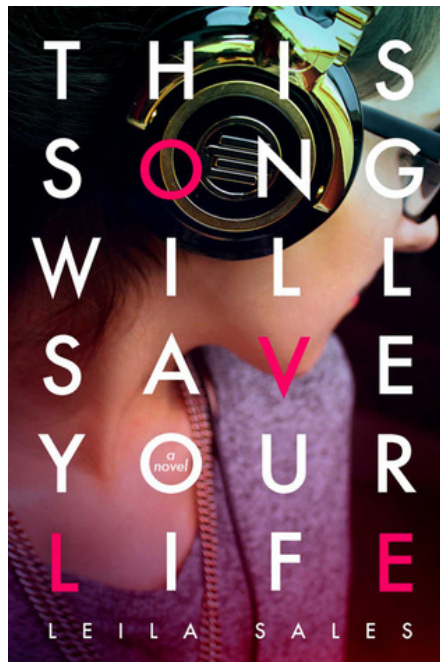




This Song Will Save Your Life

Leila Sales

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This Song Will Save Your Life Leila Sales

Making friends has never been Elise Dembowski's strong suit. All throughout her life, she's been the butt of every joke and the outsider in every conversation. When a final attempt at popularity fails, Elise nearly gives up. Then she stumbles upon a warehouse party where she meets Vicky, a girl in a band who accepts her; Char, a cute, yet mysterious disc jockey; Pippa, a carefree spirit from England; and most importantly, a love for DJing.

Told in a refreshingly genuine and laugh-out-loud funny voice, *This Song Will Save Your Life* is an exuberant novel about identity, friendship, and the power of music to bring people together.

This Song Will Save Your Life Details

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From Reader Review This Song Will Save Your Life for online ebook

Jenny says

“Sometimes people think they know you. They know a few facts about you, and they piece you together in a way that makes sense to them. And if you don't know yourself very well, you might even believe that they are right. But the truth is, that isn't you. That isn't you at all.”

This isn't a kind of book that will keep you at the edge of your seat, or keep surprising you with plot twists; it's just a simple story about a girl who has never been popular in her life, does all the silly things teenagers does-some quite serious,too, but somehow it also inspires you and manages to leave a very strong impression. This is my second book by the author, and the thing I love most about her books is how well crafted and flawed her characters are that even such simple story could mean so much. Her simplistic writing and the way she handles such serious issues like bullying and suicide takes her books to the another level.

This book is from a perspective of Elise, who has never been famous in her life, has always been kind of a person who sits away from the 'cool' group, and not because she doesn't like them, because she feels like she could never fit in that cool group. The first half is basically Elise trying to become one of the cool kids, and for that she even had a list of things she was supposed to do. She also attempts suicide, just to get attention. And while I do not agree with that sort of thing, or in any way can come up with an excuse for her behavior- because it's just wrong, I've also heard about real life incidents like these around me, so as stupid as may sounds, people actually do this. But that didn't stop me from loving the book, because thankfully, that was only a small part of the book, and the rest of the book is actually very interesting and fun when we get to know about this underground Dj party, which in some way changes Elise's life.

The other issue in this book was bullying. When Elise was trying to build a new life with music, there was also something going on in her life that just didn't fit and made her life much more difficult. She was bullied constantly, and even though she said things she wasn't supposed to, I could actually relate to her. I wasn't bullied in high school, but I also wasn't the person anyone would consider to be fun and would hang out with. I was the kid who sat alone with few of her friends and just noticed people around her doing fun things which she wasn't able to do. So in that matter, this book really did touched me more than I could have imagined. And even the end of the book was somehow very similar to my life which just made this book more special.

Then there were secondary characters who made this book more fun to read. I loved Elise's family and her cute siblings, her bitchy *and* supportive friends, and yes, I also loved Char. Okay, not so much at the end, but overall I really liked his character. It was really nice to see how Elise realized at the end who her real friends were and how she was wrong about so many things in her life. Elise also had the habit of judging people without even listening to them, and that I think ruined many things on the way- because she won't believe anyone. The characters I will remember most are VIkki, Harry, Mel, and Char. There were also some characters whom I actually started liking at the end, when everything was sorted out.

I also like how this book had a bit of mystery going on, just like in *Tonight The Streets Are Ours* , and how it was handled at the end. Though the ending wasn't dramatic or anything, in fact I never really got emotional while reading the book, everything just kind of made sense at the end. The ending was very real, too. In real life not everything happens the way you want it to be, and this showed exactly that. I liked how everything didn't end happily with Elise's life, and that's because life isn't always pretty, but I also loved how some

characters did get what they deserved,

It was a great, uplifting read for me. I can say that this book is either a hit or miss for people. But I am a kind of person who loves a story which gives a strong message, even if it not might be the most exciting book I've read, because I know that despite being simple, it was worth reading.

even if you're not like Elise, I'm sure you could relate to her somehow, and I would definitely recommend this book to everyone.

ambsreads says

3.5 stars

TRIGGER WARNINGS: self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and bullying.

This Song Will Save Your Life was a book I had never come across or even thought about until I watched Emmmabooks video I Am The Reader Book Tag. She started to talk about it in the review and before she had even finished I'd got the book. I couldn't stop myself. The concept behind the book was something that would have meant so much to me when I was younger and struggling with my depression and anxiety (without even knowing I was). It was a book that made me cry and feel sadness for the main character Elise.

Elise is a character who has been unpopular her whole life. She doesn't know why. She's different and because of that kids have latched onto that. It was sad to read about how Elise was treated and her mindset, however, it was absolutely believable was incredible. Becoming who she is, with the help of music, and realising she is worthy of having loving friendships and family. That she isn't alone. It was a journey of growth that was incredibly heartbreaking but ended up being a beautiful book.

Of course, I had some problems with the book. The writing style was amazing, and I did only cringe a few times. The first time? Here.

"Do you want to dance?" he asked, holding out his hand to me.

"I wanna dance with somebody," Whitney sang, "with somebody who loves me."

I shook my head, feeling myself blush. "I don't really dance."

Char furrowed his brow. "Why not?"

"I ... I don't really know how."

I couldn't help it. It was such a cliché scene that had me cringing so much.

The second time? During Char and Elise's 'relationship', I couldn't refrain from feeling uncomfortable at a relationship shared between a 16-year-old and a 20-year-old. As someone who is closer to the age of 20 (*oh lord I'm 20 next year*) than that of 16 I couldn't imagine how it happened. That's not to say it doesn't happen, but I just felt it wasn't quite necessary for the overall plot.

However, despite my low rating, this book has become one of my favourites. The overall messages within this book - that high school doesn't matter at the end of the day and that things **do** get better. This makes this

book an important book, a book that would be good for teenagers currently struggling. Or anyone. The writing style makes it enjoyable and the overall story is enjoyable, I didn't even mind the open ending in this case.

Overall? A really good book, I highly recommend it. I'm also glad it didn't join my ever growing DNF pile.

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

"You think it's so easy to change yourself. You think it's so easy, but it's not. True, things don't stay the same forever: couches are replaced, boys leave, you discover a song, your body becomes forever scarred. And with each of these moments you change and change again, your true self spinning, shifting positions-- but always at last it returns to you, like a dancer on the floor. Because throughout it all, you are still, always, you: beautiful and bruised, known and unknowable. And isn't that - just you - enough."

With this book, I didn't laugh much, hurt much, cry much or went through anything much but that was okay because this book is one of those that won't do anything much to your emotions and yet will affect you so much just the same and that's only one of the many ironies of this book since it never fell short of ironies that are so true and striking that they automatically got my head nodding in agreement.

The book is simply written but the contents are nothing simple. So many bright and wonderful ideas about life are scattered all over it that picking this book up is like finding a priceless treasure.

This is a truly inspiring book especially to teenagers and to anyone who is going through/gone through tough times especially in believing in oneself. It's practically a self-help book in the guise of a really good YA fiction.

