



## Love Letters to the Dead

*Ava Dellaira, D? Oanh (Translator)*

Download now

Read Online →

## Love Letters to the Dead

Ava Dellaira , D? Oanh (Translator)

### Love Letters to the Dead Ava Dellaira , D? Oanh (Translator)

It begins as an assignment for English class: Write a letter to a dead person. Laurel chooses Kurt Cobain because her sister, May, loved him. And he died young, just like May did. Soon, Laurel has a notebook full of letters to people like Janis Joplin, Amy Winehouse, Amelia Earhart, Heath Ledger, and more -- though she never gives a single one of them to her teacher. She writes about starting high school, navigating new friendships, falling in love for the first time, learning to live with her splintering family. And, finally, about the abuse she suffered while May was supposed to be looking out for her. Only then, once Laurel has written down the truth about what happened to herself, can she truly begin to accept what happened to May. And only when Laurel has begun to see her sister as the person she was -- lovely and amazing and deeply flawed - - can she begin to discover her own path in this stunning debut from Ava Dellaira, *Love Letters to the Dead*.

### Love Letters to the Dead Details

Date : Published April 1st 2014 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux

ISBN : 9780374346676

Author : Ava Dellaira , D? Oanh (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Contemporary, Young Adult, Fiction, Romance, Realistic Fiction

 [Download Love Letters to the Dead ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Love Letters to the Dead ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Love Letters to the Dead Ava Dellaira , D? Oanh (Translator)**

---

## From Reader Review Love Letters to the Dead for online ebook

### Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

Obviously Mitchell and I aren't the target demographic for this book, so take my rating with several grains of salt and I'm going to keep this short and ~~sweet~~ sour, just like myself. *Love Letters To The Dead* could have been a perfectly A-Okay book for me. The basic storyline is Laurel's sister May is gone and Laurel is lost in her grief. She swaps schools in order to get rid of the "sister of the dead girl" stigma and is presented with an assignment of writing a letter to the dead. Rather than completing just one letter, Laurel writes a series of them to various famous young people whose flames were extinguished prematurely which eventually tell all of the truths about not only May's death, but about Laurel's life as well. And that's where it lost me. The letters, the what happened to the dead sister, the grieving process, the finding herself plotlines were all great. But then . . . . .

Why the hell did everything but the kitchen sink need to be thrown in before this was over???? Laurel's sister croaked and that should have been enough for one book. But noooooooooo, God forbid you don't have a "superbadawful" happen to some poor girl in every YA novel. I know I'm kind of a robot and don't cry very often, but I do recognize when I'm **supposed** to have an emotion. The one time I'm guaranteed NOT to have them? When an author is trying to manipulate them out of me . . . .

And just to confirm to all that I'm in fact a giant dick – I don't understand the allure of Kurt Cobain either. As the book states . . . .

*"You didn't want to be the spokesperson of a generation."*

Somehow my generation (the one who actually grew up listening to a live Kurt Cobain rather than a dead one) was able to respect this. Now he's become a martyr. I don't get it.

---

### Ash Wednesday says

#### 3.5 STARS

Our flushing hearts, trying to climb the stars - how with the wrong wind, we can fall.

I don't think I've ever felt so many contrasting emotions for a book as I did for this one. My first impulse was to rage quit this as early as the second Cobain letter, followed by derisively laughing at Laurel's puerile drama. Then I felt some alien tug at my heart over Aunt Amy and her Jesus Man and got teary-eyed over the story behind her parents' broken marriage. Reading this book felt a lot like having your emotions painfully scooped out of you, put back reconfigured at the end: strangely familiar but also new.

The book has no chapters. Instead it kicks off with Laurel writing a letter to Kurt Cobain for an English assignment where they are to write letters to the dead. She doesn't turn in the letter and instead continues to write to well-known personalities who all died young telling Amy Winehouse of her heartache over her dead sister May, to Judy Garland about her disconsolate father and her mother who deserted them. She tells River Phoenix of Sky, the boy made of fluttering moths inside him; writes to Janis Joplin about Aunt Amy's Jesus and her unrequited love; tells Amelia Earheart of friends who are in love with each other but can't be together and friends who are together and in-love but will eventually be apart.

