



# After

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## **After** Kristin Harmel

Lacey's world shatters when her dad is killed in a car accident. And secretly? She feels like it's her fault. If she hadn't taken her own sweet time getting ready that morning . . . well, it never would have happened. Her mom wouldn't be a basket case. Her brother Logan wouldn't drink. And her little brother would still have two parents.

But life goes on even if you don't want it to. And when Lacey gets the chance to make a difference in the lives of some people at school, she jumps at it. Making lemonade out of lemons is her specialty. Except she didn't count on meeting a guy like Sam. Or that sometimes? Lemonade can be a pretty bitter drink to swallow.

## **After Details**

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Author : Kristin Harmel

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# From Reader Review After for online ebook

## Vanessa Chen says

The book is about a girl, Lacey, who loses her father in a car accident. Her whole school feels bad for her because of her loss and she feels that they are treating her differently because of it. She wants to act normal like any other kid but she realizes that other people in her life won't let her. They try to make her feel better and comfort her but Lacey feels that it is just making her uncomfortable. When I put myself into Lacey's shoes, I can see and feel what she goes through in her life. I can understand why she wants to feel normal, because she doesn't want the special treatment that makes her stand out of the group. Making her stand out might just bring out all the bad memories and make her feel even more sad. I also understand that she does not need anyone else's pity because she might want to prove to the world that she is able to do the same things as other people even though she lost her dad; she wants to show that she can be strong and hold things together in her life.

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## Haylee says

This book was definitely not a terrible read. But there were some major things that should've/could've been changed to make it more realistic and likeable.

Firstly, let me start off by saying that the writing was the main problem in this book. The characters did not have enough differences. I mean sure, you have Logan who has a temper, and a bunch of stereotypical mean girls, but the author had them say the same lines a lot, even though they're different people. For example, whenever a character didn't know a good comeback, they would always say:

"Yeah, well,"

Every. single. character. I'm sorry, but people don't all talk the same way. It just really bugged me. A simple problem, with a simple solution. I can't believe the editor didn't catch it.

Another thing I did not like about this book was the fact that the characters were not real. I mean, they always were doing and thinking unrealistic things. These are high school students, they don't act like that.

Here's an example. If you're going to read this book then don't read this paragraph because it has a small spoiler in it. Okay, here it is: \*\*\*\*\*SPOILER\*\*\*\*\* The main character Lacey, decides she's gonna start this club for people who lost their parents, to "help them feel normal". \*\*\*\*\* I'm sorry, first of all, no teenager would have the guts or stupidity to ask a bunch of students they don't know well to come to some club to talk about their dead parents. And secondly, the kids who lost a parent would NOT be eager to go to some group like that. I mean, be real. These are teenagers, that stuff is embarrassing and weird. And they aren't suddenly going to like it just because they tell each other how their parent died.

Another thing that bothered me:

WHY DOES THERE ALWAYS HAVE TO BE SOME MYSTERIOUS NEW GUY WHO INSTANTLY FALLS IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE WHO YOU'D LEAST EXPECT HIM TO?????

I can't give the author too much crap about that one though, because pretty much every romance novel is like

that. But it still annoys the crap out of me.

What did I like about this book? Well, Sam, the main guy was cute and it was a fairly cute story. Also, she didn't give into peer pressure and drink and destroy her health like a lot of the depressed teen characters do in a lot of the newer books. So it wasn't a terrible read. I don't feel like I got ANYTHING out of it though. But hey, not all books can be amazing.

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### **Paige says**

"After" is a book about a loss of a family member and how to stop feeling grief when it comes to that person passing away. As Lacey tries to cope with losing her dad, she feels alone. Her older brother is drinking, her mom works way too much, and her younger brother isn't doing anything anymore! When Lacey starts a group for people that have lost a parent she meets Sam. Lacey starts falling for Sam, but then he tells her that he "knows how she feels" when she talks about losing her dad. Lacey gets mad and thinks it's a joke, but then finds out a deep secret about Sam. Check out this book to see what happens.

