

Positively Beautiful

Wendy Mills

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16-year-old Erin is a smart if slightly dorky teenager, her life taken up with her best friend Trina, her major crush on smoky-eyed, unattainable Michael, and fending off Faith, the vision of perfection who's somehow always had the knife in for Erin. Her dad, a pilot, died when she was very young, but Erin and her mom are just fine on their own.

Then everything changes forever one day after school when Erin's mom announces she has breast cancer. And there's even worse news to come. Horrified, Erin discovers that her grandmother's death from cancer is almost certainly linked, the common denominator a rare gene mutation that makes cancer almost inevitable. And if two generations of women in the family had this mutation, what does that mean for Erin? The chances she's inherited it are frighteningly high. Would it be better to know now and have major preemptive surgery or spend as much life as she has left in blissful ignorance?

As Erin grapples with her terrible dilemma, her life starts to spiral downwards, alleviated only by the flying lessons she starts taking with grumpy Stew and his little yellow plane, Tweetie Bird. Up in the sky, following in her dad's footsteps, Erin finds freedom chasing the horizon. Down on the ground it's a different story, and facing betrayal from Trina, humiliation from Faith, and a world of disappointment with Michael, Erin knows she must discover the truth about herself. Sure enough, she's positive for the gene that's slowly killing her mom.

Suddenly, Erin's life has turned into a nightmare, and the only person she can truly talk to is a girl called Ashley who she meets online. But when, in a moment of madness, Erin flies away with Tweetie Pie to find her new friend, she finds herself on a journey that will take her through not only shock and despair - but ultimately to a new understanding of the true meaning of beauty, meaning, and love.

Positively Beautiful Details

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Author : Wendy Mills

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From Reader Review Positively Beautiful for online ebook

Melissa says

So I finished this book and it was awesome! It's all about love, death and choices in life. Erin has had such a hard time in this book, especially with the people who love her.

I would definitely recommend this book to anyone that likes sad romantic books! ;)

SPOILERS UP AHEAD THIS ROAD!

So I was finishing the book at school during class and when Erin's mom died I almost cried. My friend sitting next to me was looking at me and saw the tears in my eyes.

I was really disappointed and sad when Erin's mom died because when everything was right, it all started going downhill... I love when Erin met Jason. He sounds so caring and brave in life. He helps Erin find her way through the darkness. (Erin's afraid of the dark) I love how Erin never gave up. She always kept going even though she knew the road was becoming a dead end... :(

But in the end Erin is stronger than ever before. Her mothers death is now her armour, her shield and her sword. She can now conquer anything.

I love reading! :p

Celeste_pewter says

Ok. So, I'm going to admit something right off the bat: I had mixed feelings going into Positively Beautiful.

I wanted to read Positively Beautiful, because I understand Erin. An endocrine disorder runs in my family, and it's a genetic flaw that has resulted in some family members having to take medication for the rest of their lives, while other family members have been lost to us completely. As strange as this may sound, I like reading books like Positively Beautiful, because it's a reminder that I'm not alone in the fight against a genetic foe.

However, I also wasn't sure if I wanted to read Positively Beautiful for those very reasons. I lost another family member in October to that endocrine disorder, so I was uncertain whether I would be up to the task of reliving those memories. But I decided to go for it, and I'm so glad I did. Because Wendy Mills gets the ups and downs of having to deal with a terminal illness, and shows it perfectly through Erin's journey.

When we first meet Erin, she's like every other teen. She's worried about grades; trying to decide if her crush likes her, and coping with the antics of the high school mean girl. But once her mother announces that her breast cancer has returned, Erin's thrown into a world of medical complications - made all the worse, when she realizes she's at risk for the same genetic mutation.

Mills does a wonderful job of starting off the book by showing Erin's evolution, as she goes from worrying

about her daily life, to problems far beyond her control. While Erin holds it together as best as she can, Mills is careful to show those moments when Erin does feel like losing control - e.g making relationship mistakes, and not knowing how to support her mom.

While Erin does eventually find coping mechanisms by learning how to fly, and communicating with those who are experiencing similar health conditions on a message board, Mills smartly shows that the balancing act between school/medical/home is still a tenuous one. Like any teenager, Erin still has trouble fully processing her emotions, and it eventually culminates in a very surprising action.