I mean, from the list alone of these letters' recipients, you know this is not going to be a light read. And it really delivered on that promise. Some of the details in the story made me think of *Saving June* on quaaludes. But at the same time, there were moments that felt like the rich texture of the writing, was disproportionate to what was actually happening in Laurel's life. She is a high school junior with very mature problems with very poetic insights on things that don't necessarily resonate to me as a thirty-something woman anymore. I liked certain aspects of the ebb and flow of her relationship with Sky, there was discovery, there was learning, there was understanding... but the reactions, the drama was too age-appropriate for me (i.e. juvenile). It takes a bit of empathic stretch to tap in the latent teenager in me to relate to some of Laurel's rationale, but I can't deny that there were moments that were too heartfelt and pure not to be impressed with.

"You remind me of my first concert. The one I told you about on New Year's. You remind me of the feeling of wanting to make something."

I thought this book's strongest points were Laurel's recollections of May, her family's history and current dynamics. There was something magical in the way Laurel pieced May together from her memories and something devastatingly painful about how she thinks about her sister's death and her family being torn apart in the aftermath. She was mercilessly melancholic in her letters but you realize in the end these are just shadows being cast by the burdens she's been carrying.

I loved how Aunt Amy was written. It's common for characters like her to be painted in the corner as the villainous religious zealot, stereotyped with militantly myopic values and two-dimensional personalities. But eventually, there was a stretch of Laurel's observations about her that was soft and kind and all sorts of heart-wrenchingly wonderful.

She sent him cookies and cards, and New Mexico chili, and messages, especially the messages where she would do the voices of Mister Ed and of the Jamaican bobsledders and she would be herself. Her hopeful self, like she was saying, I'm here.

I love the way Dellaira writes, the story had the rhythm of psychedelic poetry in it. It's easy to romanticize the lifestyles these personalities led when they lived and much too predictable draw evocative prose on the topic of death. I like that this was as much as about growing up as staying true to yourself; a pocketguide on how not to sellout to the world, neither burning out nor fading away.

But I had a difficult time getting immersed in the letter to someone delivery, which sucks because that was exactly what drew me in the story in the first place. It was a little strange to read Laurel write to Kurt Cobain about his own divorced parents, then making the rough connection with her own life, then relate a childhood memory with May, then tell him what happened today in school. The transition isn't always smooth, which I guess lends authenticity to the whole high school kid writing in a flow of consciousness feel to it. But narrative wise, it felt a bit taxing to keep the connection.

It was a bit of effort to understand why she's writing this letter to this person and that letter to that person. I even had a hard time remembering who Laurel is writing to until she mentions it midway through asking if

the dead remembers this or that when she was alive. The moments this book worked best for me was when I forget that Laurel is writing a letter to these people. Perhaps its because I have once thought of these personalities the way Laurel did, wondered the questions I'd ask them and I have a different interpretation of Kurt Cobain from her own. So in more ways than one, this worked for me but not in the ways that I expected it to be.

Maybe what growing up really means is knowing that you don't have to just be a character, going whichever way the story says.  
It's knowing that you could be the author instead.

Also on Booklikes.

=====

Had me at Kurt Cobain and Amy Winehouse <3

---

### **Wendy Darling says**

**4.5 stars** Months ago, I had to put *Love Letters to the Dead* down because it was making me so desperately sad. Almost a full year later, I read the last half of it with a lump in my throat and tears dripping down my face. This is a profoundly moving meditation on grief, written with rare sensitivity and the kind of prose that nearly stops your heart with moments of quiet, anguished beauty.

Review on the blog: <http://www.themidnightgarden.net/2014...>

Strongly recommended for fans of *If I Stay*.

---

### **Raeleen Lemay says**

I have no idea how to explain how I feel about this book.... Like it was good... But I hated it? My emotions are confused.

Video review to come (possibly)

---

### **Michelle (Pink Polka Dot Books) says**

#### **2.5 Stars**

Overall it was a letdown. Immature characters and predictable drama :(

*Laurel is given an assignment in Freshman English to write a letter to a dead person. While she doesn't turn in the assignment, for the rest of the year she continues to write to dead celebrities about her life. Her sister died and she's starting at a new school district, meeting new friends, navigating potential pitfalls, and*

*meeting boys. As the year goes on Laurel meets a group of friends and a boy that makes a major impact on her, but she keeps everything about May's life and death to herself. As things progress she learns that she must deal with what truly happened before and after May died. She must learn to forgive May, herself, and her mother (who abandons her after the tragedy).*

### **My Thoughts:**

I wanted to like this book. I SO wanted to. The idea of it sounds great... it sounded a little like Ketchup Clouds, which I did love. Though instead of writing to a guy on death row, she's writing to dead rock stars and actors and such. Mostly these letter-style books usually just turn out like regular books, there's just a Dear Whoever in the beginning. I don't know about you, but when I write a letter to someone I don't write it in book style. But these letter books always seem to be written in scenes and convos just like a regular book. And duh I get why, but if it's a letter I want something a little bit different.