Reading this book is definitely worth your valuable time. ;)

Angela says

At the end of January I asked my friends on goodreads to recommend me their favorite books/the books that brought them to tears. I got A TON of responses... messages, comments, direct recommendations. So I decided to pick the ones that were most recommended and do a massive book haul just off books recommended to me. I got around 15 books. One of the books that was suggested several times to me was *This Song Will Save Your Life*.

I was really skeptical at first about reading this because the first one of these recommended books I read I was let down by... This isn't the case with this book. Even though *This Song Will Save Your Life* was a suggested book, recently I've decided to go into books blind. So within the first few chapters I was really shocked about what this story turned into. When the "issue" happens and then is carried throughout the story I never originally saw it coming. It hit me hard too... Pretty sure I said *"someone call a barista because this roast just got dark"*... And I was worried that this heavy cloud was going to rain all over this book parade for me. It didn't

If my bookshelf at home wasn't arranged in alphabetical order than I put place this book right beside *The Truth About Alice*. I would more than likely say they were sister reads as well. This book hit my heart the

same way that story did. Because Elise is someone I could easily relate to. Her struggles were some of the same I had to face when I was in high school. Elise's character development doesn't truly start toward close to the end of this story and I that would normally be a turn off for me, but it wasn't. The fact that it started so late into her story reminded me so much of my own life tale... because my character development didn't start till later either. I was also very lucky for two reasons in high-school one) that I had my very own Vicky and two) I was wise enough at the time to know that high school wasn't going to determine the rest of my life. I only had one real friend in high-school (*who is still my best friend*), who didn't judge me, didn't care that I wasn't the popular girl, didn't care that I wasn't interested in designer jeans, and was completely fine with my head always being in clouds because I'm a special breed of weird.

Books like *This Song Will Save Your Life* and *The Truth About Alice* are books that I wish were written and read when I was in school. They are coming of ages stories that just SHOULDN'T be missed. I'm writing this short and vague review just to rant in general about the amazing-ness that is this book. In hopes that you will just go out and buy it yourself. People will relate in some way to this book. There's at least one character in this book that you know in real life. Or that you might even have been at some point... Good or bad. On top of all the wonderful things this book has to offer it also managed to flawlessly intertwine music into it. Being a big music person, going to a school of the arts, and taking so many theory classes I was relieved to find myself not having any complaints about it.

I'm so thankful I was recommended this story. A story with a strong lead, a strong plot, and a stronger message.

"You think it's so easy to change yourself. You think it's so easy, but it's not. True, things don't stay the same forever: couches are replaced, boys leave, you discover a song, your body becomes forever scarred. And with each of these moments you change and change again, your true self spinning, shifting positions-- but always at last it returns to you, like a dancer on the floor. Because throughout it all, you are still, always, you: beautiful and bruised, known and unknowable. And isn't that- just you - enough?"

This Song Will Save Your Life isn't the perfect book, but it has the perfect message. This was a book that I thought was going to be slammed with mess, mix messages, and tons of cliches'. It wasn't.

Kathylill says

When I first read those glowing 5-star reviews I was hooked. I couldn't wait to get my hands on this book as soon as it came out. Such high expectations.

Sadly this is not for me. How bizarre that I really couldn't connect to it and this story's main character. I don't like this girl, really I think she is blasé, she is a flake and most of all I hate her for her attitude because she is oh so special.

"I was born to be unpopular"

So starts the story of Elise Dembowski, sweet sixteen but sadly nobody sees her that way. She is bullied, has no friends and her parents are divorced. She is the one that sits alone in the school bus. How pathetic. Guess what? If you wouldn't listen to your iPod with the earphones constantly plugged in and instead smile once in

a while to people, they might actually talk to you.

Everybody I know, really everybody has embarrassing moments in his life and pictures and memories and scars to show for it. It's called childhood and it's called growing up. And to think that you're so special nobody will ever like you for you, that is just simply stupid and arrogant.

For someone who gets bullied, misunderstood and is constantly underestimated at school I thought she might know how wrong it is to being judged by others because of your looks and outward appearance.

But nooooohooo for our special Elise all people around her are just stupid, idiots or bitches. She is as much a snob if not worse as anybody else.

I was working on my combination when my friends showed up. You know, Chava and Sally. Those friends. "Just the people I wanted to see!" I said to them, and I wasn't even sarcastic for once.

From the first page to the last she kept judging people, her friends and even the boy she made out with, everybody. For example: Her cool indie rock is so much better than the popular music.

The one thing I couldn't bring myself to do was listen to the music. I tried, for nearly an hour. Then I gave up. It was bad. Not even interesting-bad (...). The popular music wasn't interesting-bad, it was bad-bad. Auto-Tuned vocalists who couldn't really sing; offensively simplistic instrumentation; grating melodies. Like they thought we were stupid.

Really? Just because I like to listen or dance to pop music once in a while you oh so special girl can call me stupid and brainless? Elise's attitude is so offensive to me because the majority of people and especially my friends like all kinds of music. I like to listen to live jazz in a smoky bar, go to classic guitar concerts, I enjoy opera but I really love a DJ who can make me dance with house music. I like indie rock as well as hip hop and don't you dare tell me I am brainless and offend you because I like listening to "popular music".

So, because she is this spectacular music genius, after a few hours of practicing she is this AWESOME DJane at this AWESOME underground club, at 16. Suuuure. But not enough, she also gets a job offer after only a few weeks of half-an-hour appearances as DJ for the whole Friday night putting on music until early morning. Seriously? Are fucking kidding me? Maybe that is news to you, but at this age and according to youth labor laws that also apply in the USA as far as I know this is prohibited (it is called: Young Persons Protection of Employment Act) I believe it is liable to prosecution to put 16 year olds to work after 8 pm. But our Elise is soooo special she is even better than DJ Char, the boy who she made out with during the last weeks, who showed her how to DJ and gave her an opportunity to perform as one in the first place.

Pete took a swig of ginger ale. "If you're saying that you're sure I could find some thirty-six-year-old guy who's spun 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' so many times that he's able to play Tetris in his phone while he's DJing, while chugging Red Bull so he can stay awake until four am, then yeah. I'm sure I could find that guy, too. (...) But, Elise, believe me when I tell you this: your talent, your natural talent, puts Char's to shame."

Again our oh-so-special Elise is better than anybody else even her "mentor" DJ Char and the Underground Friday Party Night in an old warehouse will be promoted with her picture and her name online in the local newspaper. Let me tell you this: No DJ will attract a crowd because he is an upstart. But of course special DJ Elise does. And last but not least Prince DJ Char(ming) turns out to be Michael who works as server in

Antonio's Pizzeria and who is "only" a part-time student at the college.

That was Char. It was all laid out for me across the Internet. It was a simple portrait of a person, like a million other people, and I felt the magic of Char float off into the air, as if I'd blown on a pile of dust.

After I had learned all I cared about Michael Kirkby, I looked up my own name. (...) The first two search result were the same as always. (...) But the third result was different. Elise Dembowski suicide had fallen down on the list. The third thing that came up when I typed my own name was Elise Dembowski DJ. I stared at my computer screen for a long moment, and I smiled.

You know what Elise; fuck you and your attitude. You are nothing special. You are like a million other people out there and maybe just maybe I suggest you talk to people instead of judging them. Maybe Michael has a reason for his way of life. But you never cared to know, because you didn't even want to know his real name. Maybe you should care more about friends and family instead of destroying your sister's castle and being sarcastic and dismissive to your dad and the people who actually care about you throughout this story.

I really get that she has a hard life in high-school, that she doesn't like her class mates and being called lesbo because she doesn't wear a bra at age 16, well it's not funny but girl really wear a bra, those boobs bounce and jingle and make 16-year-old boys all kinds of horny and say all kinds of nasty things to you.

Being 33 years old I can honestly say I am glad I am out of school. It was a horrible experience sometimes; at least for me. But this novel gives young adults the wrong idea: that if you are an outsider you are special and you just go out at night walk into an underground club and you'll see how everything changes like in a fairy tale. And no, this is not true. Because I went out at night, and I did go to parties and I met all kinds of wrong people, started taking drugs and have meaningless sex with boys I never met before. And the way Elise takes is not right: her nightly adventures, her making out with Char, sneaking out of the house in the middle of the night...