"After" was an okay book. There wasn't a whole lot of suspense or action. There was a lot of nonsense that led up to the climax of the story which I didn't like. I didn't hate this book, but I definitely wasn't in love with it!

If you like stories about love and trauma, I recommend you read this book. There was a lot of description in the story, so if you like reading action stories don't read "After". Also, if you like happy endings after a lot of drama, you should dive into this book.

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### **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Angela S. for TeensReadToo.com

Sixteen-year-old Lacey had her life turned upside down one Saturday morning, when a routine trip for breakfast with her dad and two brothers turned tragic. Just minutes from their house, Lacey's father was killed and Lacey was seriously hurt in a car accident that no one could have predicted.

Lacey has spent the last year of her life blaming herself and trying to hold her family together. She tells herself that if only she hadn't taken as long getting ready or didn't spend time deliberately teasing her brothers, then maybe her father would be alive today.

When a new boy named Sam arrives at school, the last thing Lacey wants is for him to tell her he understands. No one really knows unless they've lost a parent. So how can this new boy act like he understands her when she knows he doesn't?

Despite what she's telling herself, Lacey really likes Sam and wants to give him the benefit of the doubt. But juggling her own grief and a relationship is a lot harder than she thought. Especially when she's asked to comfort fellow student Kelsi, who just lost her mom.

Then one day, Lacey comes up with the idea to start a club for all of the other kids in school who have lost a parent. They don't need to discuss death; all they need to do is get together and have some fun. Lacey wants to create a place where they don't feel so different from everyone else. A place where everyone actually does

understand what it's like to lose a parent.

As the club grows and Lacey falls for Sam, will she be able to put her father's death behind her and trust that the future will be okay?

A heart-wrenching story full of wonderfully crafted characters, AFTER is a book that readers will enjoy until the very last page.

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## **Tsubasa says**

3.5

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## **Cassy says**

This is the third book that I've won off Goodreads and it is easily the best. It deals with a sixteen year old girl and her grief. It also deals with her family and how her entire world changes when her father is killed. I think Harmel did a very good job with describing the events of this young girl's life without going over the top.

Lacey's reaction to her father's death is that it was her fault. She believes that she was the reason for his death, mainly because she dragged her feet the morning it happened. She seems to deal with her grief by taking on every responsibility. Her family is falling apart around her and she constantly feels the need to fix things. I felt like she was trying to fix everything in the hope that it would make up for the one thing she couldn't fix.

Lacey also couldn't seem to drum up sympathy for anyone around her. Her best friend, Jennica, had parents who had just gone through a divorce. All Lacey could think was that at least they were still alive and, despite being such good friends with her, couldn't really see how it was worse than what Lacey herself was going through. It wasn't until Jennica's father remarried, and decided not to invite his two daughters to his wedding, that Lacey started to understand that just because your parent didn't die didn't mean you couldn't lose them.

Sam was the love interest of the story and was actually one part of the story that I didn't enjoy. His arrival seemed too well-placed. He moved into Lacey's school about ten months after Lacey's father died and plays the part of the understanding comforter and friend who has also lost a parent. He seemed to be everything she needed and, of course, Lacey, who had been closed off to everyone since her father died, opened up to Sam. Then, predictably, he betrayed her. However, to Harmel's credit, it was not in a way I thought. Harmel had Sam tell Lacey the ever ominous "I have something to tell you" line, which always ends up being something bad. I was betting on Sam being sick. Then Sam disappears for five days and Lacey finally talks to his aunt. It turns out that Sam's father isn't really dead; he was just in a coma and had woken up.