Anyhow... that's not the reason I wasn't feeling this book. The reason is Laurel. She was only in 9th grade and yeah she's been through a lot... but I would think that would make her wise for her age. Well it didn't. She was so immature. And I know I was probably a super annoying teenager at that age doing and saying super annoying things... but I don't want to read about one. She was SUCH a follower. Everything her friends did, she went along with and did. Everything they said, she parroted like an idiot. She was trying to BE her dead sister for much of the book too. And it annoyed me because honestly her dead sister was very troubled, so why she wanted to be her was beyond me. Plus, get your own identity. I mean every single dead famous person she wrote to were idols of people she knew. Like if someone she met had a Jimi Hendrix t-shirt on, she'd be like, who is that?, they'd tell her, she'd go home and Wikipedia them, and write them a letter. It annoyed me. Why don't you like who YOU like, instead of who you think is "cool"??

I guess it's my personal taste. I don't want to read about the girl who eats Nutter Butters at lunch because that's what everybody else eats. I want to read about the girl who marches to her own beat. Eats whatever she wants, listens to bands that she personally likes, or at least figures out who she really is at some point.

The other thing was the plethora of pedophiles. College guys (and 25 year olds) should NOT be dating/messing around with/whatever 14 and 15 year-olds. That is gross. I'm not saying that it was promoted in this book or anything. It wasn't like shown as a good thing... but it just kept being shown over and over. All these older guys with 9th graders. I just couldn't.

The execution of these letters was another thing. Maybe this is just a thing with me, but it annoyed me to no end the way Laurel talked in these letters. She's like- Dear River Phoenix, I read online that you grew up in a family that was involved in a cult and that you guys moved to Hollywood so you could act. So here's what happened to me today. Ummmm ok??? How does you Wikipedia-ing River Phoenix have anything to do with you sleeping over at your friends house? There wasn't a lot of connecting the writing to the dead people to how it related to her life... which is what I wanted. I guess if I were to say something nice about these letters it would be that it is cool to see people that I grew up listening to/watching on TV still making an impact on a younger generation. (But it also seems pretty unrealistic that all these kids in her life idolize so many artists from the 70's-90's).

I did like Laurel's two friends Hannah and Natalie, who are in love with each other, but having a hard time admitting it out loud. I thought that part of the book was interesting and actually made me feel something. It's pretty much the only thing that kept me reading.

So yeah this book is just not for me. The annoying-ness of young teens was overwhelming, the disconnect with the letters, the pedophiles and lack of any parental guidance... it was just too much. Also the "big reveal" was pretty obvious to me. I saw it coming a mile away. I don't want to tell you what it is, but I will tell you that it's common in YA books.

**OVERALL: Pass on this one. The idea of it sounds fun, but it is not executed well. The main character has zero identity... she's just wandering around trying to be like other people. And she's annoying and immature. Read at your own risk!**

**My Blog:**

---

**Rashika (is tired) says**

*\*\*\*This review has also been posted on [The Social Potato](#)*

**WARNING:** This book may cause you to spend a whole day feeling down.

“There are some things I can’t tell anyone, except the people who aren’t here anymore”

This is honestly a very hard book to review. It brought out a lot of mixed feelings in me. I went back and forth between being pissed and loving the book and it wasn’t until the 3rd third that I decided that this book was wonderful. A warning though, if you don’t like drama, avoid this. This is filled with teenage angst and teenage angst can sometimes induce nightmares about how much high school sucked (or well I still have 3 more months of that nightmare left) but in spite of everything this book turned out to be so beautiful.

It tells a tale of loss and how to deal with it. It deals with how we sometimes build people up to be these perfect untouchable things in our minds and don't want to believe that they aren't that perfect because they become our rocks. It tells a story about learning to accept yourself and it’s a tale about forgiveness.