Everybody is special. Everybody has something good to show, everybody has gone through life altering moments as well. Maybe some people were popular in school. But even they had heartbreak, or have lost dear ones, or have a problematic family situation. It just takes talking to them to get to know people and it takes courage to open up and to confide in others. But sadly our special Elise didn't really learn this lesson.

Chelsey the crazy cat lady says

I really enjoyed this book. I was expecting something completely different actually. The struggles Elise went through happen so often in our world today and I just loved seeing how everything did turn out great in the end. She pushed through and found a great bunch of friends and found something that she loved and brought her so much joy.

Keertana says

I've written a lot of difficult reviews over the past year, but there has never come a point where I planned to just *give up* and *screw the review* because I just *couldn't do it*. And then, of course, I read Leila Sales *This Song Will Save Your Life* and it punched me right in the feels and brought back so many memories and left me a total wreck. I still don't know how to write this review. I don't think I *can* do justice to this book. I just hope that, no matter what, this book gets the attention it deserves. Because, in case you couldn't already figure out, TSWSYL is life-changing.

Leila Sales latest is a dark novel, but an important one. "How do I fit in?" I think it's a question we've all asked ourselves at some point or the other. Growing up, I didn't actually have a lot of friends. I moved to New Jersey when I was seven and, suddenly, I just didn't have anyone. I had a tight circle back in Michigan, but here I was suddenly an oddity. I was too smart. I was too plump. My mom braided my hair in pigtails which was just too weird. I used phrases like, "I was pulling your leg," which just *wasn't cool*. And still, I'd charge forward to school everyday for three years until I found someone – my best friend – the first person to accept me for who I was. I was lucky this was before middle school. I was lucky I realized that it was absolutely *okay* to be just who I was in life. I was also extremely lucky that the only time I ever considered suicide – last summer – I was too terrified of blood to actually go through with it.

Elise, however, wasn't that lucky. Elise has grown up knowing she's different and although she spends an entire summer trying – desperately – to change herself; to learn all the latest bands, to wear all the latest clothes, to do *everything right*, she still manages to miss the mark. And, suddenly, it's all too much for her to bear. TSWSYL is the perfect coming-of-age novel, exploring what it means to have no one, *be* no one in anyone's eyes, and still discover a group to fit in. Sales, first and foremost, is spot-on with her characterization of Elise. I connected with her from the first page – heck, I spent *all* my summers teaching myself something or the other, whether it was Hindi or all about paleontology or just about bird-watching – so seeing Elise come to the realization that learning for the sake of learning *wasn't* a social plus point, just like I did myself many years ago, was like walking back down memory lane.

And yet, Elise manages to be a teenager of her own nature too. While she has distinct qualities that many readers will connect with, I also love that she's fiercely independent in her quirks, her love of music, and especially her relationships with her parents. I feel as if Sales hit the nail on the head with Elise's parents. Ultimately, as much as we all *wish* our parents could help us find friends and get through life, they *can't*. Not always. Thus, Elise's bonds with her divorced parents are messy and complicated, full of unsaid words and lost emotions. Yet, despite all that, the affection Elise has for them and their understated pride of her accomplishments is felt so palpably through these pages. I don't think there is *anything* I love more than an author who is able to convey feelings without explicitly stating them and those waves were exactly what I got with this novel.

TSWSYL really picks up, plot-wise, when Elise discovers an underground club and soon learns to DJ. Already her love for music puts her in an ideal spot to fit in with the crowd, but her personality soon earns her many friends as well. Vicky, the carefree girl Elise first meets at the club, soon becomes a close friend and seeing their friendship evolve – awkwardly, slowly, but surely – was such a heart-wrenching bond to watch unfold. I sometimes like to think there are two types of books in the world: those with horrible, no-one-wants-you-here best friends who push the protagonist toward asshole guys or ditch them during a time of need or completely don't care and those with the what-would-I-do-without-you girls who stick up for the heroine and slap away the assholes and sometimes do that to the hero too when he's being a dick. Thankfully, TSWSYL falls into the latter category – for sure.

As far as romance goes, I can't say this book has a lot. Or, rather, let me re-phrase that – this book doesn't have a *typical* romance. And yet, it is much more realistic than any other romance I've read. Char, the

current DJ at the club Elise discovers, soon teaches her how to DJ and becomes more than *just* a friend to her. Both Char and their relationship have an almost ethereal quality to it, being difficult and complicated, but coated with a veneer of ease. Char is much older than Elise, which gives their romance a very different angle and dynamic, but also makes their relationship much more rewarding in the future. Elise's growth because of and due to this love story is what I ultimately loved about it, so added to its originality, Sales manages to stun yet again.

TSWSYL will probably not be as personal an emotional journey as it was for me, but regardless of that fact, it is an incredible novel. It is filled with unforgettable characters, even more stuck-in-your-head music, and wonderful depth. Utterly moving, deeply touching, and poignant, this is not a book that will leave your thoughts for a long time to come. Leila Sales, you are my hero.

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

So, fun fact: this is the first book I ever read with a character named Elise who wasn't an Archetypal Mean Girl. And oddly enough, **this Elise is one of the most relatable characters I've ever read about.** She's so much like me, **like any of us who didn't grow up popular**, that it's almost terrifying.

"Sometimes people think they know you. They know a few facts about you, and they piece you together in a way that makes sense to them. And if you don't know yourself very well, you might even believe that they are right. But the truth is, that isn't you. That isn't you at all."

So, yes, Elise is the stereotypical high school unpopular girl, but it's explored in a way that feels so much more real than any other books I've read about the topic. She's not unpopular because of one specific Mean Girl ruining her life - *everyone* thinks of her as fundamentally lesser. Her socially acceptable actions are framed as weird because she's the weird girl. She can't win. Elise is a character who is *trying* to be liked, but **isn't good enough at hiding her inner self**. It helps that the author conveys the school environment so well - the friends of convenience, the fake niceties. Even the school "mean girls" feel completely true-to-life, rather than being caricatures. Elise's struggles spoke to me on *such* a deep level.

"You think it's so easy to change yourself. You think it's so easy, but it's not. True, things don't stay the same forever: couches are replaced, boys leave, you discover a song, your body becomes forever scarred. And with each of these moments you change and change again, your true self spinning, shifting positions-- but always at last it returns to you, like a dancer on the floor. Because throughout it all, you are still, always, you: beautiful and bruised, known and unknowable. And isn't that - just you - enough."

The most relatable aspect to me was Elise's need to escape herself by visiting a local DJ club. Maybe it sounds cheesy, but she needs to escape. **She's trapped in her life and she just wants to be out.** Above all else, I related to this. The author does such a good job conveying that feeling of **wanting to escape and be someone else**, someone above it all and on top of her life and far more personable, just to be her for a little while.

And you know what else I liked? That she doesn't end the book by making the friends she needs and riding

off into the sunset. The conclusion of this novel is far less Explicit Narrative Punishment than most would be.

What stuck out to me most of all was how the author **validates Elise's feelings**. At no point do we get some decrying of Elise for being petty and leaving the school - that's not the story Leila Sales wants. Elise, as a character, is given far more narrative and personal agency than characters in YA contemporary often are.

Above all else, *This Song Will Save Your Life* is **a personal story**. It's poignant and full of vivid characters, an easy read and a memorable one.

So why didn't this book get five stars? One thing and one thing only: **the romance plotline**. I can't deal with an underage girl x college age guy romance. Elise is sixteen. She is SIXTEEN. How is this even in the realm of okay? It's nasty, frankly. Yeah, their relationship is consensual and he doesn't know her age, but **the age gap is still pretty gross**. That disgust kept me from enjoying this book nearly as much as I wanted to.

VERDICT: Aside from the one terrible romance factor, this book was near perfect. I think this would work for all ages, though teens will connect to it more. *This Song Will Save Your Life* is an absolutely amazing story about growing up on the outside, and I can't recommend it enough.

