



Crosses

Shelley Stoehr

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We cut ourselves. Not by accident, we do it purposely--and regularly--because physical pain is comforting, and because now it has become a habit.

Nancy doesn't have a best friend, until she meets Katie in the bathroom at school. She and Katie have something in common: they both cut themselves. At first, it's just fun--like the drugs and alcohol and shoplifting--and Nancy and Katie don't talk about why they do it. But soon Nancy realizes that she and Katie need cutting to get through the day. Nancy can cover the scars on her arms and legs. It's the others, the ones inside, that are becoming hard to hide.

Crosses Details

Date : Published October 13th 1998 by Laurel Leaf (first published 1991)

ISBN : 9780440227809

Author : Shelley Stoehr

Format : Mass Market Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Health, Mental Health, Fiction, Mental Illness

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Stephanie says

I found an old photo of myself reading this in high school, when I was 14. Although this book deals with important issues, all I can think of is: WHO in their right mind would get BLACK OUT wasted, if they had the luxury of seeing DAVID-FREAKING-BOWIE LIVE IN CONCERT?!!!! That's pretty much all I remembered.

Krysten says

Honestly, It is usually interesting to read of the struggles that other young people suffer through, and at times it can even be uplifting to see them overcome the trials of drug abuse, eating disorders, and self mutilation. Yet, with Crosses, the problems that the main character went through seemed shallow and there was nothing to be learned. It was pretty much like watching a bad accident, accept its happening in slow motion. I couldn't help but hold the main characters with contempt, and there wasn't anything I could feel sympathetic towards. Perhaps, it was the perception of the story but it wasn't even in the least moving or touching. It simply had me frustrated with the society and social norms of today's youth.

Jennifer says

One of the first books about cutting, and still relevant.

Nattie says

I started cutting my arm during my freshman year of high school. Until I read Crosses, I did not know that other people were doing the same thing. In 1994 cutting seemed to be almost unheard of. Crosses became such a dear book to me that I practically idolized it.

At 38 I realize that Crosses probably did me more harm than good, but back then I was someone trying to ease the pain of being extremely confused about the why of who I was. I was a morbidly shy black teenager and all but obsessed with James Spader, James Dean, and Buddy Holly, along with Audrey Hepburn, Ted Bundy, and doo-wop music. Nobody my age and ethnicity seemed to understand me, and kids outside of my ethnicity weren't really chomping at the bit to be friends.

The confusion went on for many years, and Crosses and my shards of glass were there every time somebody would ask me what I was doing listening to Metallica or Celtic music, or why I was walking around in long black nightgowns and combat boots.

I don't think I would ever read the book again. I still read books from my youth on a regular basis, but I want to keep a fond memory of Crosses and reading it now would probably destroy it.

Ever says

I picked up an old copy of this and I didn't think it would be any good, but it hit a surprising amount of nerves with me. I never participated in cutting, but I had a friend that did when I was about the age of the characters in the book. A lot of the feelings, the reactions of others, the 'reasons' behind the cutting brought back a lot of my own memories. The author must have had some personal experience to write so truly and frankly (or a hell of an imagination).

Robyn Stonechild says

this book was really quite amazing; the way Shelley Stoebr has written this novel really has opened my eyes on how much teenagers go through in everyday life; I know I was one of those teenage girls that felt the pressure on looking good and not being noticed in everyday life like the way these two teenage girls were experiencing in their lives. It also brings a raw and open look at teen suicide and brings the light on how much teenagers go through everyday to not feel like the weight of the world is being put on their backs.

Ashley says

crosses is about two young girls who go down the wrong path, and start cutting. i cant really tell about this book without giving everything away. If you like books that are based on real life experiences this is a really great book to read. it is honestly my all time favorite book, i will always love this book.

Rachel says

This book made me so angry. I hate when I hear girls that cant get their stuff together, I understand that teenagers make bad decisions but as the reader I was hoping that Nancy would get her act together and for the majority of the time she didn't. In a way I did feel bad of Katie because her home life was not stable what so ever but I just don't get how Nancy got stuck in that situation she came from a more stable home. I guess I just had high hopes for Nancy but it didn't ever really happen.

