EFFECT will definitely attract readers who are interested in character driven novels. Lainey's voice is appealing even as she tries to push away from everything she's known. (In a sideways manner, she reminds me of Parker from Courtney Summer's CRACKED UP TO BE, except I like her far more.)

Cara says

I'm having a hard time thinking of the right words to put down to describe my experience in reading this book, but I'm going to try...

Lainey is named after a soap opera character and the weirdness doesn't stop there. Her mother decided to kill herself just after she graduates, and the death isn't the first she has had to deal with. At first Lainey doesn't deal with the death as most people would expect. She carries a strong resentment towards her mother. Since the news of her mother's death her estranged half-sister, Vallery, comes to take care of their adopted brother Collin. If it sounds kind of confusing because it kind of is, but in a odd way it works for them.

From the beginning you can tell Lainey is not in the best place in her life, even though she has good friends and a wonderful boyfriend. They can't seem to get through to her the way she needs them to. It's not their fault or her fault it's just something she has to learn to get through herself. At times I would get completely angry and frustrated with Lainey. She could be just plain nasty to her boyfriend Riley, and easily would ignore Kara, her bestfriend. In comes a complete stranger who in a way teaches her what she needs to know without knowing fully who she really is. It was kind of like because he didn't know everything about her he could tell her things that the people who knew her wouldn't have thought to mention.

The one thing that really stood out to me was Lainey's personality. If you didn't really know her she would seem pretty aloof and uncaring, but she's not. In real life I probably would be turned off by her persoanlity, but through this I can come to really understand people who are like her. In the end she really could come to peace with her mom and move on to do what she feels is right and trust that, that is enough.
