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Mia's first reaction is outright disbelief. Obviously, a mistake has been made. Sixteen-year-old girls don't die. But, when the diagnosis is confirmed, she dives headlong into anger. If she has to die, why should it be of cancer? In fact, anything would be preferable to cancer. Better for her to say when, where, and especially how.

Determined to meet death on her own terms, Mia devises scheme after scheme to get the job done. A “fall” down the basement stairs, driving her car off a bridge, and even a dance with a train all end in her survival.

And through it all, Mia keeps her family and friends at arms' length with her destructive and hurtful behavior. With each failed suicide attempt and burned relationship, she slowly realizes that it's not the dying that she's afraid of, but the life she'll be leaving behind. Now, that life is in a shambles. As time begins to slip through her fingers and death is upon her, Mia fights to rebuild the bridges she has destroyed, but can she do it before the clock runs out?

Always and Forever Details

Date : Published September 18th 2012 by Booktrope Editions

ISBN : 9781935961604

Author : Karla J. Nellenbach

Format : Paperback 263 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Fiction

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From Reader Review Always and Forever for online ebook

Angela S says

I'm a little torn up over what to say about this book because it had me going in many different directions. For the first quarter, everything made sense. I liked Mia, I thought her friends were hilarious, and boy did I want her and Kal to get together. The whole idea of a teenage girl getting cancer - after surviving a first round of an entirely different type was a unique set up. It was heart breaking and perfectly logical for her to want to keep the diagnosis to herself. Then Mia starts behaving a little irrationally. As it says in the summary, she keeps inventing ways to kill herself before the cancer does. At this point it was hard to put myself in Mia's shoes. Would I not want the cancer to kill me? Sure. But to throw yourself headfirst towards death seemed a bit selfish. She was taking away precious time that her family, friends and boyfriend had to be with her. Besides that, something seemed like it was missing. Fear. No where during her suicide attempts does Mia show any fear of death, and that seemed a little strange to me.

I think with a topic like cancer, it's hard to know what a person would really be feeling, and therefore hard to capture what a person goes through unless you've been there yourself. You hear all these stories about the fighters, the ones who are always smiling, taking things as they come and not letting the disease get to them. Nellenbach even includes a character like this in the story. And I admit, I wanted Mia to be like that. Perhaps that's unfair, and certainly it's unrealistic. Who's to say how a person would feel when they're hit with the news that they're going to die (and not a pretty death)? A range of emotions is to be expected and anger is certainly one of them. I guess what I'm trying to say is that when Mia began acting out her anger, I kept shaking my head, wanting her to get it together. I kept thinking, dang it Mia, you need these people. You're wasting precious time. Stop pushing everyone away! It's good when a story gets me yelling at it, but it's even better when it listens. *big grin* Without being too spoilery, let's just say that the last third of the book totally made up for the frustrations I was having. I zipped through the ending, not exactly smiling (because hello, cancer) but satisfied. And sobbing. Yes, you will need to arm yourself with a box of Kleenex's for this one. The final scene - whoa. Just whoa. So beautiful.

The writing: Karla Nellenbach has a way with words. The descriptions and prose were beautiful. The dialogue was spot-on without trying too hard, and boy did I love this line: I don't have a pony in that race. I was grinning when I read that one. Nellenbach definitely has a pony in this race, and I look forward to her next book.

Rachelle says

I kind of don't want to read anymore books for the rest of the year. This book was THAT GOOD. Fans of John Green and Lurlene McDaniels had better add this to their TBR book immediately. It was so much more than a book about cancer; it was a very real glimpse into the life of any teenager facing a terminal illness. The author does an excellent job creating believable characters. I found myself relating to Mia. Not as someone with cancer, but the emotions and thoughts and actions are just so real, so raw, it's not hard to be pulled into the emotions.

Unlike a lot of books, this one does not leave me wanting more. The author ended things at the perfect moment. Any more would have felt dragged out, but any less would have left things undone. I am eager to see what else Nellenbach gives us.

M.B. says

I'm sure I'm not the only person who has wondered how they'd react if they were told that they only had months to live. I'd thought about how I would spend that time with family and close friends, getting my affairs in order and things such as that. I'm an adult, with children and responsibilities, so these are the things I would need to make sure are in place before...

