



# A Symphony of Cicadas: Sometimes the End Is Just the Beginning

*Crissi Langwell , Carol Weber (Editor)*

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Rachel Ashby thought she had it all. She was in the midst of blending her family with her fiance, and mere weeks away from her wedding. After a lifetime of disappointment, everything was finally falling in place.

That is, until she was killed.

Cast into the afterlife, Rachel struggles to hold on to the parts of her life she was ripped away from. As she tries to remain near the people she cherished, the layers of her life are peeled back. Rachel is suddenly faced with the incriminating evidence of her imperfections. Even more, she's exposed to the glaring human side of those she loves the most. Suddenly, it's unclear what hurts the most - the fact that she's dead, or the fact that her loved ones aren't as innocent as she thought.

Crissi Langwell has written a novel of love and loss in a portrait of one woman's journey, as well as the journey of those she left behind. The story offers a beautiful yet somber glimpse into the mystical world of spirits, and the heartache and healing in the world of the living.

## A Symphony of Cicadas: Sometimes the End Is Just the Beginning Details

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## **From Reader Review A Symphony of Cicadas: Sometimes the End Is Just the Beginning for online ebook**

### **Mimie says**

I received this book in exchange for an honest review (LoP or Lovers of Paranormal)

I never thought of afterlife really. But after what Rachel is going through, it's is so real and related I can barely put this book down. I still have tears in my eyes!

I had never imagine this book would to this to me.

This is refelction of real life!

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### **Patty Beaty says**

an unexpected pleasure to read. I was however disappointed that no more mention was ever made of Joey. I see there is to be a second book that centers on Joey but I feel Joey should have and could have been worked into the ending of this book.

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### **Christy Campbell says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! I'm a big fan of paranormal romance and mysteries. This was the first I'd read in this genre that used adult main characters rather than teens. I immediately felt drawn to the plot and remained engrossed in the story the whole time.

The main character Rachel accurately portrays the emotions of a woman who has lost everything and must deal with the consequences of a family moving on without her. Seeing Rachel watch her husband, children and sister share their grief was heartbreaking to me. Rachel's husband was an unselfish widow who does the best he can to cope and the secondary characters were strongly written. Although I wanted the end result to be different, darn it, (based on how many tears I shed) it concluded perfectly for the storyline and left me definitely planning on reading the sequel to this book.

Crissi's writing was lovely and poetic at times. I highly recommend this novel for those who love a ghost story with depth and mystery. I commend the author for penning such a great read!

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### **Kristy Gillespie says**

“When you’re inside the world, you can only see what’s right in front of you. But on the edge of the world, you can see everything that’s going on in it.” – Joey Ashby

Rachel Ashby was truly happy the day she and her thirteen-year-old son Joey died. Rachel owned a successful flower shop, she was engaged to an amazing man who was building their dream home, and her

son and his son were warming up to the idea of being part of a blended family. One minute, she's laughing with Joey, and the next minute her car is careening off a cliff.

After the accident, Rachel finds herself caught in the in-between, a magical but melancholy place between Earth and Heaven. To make matters worse, Joey's spirit is no where to be found. Her late aunt Rose arrives as her spirit guide, explaining that she's been waiting for Rachel and her sister Sara. She says that Rachel's spirit will stay in the in-between until she's ready to sever her ties with Earth. Rachel has two main reasons for remaining in the in-between. For one, she has to find her son's spirit. For two, she's compelled to watch over her fiance John. Unable to locate Joey, Rachel becomes obsessed with John. Rachel is saddened yet comforted by John's depression over losing her, which I think would be a natural reaction for most of us. (I know that if I were in Rachel's position, I'd watch over my husband and expect him to mourn for sometime over my death). But as Rachel's spirit clings to John, she realizes how much pain its causing to them both. Eventually, she makes peace with her death and leaves the in-between for Heaven.

I hadn't realized how much A Symphony of Cicadas touched my heart until I found myself thinking about it days after I finished reading it. In fact, I squeezed my husband extra tight before I left for Pennsylvania for the weekend, and did the same with my brother and parents before I left their house to head back to Virginia.

Towards the end of the novel, Rachel says "In my death, I discovered what it was like to truly live." I hope that I don't feel that way after I pass on, and I have a feeling that I won't.

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## Ria says

There were parts that I loved. Then, there were times that I skimmed and felt like quitting. The detailed explanations of her home, son's video game, wedding dress and past tended to drone on and bored me. In addition, I found Rachel selfish at many points. She couldn't leave her fiancé and his kid to find her own child? Hmmm. One thing that was unresolved really bothered me. \*\*\*\*\*spoiler\*\*\*\*\* We never see her reunited with her son in the after life or even what happened to him. Everyone else was tied up in a neat little bow but no more was heard from Joey.

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## Erin M. says

I selected this book from Cheap eBooks.

