



The Midnights

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Susannah Hayes has never been in the spotlight, but she dreams of following her father, a former rock star, onto the stage. As senior year begins, she's more interested in composing impressive chord progressions than college essays, certain that if she writes the perfect song, her father might finally look up from the past long enough to see her. But when he dies unexpectedly her dreams—and her reality—shatter.

While Susannah struggles with grief, her mother uproots them to a new city. There, Susannah realizes she can reinvent herself however she wants: a confident singer-songwriter, member of a hip band, embraced by an effortlessly cool best friend. But Susannah is not the only one keeping secrets, and soon, harsh revelations threaten to unravel her life once again.

The Midnights Details

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Author : Sarah Nicole Smetana

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Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Music

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From Reader Review The Midnights for online ebook

Just Reading Everything says

Smetana's gorgeous writing and heartfelt storytelling soar in THE MIDNIGHTS. The novel follows Susannah, a seventeen-year old who has music thriving in her bones, who's uprooted from her LA home and moved to Orange County with her mother after experiencing a monumental loss. The passages about grief and striving to find answers are heartbreakingly realistic and thoughtful, and Smetana's masterful plot is effortlessly captivating. It's the kind of coming-of-age story that settles in your heart and doesn't let go. You'll absolutely want to keep your eye out for this one in 2018.

Vicky Who Reads says

3 stars

It's been two months and honestly I've already forgotten the majority of this book.

I definitely wanted to read because Sarah is cool and support debuts!!! but this didn't really hit the mark for me. I definitely think I have specific tastes in contemporary, and a big part of why I didn't like this as much as I wanted to was because it wasn't really my style? But I like trying new things, hence why I read it.

I didn't connect with Savannah a lot, and one of my biggest criticisms would be how I wanted a lot more on her family relationship from this book. If it was a family book, I would have been *all* over this.

But it wasn't and it ended up being a little more slice of life and a little more low-key, which is great for some people, but didn't end up clicking with me. It dragged a little in the middle and I wasn't super invested, but I see the potential in the story. But it didn't move me half as much as I wanted to, hence the very mediocre 3 star rating.

I wouldn't rule Smetana off my list though, and I'd like to see what other books she brings our way!

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Jessica | Booked J says

Review also found on Booked J.

As a note, an e-galley of this novel was sent to me via Edelweiss by the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This does not effect my opinions in any way.

For the first time in ages, I felt truly captivated by a YA contemporary novel. Lately, meaning around the time that I picked up *The Midnights*, I felt as though I were in a never-ending reading slump when it came to its genre. There's something in Sarah Nicole Smetana's prose that packs a serious punch and kept me riveted from the first few pages, effectively knocking me out of my slump and moving me. I think that's the first thing readers need to know about *The Midnights*--it's moving, it's a true coming of age story that provokes

thought. And if you want to feel something, this is the book for you.

Although the plotlines aren't at all similar, beyond the loss and the weaving of music through the pages, there's just something in *The Midnights* that feels emotionally reminiscent to *If I Stay* by Gayle Forman. It is undeniably its own story and by far one of my favourite YA releases of 2018. This is, naturally, due to Sarah Nicole Smetana's unflinching honesty and ability to tell a story. As she writes Susannah, you feel as though her words command you to listen.

There won't be a dry eye upon finishing the book. At least, in my case, there wasn't. I was just deeply and thoroughly moved. While I hadn't been in the same shoes as our lead character, I felt connected to her. From the good, and the bad, Susannah is complexly human. I loved the elements of music in *The Midnights* because it's something that I can, personally, relate to easiest of all.

As for everything else in the story--there's so much to be told. From its setting to its cast of characters the novel is a pure image of youth and family. My only complaint is that there were moments when you felt a certain grip slipping in the prose but at the same time, this also felt very organic. I scarcely remembered its flaws by the end of the novel because I felt so many other things whilst reading it.

The truth is, you don't need to be in Susannah's shoes to feel her story. You see it in the prose, you see it as she learns and makes mistakes and grows and mourns and loves. *The Midnights* is the coming of age story you've been looking for.

Danielle (Life of a Literary Nerd) says

“You have to shake your notions of good and bad, and create outside of judgement. Follow the instinct, not the convention.”