Anne says

I was born to be unpopular.

Let me start out this review by painting you pictures.

PICTURE 1

Elise Dembowski has always been unpopular, there was never a moment when it wasn't so, there was no such thing as pinpointing the *exact* moment which marked her fall from grace. And I hereby submit these quotes as irrefutable evidence:

"Don't be special." That's what I would say to my younger self if I could pinpoint the moment when I went astray. But there was no one moment. I was always astray.

*And then one day on the playground, Lizzie Reardon came over and casually said to my new friend, "Don't spend too much time with Elise. She might rub off on you." I was sitting right there. It wasn't a secret. I was a social liability.
This was fourth grade.*

*I've gone to school with the same kids since kindergarten. And they knew what I was long before I did. I was uncool by fourth grade. How is it even possible to be an uncool fourth grader? Didn't we all just string together friendship bracelets and daydream about horses and pretend to solve mysteries back then?
But somehow, even in fourth grade, they knew.*

Elise is sixteen now. And nothing has changed, if anything, things have only gotten worse. The long and short of it?

PICTURE 2

We have now been acquainted with Elise's sad and unfortunate fate. Next thing to know is, that all her life, all she ever wanted was to be accepted, to be liked, to not be herself. **To not be special.** She's so fixated on these thoughts and wishes that whenever a hand of kindness(no matter how glaringly and evidently wolfish and dishonest it is) is extended to her by the most unlikely people, she becomes erroneously gullible and falls prey to their lies. Every single time. She's so broken down and worn out that she can't fight back, can't stand up for herself, not once. So she's been swallowing crap her whole life.

The long and short of it?

And all the while, I'm rolling around in my bed, yelling: **DON'T FREAKING EAT THE POISONED APPLE! DON'T FREAKING EAT IT!!!**

THE REST OF THE STORY LINE

The year before Elise became a sophomore, she **pretended** to attempt suicide(I promise there are no spoilers at all, it all happens within 8-10% of the book) Attempted meaning - Of course, she failed. So we have our heroine a year later still struggling to keep up with life. Still trying to live, or rather cope. One day she comes across an abandoned warehouse night club named **Start**, where she meets people who will later on influence her life, people who, like her, know and understand the power of music.

MY THOUGHTS

I'm going to say, that it pains me greatly to rate this book the way I did. I have a deep and great respect for books(and authors), like this, that address important and crucial subjects which plague the society. Most especially, those that explore pertinent questions pertaining to the topic of rape, sexism, bullying and ostracism. There's just **too much** emphasis placed nowadays on fitting into a particular image, a mould which society deems as **norm, acceptable, and conventional**. One of the many manifestations of such pressure on people-teenagers mostly-is bullying. Why most choose to overlook it? Honestly, the "why" of it is something I can't fathom. Is it too complex? Too ugly? Too sensitive? Too unsavory to be discussed? I like books that bring such topics to light, so I'm very sorry I couldn't like this wholly.

AND NOW MY REASONS

Elise is as judgemental as she is plastic. And it grates me like you wouldn't believe. There's something to be said for reciprocation. If you don't want someone to judge you, start by not judging yourself. Elise bashes circular, popular music and musicians(granted, I'm no fan of circular music too but I am not offensive and mean about my opinions), calls all her classmates Idiots and says a lot more nonsense I won't bother trying to recall. Her voice sounded seriously offensive to me for most part of the book. It's okay to be angry and mad, maybe it's even the right thing to be, but it **did not go well at all with the pitiful and dispirited persona she was trying to sell**. She just felt too fake and manipulative for me. Is it even logical to complain about not having friends, about never being given a chance, about being made into a persona non grata, while on the side you dismiss the attempts of honest people, insult honest people who try to reach out to you **just because you consider them as social pariahs just like-and even worse than- you?** How different exactly are you from the people you curse?

I needed to understand why was she singled out in 4th grade. Why really? I mean in 4th grade? Just why? It isn't impossible, yes I know, but the way it was presented in this book only came off as absurd to me. Maybe that's the root of it all, the presentation of her case failed me.

Another problem I had was I couldn't feel her pain at all. The thing that really didn't sit well with me was her attitude towards suicide: I get that Elise was shooting for humour, but It was just too breezy.

Plus I had spent so long on my playlist that it was already nearly five o'clock. So, realistically, this wasn't a great day for dying. Which was a disappointment, but also sort of a relief. Since I already had the X-Acto knife, though, and I already had the playlist, I decided to go into the bathroom to **practice a little. To practice cutting myself, I mean.** Just a little, so that when the time came to do it for real, it wouldn't be scary.

You're joking.

And when she very logically meanders through different possible ways to do herself in, ticking several options off, so playfully, like it was a check list with groceries on it. I couldn't help but sing

Where are all the heartfelt emotions? **Seriously** I couldn't take the chick **seriously**, it was like she was trying too hard for pity, trying too, too hard to get my sympathy. For me, her voice lacked seriousness and the moving emotion which should easily be felt from someone who just decided to snap the thread connecting her to life. Her thoughts sounded more like analytical and experimental musings of a fascinated experimenter, a lot more than it did a broken, dispirited, and unrecoverable teenager. Therefore, I couldn't feel her pain.

And then she goes and says this:

Again, I knew I could look this up. How long does it take between the time you cut yourself and the time you die? The Internet would know. But I wouldn't ask, because that made everything seem so clichéd. Another teenage suicide attempt, another cry for attention. It's all been done before.
Only mine wasn't going to be a cry for attention.

And it is all I can do to scream

But as the book progresses, the story takes shape and she redeems herself *a little bit, in my opinion*, when she admits

"That's what I discovered about myself on the first day of my sophomore year of high school: I didn't really want to die. I never had. All I ever wanted was attention".

And I could only say: **And now I believe you. Let's start all over again. You're Elise, I'm Anne. This could be a good book.** And since I slept on it, I woke up feeling like *it was a good book*, though it never did become as affective as I hoped it would be. I loved the moments, rare as they were, when I connected with Elise, when I felt like I could understand her a little. When she said things like this:

You can't tell me my feelings are overwrought or absurd. You don't know. They are my feelings.

I let them go. And then I leaned my head against the window and I cried.

Does this seem weak to you? Could you have done better? Fine, by all means, do better. But you don't understand this: sometimes when you are worn down, day after day, relentlessly, with no reprieve for years piled on years, sometimes you lose everything but the ability to cry.

But I had no one who was really mine.

I loved her fervent love for music, I shared the moments of Joy music brought her. In general it's a good story, it's the specifics that keep biting me. But I don't regret reading it one bit, and I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to read a book that explores such subjects: **bullying, the power of music, the beauty and warmth of unexpected friendships, self discovery, romance and something like love(don't ask)**. It's the truth, it's a good story with a sound message.

Can we all just take a lesson from this sweet little darling here

Kristin (KC) - Traveling Sister says

3.5 Stars

A well-written, enjoyable read but in the end I think I favored the premise of this story over what actually played out.

Sixteen year old **Elise** wants one thing: to become popular and morph into anyone who doesn't resemble **herself**. After undergoing a summer of "coolness" self-training, Elise begins her sophomore year armed with new clothes, fresh hope, and shaky confidence. But her efforts prove in vain when she realizes she is still the school's biggest outcast despite her earnest attempts.

I always enjoy when a story shines a light upon a wallflower—and this author handled this well. I could *feel* Elise's pain and frustration; her sheer desire to be someone else. The only thing missing was the *reason*. I wanted to know why she was an outcast? What did her classmates see in her, regardless of how unwarranted it all may have been? Elise was an extremely disliked character, and I was interested in learning where the ridicule initiated, even if it was unjustified. Unfortunately, I never really gained any backstory.

I did love the musical element in this story and felt the in-depth focus on DJing was a unique and interesting touch. There is a very slight, complicated romance incorporated, but this was definitely a plot focused more on "finding" and learning how to believe in yourself.