Though any reader can understand Erin's decision to take such a drastic action, Mills also very firmly shows, through the help of friends, begrudging colleagues (Erin's flight instructor), and surprising new acquaintances that it's just not good to run away from the challenges of life. There are strong reminders that it's one's ability to face and conquer the most difficult of circumstances, and not run away from them, which makes people grow.

Outside of Erin's journey, Mills is thoughtful and respectful, but also doesn't sugarcoat just how devastating a terminal illness can be. She's very forthright at the pain that can be caused by treatment and recovery, and how sometimes, treatment's not going to be the magic balm to fix everything permanently.

Without giving spoilers away, I really appreciated the fact that things don't always end perfect for Erin or anyone in her life. It's realistic, and really shows just how much Erin and those in her life have overcome, and how strong they truly are. This is something that I think many of those who are in similar positions in real life, like myself, will appreciate.

Things to consider:

My one minor quibble with *Positively Beautiful* is with the writing in part one. Erin's voice feels a little young at times, and I'll be honest: it was a little hard to engage with the plot.

However, once we hit the crux of Erin and mother's medical challenges in Part 2 through Part 4, it was obvious that Wendy Mills was in her element. The story started coming out effortlessly, and with a confidence that wasn't necessarily there in Part 1. The only reason I'm mentioning this is because I want people to keep reading. If you feel like this isn't for you after the first part, don't give up. Wendy WILL blow you away.

Final Verdict:

I was uncertain whether I really wanted to read *Positively Beautiful*, because of my own experiences with genetic disorders and terminal illness.

But I'm so glad I did, because Wendy Mills absolutely gets it. She understands the ups and downs that a person experiences when they receive a medical diagnosis that changes their life forever, and the sheer strength and courage of conviction it takes to come back from such a diagnosis, and to continue living your life to the fullest.

I highly recommend Wendy's book for fans of contemporary fiction, but also for educators and parents who may be facing similar situations in their own lives. I genuinely believe that Wendy does such a thorough job of walking a reader through Erin's emotional process, and showing how she finds the courage to go on, and

many readers in similar positions will relate.

Christina says

DNF at 28%

****SPECIAL NOTE:**** *An eARC of this title was provided by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. However, that did not influence this review in any way. All thoughts, quotes, and opinions will be of this version and not of the published edition.*

I was always drawn to the book because the cover really is pretty, but the synopsis always had me on the fence. After watching GR for a bit and noticing a heaping of 5-star reviews that boasted about how emotionally impacting-- we all know I love having my feels go through the grinder-- this novel was, I quickly hit the request button and anxiously waited for approval.

So, immediately after starting the book I recognized that this sixteen-going-on-seventeen-year-old and her best friend sounded a tad on the juvenile side, and I know this is *young* adult, but when it sounds more middle school than high school, you can't fault me for wrinkling my nose a little bit. I tried to stick with it, hoping that the author's voice would grow on me, but it hasn't. I was also feeling like things weren't flowing well- character personalities, romantic interests, and dialogue all fell a little on the forced side. I have a long list of books that I'm trying to work through and after reading a few of the lower rated reviews for this novel, I can see that I'd probably fall in that camp for various reasons. Though I doubt this would be a 1-star review if I had chosen to see it through to the end, I don't want to have to struggle to find enjoyment while reading a book.

However, I don't want to deter you from reading. It really does have many good reviews, I just don't think this is a "me" book and should have trusted my initial hesitation more. That being said, I don't rate books I don't finish because I don't think it's fair to the author, the book, or the publisher, so that's why you don't find a rating here.

♥ **A very special thanks to HarperTEEN and Edelweiss for providing me with an advanced copy of this title in exchange for my honest review.**

Abigail says

In case you couldn't tell by the synopsis, this is a cancer book. For me personally, I have a very hard time reading cancer books. This is true for two reasons. First, cancer was a big, terrible part of my life for over five years, and the impact it made still affects me each and every day. Thanks to my firsthand experience with the effects of cancer and the many years of my life spent watching it slowly tear apart my loved ones, cancer has become a very tender and personal subject. Second, seeing it portrayed in a false sense or watching it be romanticized bothers me greatly. Neither cancer, nor any other illness--mental or physical--for that matter, is "beautiful," "poetic," or even "glamorous" like so many movies and books would have us believe. **It is a horrendous disease that steals lives and tears apart families.** It leaves holes left by loved ones that can *never* be filled. Cancer is a murderer and a thief, and that is the **ONLY** way it should be portrayed. To think of it in any other fashion is highly offensive and extremely disrespectful to the *millions* of men, women, and children who battle it everyday.