Laurel is starting high school at a school where she doesn’t know anyone. She didn’t go to the same school as everyone else in her 8th grade because she didn’t want to go to the same high school her sister, May, went to. At the start of this novel, Laurel is drowning in grief and guilt. She believes that her sister died because of her. When her teacher gives them an assignment which asks them to write a letter to dead person, she chooses to write a letter to her sister’s favorite artist, Kurt Cobain.

Laurel is such a heart breaking character. She has an innocence to her which makes you want to wrap your arms around her and never let go. She is such a complex character and you really feel for her. She comes from a broken family. Her parents aren’t bad but divorce has a way of tearing families apart and it tore hers too. She doesn’t fit in and she doesn’t know how to fit in. She is stuck in a world without her sister and she doesn’t know how to carry on so when her English teacher gives her the assignment, she finds a way to pour out her feelings. She has someone to talk to, someone who won’t judge her.

But the author doesn’t just stop there; she develops a wonderful entourage of secondary characters. From Hannah to Natalie to Kristen to Tristan to Sky you cannot help but fall in love with each of them. There is so much depth to all of these characters and all of them break your heart in some capacity.

“We were here. Our lives matter.”

My favorite bit about this book however was how the author brought all our beloved celebrities/idols to life in her work. My heart broke for them. She made their stories come to life and it really just broke my heart all over again. She does it so beautifully too. This woman is so GODDAMN TALENTED.

The romance was well developed. Sky is a sweet love interest. He pulls some jerk moves but his reasons are so realistic that you cannot help but forgive him. He doesn't want to be with someone who is drowning in grief because he cannot do anything about it. She won't tell him how he can help and you can understand his choices because it's heartbreaking to watch someone you love drown in grief and not be able to do anything about it. It hurts you almost as much as the person who is hurting and honestly, I don't blame Sky. There were some things Laurel needed to realize on her own and until she did so, there relationship could not have worked.

This is a very character driven book because at its heart, it's a coming of age story and we join Laurel in her journey. A lot of the people she writes to died tragic deaths, from Kurt Cobain to Jim Morrison to Heath Ledger to Amy Winehouse etc. Some of them took their own lives, some of them died of drug overdose and some of them just never made it back. While writing to these various people, she grows and she learns that not everything is perfect. Her sister wasn't perfect. All these wonderful people weren't perfect either and so the healing starts. Laurel has to learn to forgive herself and her sister but she also needs to realize that she doesn't need to be perfect. She can be broken and really all she needs is to be herself.

With all that said one of the biggest draw backs of this story for me as a reader was the fact that the character was in 9th grade. 9th grade is a very awkward time because you're just starting high school but at the same time you've just left middle school so you're right hovering on the fence between becoming a young adult and starting your journey to becoming an adult. The problem with this is that it contradicts the essence of Laurel's character. Laurel comes off to me as a very naïve person. She is very innocent but then she is thrust into very mature situations and I am not sure what to make of that. It's like the author couldn't decide what she wanted so she mashed the two together and well the result wasn't all that enjoyable. Perhaps if this book had been one or the other, an MG or with a character who was not 'just' starting high school, it would have been more favorable. For example, *Saving June* dealt with something similar and because of the age of the main character the book was a lot easier to swallow.

Having said that, this book really was touching. I don't know what it's like to lose someone but the grief in this book is so profound that I *know* that I don't want to know. This book really is powerful and I am definitely going to be on the look-out for other works by the author.

*Note that all quotes have been taken from an uncorrected proof and may be subject to change.*

---

## **Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says**

*Dear Kurt Cobain,*

*Mrs. Buster gave us our first assignment in English today, to write a letter to a dead person.*

**For me, this book was pointless, puerile, and pretentious, with a character who is the passive, dull YA contemporary equivalent of Bella Swan or Luce Price.**

*It's hard to be myself, because I don't know exactly who I am. But now that I've started high school, I need to figure it out really fast.*

The main character was simultaneously too naive and juvenile, while never letting me forget that behind this

character, there is an adult writing this book.

*On my first day...I used my favorite outfit from middle school instead, which is jean overalls with a long-sleeve tee shirt and hoop earrings.*

I could not bring myself to care about the extremely dull character, who has no character and no personality of her own, who comes off as a girl who's only too willing to be pulled along by peer pressure.