The fact that not every aspect of this journey was neat and tidy gave the plot a more realistic feel. I don't want to be pacified because things "worked out"—I want to be **convinced** even if that means some disappointment. And in this regard, I feel much of this story held a life-like feel. The writing was polished, fluid, and I loved the creative descriptions.

Elise's character was a pretty solid representation of a young girl struggling to gain her self-worth. However, I did find her a bit too self-centered at times and I'm unsure if this was the author's intent.

In sum, a quick read with a strong message of self-love and acceptance—and of course...the healing powers of music. I'd recommend to YA/music lovers, and readers in search of an original coming-of-age plot.

Book Stats:

? **Genre/Category:** Young Adult Contemporary

? **Steam Caliber:** Mild

? **Romance:** Mild. Not really a love story.

? **Characters:** Well fleshed out.

? **Plot:** Coming of age plot about finding self-worth.

? **Writing:** Polished and intriguing.
? **POV:** 1st person: Heroine
? **Cliffhanger:** None/Standalone
? **HEA?** (view spoiler)

Beatrice Masaluña says

This Song Will Save Your Life hits my heart in the rawest way. The story was so realistic and straightforward. The lines were so relatable and I don't know how to describe what I'm feeling right now as my emotions swirled all over me. I'll make this as a short review because it's hard to formulate a review for this book.

Elise Dembowski is an easy character to sympathize with. In her school, she's been bullied and treated as an outcast. She wants a sense of belonging or just fit in on a crowd. She tried to commit suicide for being treated badly but through music, it became her therapy. She becomes a DJ at a nightclub where people can see her for who she is. Someone who's vibrant and passionate about music. I remember the feeling of not being able to fit in a crowd when I was in high school. There was a time I really felt invisible during a conversation and when I tried to join in, they just continued as if I weren't there with them. It hurts and I felt lonely. I also remembered having a heart-to-heart talk with my mom about it. She said that I should cheer up and do things I enjoyed like playing Badminton or reading a book. That's what I did and in the end, I found a few friends whom I'm comfortable with and accept me for who I am. Until now, I still keep in touch with them.

What lesson did I learn from this book? You don't have to change just to fit in the crowd. Just be yourself and enjoy what you're passionate about. You'll find a group of friends who'll accept you for who you are. Who will be there when you needed through good and bad times.

Can I say this book has an impeccable list of songs? For someone who enjoys old tunes, I appreciate it very much. I love listening to them all.

Final rating: 4.5 / 5 stars

Navessa says

I received this ARC in exchange for an honest review

After reading Emily's brave and beautifully honest review of this book I really wanted to read it. Where she spoke about how much she related to Elise because she was like Elise, I'd like to speak from the opposite

end of the spectrum because I don't think you have to have been in Elise's shoes to appreciate her story or her struggles. You see, I was definitely *not* this main character in high school.

I was popular. I was outgoing. I stuck up for myself at loud volumes. I played sports, had a ton of friends, got invited to parties, was the runner up to prom queen my senior year, dated older guys, won best dressed in the year book, you get the picture. Now put your damn pitchfork down, I wasn't a mean girl either. I hung out with everyone. And I mean *everyone*. In part this was because I never felt like there was one group that was really 'for me' but also I was just highly social because I come from a massive (and **loud**) family and organized chaos is kind of a theme in my life. Having friends that were hippies and jocks and punks and Goths and geeks was just an extension of that chaos and so I bounced from one group to another and back again pretty regularly.

But you see, even surrounded by people, I was still lonely sometimes. Even surrounded by people, I felt like I didn't belong sometimes. While my friends talked about boys and movies and music and "Oh my god, did you hear about..." I dreamt of a world in which vampires stalked the night and the howls of werewolves echoed through the forest that surrounded my house. While sitting in class I relived the last chapters I had read before falling asleep the night before. In my mind, battles between orcs and elves took place on blood drenched fields while dragons winged past overhead. Every day I counted down the hours until I could get home and continue reading because the world I lived in while I was shut up in my room was infinitely more magical than the one I lived in outside of it.

None of my friends knew about my obsession.

What I'm trying to say is that even if you aren't outwardly similar to Elise, on some basic level you'll relate to and empathize with her because at its core, this book is about being different. It's about being lonely and misunderstood. Who of us hasn't felt that way at one point or another?

This book is also about acceptance, growth and self actualization. It's about finding something that helps define who you are as a person. It's about that thing, that one *thing* that's yours and yours alone. For Elise it's DJing. For me, it was reading. For you it was probably something else, maybe video games, maybe drawing, maybe singing but it was that one *thing* that gave you something to get lost in. It was a place to forget about who you were and who you were supposed to be and what people thought of you and what *you* thought of you.

You probably want to know about the plot huh?

I...well...you see...hmmm. Okay, so I took pages of reading notes while devouring this novel but I don't even know how to translate them into something coherent here because they're pretty much nothing but my *feelings*. And I'm sure you don't want to read paragraphs of "First I was sad, then I was-" so just know that this book made me not only *feel* but it made me *think*. It brought me back to those awkward phases in my life and made me thankful all over again that reading allowed me the escape I so desperately needed. It made me remember all those moments that I made selfish decisions and took for granted the good things that were right in front of me. It made me feel less alone in my actions and my regrets and it made me so happy and so thankful that I grew out of those stages and have become the woman I am today.

I don't want to go into too much detail about the plot or Elise's progression as a character because I honestly feel that as much as I loved this book, my reflections on it might dissuade someone from reading this and that I don't want.

Let me say this instead; at times my heart was broken for Elise and at others I wanted to throttle her but it's okay because I was *meant* to feel these things and I enjoyed every damn emotion. Even when I was so anxious I sort of wanted to throw up. Even when I was so mad *for* Elise that I wanted to scissor kick

someone in her defense. Even when I was so sad I wanted to cry and even when I was so happy I wanted to do the same.

Just...just read it, okay?

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Giselle (Book Nerd Canada) says

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book for review from BookOutlet.ca in exchange for an honest review.

Elise.. The overachiever reminds me remarkably of me.. It's hilarious that she wanted to win at everything because I am the same way. If I start a new hobby, I want to learn everything about it so I can master it. Elise is the same way and I love that. She also doesn't know too much about social interactions, which is also something I don't know too well of. Her insightful mind and view of herself and her world was just completely refreshing. Her demons were very similar to my demons and I'm certainly glad that she got through it. With the help of music and DJing, the title is completely literal and it saved her.

I'm so wonderfully glad there's a teen character who felt real. She's not perfect at all, especially in the beginning when she attempts suicide. Some of the thoughts that she had felt realistic to someone who is going through depression. Being at such a low point in her life, you just wanted to hug her and tell her everything is going to be all right.

Overall, a wonderful realistic read that you will definitely want to pick up. It's just that great and AHH I WANT EVERYONE TO READ IT. It's also the book that pretty much cemented me into enjoying contemporary.. *SHOCKED face*

RATING 5/5

QUOTES

"I like that you're honest. Some girls might claim to be older, you know, so they seem more mature or whatever. You're not pretending to be anything you're not." (66)

"I suck at pretending to be anything I'm not." (66)

"I liked projects where I could take things apart and figure out exactly how they worked. The problem is, you can't do that with people." (70)

"I can teach myself anything. Well, almost anything." (87)

"Sometimes you just have those days where everything goes wrong. But sometimes, and totally unexpectedly, something can go right." (89)

"There are some people who want to win at whatever they do, even if the things they do are not the sort of things one wins at." (106)

"I don't need a makeover. I'm happy with myself the way I am." (114)

"Who had don't this, and why? Who would possibly expend the time and energy just to hurt me this much?" (139)

"I liked the idea of simply not having to be here anymore, not having to deal with life. As of death could be just an extended vacation." (145)

"They're jealous of you because you're smart and you're talented and you know who you are." (154)

"Popularity rewards the uninteresting." (206)

"The world embraces ordinary. The world will never embrace you." (211)

"Sometimes you have to give up something you are to get to who you want to be." (220)

"Sometimes people think they know you. They know a few facts about you, and they piece you together in a way that makes sense to them. And if you don't know yourself very well, you might even believe that they are right. But the truth is, that it's you. That isn't you at all." (241)

"People are who they are, try as you might, you cannot make them be what you want them to be." (271)

Giselle says

What an amazing, awe-inspiring book! This Song Will Save Your Life is emotional and beautiful; a story that will bring out your happy-tears by its conclusion!