Mere weeks before Rachel Ashby's wedding to John, her best friend and soulmate, Rachel and her son Joey are killed in a car accident. Rachel's life was just about to begin, it seemed, but now--it was over. Or was it? She wakes up at the scene of her death, confronted with a new reality complete with new physical laws. In her alternate world, she can manipulate the laws of time and space, traveling to the outer reaches of the galaxy and back in the blink of an eye; she can visit whomever, wherever, whenever she chooses. In spite of the seemingly limitless wonders of this afterlife, Rachel learns that she is actually in a kind of limbo, a dimension where the spirits of the dead who cannot let go of their connection to the living world, linger indefinitely until they are at last ready to leave and enter "Heaven." Unable to take this final step, Rachel becomes obsessed with not being forgotten and "haunts" John relentlessly. Though he cannot see or hear her,

she is, nevertheless, constantly on his mind, preventing him from moving on or even taking care of himself and his son. At first, Rachel is blind to the harm she is causing by clinging so tenaciously to the living world. It isn't until her influence almost causes an event as tragic as her own death that she begins to change, to learn what it really means to love, and to accept that the most loving thing she can do... is to let go.

What I loved:

-Setting is extremely important in this novel, almost becoming a character in itself. Though it is primarily set in the Bay Area of northern California, we are swept away to exotic locations at the main character, Rachel's, whims. From a whispery, cicada-filled forest, to the snowy summit of a Hawaiian volcano, to the very edge of our galaxy, Langwell's descriptions of Rachel's travels through time and space were quite beautiful and lyrical.

-A huge strength of this novel is that it gives a really empathetic treatment of characters who sometimes act or appear distasteful. Langwell gives us the gift of understanding that a sullen teenager craves discipline and boundaries; or that an overbearing, overshadowing sister is lonely; or that an overworked, emotionally-unavailable husband wants to be part of his family again but doesn't know how. Over and over again, Langwell shows us more than one side of someone, perhaps tacitly reminding us to give others the benefit of the doubt.

-What I loved the most is a surprisingly prosaic thing, but one which I think separates good writers from bad writers--and that is an overall evenness to the story. Not once while reading did I think that a certain character, situation or plot point felt "out of place." Not once did I notice a lack of consistency in the "rules" Langwell's established in Rachel's parallel dimension. What a pleasure to read such an intact work of writing!

-I admit that I can be a notoriously hard sell on a novel, and the first few pages of the book had me worried that I had stepped into a romance novel filled with gratuitous and (often) badly-written sex. But that is certainly not the case here. Langwell's spare and poignant use of intimacy underscores a running theme throughout the book: the need and desire for human connection, the grasping at whatever vestiges of that connection remain when the one you love is lost... She does not rely on sex alone (or really much at all) to make this point.

Read the full review at "A Writer Reads": <http://www.writerreads.com/?p=198>

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## **Erin says**

Just weeks before Rachel Ashby's wedding to John, Rachel and her son Joey are killed in a car accident. She wakes up at the scene of her death, confronted with a new reality complete with new physical laws. In her alternate world, she can manipulate the laws of time and space, traveling to the outer reaches of the galaxy and back in the blink of an eye; she can visit whomever, wherever, whenever she chooses. In spite of the seemingly limitless wonders of this afterlife, Rachel learns that she is actually in a kind of limbo, a dimension where the spirits of the dead who cannot let go of their connection to the living world, linger indefinitely until they are at last ready to leave and enter "Heaven." Unable to take this final step, Rachel becomes obsessed with not being forgotten and "haunts" John relentlessly. At first, Rachel is unwilling to acknowledge the harm she is causing by clinging so tenaciously to the living world. It isn't until her influence almost causes an event as tragic as her own death that she begins to change, to learn what it really means to love, and to accept that the most loving thing she can do is to just let go.

I really liked A Symphony of Cicadas, and found myself connecting to it emotionally. (I cried, okay?!) It is certainly not what I would call a “difficult book”: It was easy to read, easy to understand, and did not push the boundaries of conventional morality. It is a well-written story that will appeal to readers who prefer to keep their fantasies grounded in the “real world,” and would be a great crossover read for those who typically don’t read Fantasy fiction at all. Readers of inspirational stories will find much to like as well, as it explores such themes as family, God and love. While it was a little too sentimental, a little too neatly-resolved for me personally, I would not hesitate to recommend this book.

For the full review, please visit [writerreads.com](http://writerreads.com)

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### **Don Sansone says**

Wonderful and profound... I'll be living with this one for a long time to come...

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### **Karie says**

it was a very good read it made me cry first and then laugh a little. I will definitely read Crissi's next novel. Get writing!