*The next thing I realized is that you aren't supposed to bring your lunch. You are supposed to buy pizza and Nutter Butters, or else you aren't supposed to even eat lunch.*

This book goes nowhere. It is a diary of a high school girl, **Laurel**, who's lost her sister, **May**. Laurel's despair over May's death is tremendously subtle, and so suppressed that I can hardly tell she's grieving at all.

*I guess I am not doing this assignment the way I am supposed to. Maybe I'll try again later.*

*Yours,  
Laurel*

### **No shit.**

The point is that there was no point to this book. If I wanted to read about a main character that I can't relate to, whose grief isn't even present, who falls in love too easily, who lets herself be completely bent by peer pressure, who can't really relate to her family...WHY DO I NEED TO PAY MONEY FOR IT? If I wanted to read the diary of a really immature young woman, I can just go onto Tumblr or DeviantArt or Livejournal (does anyone use Livejournal anymore?) and browse through any amount of adolescent frippery for free. And I can stop when I want to!

The Premise: This book is written in a series of letters to dead characters, musicians, poets, actors. It reads like a slightly less silly version of a 12-year old fangirl writing letters to One Direction or Justin Bieber.

*Dear Amy Winehouse,*

*Your fearlessness seemed like it came from a different time. When your first album was released, you still looked innocent, a pretty girl who said she thought she was ugly.*

*You would step onstage in your little dress, sipping a drink, with your big beehive hairdo and Cleopatra eyeliner, and sing with a voice that poured out of your tiny body. You were willing to expose yourself without caring what anyone thought. I wish I was more like that.*

And 95% of the book is about Laurel, not the artists. To be fair, I didn't want it to be, because **the information I got from these artists from these silly, juvenile "letters" aren't anything I wouldn't have gleaned from 5 minutes on Wikipedia or Daily Mail UK.**

The Actual Letters: A few paragraphs on the artists themselves, and then a million pages (or so it felt like) of **a teenaged girl rambling on about:**

#### 1. **Skyyyyyyyyyyy. Skyyyyyyyyyyy <3333333**

*I especially like to watch this boy, whose name I figured out is Sky. He always wears a leather jacket, even though summer is barely over. He reminds me that the air isn't just something that's there. It's something you breathe in.*

2. **Her family**, dad, mom, crazy Bible-thumping Aunt Amy
3. **Her lesbian friends**
4. **Her cool older friends** who are like, so awesome, and, like, so into each other, and like, so into music!

*Dear Janis Joplin,*

*When I got home today, I looked up about Slash, and I also looked up about your life, so that I can start my education, and so that I can be friends with Tristan and Kristen.*

*When Kristen and I are better friends, I am going to ask her to play me some of your music.*

*Yours,*

*Laurel*

5. **Her sister. I guess.**

**The "letters" follow this pattern for the entire fucking book:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I think you're really cool because \_\_\_\_\_. I imagine that you must have been like \_\_\_\_\_ growing up. I think your dreams must have been like the wings of an angel sparkling with unicorn horns and butterfly dreams that never got fulfilled.

Today I went to lunch with my friends. I thought about Sky a lot.

Then I talked to my friends. Then I watched them kiss. Then I pretended that I didn't see them kiss. I went home to talk to my really sad dad, and I reflected upon how sad he is and how much I miss him. And May. But I'm not going to think about May. I'm not going to tell you anything about how she died. I'm going to let you have the impression that I love her even if I don't say it. I'm going to give you the impression that I care about her without ever implicitly mentioning her.

Sky is really hot.

\_\_\_\_\_, you must have been so cool to know while you were alive.

Yours,

Laurel

**AN. ENTIRE. BOOK. LIKE THIS.**

Laurel: She reminds me a lot of **Lara Jean** from Jenny Han's *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*, which is to say, she's innocent as fuck, she's naive as fuck, and even if she's old enough to get to 3rd (and then some) base with her boyfriend, and drink, and do illegal shit, she's just there for the ride. Laurel is not a leader. She is a follower. She does things because people tell her to. If this book were an YA paranormal, Laurel would be the equivalent of Bella Swan because she fucking does nothing in the book unless someone drags her into it.