Positively Beautiful did not once portray cancer in any way other than it is. That is one of the reasons I decided to give this book more than two stars. That being said, I did not enjoy this book nearly as much as I thought I would--thus the lower rating.

The book begins just as Erin's mother is delivering the heartbreaking news that she has, once again, been diagnosed with breast cancer. In order to get rid of it she will have to undergo a mastectomy and then proceed to have chemo and radiation treatments. To top it all off, Erin overhears her mother discussing a gene mutation called BRCA, that puts victims at an average risk of 80% for breast and ovarian cancer. This mutation is the cause of her mother's cancer and because it's hereditary, puts Erin at a high risk of developing cancer in the future.

The story follows Erin along through the many emotional and physical struggles that have become a part of her everyday life. We are able to see in great depth the way this disease influences her daily choices, as well as her methods of dealing with the brokenness inside of her that has come as a side-effect of the disease.

Positively Beautiful is separated into four different parts. One of the major reasons for my partial dislike of this book resides in parts one and two. This is because the first and second parts were largely focused on her relationship with her best friend, whom I was unable to connect with. Thankfully, about mid-way through, the focus quickly transitioned to her and her mother's relationship, the thing that had drawn my attention to the book in the first place.

Throughout the entire book, Erin and her mother's relationship was executed wonderfully. I never once felt like it was unrealistic or exaggerated--quite the opposite actually. Reading about their fierce, undying love for each other, and their determination not to let the cancer tear them apart brought me to tears. Through everything, they continued to hold onto each other and refused to let go of their hope. The author did an excellent job of portraying their relationship in a way that was very truthful, especially regarding their situation.

You don't really get to fully know and understand Erin until part four, but while I would have liked to have a better view of her emotions throughout the entire book, I understand why the author did it the way she did. During the first half of the book, Erin is in the beginning stages of her grief and therefore in a deep state of shock and denial. During this time, things become extremely rough inside and outside of the home, driving Erin to do some very regrettable things. I was very conflicted during this part of the book, because while I found her acts very juvenile and extremely inconsiderate, I was also able to relate with her on some level.

During these stages of her grief I felt like Erin was slowly coming to know herself just like we were slowly coming to know her. I think that it is for this reason that we were cut off from seeing all of Erin from the start. As she began to accept what was happening and fully realize and regret what she had done, she was able to better understand herself, her emotions, and the circumstances that she had been thrown into. Thanks to her newfound understanding of herself, we, by extension, were able to understand her better as well.

Overall I enjoyed the book, even though it was fairly slow and hard to get into at first.

Olivia says

This book was..... Oh my god. This book was... Wow. I mean. Wow. I highly recommend this. Erin was extremely relatable for me, Jason was perfect, and everything about this story was beautiful. P. S. Don't read the end of book in public, or you'll be crying buckets and getting strange looks from strangers, just like what happened to me in school today.

Kels says

“Courage is not always big and bright and loud; sometimes it's as silent and small as true words, a smile when you'd rather weep, or getting up every day and living with quiet dignity while all around you life rages. You cannot truly love, live or exist without courage. Without it you are simply biding time until you die.”

What stood out to me when I first picked up *Positively Beautiful*--besides the too-bright cover--was the writing! Wendy Mills penmanship is breathtaking beautiful. I mean, wow, she stole my breath away more than once with her words, which were poignant, witty, creative, full of beautiful but not overwhelming metaphors. Seriously guys, I'm having a case of writing envy just thinking about it. Though not entirely similar, it quaintly reminded me of the writing in *The Start of Me and You* by Emery Lord. So if you're a fan of poetic writing, then this is a plus one on the scoreboard for you!

But there, were negatives. Oh my, were there negatives. One of my main issues was with the the protagonist, Erin. She grated on my nerves so much! First, with the faulty friendship, which was an extremely sucky friendship in my opinion. There was just so much wrong with it, and the majority of the blame lied with Erin. And then with the completely selfish, irresponsible decisions she made later on in the book. Gosh, I seriously was so upset at the turn of events in Part 2 that I had to set the book down. Yes, it upset me that much that I had to take a nap and recoup! :/ But somehow, although she still annoyed me at times, she managed to connect me with her emotions and I was crying so hard by the ending. I need some ice cream just thinking about it.