I wanted to love this so much and I just didn't and that makes me really sad. I was looking for this moving story of grief and family and Susannah finding herself, but this book made me feel absolutely nothing. I didn't connect to it at all - not the characters, not the relationships, not the plot. Nothing. I can't remember the last book that I was completely apathetic towards.

I found the pacing in the beginning to be really disjointed and rushed. Because of that I never bought any of the relationships. This was really detrimental because Susannah's relationship with her dad is incredibly important to the story and it's progression, but I just didn't care about it. There was also this reflective quality to the writing, that while worked for the story, felt out of place. There was moments when the narration read like a voiceover looking back at what happened, but it was used infrequently and pulled me out of the story. Even the music element, which I usually love in story fell flat here. I didn't feel Susannah's connection to the music. I just didn't feel much of anything.

So **The Midnights** was a super unfortunate miss for me, but I'm sure A LOT of people will really love it and connect with it, so it's worth a shot if you're in the mood for a contemporary with a little more depth. Hopefully it will work out for you, but I think this was a case where the book just isn't for me.

I received a copy of the book from HarperTeen via Edelwiess in exchange for an honest review.

Bethany says

The Midnights is a moving story about family, grief, music, and finding yourself. Set in Southern California, there is a strong sense of place. The Los Angeles area is captured beautifully, and not as a glitzy Hollywood stereotype, but rather in a richly nuanced way that could only come from someone who has lived there. Nature is almost personified at times in the Santa Ana winds, earthquakes, and wildfires. As someone who lived for many years in Southern California, I really loved that aspect of it. But if you are less enthralled with that than I am, don't worry! There is much more to like here!

Susannah Hayes is the daughter of a washed out musician who loves the craft of song-writing and imparts that love to his daughter. It's clear that he struggles with some kind of mental illness, but in Susie's eyes he can do no wrong and she is desperate to connect with her dad through music. When he dies in a car crash, her life changes completely and everything she thought she knew is turned on its head. A senior in highschool, she is thrust into a new school and new home while trying to cope with grief and unanswered questions about her father's past.

I think this book does a really great job of exploring the complexities of family relationships and how teenagers often don't know their parents as well as they think they do. Susannah loves her father, but she comes to understand that he was also flawed and deeply damaged. Meanwhile, she eventually develops a new understanding of her mother that brings them closer together. But along the way, she makes some less than ideal life choices in terms of drugs, alcohol, and boys.

It's interesting to see Susannah begin to mirror her father in a number of ways when she joins a fairly damaged, relationally unhealthy, but musically talented friend group. Throughout the book we do see her process her grief and grow as a person, but things definitely get rough before they get better. In the midst of her own pain, she sometimes ends up hurting others.

Be aware that there are instances of teen drug and alcohol use, sex while intoxicated (unclear whether any protection is involved), and sneaking out. I was kind of uncomfortable with the fact that alcohol was always a pre-cursor to sex and nothing about that was really addressed. In terms of drug and alcohol use, it seemed like a realistic path of experimentation that made sense for the story, but it was balanced by examples of negative outcomes when left unchecked in the long-term. I particularly mention this because the audience for the book is primarily teenagers.

I also want to note that while I am not a musician, there is a lot of focus on music and musical craft. Parts of this brought me back to my own teen years, but I think this might really resonate with musicians. Overall, I thought this was a very strong debut novel that is sometimes dark, but ultimately hopeful. Susannah is not always likeable, but she is certainly relatable and she is willing to recognize her own mistakes and try to change. If the premise interests you, I definitely recommend it!

Heather Ezell says

Visceral and heart breaking, THE MIDNIGHTS explores grief and artistry and the secrets that make up a family, a friendship, an identity in both sharp and subdued layers. The voice is absolutely evocative of Janet Fitch, both in terms of the prose overall but also in the way Sarah captures the raw natures of LA and Orange County. The description does not lie: you can *feel* the scintillating landscape that Susannah navigates -- both the external and internal. And also the music. THE MUSIC. <3

Amber Smith says

A stunning, beautifully-written debut, *THE MIDNIGHTS* explores the complex nature of loss, grief, secrets, and family, as we follow one girl on a poignant journey of self-discovery.