But how would I have reacted if I was given that diagnosis and I was only 16?

I have a feeling that I would have reacted in pretty much the same as Mia did in *Always and Forever*. Even without her history of beating Leukemia, being told she had months to live makes her angry. Angry enough to decide that if she was going to die, it wouldn't be of cancer.

What follows is a heartbreaking story of Mia trying her best to make her passing easier for her friends and family. Unfortunately, she takes it a little too far, and begins pushing them away.

It's not very often that a book makes me cry. I'm not heartless, but the words have to be something spectacular to bring that level of emotion to the fore. I laugh a lot, but tend to hold sadness in. By the time I finished reading this book, I had a headache from crying so much, particularly the final two chapters.

I honestly feel that this book, and Nellenbach's other, *A Sliver of Hope*, are some of the best YA books I have read in a long time. I enjoy paranormal romance books aimed at the Young Adult audience, but these are carrying a message to the target audience that are extremely important. They deal with subjects that some, not all, teens will come across in such a sensitive and sympathetic way that they will stay with the reader for such a long time. I know for a fact they will stay with me.

For this and more, go to: <http://michbookreviews.wordpress.com/>

sue says

what a wonderful read! although this book was dealing with difficult subject matter that has touched all our lives, there were plenty of real belly laughs too. mia was an outstanding character and I could feel myself understanding more and more the decisions and thoughts that she had over her inevitable death.

I was so wanting to knock their heads together to sort out her best friend and her feelings for one another, in my head I was screaming `come on life for her is so short

hankies at the end is needed though. well done to the author for an excellent read.

Tracey (Life and Literature) says

I usually like to start a review by recapping how fantastic I thought the book was. But here I am some days later, after finishing *Always and Forever* and I still can't find the words to adequately describe the impact this book had on me. I admit to crying easily. I get misty eyed about many, many things. But it's very rare for me to find myself so overcome with emotion that I just want to curl into a ball and give in to the gut wrenching sobs that have overcome me.

I knew going in, just from reading the book description, that this wasn't going to be a happily ever after kind of book. But I was completely unprepared for these characters to take hold of me the way that they did. Completely and wholly. And even now just thinking about it, my eyes are struggling to keep the tears contained!!

Unfortunately death is an incredibly sad but inevitable part of life. But that should be once we have lived very long, happy and fulfilled lives. Not when we are sixteen and have already fought and beat cancer once!! Not when you have your whole life ahead of you!! Mia is given the news that cancer has again taken hold of her body, but this time it is inoperable. Once this news has been given to Mia and her family we take the journey with her through the different emotions as she struggles to accept that she is not going to have that long and happy life.

Always and Forever is full of such wonderful characters. Mia just slammed her way into my heart. I laughed with her, I cried with her, I got angry with her and I loved with her. As she pushed her family and friends away I just wanted to hug her and tell her to let these people that love her in. Let them treasure what time they have left!! And then there was Kal... He is just full of love and goodness and I fell completely in love with him. Him and Mia were so perfectly made for each other.

The final scene in the book broke me, not just for the subject matter but for the beauty of the writing. The author's writing is wonderful throughout the whole book, but that final scene completely nailed it for me!!! Heartbreakingly beautiful!!!

There are few certainties in life, but one of them is that I will be reading anything and everything that Karla J. Nellenbach writes from here on out!!

Review first posted at YA Book Addict... <http://youngadultbookaddict.blogspot....>

Jess (the cozy reader) says

Mia's story was so heartbreaking. Getting cancer not once, but twice, and knowing she doesn't have much time left. She goes through all the stages from, anger, grief, depression and finally acceptance and through that she finds true love. Of course I cried like a baby at the end, but the love that Mia has for her family and Kal will be always and forever.

Faith (Geeky Zoo Girl) says

Review also published on my blog StudentSpyglass

Source: Review copy for a blog tour

Plot: ★★★★★

Characters: ★★★★★

Readability: ★★★★★

Overall: ★★★★★

I know I said realistic fiction wasn't really my thing, but I've been trying to step out of my [fantasy dominated] comfort zone this year, so forgive me!