Another big issue: the romance. I mean, YA romances just have a high suckage rate and *Positively Beautiful* was sadly no exception. There are two love interests, *surprise, surprise*, and I didn't connect with either of them. Erin's crush on Michael just felt so superficial, and remained just that. And then Jason... I really liked Jason, but as a love interest, nuh uh. I think that it would have been so much cooler if Wendy Mills would have opted for exploring and developing a friendship between them rather than thrusting them together in a poorly construed romance.

Lastly, this book is pretty hefty for a YA contemporary, and I think it would have been a much more solid read if it would have been condensed some. There was just a lot of fluff and scenes I feel like served no purpose to strengthening the novel. I felt like by the end of Part 2 and all of Part 3 was such a drag, it pretty much bored me to tears. There's a lot of nothing going on between the middle, and this book suffered

tremendously because of it.

But, hey, look I still gave it four stars!! Crazy, right? Okay so to clarify, this was more of a high 3 than a low four (darn you GR for not having half stars yet!!), but I decided to round up because this was still a stunning debut novel by Wendy Mills that tackled some tough issues that really made me think, and *hellooo*, I cried, which is at least worth half a star. Seriously, this book had some flaws but I can't get over how great the writing was, I look forward to reading more of Wendy Mills' novels (which I already have flagged on my to read list). :)

Paula M. of Her Book Thoughts! says

You can also read my review [HERE](#).

This gutted me more than TFIOS did. **If you think this will be another cancer story, stop right there.** This book truly mirrors its title because Beautiful is the one word I thought when I finished the book. **This is Wendy Mills' debut novel and I just want to hug and thank her for writing this incredible novel.**

“Courage is not always big and bright and loud; sometimes it’s as silent and small as true words, a smile when you’d rather weep, or getting up every day and living with quiet dignity while all around you life rages.”

Erin’s mother have cancer and not only that, Erin might have one too in the future. This is where I first heard about the BRCA mutation and I instantly researched it. Luckily, I don’t have a relative that suffered with this but I still felt like I should know about it.

Positively Beautiful is just stunning. Wendy Mills’ really does her job into making her readers be invested to the story. Her writing is lyrical and emotional and it really pulls you in. Half of the book is highlighted because of all the beautiful lines and all the wisdom this book contains. And it’s not just all about love or boys... as a female reader, it inspired me to love my body even more and made me realize that our body is not the only thing that is love worthy. I already know that, of course, but this book just stresses it out and it’s just wonderful.

It’s also incredible that the story isn’t centered on a boy-girl relationship. Sure, this book contains a lovely romantic aspect but it’s more focused on the relationship of Erin and her mother. Which is truly the real brilliance of this book. Oh goodness, every time they talk I just cannot stop balling. **The emotions in Positively Beautiful is so real and genuine.** Even Erin’s best friend has her own story that make me sad but it was dealt with magnificently and I think a lot of teenage girls could relate with her.

This book contains so much and instead of being messy it was all woven in a very astounding way. The pacing is just perfect with all the stuff that is going on in Erin’s life and every issue is just dealt with accordingly.

There’s a slight twist that concerns the love interest and boy was I shocked. I honestly did not see it coming. I won’t be mentioning anything anymore but I will say this. I have mixed feeling about the guy. I love him. And I love them both together. But the guy frustrated me and because he has this belief or

philosophy about love that I don't like. But then again, there are people like that in real life. By the end, I was just plain happy for both of them. I liked how things ended and again, it was nothing but amazing.

Erin made some pretty stupid decisions. But who said Erin was perfect? **She's flawed but still strong and that's why I adore her.** She's very matured and smart and I love being in her mind.

I know I didn't make a rehash or a summary because I honestly don't know how. I'm also afraid that I won't do the book justice so JUST READ IT. Because I really really recommend it. Positively Beautiful will break your heart... and mend it right back. You will laugh and cry and swoon and it will make you think. **This book is just remarkable. It will totally speak to your heart and will stay in your mind for a very long time.** What a marvelous debut!

“Which would you rather, to have a long miserable life, or a short, beautiful one?”

Gabs {My Full Bookshelf Reviews} says

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All quotes included are from an ARC, and will be checked with the finished copy of the story once it is released.

Read more of my reviews at [My Full Bookshelf Reviews](#)

Which would you rather, to have a long miserable life, or a short, beautiful one?