Ivy says

I had a difficult time with this book and now I am having a difficult time with this review. It is so very real, so reminiscent, so heartbreaking - it brought back many painful memories for me.

Crosses is a tragic, emotionally visceral story that rings with gut-wrenching truth. It centers on the main character, Nancy, and her relationships with her newly discovered best friend, her boyfriend, her parents and her cutting compulsion.

For the first half of the story I imagined I would give it a two star rating - I was just so depressed while reading it and I had mixed feelings about the messages it brings to the reader. However, I eventually realized

that my envisioned low rating of the story was based on my own personal experiences and feelings, which of course were negative and from a part of my life that I try not to dwell on. As I read on and got closer to the end my opinion of the book improved.

(view spoiler)

Miharu Rokujou says

When I read the description of this book I knew I would enjoy reading it, and I did quite a bit! The story is about two high school aged girls in the late 80s who are into the punk scene and they discover they have a lot in common, like self harming. They decide to experiment with drugs, boys who were too old for them, shoplifting, and all kinds of crazy stuff that must have been way easier to get away with back in the 80s than it would be now.

The only thing that bugged me about this book was that it seemed like way too many bad things were happening to her in just about every chapter. I kind of felt like I was reading a book on lesson learning, like don't do this because this horrible thing will happen to you and your life will get ruined! So I felt some of the bad things that happened to her were a bit exaggerated.

(view spoiler)

The last chapter of the book seemed very abrupt. I felt like there should have been another chapter or two after that because none of the issues were resolved. But in a way, it really reminded me of how the ending of my favorite film "Thirteen" went as well. It seemed like there could have been so much more to the story, but it just suddenly ended. I also feel like this book has more in common with the film "Thirteen" than the book "Go Ask Alice" because the issues dealt with were a lot alike. (view spoiler)

But yeah, this is a pretty good book and I would recommend it to people who love to read novels about depressing things and messed up families!

Jason Brown (Toastx2) says

Crosses - A cut up book about a cut up girl

December 11, 2007

In a bookstore with Jenn, we had about an hour to kill waiting to see a movie together. What to do, what to do. Well, let's go over to the mall bookstore and browse the shelves. We are both avid readers so it is always nice to talk books with her. I described a book to her (I was at a loss for the name of the book or the author at the time, even though it was one that was in my collection). She stated that she had never read it the cover creeped her out as a kid. The next day she came forward with a full cover image of A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle, and I was surprised we were able to communicate images into books. Cover art is important people!

So we are in the bookstore, wandering about both together and on separate missions. It gets into my head that

I have not read the books *Go Ask Alice* / *Jay's Journal* since I was in jr high school. I mosey over to the computer to look up which section they would be located in. I find them under "Anonymous" in the young adult section of the store. Unexpectedly, Anonymous falls under a subsection of Miscellany, not 'A' as you would expect. Proud of my find, off I go stalking Jenn to show off my prize!

Jenn advised that she always felt that Shelly Stoeher's *Crosses* was a better, more graphic teen scare fiction. Not seeing a copy in the store, she tells me she can dig it out of her storage unit in order to allow me access to it, provided I don't mind reading an incredibly beat up copy that has been mangled by her teenage whims. Here are my perceptions, along with images of the mangled book corpse:

Crosses is a very short read. Clocking in at under 200 pages, don't pick it up if you are looking for substance in a piece of work. It is a light and fluffy (read: overly dramatic / generally droll) approach to teenage cutting, drug use, and sex. The author, Shelley Stoeher, has written many similar books with titles such as 'Weird on the outside' and 'Wannabe'. It looks like she had some success with *Crosses* and decided to relive her youthful self-deprecating behavior through books and make a little nest egg of money.

I am not dissing on the book. It was enjoyable, in as much as you can expect being inside the head of a fifteen-year-old girl on the decline can be "fun".

Nancy, the main character, pushes the storyline through its motions in a first-person semi-journal style. There are no dates on the chapters, nor cheesy "dear diary" lines tossed in, just narrative. She is your average stereotypical jr high school girl. She is whiney and pig-headed, self-serving and lacking wit.