Lacey had started a group that consists of kids her age who have lost a parent, including her older brother. It isn't really a grief group; they've all been through that and couldn't stand it. It was just a group of people to hang out with who understood and weren't going to treat you differently. For the first time people weren't staring at them, weren't giving them sympathetic looks and they knew that the other people weren't befriending them for the sole reason that they had just lost a parent. It was a group of kids that finally started to feel normal again, if only for a few hours. Sam joined the group, not realizing at first that it was a group

for kids whose parents had died, not just people who felt that they had lost them. When Lacey learns that, not only did he never clear up the misunderstanding, but now his father is awake and Sam has gotten his second chance, she refuses to talk to him, feeling betrayed, and reasonably so. It wasn't quite the surprise I expected which counteracted the formulaic feeling I was starting to get in terms of the romance.

Lacey's family is also a mess. Her mother spends almost all of her time working, never really helping her kids in the way that they need it. She wasn't dealing with the situation so she couldn't really help her kids deal with it. Lacey's younger brother, Tanner, all but stopped speaking. If he said a sentence a day it was a big deal. He completely retreated into himself and even stopped hanging out with his friends. You find out later it's because he thinks that it wasn't right for him to feel happy, to be happy, now that his dad was gone. Lacey's older brother, Logan, started drinking heavily. Lacey's way of coping was trying to hold her family together. I liked the different reactions Harmel presented her readers with. No two people dealt with their grief in the same way. Lacey continually insisted that she was fine when it was obvious to everyone that she wasn't fine.

One of my favorite scenes in the book was when Lacey went to her father's grave on the one year anniversary of his death. She had been there earlier with her mother and younger brother but was once again taking care of her family. Later that evening, she went out running and ran to the cemetery. She starts talking to her father's headstone apologizing for everything: how she dragged her feet that fateful morning, how she should have said something when she saw the SUV coming, how she should have looked up sooner, and finally, that it wasn't her, that *she* wasn't the one that was hit. It was such an emotional and moving moment and Lacey finally confronted all of the things that she had been avoiding for a year. She finally admits that she was angry at him. She was angry at her father for leaving and not caring enough to stay.

When she leaves the cemetery, Sam is standing there, ready to support her and Lacey finally forgives him, realizing that just because people's parents haven't died doesn't mean that she should shut them out of her life.

The only other thing about the book that I didn't like was that, at the end, Logan ends up in the hospital after drinking and hitting a telephone pole with a car. He ends up being ok but suddenly, all the problems the family was seeming to have disappeared. Lacey's mother started to take an interest in her family again, Logan went to rehab, Tanner found a friend, the younger sister of one of the kids in Lacey's group, and started talking again. I don't mind things fixing themselves, because eventually things usually do fix themselves. It's never easy and it's never quick but it happens. I just think Harmel did it a little too quickly. Everything was wrapped up into a neat little bow and everyone was happy again. Not that it wouldn't happen, I just think that it would take more time than that.

Overall, I was impressed with the book. I love YA lit anyway and Harmel really presents us a tragic yet wonderful story. I was a little unsure of this book because often books that deal with grief don't execute well. However, I really feel like Harmel managed to show you how differently everyone reacts to things and not just to death.

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## Sara says

Though the topics covered in this book were heavy, this was a light and quick read. After Lacey's dad dies in a car accident, Lacey notices all the changes around her: her mom absorbs herself in work, her older brother starts drinking, her younger brother withdraws, and Lacey keeps wishing for things to be the way they were

before. When Lacey realizes that others at her school are dealing with the same sort of problems, she reaches out to help them and, as a result, helps herself.

I liked how all the characters reacted in different ways to the same events, and the way that Lacey tries to help everyone with everything but realizes that some things are out of her control. Not all the characters were as fully drawn as they could have been (perhaps because the book is so short) but they were still realistic and believable. Despite sad moments, the story was overall very sweet and touching. Maybe no new ground was covered in this book, but it's still a good read and I imagine it will really resonate with those who can most identify with Lacey's situation.