This book was a beautiful sob-worthy read and I honestly don't think I've ever highlighted so many quotes in a story for no other reason than the fact that they somehow spoke to me. (For instance, the quote above.) This book *was* Positively Beautiful. I started out not knowing if I would like it, but by the end, I knew; I didn't just like it, I loved it.

Erin Bailey's mother has just been diagnosed with breast cancer, and what's worse, Erin finds out she may have a genetic mutation that puts her at risk too. She has to decide whether she wants to know and try to protect herself, or go the way of "ignorance is bliss" and live her life. I loved Erin. I felt the way she dealt with everything felt real; sometimes the decisions she made weren't necessarily the best decisions, but they all were things that people under an insane amount of stress and grief could do. She is faced with a lot of heartbreaking questions, things that no teen should have to think about, like what will happen if her mother dies, or if she has BRCA gene that could cause her to get breast or ovarian cancer, and she still carries on. She was a very complex character, and by the end of the story I was quite proud of her for overcoming so much.

Erin finds comfort in a person she meets on a BRCA website in a forum, Ashley. I constantly would highlight the things Ashley told Erin; it was good advice, and really deep. When Erin finally meets Ashley face-to-face, I was totally shocked. I hadn't guessed what would happen or how it would happen. I loved it.

I loved that this story focused on relationships in a non-sugarcoated way; Erin's best friend becomes

estranged from her because of a fight. The boy she kind of likes doesn't end up being the love interest. (more on that later.) Erin's mother, who I loved--she was kind and loving and she and Erin had a great relationship--might die, and Erin has to deal with that.

The writing is simply beautiful. There are so many gems of sentences to be found in this book. Not only that, but the character's emotions were artfully showed through the writing to the point where I felt exactly how they felt just reading.

The plot is wonderful; the lesson I took away from it was to live life to the fullest, because you never know what's ahead, and it went about showing this phenomenally. Erin's journey is great to read about. I loved everything about it. By the time Erin was learning how to fly a plane, I was downright *inspired* to go out and do something.

The romance was awesome because it was so unexpectedly unique. At the start of the book, I was sure the boyfriend was going to be Michael, who Erin seems to like. I was not looking forward to this; Michael has an unhealthy obsession with death, and I didn't love him as a character, much less a love interest. But it doesn't go that way; Erin realizes he's not the boy for her. Later, a new person is introduced, and I loved Bailey and him together. Their relationship was messy at times but it all came together in the end.

The ending ripped out my feelings and threw them away. Oddly, I didn't cry. I felt absolutely hollow inside, and my throat choked up, but there were no tears. Still, I was overwhelmingly sad. There was a light at the end of that dark tunnel, but I still felt very solemn as I read the last few pages.

I've decided not to conclude this review with a summary, but instead leave you with this quote.

Courage is not always big and bright and loud; sometimes it's as silent and small as true words, a smile when you'd rather weep, or getting up every day and living with quiet dignity while all around you life rages.

Savannah (Books With Bite) says

This story. So much feels. So much heart that is put into it, that once I was in the story there was no way I was getting out.

Plot: This is about a young girl who is in the midst of a trial. After loosing one parent, Erin much come to terms about losing the other. AHHH! I can't even begin to say how much I love this book. I read this book at the doctors office and I had to step out due to the amount of tears coming out of my eyes! Each chapter flows well and is filled with such emotion and heart that you simply can not put it down.

Relationships: One thing I adore through out the story is relationships. Erin doesn't go through this alone and finds great relationships along the way to pick her up. What she is going through is hard. She has a lot of tough decisions to make at such a young age. So many options just stolen from her. At times, I felt angry and wanted to be her friend. She is so quite and holds it all well.

Ending: Grab your tissue box folks. The ending is a tear jerker that just stabs you in the heart. Erin does find some peace but how it all manages to come together is just so...heartbreaking yet beautiful. Erin grows into this person that you know you will have faith in. Despite what she has learned about herself, she has faith to love and live.

I really can't compare this book to anything else because well I can't. I don't think I ever read such book that carried itself with such emotions and turmoil. It's nothing that you ever expect so definitely pick up this book. You won't regret it.