Once in a while there are books where you get to fully and completely connect to the main character to such a degree that you experience it all as if it was your own story with your own emotions. This was one of those books for me. Elise made it incredibly easy to love her. She's funny and smart, but she has never fit in with her classmates. She has an artist's soul, giving all her passion to what she loves; not awarding great importance to frivolous things like fashion or gossip unsurprisingly makes her an outcast at school. The struggles she faces by daring to be herself is heartbreaking. Leila did a great job at making this major part in the story all so very real and relatable. While it had the potential to be an overwhelmingly sad story, instead it focuses on being uplifting, even inspirational. Elise never loses track of who she is, keeping her focus on what makes her happy instead of giving up. She is an amazing person through and through regardless of her flaws. Her doubts, insecurities, and fears captures the feelings of not fitting in to a T.

When Elise does find out where she belongs by doing something she loves - being a DJ - I felt so extremely happy for her. Think about a time you got some great news that made you giddy happy the rest of the day. This was how I felt by the end of this book, complete with happy tears blurring the words. Not even kidding, I could *feel* the energy of the crowd and the adrenaline pounding Elise's heart with thrill and nervous energy in those moments in the DJ booth. Along the way we meet some witty, energetic characters to color these pages. Even with the smallest of roles - bouncer Mel for instance - they brighten the story every chance they get.

This novel is honest in its entirety, not just with the depiction of high school. Leila approaches romance and sex in a very realistic light, for one. It's not always black and white with happily ever afters. Sometimes romance is just an experience; unclear and lustful, not all-empowering love. I also appreciated that romance was not used - nor needed - to move this story. Furthermore, Elise has a wonderful family unit - 2 actually -

that were a significant part of this novel. Her mother's house is loud with family dinners and siblings that you grow to adore as much as she does. Her father's house is where you get to veg on the couch silently, but together. These are parents who are refreshingly understanding and supportive of their kids' passion. I loved this, it completed the package.

I do think this novel will impact some more profoundly than others, likely dependent on your own high school experience and identity. No matter, it's beautifully written with so much heart - a book well worth your time!

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

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

Caitlin says

I am honestly very torn as to what rating this book deserves. There are a lot of powerful messages in this book so I think I'll keep it at a 3.5-4 star rating.

This is going to be a semi-personal review so I'm sorry if they're not your thing!

This was a really easy book to relate to. I've been in the position of almost all of the characters in the book throughout different times of my life. Even some aspects that I couldn't directly relate to, I have witnessed my friends follow the same path that Elise took. My best friend used to walk the streets every single night because he was searching for so many answers that he couldn't find anywhere else but out in the streets at night. He never found an underground nightclub like Elise did but I think he did find some of the answers he was looking for.

"Sometimes when you are worn down, day after day, relentlessly, with no reprieve for years piled on years, sometimes you lose everything but the ability to cry"

Honestly this quote hits me so hard. I, like many other people, have experienced my fair share of bullying. It was never to the extreme that Elise suffered in this novel but for about 2 years I dreaded going to school because my "friends" turned on me and decided to make my life a living hell. For about 6 months I got off the school bus in the morning and would sit in the bathroom and hide so I wouldn't have to deal with anyone. I spent a long time jumping between friendship groups because no one really wanted to sit with me.

Elise's journey with suicidal thoughts and self harm was limited in comparison to the journey that I know a lot of people have travelled (I myself have travelled along that path). However, it was very real and raw. There's one section when a girl tells her she did it wrong because she didn't cut herself the right way to die. Elise replies to this and says no I didn't. I'm not entirely sure if this is what the author meant but from my experience, you don't harm yourself to die, you hurt yourself to live. Even when Elise was planning on committing suicide, she didn't want to die. She wanted to end the life she was currently living. She just wanted someone else's life. In a way she did do that even though she didn't go through with her suicide attempt because she got the life that she wanted.

Elise's journey with bullying was heartbreaking to read about. It is mentioned in this book that she was picked in fourth grade as the target for all sorts of bullying. It's horrible to admit but I remember this happening in school. There was 1 girl who was the target of lots of bullying but no one ever really stood up

for her. It's tough reading something like this because you realise how much you could have helped them if only you paid attention more or put in the effort to care. I feel like almost all of us will be guilty of doing the exact same thing.

"Sometimes people think they know you. They know a few facts about you, and they piece you together in a way that makes sense to them. And if you don't know yourself very well, you might even believe that they are right. But the truth is, that isn't you. That isn't you at all."

This quote hit me even harder. I feel like this could be used to sum up the majority of my life and I'm sure a lot of people could also relate to this. I'm going to end my review here on this extremely powerful quote. At the end of the day you can try and change yourself 200 times to become someone that other people will 'like' but it will only hurt yourself. There's nothing worse than being trapped inside yourself.

"You think it's so easy to change yourself. You think it's so easy but it's not. True, things don't stay the same forever: couches are replaced, boys leave, you discover a song, your body becomes forever scarred. And with each of these moments you change and change again, your true self spinning, shifting positions - but at last it returns to you, like a dancer on the floor. Because throughout it all, you are still, always, you: beautiful and bruised, known and unknowable. And isn't that - just you - enough?"

Always remember: your scars are what make you, you. You are beautiful even with your battle scars.

Lia says

My playlist for this book:

Bastille - Flaws
All Time Low - Therapy
Cat Stevens - Wild World
Death Cab For Cutie - Transatlanticism
Ed Sheeran - The A Team
Emeli Sandé - Clown
Noah And The Whale - Give A Little Love
Goo Goo Dolls - Iris
Jack Savoretti - Written In Scars
Keane - Somewhere Only We Know
Mikky Ekko - Smile
Mumford Sons - Little Lion Man
Passenger - Things That Stop You Dreaming
R.E.M. - Losing My Religion
Ron Pope - A Drop In The Ocean
The Rocketboys - Viva Voce
X Ambassadors - Renegades

I had this feeling suddenly. I get this feeling a lot, but I don't know if there's one word for it. It's not nervous or sad or even lonely. It's all of that, and then a bit more. The feeling is, I don't belong here. I don't know how I got here, and I don't know how long I can stay before everyone else realizes that I'm an impostor. I am

a fraud.

I don't usually write very personal reviews. Being a naturally reserved person, a similar approach is what I'm generally comfortable with: talking about my opinions, never about my life. But with such a book, I feel like it's time for me to step out of my comfort zone.

This Song Will Save Your Life is an honest book. It's a touching book, and it made me teary-eyed, and it warmed my heart. It's the story of a girl who was never quite right. Who was always precocious, always a little bit too smart for her own good, always unaware of what she should have been like. She thought she could be whatever she wanted. Then, slowly, she realized that she could only be what other people wanted her to be: friendless. A loser. Depressed. Suicidal. Hateful. So Elise cut herself, because she needed attention. Because she needed to be seen.

It is no secret that teenage years are often one of the hardest and most complicated times of our lives. I was no exception. And now, looking back, I'd like to take my younger self's hand and tell her that I'm proud of her, that she's strong, that she's valuable, and that she's doing the best she can. And that's okay. Because I was a million different people: I was the awkward girl, I was a loner, I was frigid and then suddenly a slut, I was quiet, then aggressive, and then I was the new girl, I was the quirky girl, I was even the popular girl that boys wanted to date and girls wanted to hang out with, and then I was just me, I was just a writer and a dreamer and sometimes a good friend and sometimes a bad one. I was a million different people, and it was impossible to live with it, because the world is merciless. And because once they see you're different, they'll do whatever they can to make your life hell. But you have to fight back. You have to stop apologizing for being who you are, you need to grin and say thank you when they call you weird, and eventually you'll find out that you don't really care. That you went through all that judgement and thought it was going to destroy you, so you hurt yourself a little bit too, you hurt others because you didn't know any better, but at the end of it all... you understand it's not worth it. You find out that it feels so much better when you say whatever you want, you wear whatever you want, you do whatever you want. Because it doesn't matter if you're quirky weird cold-hearted she thinks she's so much better than all of us. Because you're you, and you're so, so bright. So full of passion and anger and strength, and you could change the world.