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### **Wan Yu( Stephanie) says**

Lacey's life was perfect, but everything changed and shattered after her father died during a car accident. Her mother put all her attention in work; her older brother drank; her younger brother will have a "family". She thought she should take the responsibility for her father's death because she believed her father won't die if she leaves the house 5 mins early or later.

"There's before. And then there's after." This line is showed clearly in the front cover of the book and it really stands out to me. I agreed with this line because every big thing comes from all little things. Don't regret when serious problems come up, because these problems come from every little things you did. Think before you do anything and be responsible. In this case, I think Lacey should not blame herself for her father's death, because no one knows what happen in the future. None of us can be sure her father will not die if she leaves 5 mins early or later. If bad things happened, try to accept that and continue your life, because time can go back and let you choose again.

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### **Sam says**

After is a touching book about a teen's life after the death of her father. Lacey is a very independent teenager; her emotions are complicated and jumbled. She's not perfect and doesn't act that way.

This book shows a great look at how the death of a parent changes a teenager. Lacey feels like an outcast after her father dies. She begins to take more responsibility on herself, trying to fill in for her mother, who is hardly around, and also helping others who are dealing with a similar kind of loss. This is a book that would be great for a teenager dealing with this kind of tragedy, to help them how they're feeling. After is about a serious subject, the author, Kristin Harmel makes sure never to drag the reader down. As I kept reading, I never wanted to stop, the book just got better and better. I love how the book is basically about having faith that everything will turn out okay, even if it might not seem it will ever. This was the best book I have ever read, its very touching and you never want to put it down.

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### **BookChic Club says**

I've read two other Harmel books, her YA debut When You Wish and her adult debut How to Sleep with a Movie Star, and loved both of them. This is no different in the fact that I really enjoyed it, but it's different from her previous novels in tone. I was a bit surprised by what the book was about when I got it in the mail a few weeks ago, considering Harmel's past works, but was eager to see how she would fare with a more somber book.

Let me just say that she did a very good job- there's just the right mix of somber and lightness, and everything felt realistic. Lacey was a wonderful, flawed character to read about, and I loved her eagerness to help others, despite some backlash. I liked the idea of a club for kids who had lost a parent and it felt right to have something like that for those who had gone through something like that. It was nice to see this small group band together and help each other out.

The romance aspect of the novel was handled well. It wasn't rushed and made sense, and was realistic. There were bumps along the road, but inevitably ended sweetly. It was a nice addition to the story. The climax was a bit surprising and I wasn't expecting it, or at least not half of it; I guessed correctly on one count but not on the other. It was interesting.

Overall, I really enjoyed this novel and it made me want to read more from Harmel. I'll have to see if my library has some of her books or actually read the other one I own, and I'm eagerly waiting for her next novel.

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### **Steph Su says**

AFTER is a gentle and sweet read about death and love. The book doesn't cover any new ground, but it makes for a quick, pleasant read.

The characters' dilemmas regarding, grief, friendship, family, and love are realistically complex. Grief affects people differently, and in AFTER we get to see many different facets of it: Lacey's younger brother's silent withdrawal, her older brother diving into a relationship that she can't understand, her mother flinging herself into work and neglecting the rest of the family. The different situations, breakdowns, and verbal showdowns that Kristin Harmel portrays in this story are rendered accurately and sensitively.

However, many of the characters' interactions with one another still felt rather forced to me. While I appreciated and could even understand Lacey's uncertain feelings toward Sam, it is not well explained why Sam had such a persistent interest in her. And, unfortunately, there really was nothing new in this book: there are already a number of YA books on grief out there.

AFTER is a quick but ultimately forgettable read that may perhaps best be enjoyed by readers who either understand what Lacey is going through or are looking for an easy and quick read.