Cynthia (Bingeing On Books) says

This is a tough review for me to write because I did not love this book nearly as much as I thought I would. The book starts right after Erin finds out about her mother's cancer diagnosis. To top it off, her mother tells her about a test for the BRCA gene that would tell Erin if she has the gene for breast and ovarian cancer. There is a lot of emotion in these passages. As Erin says, there is her life before and then there is her life after. I felt so sad for her that she had to be strong for her mother and take care of her, while dealing with thoughts of DNA testing and normal everyday life at school. People tell Erin that there is nothing she can do. They tell Erin that she shouldn't even take the test until at least eighteen, if not twenty-one and that she shouldn't make any decisions based on this test until at least twenty-five. In the notes at the end of the book, the author mentions the extensive research she did on this testing and this gene. But nowhere in the book or the notes at the end of the book did she mention why these age limits were recommended. I don't know anything about this gene really so that information would have been nice. Nevertheless, I could understand Erin's frustration when everyone told her to just forget about it. She was seventeen so they were telling her not to even think about it for the next year. How does a person even do that? Erin did make some questionable decisions because she wanted to know the answer, but I understand them. Like Erin, I am an obsessive planner so there is no way I could just not know.

Here is what I disliked about the book: the romance, or lack thereof. Forget love triangle. There was almost a love square happening. It was confusing. First Erin had a major crush on a loner at school. Of course she turnover every encounter into way more than it was. But there was no chemistry and no relationship development at all. And then when it "ended" after approximately three "encounters" (I can't even call them dates, I just didn't care. Then she met someone else. This guy was the "real" love interest I guess, while the first guy was just a distraction or something. I hated this romance from the start. There was zero chemistry and somehow these two characters loved each other after a day or two. And this other guy didn't want to fall in love with anyone, even Erin, because he wanted to protect her. Sorry, but gag me with that one. The "relationships" between these two men did nothing to add to the story and I found myself skimming over those sections. I was much more interested in Erin's dilemma and her mom's illness.

Halfway throughout the book, Erin did something incredibly stupid. I won't give any spoilers, but it was just plain stupid. I tried to understand why she chose to do what she did, but I just feel it was a selfish decision on her part. The ending of the book left me in tears (naturally) and once the author stopped harping on the romance, I could concentrate on the heartbreaking decision Erin had to make, along with dealing with her mom's illness.

Tee loves Kyle Jacobson says

Positively Beautiful was an incredible read for me. I have to say that I laughed and I cried and then I thought to myself they need to make this into a movie because it would be a best selling movie. I hope this book comes out on Audio Books because I want to listen to it again and again.

Poor Erin she has a life so full of loss and more loss to come. See her father died when she was young and then her grandmother died from Cancer and now her mother is telling her she is dying from Cancer as well. All Erin wants to do is have a normal life with her BFF and see her crush everyday at school. But that is not what happens to Erin and it is the journey she takes and the decisions she makes that makes this story an incredible read for everyone.

Erin finds out she has the Cancer Gene and lord Google is a bad place to go when you are looking for information because she is soon on information overload and she throws herself into flying. At the end of the

day Erin will have lost a friend, and changed her crush. She has so many decisions to make that as I was reading and crying I couldn't help but think I would not be that strong. I would fall apart and not be able to make decisions like she did.

This is a must read when it comes out!

Laurence R. says

GUYS, I'M SUCH A MESS! I really, really liked this novel, though. It's even better than I thought it would be. I highly recommend it!

Sophie says

You can find this review along with many others on my blog!

If you couldn't already tell from the synopsis, this is a cancer book. Personally, I don't have the best history with cancer books. And I mean that in the sense that they tend to really get to me. I've had people who are very dear to me battle this disease and I have lost people to it. So when it comes to books like these, I can be very picky.

This book follows a Erin, a girl who lost her father and lives with her mom. One day after her mom gets home from work, she delivers some heart-shattering news to Erin. She tells her that she has been diagnosed with breast cancer. And on top of that, she tells her that she might be prone to having too. Thus the madness and roller-coaster of emotions ensues. We basically get to see how this affects Erin and her whole life. We get to see how this influences her daily life choices and how it really just breaks her inside. Not only that, we also get a very in depth insight of the disease itself and how it can affect the people suffering from it.

I think that the author stayed very truthful to the whole topic. Nothing really seemed understated nor exaggerated. And I really appreciated that because it made the story very believable. So much so that before I knew it, I found myself getting very attached to these characters. Which ultimately lead to a sea of used tissues in my bedroom (gross I know). I think the characters were so well-written and developed. At first the main character seemed a little bit childish at times, but then some of the best character development happened.