This book often hit a little too close to home. Elise had a beautiful family. She had parents who loved her, siblings who cared about her. She was talented and smart and strong, but it still wasn't enough. Because the world saw her light and wanted to snuff it out, and kids can be so cruel, and kids can be so sad. So Elise brought a knife to her wrists and cut deep until she was bleeding. Then she picked up the phone and, almost through a haze, she called for help.

Her life didn't get any better after that; in fact, it got worse. She felt so lonely and numb and out of place that she had to take long night walks to get to breathe again, to feel like she wasn't trapped. To feel like she was free. And it was during one of these walks that Elise discovered Start, a warehouse nightclub, and she discovered her love for DJing. I've always thought that artists are all somewhat alike: musicians, writers, singers, painters, even DJs. There is nothing like the feeling of creating something. And while Elise found out that all her passion and talent and love for music had not disappeared after all, she also opened herself up to the world. To friendship. To new people, good and bad, people that would stay and people that would leave - because that's what happens. The world that is waiting for you outside those walls is not inherently good or bad: it's just there, in its infinite shades of gray, waiting for you to explore it.

Elise's journey wasn't pretty, and it wasn't easy. It was raw and real, and far from over, but it was something. She watched the people dance and cheer and kiss and she knew it was all because of her - and what a glorious feeling that was.

Sometimes people think they know you. They know a few facts about you, and they piece you together in a way that makes sense to them. And if you don't know yourself very well, you might even believe that they are right. But the truth is, that isn't you. That isn't you at all.

This is not a review on what this book is about. I'm writing this because I feel like This Song Will Save Your Life is a book for us. The artists, the outsiders, the ones that can't sleep at night, the people that were or are or will be in pain, the people that know what passion is, that know what it means to care so much and so little at the same time. It's a book for dreamers, for all of us who believe that we can, that it is possible to change things, that it is a gift to be yourself, and for those who were hurt by the world but always fought back. It's a book for those of us who look at the sky and wonder, who maybe have lied and shouted and are not proud of who they were, but they are still trying. And, as the song goes, maybe there's a way out of the cage where you live, maybe one of these days you can let the light in.

Neil (or bleed) says

*I was broken
I was choking
I was lost
This song saved my life
I was bleeding
Stopped believing
Could have died
This song saved my life
I was down
I was drowning
But it came on just in time
This song saved my life*

Simple Plan's This Song Saved My Life is the first thing I thought of, the first time I saw this novel. Now, that I have read this book, I can say that this song is relevant to the book.

I was ready to give this book 4 stars when I'm in a middle of reading it when the later part comes and I didn't expect what I've got. No, it's not something shocking or mind-blowing but it's something hopeful, remarkable and truly heartwarming. It's like the unexplainable, pure joy I'm feeling when I'm seeing my family, my friends, and even myself happy despite everything.

Oops! sorry it turned out to be I'm some kind of an emo but that's it. That's what I have experienced reading this wonderful novel. At least on the later part of the novel. Because, This Song Will Save Your Life isn't a happy book, in the first place. It carries a heavy package of emotions filled with sadness, worry, jealousy, and anger. In fact, this book started with a suicide attempt of the main character. She thinks her life doesn't make sense. She feels that she doesn't belong. So she changes herself forcefully; she tries to change herself but it doesn't change anything. At all.

This Song Will Save Your Life is a powerful, profound and realistic novel that reminds us to be ourselves. It also reminds us that yeah, life is unfair, some people are just assholes. But, we have choices in life. We can choose to do what we really want and what make us happy. We can choose to not mind some people's judgment because at the end of the day, whether you do something or not, some people still have a say about you.

Lastly, This Song Will Save Your Life has a special place now in my heart because I think it saved me, partly saved me from the nothing I've become (bring me to life). Lol!

Emily May says

"Don't be special." That's what I would say to my younger self if I could pinpoint the moment when I went astray. But there was no one moment. I was always astray.

Uh oh. Brace yourself, fellow fiction lovers, I'm about to tell you a true story. My own, in fact.

^So, I was kind of a weird kid. And I had one hell of a bad time in school. I'm talking particularly about when I was aged 11-16. I was that special breed of socially clueless where I simply just didn't get it. I didn't know how to not be weird, I didn't know what the right thing was to say, I didn't understand why it wasn't okay to put my hand up and tell the teacher I'd finished the work twenty minutes before the lesson ended. So I walked around that school with a sign around my neck that said "victim" and I didn't know how to get rid of it. They called me fat, they hated my hair, they called me frigid one minute and a slut the next, they walked into me on purpose, they knocked my things on the floor, they dared boys to ask me out just to see if I would believe them. And every time I would change. I kept thinking there was some unwritten rule that I just had to figure out and then I would be the person they wanted me to be. What I didn't understand until a long time after is that everything I did broke the one social rule above all others - I cared too much.

People latch onto things so quickly in high school. Sometimes it was a twisted version of the truth about something I'd said or done; other times I couldn't even imagine where the rumour came from, it was a complete lie that was complete truth by lunchtime. I wonder if Ms Sales has experienced this herself because Elise's story so closely resembles the reality. It's so... honest. It says the things that uplifting books about bullying never say. People are always saying that you have to tell someone, that's supposed to be the first crucial step. But the reality is that no amount of phone calls from your parents or meetings with teachers can change the way people see you or change the person you are. This book shows that. And, in reality, the bullied kid doesn't turn up in the end dressed like Sandy from Grease with the winning lottery ticket in their hand, laughing at all the people who made fun of them. In real life, there is no revenge... but not only that, and this is the thing every bullied kid doesn't like to admit, but there's no desire for revenge. When you play out that scenario in your head of the mean kids changing their mind and deciding to ask you to join their little clique, you don't imagine yourself saying no and laughing in their faces. The sad awful thing about it is that you would be grateful. Fucking grateful that someone actually thinks you're alright.

The parallels I drew between this book and my life left me in awe. If you replaced music with books, then Sales could very well be telling the story of my life for 90% of the novel. I recognised every single character, I related to every single emotion Elise had. It was a painful journey but strangely incredible as well, to see the way you felt shared by someone else - even a fictional person. This is a raw, moving, fantastic book that still manages to drop in some humour despite being much darker than readers will expect from the author. This is something I have to stress: it's completely unlike Past Perfect and Mostly Good Girls. If you're

wanting more like that, you're going to be disappointed.

There was another aspect of this book that hit close to home and it happens early enough that I don't consider it a spoiler to talk about it. During my time in school, I had one last thing that I clung to: my grades. They were good. And in my head they were my ticket away from all the crap of school - I would get a good job and never have to worry about this shit again. But this one afternoon, I went into class and we got our grades back from our coursework. And I got a B. I know what you're thinking, haha, a B. A B... big fucking deal, right? And it should have been nothing. It would have been nothing, a minuscule drop in the ocean of life. Except no, because that drop landed in an ocean that was on the brink of overflowing. And I walked out of the classroom that day, just got up and walked out and walked (I noticed) the exact same number of miles that Elise walked (5) until I got home. One difference between the two of us was that she got a razor and I got pills. The other difference is that she didn't go through with it. I did.

There's a lot I regret about that day, about how selfish I was and how, in that moment, I didn't think about a single other human being. Most of all, I regret that my ten year old sister was the one to find me. I regret that she had to be the one to call my mum at work and tell her that her daughter had tried to do something unthinkable. I remember the looks on their faces afterwards when they heard of that B, the question hung in the air "who does something like this because they got a B?" I didn't know how to tell them that it wasn't the B. It wasn't a thing or a person or a moment that I could point to. It was everything. And I think *This Song Will Save Your Life* captures that feeling perfectly. The feeling of many small things building over time until the weight of them becomes too much. On their own, they're nothing. It's pathetic to even make a big deal about any single one of them... but together, they're suffocating.