I received an advance copy

Rachel Solomon says

THE MIDNIGHTS is one of the most exquisite YA novels I've ever read, with an evocative, dreamy setting that is truly a character in itself. I've never read a Southern California so raw and alive and unapologetic. Sarah Nicole Smetana's prose should be savored like the darkest dark chocolate. So many lines burrowed into my heart and stuck in my throat. I loved and ached for Susannah, grieving the sudden loss of the musician father who didn't have enough time for her. Every member of Susannah's friend group is deeply realized, nuanced, and compelling. This book is 400 pages, but I'd happily have read another hundred. A must-read for fans of Nina LaCour, Jandy Nelson, and Jessi Kirby. Pairs beautifully with Janet McNally's *GIRLS IN THE MOON*.

Stephanie says

Bibliophile Euphoria

This story has a melancholy feel to it with a side dish of inspirational.

Through the wondrous power of music, this beautiful story navigates the path of friendship, family, the grief of losing someone, and finding who you are. (Proven once again, music never fails).

The setting description was my favorite part of the book. The scenery and visuals given made me feel like I was right there in Orange County. An unforgettable read, indeed.

This is the type of story that I will cherish in the subconscious part of my mind for years and years to come.

I would recommend this book to fans of Sarah Dessen and Meg Cabot.

Bibliophile Euphoria

Brenda Rufener says

Friendship, family, music, and romance. All layered in a way that will touch your heart and make you feel. Really feel! Also, I appreciated the OC setting. Haven't read many books, although I'm sure they exist, that capture *this* California atmosphere. Smetana's light stroke paints a vivid picture with all senses evoked. *THE MIDNIGHTS* is a must-read for 2018! Can't wait to see this book on the shelves.

Lea (drumsofautumn) says

DNF at 30%. I'm just gonna stop pretending that I will ever continue reading this. I had a hard time deciding

to DNF this because there's nothing I can really say about it. I can't pinpoint an exact reason why I didn't enjoy it, I just simply didn't. I was not attached to any of the characters, I thought they all felt a little bit emotionless (not that they really were but the emotions didn't really come through in the writing). I constantly had to force myself to pick this up and then I still only ever read a couple of pages. Not worth it for me but maybe still a good book for you :)

I received an ARC of this through Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

Amber says

IThank you to Booksparks for providing me with a free copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

really loved reading this book. I was completely in the mood for some YA fiction, and this was a perfect fit. I mean, not only was it set at that slightly awkward, slightly angsty end-of-high-school age, but it was also laced with music. And by "laced" I mean "completely submerged in music". And I loved it!

I'm finding myself wanting to say that this was a really sweet book, despite the fact that it wasn't a "sweet" story per se. It was, in fact, quite emotional because it dealt with some pretty difficult situations. And yet, I have this warm feeling toward the book now that it's done. I'm chalking that up to Susannah. I have a soft spot for her. Watching her struggle for her father's praise, and then her struggle to fit in and find her own way after he was gone broke my heart. And yet I remembered that season as a teen, constantly searching for you're own identity and your place within the world around you.

Ok, I have to stop here or I'm going to start spoiling all the details. And nobody likes a spoilsport! This book will be perfect for fans of YA fiction with a side of romance, and music fans. (I am *still* drooling over her dad's vinyl collection.) It's a great coming-of-age story that you'll probably be able to relate to, and you won't want it to end.

Lauren says

I've been dying to read The Midnights ever since I saw Rachel Lynn Solomon, author of the AMAZING You'll Miss Me When I'm Gone, raving about it on Goodreads. I figured if she'd loved it I'd probably love it as well, and as it turns out, I was one hundred percent correct (thankfully!).

The Midnights is not just good but great. Combing lyrical writing, a drool-worthy setting, and a thoughtful coming-of-age, The Midnights is a standout YA debut, perfect for fans of Sarah Dessen's This Lullaby.