Nancy does well in school but is tired of being the 'smart person' in her classes. She wants to stand out. Nancy begins to wear safety pins in her ears and decks herself out in punk rock "fashion" but has no known knowledge of the punk rock world. Nancy meets Katie in the bathroom, and over the course of days, they learn of a shared fascination with cutting themselves. The action focuses on them, associating with their assumed reality and pain. They become fast friends and begin to steal, consume drugs and raise hell. Mainly they just lay about sick from whatever drug or drink they imbibed too much of in the last chapter.

You can guess where the faux morality tale goes from there.

Putting myself back in the combat boots I wore in high school, I can see this being either a prized placement book on my bookshelf or just as easily, being set fire as a trash novel intending to use scare tactics to bring children away from drug use. I can't tell you which it would have been as I am far too different of a person now, but I did honestly enjoy the book. It was refreshing to read someone else's misery and cluelessness.

I can see where this book would backfire and could have been used as a misguided and utterly inaccurate handbook for kids.

Some lessons this book would teach:

- * Don't drink so much that you pass out and nearly get raped
 - * 3 easy ways to shoplift
 - * Concert survival on hash brownies
 - * What not to do when shrooming
-

Lisa Heinsohn says

Belongs in the top five of the best and most impressive teen novels I've read.

Carol Boyer says

Compelling, A Powerful Book!, October 30, 2016

Finding a new author is exciting for me and this book by Shelley Stoebr, did not disappoint. Crosses is written with striking reality, hard to read, it made me cry, it's poignant, yet it's hopeful as the author leaves you to your own thinking in the last chapter. Nancy is a lost teenager, dulling her emotional pain with cutting herself over and over again. Her parents are deep into their own addiction to alcoholism, detached and ineffectual with punishments or boundaries when Nancy continuously gets into trouble in school, and the community. Her best friend Katie is her cohort, and explains "We cut ourselves. It's what we are". Nancy has a straight boyfriend who loves her and rescues her each time and hopes it is the last. As Nancy spirals down deeply, she is caught in the same alcoholic dilemma as her parents adding to her destructive behaviors. The pace and characterization of this book is brilliantly written, I stayed up late just to finish it...then to ponder if there would be a sequel. I enjoyed this book, and will definitely read more of this author.

Tiara Anderson says

I think this book is really good. I related to it a lot. I did not like a certain part of it, it made me upset and I almost cried but then the very end was good. I'd like to read another book like this.

E says

Damn. Had a whole review written then accidentally closed the tab. Le sigh.

OK, so, what did I write? This book made all things punk seem supremely unattractive to me. I'm not going to pretend that it was a torturous read or totally boring, as I definitely was drawn back in over and over, but it had enormous potential, and lived up to next to none of it.

'Crosses' read like this: "So here's this dumb thing I did. I got in trouble. Here's this other dumb thing I did. I got in trouble. Here are more mistakes I made. Here are more people I hurt. Here are more bad choices. The end." As others have noted, it all but ends mid-sentence, and there was almost no discernible story arc or character development that I could pick up on. I don't tend to be favorably disposed towards books where I can't stand the protagonist, and this was one of them. Hello? How many more times are you going to F up your life before you decide that maybe, *just maybe*, this whole substance abuse thing is a bad plan? Nancy came across as bratty, disrespectful, and annoying. And stupid, of course. I just couldn't bring myself to pull for her, and even my normal compassion towards those who are suffering barely registered. She was like the fiction equivalent of the sloppy drunk at the party who falls all over herself all night as she whores for attention. The "here's a dumb thing I did, here's another dumb thing I did" narrative format certainly didn't help. It was just one thing after another.

Another major gripe is that I don't feel the author takes substance abuse or self-injury seriously. Cutting is not a fad, nor some silly activity melodramatic teens who need to get a *real* problem engage in just to get attention, nor something people who are merely bored tend to engage in. The treatment of a very serious disorder came off as shallow and sensationalized. I feel 'Crosses' does a disservice to those who are actually suffering, and need help and understanding.

The Long Island setting was cool -- I've read so few books that are actually set here -- but yeah, overall this book is a pass. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone who is seeking solace in dark times, nor the loved ones of teens who cut or abuse drugs and alcohol. I don't know the author's background, but I wonder just how much she really knows about these subjects.