I'm sorry if you're not a fan of very personal reviews but this was a very personal read for me, it was inevitable. I've thought about this rating really hard and I've pulled apart my decision to give it five stars because I've always given out the full rating sparingly. But I think, looking back, this book was really special for me. And not just for me. Looking at it as objectively as is humanly possible, I think this book managed to be a lot of things: emotional, sad, funny, honest and inspiring. I noticed how well-drawn each character was, even the secondary characters. Each relationship was important in its own way and wasn't neglected, this book actually had several small stories going on that together made up the whole. And the conclusion didn't try to convince me that everything changes and people walk off into the sunset holding hands and smiling. Many people didn't change and the bad guys didn't learn their lesson, but I appreciated that touch of realism a lot more.

I've rarely felt so relieved that a character got where they needed to be despite everything bad that had happened to them. Elise has a special place in my heart, as does this book. In case you were wondering, I got to where I needed to be too. And my ten year old sister and I talked a lot about what happened; she's now a beautiful and talented sixteen year old and my closest friend.

< /catharsis>

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Rebecca McNutt says

An incredible story of the importance of finding your place in the world, *This Song Will Save Your Life* is a great book and its main character is unlike any other.

Anastasia says

5/5 stars

Trigger Warnings: suicide, self harm, depression, bullying

Elise Dembowski doesn't fit in. She spends the summer before her sophomore year of high school literally studying pop culture: the celebrities, the styles, the popular music. She hates it all, especially the saccharine, auto-tuned music. When it comes to music, Elise has standards. But she has come to the conclusion that, had she been more normal as a young child, she wouldn't have become such an outsider. It may be too late to change her fate now, but she has to try. On the first day of school, she pulls on her skinny jeans and a tee shirt with a flattering neckline, slides a headband into her hair (the magazines say that headbands are in), and stands at the bus stop. Still, no one talks to her. But it's early in the day, right?

When a final attempt at popularity fails, Elise nearly gives up. Then she stumbles upon a warehouse party where she meets Vicky, a girl in a band who accepts her; Char, a cute, yet mysterious disc jockey; Pippa, a carefree spirit from England; and most importantly, a love for DJing.

"You think it's so easy to change yourself. You think it's so easy, but it's not."

When I first heard about this book I was completely sold. The summary hit a little too close to home but I knew that if I ever got my hands on this book it would change my life. Once I saw a couple reviews and videos about how amazing the book was on youtube, especially Emmmabooks (If you are reading this. Thank you so much for raving about this book and promoting it to your audience. This book has truly changed my life for the better and like the title states it will "save your life".), I had to pick it up; and I am so glad that I did.

"Sometimes when you are worn down, day after day, relentlessly, with no reprieve for years piled on years, sometimes you lose everything but the ability to cry."

Elise is a sophomore in High School and has never really fit in with her peers. But she wants to change this. She wants to sit in the middle of the bus instead of the front, have someone sit with her instead of sitting alone, have a conversation with someone instead of listening to her ipod. Feeling like you don't belong has been a general feeling amongst the youth of today; especially High Schoolers. Being a High School student myself I really connected to what Elise was feeling and all of the thoughts going through her head. Once Elise decided she had had enough of the bullying and abuse she was receiving at school she decided to hurt herself. After cutting herself she realized that she didn't want death she just wanted someone to care if she died. A couple months, therapy sessions, hospital visits later Elise is back in school and stumbles across an underground nightclub and she comes alive.

"I like projects where I could take things apart and figure out exactly how they worked. The problem is, you can't do that with people."

Elise meets many people while at the nightclub. Mel, the guard/body guard at the door of the club who becomes a father figure for Elise. Vicky, an outgoing soon to be rockstar who befriends Elise. Pippa, Vicky's "do now ask later" kind of friend. Char, the Start's DJ and mentor to Elise. Every single character in this book had depth, even the petty popular girls in school that we only meet for a couple of pages. They were all

interesting and unique. There were a few stereotypes used throughout the book but it helped convey Elise's thoughts and how she sees High School.

"I was smiling like a crazy person because I had just made a hundred people dance, I had just made a hundred people scream, I had just made a hundred people happy."

Char, the DJ at Start, sees Elise's love of music and talent with the turntables. He takes her under his wing and teaches not only how to DJ but how to DJ the right way. It's not only about playing songs that you like over and over. Anyone with an ipod can do that. It's about reading the crowd to see what they are reaction to, beat matching, and most of all losing yourself in the feel of the music. Elise is a fast learner and soon Char lets her DJ for a half hour every night on Thursday's. Elise loves the feeling of being in the DJ booth looking out over the club and watching what her music can do to people. In those moments she is truly happy, but when the lights turn on and she has to sneak back into her bedroom, the feeling of being invincible starts to fade.

"Tonight the Internet seemed filled with versions of me, like a fun house filled with mirrors. Some of them made me look prettier, and some of them made me look uglier, and some of them chopped me right in half, but none of them were right."

Elise loves the nightclub scene. When the lights are dim and the music is loud everything looks ten times better and everyone seems ten times more interesting. That bartender? He is a college student trying to pay for his schooling. That girl with the shirt skirt and spiky pumps? She's a talented singer that's trying to graduate. That DJ with the unicorn boots? She's a sophomore in High School that's bullied and is just trying to fit in. But in the dark you don't see all of these insecurities or normal features of a person. You only see what they want you to see, because for one Thursday night every week they can be whomever they want.

"Sometimes you just have those days. When you know, from the moment you wake up, that everything you touch you will break, so the less you touch, the better."

This book is one of the best portrayals of depression, anxiety, and bullying I have ever read. From the first page I was sucked into Elise's head and found myself engulfed in emotion. For me this book put all of my feelings, fears, and insecurities on paper and it was a little sad and hard to read. But, in the end this book helped me come to terms with those feelings and ultimately helped me understand myself better.

"Sometimes you just have those days where everything goes wrong. But sometimes, and totally unexpectedly, something can go right."

This book shows that even when you feel like everything is broken, one day with help, everything will come back together. Each person's feelings and emotions are valid, and every situation is different. This means that reading this book you might feel the portrayal of depression, etc isn't good because that wasn't your or a loved one's experience. But, somewhere out in the world there is someone reading this book and connecting to the characters feelings and finding a sense of understanding and love in between these pages.

"I was giving up. But sometimes you have to give up something you are to get to who you want to be."

The writing style was perfect. It was just descriptive enough to imagine the scene but vague enough that you could modify certain things. Leila Sales' writes amazing characters and plot. There weren't any lagging moments or scenes that weren't vital to the growth of characters or the plot.

"It was a very small compliment, but it came from someone who mattered, about something that mattered."

All in all if you are in the right mindset this book will move you. Elise is a relatable character that burrowed into my heart, read my mind, and spoke to my soul. Her words didn't seem overplayed or fake. All she wanted to be was popular and you know what happened instead? People were horrible and treated her badly. Some say it's the "high school experience", but to me that's just an excuse for the abuser. It doesn't matter if it's verbal, physical, emotional, cyber, or in person, what matters is that one person is being hurt. I absolutely loved this book and it definitely holds a special place in my heart.

Mental illness is not something we should look over. It may be scary to speak or even think about but if you are feeling depressed, suicidal, anxiety, or are suffering from abuse, bullying, or any other crises please talk to someone, visit the websites below, or call a helpline. Please reach out to someone who can help.

United States Suicide Hotlines: <http://www.suicide.org/suicide-hotlin...>

International Suicide Hotlines: <http://www.suicide.org/international-...>

24 Hour Crisis Hotline: (212) 673-3000

National Domestic Violence Hotline: <http://www.thehotline.org/>

For many more crisis hotlines such as depression, suicidal thoughts, stress, anxiety, grief, bullying, and so much more: <http://www.teenhealthandwellness.com/...>