When the book first begins, Susannah is living a relatively normal life. She works at a coffee shop, has a crush on her guy best friend, and loves the midnight jam sessions her and her father have. Susannah is content with her life. She doesn't feel the need to ask for more, to work for more. She's not worried about college. She's just worried about coming up with the next great lyric. However, everything changes in the blink of an eye. Suddenly, her father- her idol, her rock - is gone, and she's exiled to Orange, CA to live with a grandmother she didn't know she had and a mother she barely recognizes as the days go on.

I'll be honest: I didn't love Susannah at first. I didn't like how she treated her mother, or how selfish she could be when it came to putting her needs before others. Suffice to say it took me a long time to warm up to her; however, while I didn't always love her attitude and choices, there was something so incredibly compelling

about her voice, something that made me keep reading, no matter the situation. Over time, I began to understand Susannah more. I began to see her passion for music, why she was so willing to put it before everything else. It was her "thing" as well as her tie to her father, and I gave her dedication props. When Susannah moves to Orange, she has the opportunity to reinvent herself. Suddenly, she's in with the cool, elusive kids, the ones who drink, sneak into bars, and have midnight parties at the beach. Susannah slowly transforms, letting herself being influenced by people who shouldn't have say. I found this transformation to be interesting as well as realistic. I think it will resolve with anyone who's ever slowly changed a bits about themselves only to wonder later why they did it. By the end, I was happy I had accompanied Susannah on this journey. I was proud of who she had become and how she had transformed her life.

This book won't be for everyone. It's a slow novel, focusing on music, relationships, and grieving more than action and swoon-worthy romance. However, it worked for me, and for those like me who like novels that are character drive, I think it will work for them as well.

I appreciated the amount of time Sarah put into development here. First, she did an amazing job of developing the California setting. It was dreamy and evocative and fit perfectly with the feel of the book. I can't imagine this book being set any place but Orange. Second, Sarah did an amazing job of developing the relationships to be found here. Over the course of the book, Susannah begins to reevaluate her relationships. She begins to wonder what made her father so special to her, what made her so willing to overlook his flaws, and what she can do to be close to him even though he's gone. Her relationship with her mother is challenging. She has a lot of resentment towards her and she doesn't understand the majority of her decisions. Their relationship had many ups and downs, so many highs and lows, but there was something special to be found there. I also appreciated that there wasn't one guy. Instead, Susannah bounces from guy to guy over the course of the book, not because she can't decide on one, because each one feels perfect at the time. I found this to be realistic, because you don't always find the one in high school, and that's okay. Each relationship is just a building block in a sense.

Overall, The Midnights is a slow-burn, evocative novel. I look forward to reading more by Sarah in the future.

ARC was provided by the publisher via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review

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Lia says

I don't know what to think. Objectively it's not bad at all but I also didn't like it very much.

Samantha (WLABB) says

Rating: 3.5 Stars

I am always up for a good grief and loss book, and The Midnights absolutely fit the bill. It was filled with the pain we associate with losing a loved one, and the ways one may go about trying to fill the hole left in their heart.

- Pro: Smetana beautifully depicted the emotional pain experienced by the characters in this book. The grief

and suffering was utterly palpable.

•Con: I know it's realistic for some people to spin a little out of control when they are grieving, but I had such a hard time with the choices Susannah was making.

•Pro: The music references were so awesome. I really loved being pulled into Susannah's musical world, and I was truly fascinated by her songwriting process, her performances, and the bands who influenced her life.

•Con: The book was kind of long, and had some parts, which didn't really seem necessary to the story.

•Pro: I have been keeping track of where books are set, and it seems like a ton of books are set in California. However, I really thought Smetana's approach to describing the setting was different and interesting. She often focused on the weather elements, and connected them to the musical elements, which was different and a welcomed surprise.

•Pro: The Midnight sessions Susannah shared with her father were quite special, and I thought it was brilliant the way these different "midnights" kept popping up throughout the story.

•Pro: I had quite a fondness for Susannah's grandmother. She was a tough lady, but she was wise, and I really appreciated the way she tried to help Susannah see things from a different angle.

•Pro: I was really proud of Susannah towards the end, and loved that she grew up a bit over the course of the story as she healed.

Overall: An emotional and affecting look at one teen's struggle with grief, and her attempt to move on.

*ARC provided in exchange for an honest review.

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