She is a good girl, an innocent girl who drinks and do stupid stuff like ask strangers to buy her alcohol because her (cool) friends tell her to. And she really, really wants to be friends with them. She is desperate to be loved, and I couldn't give a flying fuck about that. **Spare me your dull I-have-problems-that-I-won't-talk-about mental issues**; I want a girl twisted and torn by grief, I don't want a passive little fluffy bunny, even if that bunny occasionally indulges in some cannabis-laced carrots.

Inconsistent Writing: I could not get immersed in Laurel's character because she has such an inconsistent voice. In some parts of her narrative **Laurel sounds like a 12-year old**.

- *I liked everything about it. I liked waiting in line with everyone. I liked that the girl in front of me had red curls on the back of her head that you could tell she curled herself. And I liked the thin crinkle of the plastic when I opened the wrapper. I liked how every bite made a falling-apart kind of crunch.*

- *When I got the shirt, secretly I had hoped that Sky would notice me in it and see who I could be. Maybe he'd feel a pang of regret over losing me.*

- *It had my name on the back. It was perfect. He had sanded the wood down so it was smooth, but the grains don't go away. I told him it was my favorite present I'd ever gotten. He looked proud.*

**And then she starts spouting off philosophical crap and imageries out of freaking nowhere**, and I'm left wondering who am I reading, the character or the author trying to write a poetic teen who's not convincing in the least?

- *Her house is a different kind of empty. It's not full of ghosts. It's quiet, with shelves set up with rose china, and china dolls, and rose soaps meant to wash out sadness.*

- *There is something fragile like moths inside of him, something fluttering. Something trying desperately to crowd toward a light. May was a real moon who everyone flocked to. But even if I am only Sky's street lamp, I don't mind.*

- *I think Hannah must be afraid like I get afraid, the way I did when I heard the river yesterday, the way I do when I don't even know what the shadow is, but I feel it breathing.*

**Laurel's narrative voice just did not work for me. I can't take a 12-going on 40 year old poet.**

The Romance: **Zero spark. Zero chemistry.** About as convincing as the romance between Leonardo DiCaprio and whatever barely-legal Victoria's Secret supermodel he's dating now.

**Everyone loves Laurel.** Out of nowhere, the most popular guy in school asks her out, and not only that, she got the attention of **Sky, the loner who never talks to anyone**.

*And although he has license to stand with the cool kids, he still doesn't fully belong anywhere and hasn't relinquished his title of Mr. Mystery. Hence the throng of girls who are always leaning in and touching his arm. But of course, my money's on you."*

He's a cool loner, the one who never cares about anyone, until he meets Laurel. It is insta-love for her, and **Sky falls for Laurel remarkably fast**, considering Laurel never does or say anything fucking remarkable. But I guess 17-year old boys are easily impressed.

*"You'd be a really great writer," I said.*

*"Oh yeah? How do you know?"*

*"By the way you talk. Like when you said that Kurt is so loud because he's staring the monster in the face, and how you've got to fight back."*

Final Comments: **The grief over May's death just isn't there.** Sure, Laurel is supposed to be really, really sad about May, considering she died, but I never felt her sadness. It is a matter of **telling, not showing**. You could argue that Laurel is suppressing her grief really well, but why the fuck would I want to read a book about that? **It's the equivalent of reading a romance novel where the main character absolutely refuses**

**to fall in love against all reason.** I know those books exist. I don't like them!

**Some truly bad things happen to Laurel in this book, and guess what? I don't care.** I want to care. I'm not a callous person, but you have to make me FEEL something for the character. I could not relate to her. I could not sympathize with her. I did not like her. I can't bring myself to hurt for her when she is damaged.

Not recommended.

---

**Emily May says**

**Dear Famous Person,**

You are so cool. My name is Laurel and I go to High School but I am still going to talk to you in the passive, immature voice of a 10 year old and then occasionally break out into beautiful metaphors about the sparkles in Sky's eyes and how just one glance from him makes fireflies dance in my stomach (or something equally nauseating beautiful).

"There is something fragile like moths inside of him, something fluttering. Something trying desperately to crowd toward a light. May was a real moon who everyone flocked to. **But even if I am only Sky's street lamp, I don't mind.**"

That's right. Sky is great! And Sky is awesome! And fuck everything else because, looky there, it's Sky!

Yours,  
**Laurel**

p.s. This book is actually all about the deep grief I feel after my sister's death. I know that may be surprising when all I actually do is pull the petals off flowers and wonder if Sky loves me.