This book is divided into parts. And I think that this really played a huge part in the story itself because in each part we get to see different phases of her mom's cancer. And they were significantly far apart. And by that I mean that some time passes from each part to the next. At first I was worried about this because I thought it would make everything feel rushed. However, it was quite the opposite of this. To me this elongated the story in a necessary way. If that makes any sense. I guess what I'm trying to say is that we got to see a lot of things that you don't really get with many books that deal with this subject. And none of it felt like it dragged on. There wasn't a time were I found myself bored. In fact I really couldn't put this book down. Like I said, I got really attached to the characters and the story. I was completely engrossed in this book and I owe a lot of that to the writing, which also played a big part in my enjoyment of the book. It was absolutely eloquent and it delivered humor while remaining poignant.

I also wanted to mention that there are some romance aspects in this book which I adored. I won't discuss that any further cause I don't want to spoil anyone!

Overall, I think everyone should pick this book up. As soon as you start reading it will evoke interest in you and you won't be able to put it down.

Rachael says

She sighs and looks over my shoulder for a moment. Then she looks back at me.

'I have cancer,' she says simply.

And my life cracks into before and after just like that.

I'm one of those people that don't believe in coincidences. This book took me so long to read because it was like looking in the mirror. I didn't get drunk at a party and kiss my best friend's boyfriend, but I found a tumor when I was sixteen and a half. I freaked, *of course*, and thought if I ignored it, that it would go away. How many sixteen year olds get *breast cancer*? I didn't want to become one of them. I had actually forgotten about it until I was just over seventeen, and by that point, I realized I needed to say something or it really might turn into cancer. I told my mom, we scheduled an appointment, got it biopsied, and waited for the results. It turned out to be part of a chronic illness/disease (I really hate the word disease. It makes me feel disgusting), and that it was thankfully **not** cancerous. Flash forward two and a half years, and the tumor had grown and become *insanely* painful. So painful, that it had gotten to the point I couldn't wear underwire bras anymore.

My specialist referred me to a breast oncologist and she scheduled surgery the following week. I remember sitting in that waiting room, sitting by women fighting this monster. I remember crying because it would be my future. The tumor had grown into a golf ball size, and was highly, **highly** suspicious for malignancy. Even though it's gone now, there is a very real (like 90%) chance that it will come back, and when it does, it *will* be cancerous. And with my gene mutation (not BRCA), I am **four times more likely** to develop breast cancer, and others like me have the **highest chance** to develop brain cancer compared to the rest of the population that doesn't have this gene mutation.

This book was very, very, **very** real for me. I recently found a support group for others like me, and I have to weigh the decision of whether or not I too, should get a mastectomy. Does knowing make it better? Or is ignorance *truly* bliss? Some days you're on one side, and others on the opposite side.

Erin's dad was a pilot, and she learns quickly that she inherited his love for flying. It probably didn't hurt that flying took away some of the unbearable weight on her shoulders. She has a natural talent and feels close to her dad, even though he's been gone for a little over 10 years.

I had to take my time reading this book because it wasn't really fiction for me. Sure, what Erin did was not

smart by any means. But, because I understand *exactly* where she's coming from, I can't really blame her. I can't tell you how many times I wished that I could run away from what I have. When she finds out she's positive for the BRCA gene, she flies solo from her home state, Georgia, to Florida where Ashley lives.

Erin found out that the friend she had "met" in the support group, the friend she thought was a girl, was in fact, a guy. A very attractive guy, from his description. Despite being a little taken aback, she feels as if she has already met him before, and there's no awkwardness because he's still the friend she found in the group. Jason takes her to his island, he makes a fire, sets up a tent, and supplies her with clothes, food and even books. The events that happen over the course of the week they spend together, she falls for him and experiences a different kind of heartbreak: rejection.

This book happens over a near two year period. And unlike any other cancer book I have read this far, the focus is not on love, but on coping and coming to terms with your own reality as well as the one person who is always supposed to be there for you: your mom.

There's triumph, there's heartbreak, there's betrayal and blows to the gut that knock the wind out of you. It's so realistic, and I honestly felt like I was swatted down every other page. This book gives an honest insight on what it's like to discover harsh realities of natural selection at its finest. It sheds some light on the teetering scale of "what ifs" that come hand in hand with a gene mutation such as BRCA.