I have to admit, I loved Always and Forever. Mia, a sixteen year old cancer survivor gets diagnosed with a second type of cancer...an inoperable one, that doesn't leave her with a lot of time. Determined not to fall prey to cancer and the indeterminable wait, she decides to take matters into her own hands, pushing her friends and family away as she tries to orchestrate her own death. I'll be honest, this was a bit of a stretch for me, but the rest of the characters MORE than made up for Mia's somewhat bizarre rationalisations.

Kal in particular is one of the most likeable characters I've read about in a long time, and throughout the book I veered from hating him to wanting to hug him – just as Mia does. Karla Nellenbach's writing sucks you in so you can't help but understand exactly how Mia feels, even if you want to shake her sometimes!

I'm not a big crier, but I have to confess that I pretty much sobbed my way through the entire book! The final scenes are especially beautifully written. If you're looking for a beautiful, heart-wrenching story with a good dash of romance and some wonderful characters, look no further!

Jenny says

Tears.(this doesn't necessarily contain spoilers, but I do put some of my feelings in about things that happen throughout the book and at the end)

This book was so heartwrenching and beautiful I don't know if I can review it like it deserves. I don't do reviews much cause I don't express my feelings about a book well in writing.

Karla pulled me in from the beginning on Mia's journey, which as a younger woman myself(21) hits close to home. She is in the prime of her younger years, highschool, amazing friends, the sweet age of 16, and now an unbeatable enemy.

The news rocked me to my core when it was announced, I mean I literally broke down in tears for Mia and Kal, I said why the heck did you have to go and do that to this amazing girl and boy who have a future destined for greatness together?! A love that is only in fairy tales! I grew to love all the characters in this book like I was one of Mia's best friends, I could feel the love they all shared and the fun times they always had.

When it got bad, I was constantly having to put the book down and wipe my eyes and try to compose myself again. I had to steel myself against her fight with her friends, because I was so wrapped up in this book that everything hurt for all of them. I felt Mia's pain when she had to hurt her friends because that is what she felt was best for everyone, I felt Kal's pain when he had to look at Mia and ask someone else if she was doing okay because he thought she didn't want him around. Brad is the gay friend everybody wants, he makes life enjoyable even in the worst of life's moments, every time they spent a moment together my face lit up and I could feel Mia's joy no matter how sick or drained she was.

All in all, the last few chapters of this book and Mia's last moments were the hardest damned thing I think I've ever had to read. I've read sad books where people died and lost loved ones, but this book just KILLED me. I am sitting here, after literally just finishing that last page of beautiful love between Kal and Mia trying not to burst into hysterical sobs. I want to scream and yell at the world about this book, I wanna know why such an amazing innocent girl gets ripped away from this amazing man who has been her best friend for 10 years.

I don't think, I will EVER recover from the amazing beautiful love that this story created and wove through my heart all the way to my core and tugging at my heart strings. The heart wrenching agony as I read my

way through Mia's struggle to live a normal teenage life while fighting something so horrible.

Karla, you did an amazing job! This book deserves way more than 5 stars, it deserves for the whole world to know about it and read it in all its amazing glory.

Faith says

This was a well told, planned out story..... That ended to fast :(

i was up till 12:30 cause the last quarter is a part that you just cant stop or take a break in the middle of . went through a good half of our tissue box last night.

its realistic read which made it hard to get though since my mom dies of cancer in 2006. In a way I wished I never read it, since I denied the fact of mom having cancer to myself. And now reading this, having alittle insight as to what she went thought since I thought she had more time and wasn't able to get there in-time since we live In Germany at the time.

Heather Wood says

As soon as I read the blurb for this book, I had an inkling I would be a sobbing mess while reading it. Although Always and Forever was certainly a tearjerker, it wasn't merely a story about a girl dying from cancer. It was also about going through the stages of grief and being able to find love and acceptance along the way.

The author did a superb job of depicting Mia as an average high school girl. Her relationships and behaviors felt very realistic for a sixteen-year-old girl. I loved her friendships as well as a healthy relationship with her parents. Her behavior after finding out about the terminal diagnosis was also well done. It was easy to imagine a young girl trying to push everyone away in order to protect them from her impending death.