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### **Rebecca says**

I enjoyed this book. It's a YA, so I read it in a day. I like this author a lot and I'll read anything from her, but I like her chick-lit books better. I think maybe because they last longer. But this one was okay. The "issue" was the girls dad died in a car accident and she sort of blamed herself for the accident. She and her two brothers were in the car with their dad when he got into an accident. She blames herself because she purposely and jokingly took longer in the bathroom then needed and if she had just finished sooner, he wouldn't be dead. I think that is a good reason to feel guilt. The main part of the book takes place like a year later, how the whole family has changed. They used to be super close, but aren't anymore. Of course, new guy moves to town and they get together, but there is a twist, which I won't ruin, because I like this author a lot. It's definitely valid. Probably my least favorite part of this book was how many freakin' characters there



were. There were like two "pretty popular blond girls" in the book and I couldn't tell who was who. There also were like way more characters mentioned than needed to be. I think there were so many that at least once the names overlapped, which I hate as then I can't keep anything straight. Luckily, the main cast was small, but I hate books that just mention name after name like once and then never again. I like a manageable cast. Otherwise, the story was good, perfect YA.

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### **Liz Fichera says**

Poignant. Adults and teens who've lost a parent will appreciate the emotional content of this novel and the grieving process descriptions and frustrations.

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### **Claire says**

Teen/YA nonfiction- Lacey's world is turned upside down after her dad's tragic car accident. You want to know the worst part? She saw it with her own eyes and the feeling of guilt is killing her slowly. Her family is no longer the same, but then the new student Sam comes along and makes things a less sour and bitter. Is that coincidence a little too good to be true?

"I hated it when people tried to help me, especially now. Couldn't they see I was dealing just fine? I didn't need anyone's help or pity. Especially not some new guy's".

Lacey wanted to have control over everything, but her life was an undiscovered mess. She wanted to live a perfect lifestyle, knowing that avoiding the situation was not the right answer. The author demonstrates Lacey's stubbornness when it comes to receiving help from others. Her character was not very open, because she did not want to feel sympathy from anyone. She feels guilty for even finding a moment worth of happiness.

Living with guilt was a challenge for Lacey, but that did not mean that her life was near a dead end. The obstacles became easier after she became more open and received help from people that shared mutual feelings with her.

I highly recommend this book. It can be relatable, but it is definitely a touching novel. It reached deep into your heart and makes you really think about what the author is trying to express. The main character overcame her obstacle and that will give the reader a sign of hope to reflect on. I loved the narrator's positive perspective and outlook near the end of the story, it made a perfect ending.

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### **Book Concierge says**

3.5\*\*\*

Lacey's father is killed in an auto accident, leaving her mother and two brothers obviously consumed by grief. Lacey, although she blames herself for the accident, is fine ... or so she keeps telling everyone. She is

doing well in school, has taken up the household tasks her mother cannot seem to accomplish, and is watching out for her younger brother Tanner, who has virtually withdrawn from life. The kids at school have mostly stopped giving her pitying looks, and even though she'd like for things to return to "before" she recognizes that she must deal with "after." One thing that helps is a club she starts for other classmates who have lost a parent – a place where they can feel "normal" and know that expressions of "I know how you feel" are genuine and not just a rote response. And the attentions of a new boy in school, handsome and popular, definitely help.

This is a good YA novel that deals with some very real issues. Lacey, her brothers and mother each deal with their grief in different ways – ignoring it, keeping busy with work or school, withdrawing from friends and family, turning to alcohol. Those around them are sometimes puzzled by the reactions to their offers of help and support. Harmel shows how the loss of a parent affects not only the surviving family members, but also those around them – colleagues, teachers, friends, and neighbors. What does a friend do in this kind of situation? Do you reminisce with Lacey about her Dad? Do you pretend everything is fine? Do you avoid mentioning your own family? Do you try to have fun like a "normal" teen? Do you stick by your friend or find new friends who don't shut you out?

This is a sensitively written story of one family's journey back to "normal" after suffering a devastating loss. The characters are fully realized, and the situations believable. Definitely recommended for teen readers.

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