My gene mutation promotes tumor growth anywhere there are nerves. Yes, that means I can literally get tumors *anywhere and everywhere on my body*. I have them on my stomach and back, my arms, my neck, one on my face, as well as all down the entire length of my spine. I also have tumors between my skull and scalp, in my brain, and even my irises. I, unlike Erin, can't just cut off my boobs and scrape out my ovaries to avoid the potential cancer. I'd have to **literally** cut everything off me in order to avoid all the potential cancer I face. There isn't even any treatment for my condition. **None**. Nothing but sit and wait, and watch as tumors grow and form and have yearly fully body MRIs. But just like Erin, I can pass this horrible mutation onto my children. Me and my husband came to the heartbreaking decision to not have children because of my condition. It's still hard to swallow because I wanted kids of my own *so freaking bad*.

I cried the entirety of part four.

When Jason told Erin he loved her, I cried some more.

That *last freaking chapter*, I sobbed like a baby while I read through my blurred vision.

I sat and stared at the wall for twenty minutes after I finished this book.

This book *gets* cancer. This book understands *just how ugly it is*. This book's title is so *unbelievably perfect* for it.

This book is raw, and sad, and beautiful and heartbreaking, and it is so unbelievably **real**. *Everyone* should read this book, so they too, can understand what the limbo of not knowing and what cancer truly looks like. And also, that the unknown certainty, sometimes guaranteed "C word" stamp **doesn't mean** weakness. That the "C word" **doesn't mean** death and not living life to its fullest.

Courage is not always but and bright and loud; sometimes it's as silent and small as true words, a smile when you'd rather weep, or getting up every day and living with quiet dignity while all around you life rages. You cannot truly love, love, or exist without courage. Without it you are simply biding time until you die.

The days of my life are pearls on a string, some scratched and marred, some lustrous and pure, but all of them mine alone. It's not the ugliest, or the most beauty of them, that defines me, but all of them together that make me who I am.

Erin Lynn says

This review was originally posted on The Hardcover Lover.

Thanks to Alexia On The Same Page ARC Tours for providing an ARC for me to read!

A few simple words can't explain what reading *Positively Beautiful* by Wendy Mills will do to readers. It's an emotional roller coaster of a read that will have readers laughing, smiling, swooning, and crying. You will be in tears by the end of the book. I promise you that. The book will literally transform the way readers think about life and death.

The novel starts out by introducing readers to sixteen (almost seventeen) year old Erin Bailey. She is your average American teenage girl. She does well in school and has a best friend. She's not the most popular girl in school, but I wouldn't say she's on the lowest rung of the social ladder. She's also got a nemesis like quite a few girls do in high school. Her best friend meets a boy, and soon they all begin to hang out with Michael, a boy who used to be quite popular until he decided to drop it all. Pretty status quo, right? Well... that's just the beginning of the book.

Mills introduces the main problem of the book - Erin's mom's cancer diagnosis - rather quickly, but after reading the whole novel, I like that she did that. With the inclusion of a very quick diagnosis, Mills creates a very realistic case of what it's like to battle cancer because cancer really can strike anywhere and at any time.

If you read the synopsis, you know that Erin's mom discovers that the cancer is linked to a genetic mutation.

Some of you may already be aware of this gene - the BRCA gene - because Angelina Jolie recently decided to have a mastectomy because of it. After Erin finds out that she could be at risk, she orders a kit to have her own DNA tested. I thought that Erin was brave for wanting to find out the truth, even though everyone, including her mom, is insisting that she wait until she's older to be tested. I admire Mills for bringing this into the story. It really shows that some people want to know just how they could die.

I also enjoyed that there were a few things going on in this book. It's not just about cancer (although the aforementioned cancer is the reason that Erin does a lot of what she does). There are some heartbreaking moments between Erin and her best friend. There are some times when you'll feel so bad for Erin that you want to jump into the book and give her the biggest of hugs. You'll see Erin go online to find support groups to help her cope with the genetic mutation that is destroying her family. Erin also tries to distract herself with flying lessons so she can feel closer to her late father. Erin is a multi-faceted character that I think will connect with many of today's teens.

If you're only looking to read a few new books in 2015, this should be one of them. It's emotional and it's raw, but it will teach you about life and love when it seems like all hope is lost in the world.