I went back and forth on my feelings towards Kal. At first, he was way too mushy for believability. He felt too romanticized and all the sobbing and poetry reading put me off. However, by the middle of the book he grew on me and I ended up liking him a lot more. It was great to see a three-dimensional YA male character that the main character didn't fall for simply because he was hot and mysterious.

I enjoyed that the book was told in first person and gave the readers a chance to really get into Mia's head and understand her motivations for wanting to end her life before she succumbed to cancer. Present tense may have worked better though since we know from the beginning she's going to die.

If you're in the mood for a sweet story that will cause spontaneous bouts of crying, then I highly recommend this book. The writing was beautiful and I'm going to be on the lookout for future books from the author.

Rating: 4.5/5 Stars

T.H. Hernandez says

This is not the sort of book I'd normally choose to read and I'm still not sure what possessed me to get it. It sat on my Nook for several weeks before I even opened it. And then I took my time reading it. I needed to be in the right mindset to read about a teenage girl dying of cancer. But once I really let myself get into the story, I couldn't put it down.

The writing is strong, the characters beautifully crafted, the story, heartbreaking. But I knew that going into it. I knew Mia was going to die from the very first page. What I didn't know was how. See Mia refuses to let the cancer take her. She wants to say when and how she's going to die, refusing to let cancer dictate the terms.

She not only struggles with her own emotions but with those closest to her -- her parents, her younger brother, her friends, including dreamy Kal, her "always and forever" best friend and next door neighbor.

As Mia moves through the stages of grief, she attempts various ways to end her life on her terms, on her schedule, alienating everyone around her with each attempt.

The author does a phenomenal job telling Mia's story, taking us through each stage of the process right along with Mia. Even though we know we're going to lose her, we can't help pulling for her, rooting for her as she tries to repair the relationships she damaged before it's too late.

No, this is not the sort of book I'd choose to read, but I'm so very glad that I did. I probably won't choose another book like it, because it was painful. Beautifully so, but still painful. I cannot say one negative thing about this book. Five out of five stars and a bucketful of bittersweet tears.

Mandy says

I received Always and Forever in return for an honest review from the publisher Booktrope. When she was 12 years old Mia was confirmed to have beaten Leukemia. Even though she was pronounced well her parents still worry about it coming back so she's constantly visiting the doctor looking for signs of cancer. It's now four years later Mia is sixteen and she's been diagnosed with an inoperable form of cancer in her brain. The doctors tell Mia that she has less than a year to live.

Mia doesn't want to die least of all by cancer so she decides that she will choose the when and how. She sets out not telling anyone that she has cancer so that she can have just a little while longer to be normal. Things change between Mia and her best friend Kal when she tells him she doesn't have cancer he tells her how he's in love with her. Mia can't help getting swept into a relationship with the boy she's always loved. However as she gets worse she decides that it won't work and pushes him away. Causing a rift between that ends their friendship. She self destructively tries to end all her friendships in hopes of making her death easier.

Determine to not let the cancer kill her Mia sets out to attempt to accidentally commit suicide from falling down the stairs to driving off the bridge. However none of them succeed leaving her regretting that she's pushed all her friends away she decides to try and patch it up before it's too late. Will she be able to fix them before her time runs out?

I love Mia she's not had an easy life but she's dealt with her struggles better than I would have. Even when she learns that she has less than a year she doesn't let it destroy her. She wants to be normal as long as she can to enjoy the last of her time. Who can blame her for not wanting to tell people I wouldn't want to be

treated differently. I felt like I really connected to Mia like I was there with her through her whole story like she was my best friend. I was so happy that she had Brad and Dave to be there for her when Kal and Ricki weren't.

Always and Forever is unlike anything I've ever read. I tend to spend most my book time in the fantasy genre mostly because I'm a dreamer. I can honestly say I wasn't sure what to expect when I started Always and Forever but what I found was absolutely amazing. I found the book beautifully written, the author does an amazing job taking us through Mia's story from start to finish. It's a captivating story that starts tugging on your heart strings right from the start. I can honestly say I was teary eyed through most of the book and the last half after part three bargaining I cried the whole time. Thankfully I'm a fast reader or my hubby would have killed me for crying so much.