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### **Liz Carrasco says**

For full-disclosure, I should share that I am friends with the author, and as such, I actually found myself MORE critical than I might be with any other book that I might pick up. I recognized Rachel and her life history as a reflection of her (Crissi) and struggled with how Rachel (and thus, Crissi) responded to certain situations regarding her journey and faith. As the story unfolded, I found myself engrossed in Rachel's story. I cried in her despair and rejoiced in her breakthroughs. I even saw myself reflected in a character or two and am anxious to read more from Crissi. Might this work itself into a series?

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### **Katie Talbot says**

Wow! I just finished reading A Symohony of Cicadas and I am still wiping the tears away! After reading the second chapter and feeling like I was on a cliffhanger, I continued on. I felt heavy with sadness reading on, wishing for different outcomes and really feeling the character's pain. The novel is beautifully written and as it progressed on the feelings of sadness were replaced with feelings of hope and love and peace. What a perfect day to finish reading, being Easter today.

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### **Leah Reise says**

"A Symphony Of Cicadas" was a cleanly written, memorable and heartfelt story. Even with the wordiness that is expected in a debut novel (which I am also guilty of as a new author), Langwell brings a real-ness to the characters, which is felt in the color and honesty of her writing. I speak of a 'real-ness,' because it is hard

to find a book that pulls you into the story as if you were in the shoes of each character—feeling their love and loss, joys and sorrows; and Langwell does this fabulously. With wonderful description, the middle-place the protagonist, Rachel, exists in is believable in both its darkness and its beauty. I loved that, because that is what life is, in all its fabulous chaos and fury. We not only live amidst the material world, but also inside our own perception. And we have more power than we know to affect our surroundings (people and environment).

All in all, the sincerity in the tone of Langwell's writing draws you into what feels like a real story of life after death. This is saying a lot, as it is that I am of atheistic mind, and am drawn more to concepts of science than of religiosity. But the tone of this story was not a religious one; it was spiritual, something that everyone can relate to, and wonder about. And Langwell painted a vibrant existence that portrays all the hardships we share in life and the insecurities and darkness we must face before we depart this Earth. With words in a book, writers like Langwell lead people and the world in becoming—not a perfect place—but a 'better' place."

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### **Debbie Hughes says**

Langwell has a gift for creating believable and real characters. I laughed and cried and fell in love with Rachel and her story. I was angry at what happened to Rachel and Joey, how could this story have a happy ending? I wanted to go back to the beginning and change what had happened, I wanted it to be a bad dream. But something strange happened to me, as Rachel struggled and grew, I changed with her. Given the same circumstance would I do the same or as well? I look forward to her next novel.

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### **Krys says**

I'm whacking my brain trying to think if I've ever read a book that had me in two time zones at once. Sure there were books in which realms were traversed and time stood still but THIS! The story was beyond amazing touching base with questions many men asked since the dawn of time. The themes of death, love, the meaning of life and tragedy all came together in one beautiful, heart-warming story.

The author was amazing in the way she was able to depict the transcendence of time in both worlds that she created. I feel this is what made the story so magical. My thoughts of what it felt like to read this book is tough to articulate without a scenario:

close your eyes and imagine yourself on a life raft (or anything floaty) in the middle of a great ocean, your raft smooth sailing with the ebb and flow of the tide while the blue sky above seems touchably close but stays just out if reach, yet clouds caress your face as the oceans ebb you towards sweet oblivion.

Okay. Now I don't know if that helped any but I must say the story stirred something inside of me. Reading this, you question your own beliefs, what you know and what you have experienced. You call your life into question and even come the realization that so many things are trivial and insignificant in the face of death.

Now my peeves:

The main character came across as bratty, selfish and a tad bit shallow. She seemed a petulant child, wasting time on petty grievances in the face of the greater picture that she is a part of and refuses to acknowledge. I had a hard time connecting emotionally and even though she said she learned a lot, I didn't feel that conviction even through the change in attitude.

The author sort of flubbed during the scenes with the main character's sister Sara. I get that I was reading what the character was picking up from her sister's point of view but it read more like Sara took over the telling of the story and it took a bit away from the experience. Especially how, during this time, the reader got no insight or comments from Rachel's POV on what she was vibing from Sara.

Despite all of that, I greatly enjoyed the story and would recommend this to anyone who loves unique tales.

BOOK WAS RECEIVED IN EXCHANGE FOR MY HONEST REVIEW: LOVERS OF PARANORMAL R2r

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### **Claudine says**

An amazing walk through the afterlife - based on a nightmare the author once had while planning her real life wedding. The action starts very fast and it's not something you can just walk off from or put down. The protagonist is relatable and real. All the characters offer a wonderful piece to this puzzle and Langwell weaves them together seamlessly.

There's a bit of the surreal and thought provoking in the afterlife, so sit in and grab a cup of tea or coffee and get ready for this story to stay with you for a while.

Cannot wait for the second book to find out what else is in store for these families...

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