I honestly feel that Always and Forever is a brilliant book for people who have lost someone or are going through losing someone it shows you an interesting prospective one which I never considered before. I've lost many people over the years and for me Always and Forever gave me an insight into what they may have been going through. I just really loved this book. I will admit deep down I was hoping for a slightly different ending but I'm not complaining. I really loved the story it played with my emotional heartstrings in a way that no other book has. I'm truly impressed and blessed that I had the chance to read it. Yup still crying.

Splash Of Our Worlds *Yiota* says

Reviewed by Nina

This book is mocking you from the start "I'm going to make you cry. Embrace yourself, I'm going to make you cry". The synopsis screamed that to me, but as a curious creature, I accepted to read anyhow.

The writing is amazing. It tells you the story of a 16-year-old who has a disease that cannot be cured. So we follow her through the five stages of grief, from how she first denies it, to how finally she accepts it. And through that time, the only thought wondering around her head is how she wants to be in control of her life and not her disease.

I know I spoiled the end, but it's a well known fact from the first page. I found the story extremely true. It's something that happens around us, not in our family specifically, but generally, and it's sad and really makes your good mood go bad in an instant. I really don't know what else to say, except that I did cried at the end. I'm not very proud of it, but a book that makes you have such strong feelings is worth it.

Bottom line, I liked it. I cannot say that I can read books like this all the time, but for this once it was great. I have to say that at the end, I felt relieved and I realized that life goes on and that we have to live it to the fullest.

Jillian (PidginPea's Book Nook) says

{ I received an ebook for free through Early Reviewers on LibraryThing. Review originally posted on my blog, PidginPea's Book Nook. }

Always and Forever is so heartbreakingly beautiful. It took me a little while to write this review because I

just couldn't find the words after I first read it, and I'm still having trouble now. It leaves you with a numbness; closing the book only emphasizes the sense of loss. It takes quite a bit for a book to make me cry, but I had tears streaming down my face at the end of this one.

I can't imagine being in Mia's place. She survived cancer once, and now she is told she has cancer again. And this time she won't survive. Mia reacts to her situation differently as she moves through the stages of grief; she is furious, she is devastated, she takes everything out on her friends and family. At times I wanted to grab her and shake her and make her realize how much precious time she was wasting with her loved ones. But would I act any differently if I was in her place? How do you respond to something like that? How do you go on with your life when you know each second is bringing you closer to the end of it?

When I first read the synopsis, I wasn't sure how I was going to feel about Mia trying to end her life on her own terms. But Nellenbach handles it wonderfully; she explains Mia's thoughts and actions in a way that puts you right there in Mia's mindset. Even if you don't agree with it, you understand why she's considering it.

The relationship between Mia and Kal is very sweet. He is there for her through good and bad. When she rebels against it all and wastes time with her loved ones, the lost time with Kal is exceptionally hard. Or it was for me, anyway; I really liked them as a couple, and I felt bad for Kal not being able to help and for Mia missing out on some much-needed comfort.

I don't want to say too much about the end of the book, but I'll say it was beautiful. The tone, the feel, the words...it all came together in one beautiful, bittersweet scene. I would snatch up another book by Nellenbach in a second.

Susan Swiderski says

I feel like a bit of a sick-o for saying I loved this book. I mean, it tells the story of a sixteen year-old girl with terminal brain cancer. That's HORRIBLE, right? Right!

BUT... the story is so engaging, and the characters are so realistic, it just kinda sucks you into it. Makes you like them, care about them, and want a happy ending for everybody involved. Of course, that isn't gonna happen when the main character has terminal cancer. The most impressive part of the story is how she and everyone else deals with her impending death. How, after surviving another type of cancer four years earlier, Mia tries to deny she even has it again, let alone its hopeless prognosis. How she doesn't want any of her friends to know. How she drives everyone away to "spare them" the pain of losing her. How, in fact, she goes through all of the classic stages of grief, until she finally finds her way to acceptance and peace. It is a tale of family, friendship, and love.

It's a beautifully-written story, and the ending is unbelievable perfect. It will rip your heart out of your chest and stomp that sucker flat, but even as you're crying, you'll be thinking, "Now, THAT'S the way to die."