---

You know, this book is actually almost exactly like the diaries I wrote when I was about 10/11 years old. I didn't write to famous people, I wrote the entries to a made up name so it was like I was talking to someone who was there just for me. Because, well, Anne Frank did it and I thought it was totally cool! Honestly, it's a mystery why I wasn't one of the popular kids in school.

I would write in fragmented sentences that walked the unfortunate reader through my day, until I would suddenly get a burst of inspiration and philosophize about life in that all-knowing way which only young teens who know absolutely nothing about life can manage.

Here's the thing, though. There's a real good reason why most people don't publish their diaries: because who wants to hear about your boring-ass high school day or how freaking hot that dude called Sky is? **If this book was attempting to be a realistic portrait of an annoying teen without a personality - mission accomplished.**

Frankly - here comes the controversial statement - this has to be the most emotionally manipulative book since *The Fault in Our Stars*. Laurel's sister has died so she deals with all her thoughts and feelings by writing letters to different dead people - inc. Kurt Cobain, Jim Morrison and Judy Garland. Guess who the

last dead person letter is to? Go on, guess.

**And Laurel's personality is nowhere to be seen.** Her letters are written in short, disjointed sentences with no sense of emotion coming through at any point. No sadness for her sister. No actual chemistry between her and Sky. It's just words, and not great words at that. She, like me, pauses in the middle of the childish narrative to wax poetic about something (probably to do with Sky). She is constantly defined by other people - what she thinks of Sky, her friends and the famous people. Who is this girl that everyone seems to fall in love with? Not a clue.

---

**Dear wasted time,**

I apologise for not reading something less trite, immature and manipulative.

Yours,  
**Emily**

Blog | Leafmarks | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | Tumblr

---

**Maureen says**

I ended up enjoying this book and the characters a lot, but it was SO similar to Perks that it annoyed me. I love the idea of writing letters to someone who is dead, and I love how the author included facts and things about the famous person's life. The characters were lovely and the writing was beautiful. Getting over loss is never easy, and I really liked how the author approached it.

The romance aspect felt a little forced to me. There wasn't much build up or substance or....anything, until closer until the end.

I loved Natalie & Hannah and their storyline, though I wish more of the focus would have gone to them than any of the other secondary characters.

\*spoilers ahead beware\* But THE PLOT. The major "shocking" plot point was so much the same, and the background characters were going through almost THE SAME SITUATION as people in Perks. EVEN MINOR CHARACTERS HAD THE SAME PROBLEMS.i really really wish the author would have used a completely different story with an equally as shocking revelation of something different because this story had so much potential.

The letter writing story telling was different enough from perks that it could have stood on its own, but since so much was the same it feels extremely repetitive.

But 10/10 for cover design, amirite?

---

**Aj the Ravenous Reader says**

*"You can be noble and brave and beautiful and still find yourself falling."*

Although the title is a blaring warning that this is going to be a tough and probably a torturous read, I boldly ignored it because look at the book cover. Doesn't it look beautiful? Its invisible strings had this unrelenting

tug at my eyes and my heart that made me give in and grab the book. ^^

I really didn't know what to expect from this book but what I did not expect is that the entire story is written through letters to dead artists who died prematurely which is to me the very thing that gave this book such a unique appeal. The letter writing which only started as a school requirement (and which she didn't even turn in to her teacher) paved the way for Laurel (such a pretty name) to reveal and express all those pent up emotions over her sad and bitter experiences including the death of her only sister.

There isn't really much of a plot in this story. It's kind of linear truthfully and yet the story got a firm hold of me and I couldn't help but tear through the book reading Laurel's confessions. The things she couldn't tell her parents, she writes it to Judy Garland. She shares her grief over her sister with no one except Amy Winehouse. When for the first time after so long, she met good and genuine friends, she writes it to Amelia Earhart. Reading her letters was both painful and depressing because they revealed how much she had already suffered at a very young age. There was also this nagging detail that Laurel is suicidal and the darker revelations about what she went through made me want to bang my head against the wall.

But because the letters are highly significant in the story, they are also the device that will determine its conclusion. Will those letters save Laurel or not? Will the story end in an inspiring note or an irreparable crack in the heart? Care to find out?

---

## **Maria Espadinha says**

O Peso das Memórias

May e Laurel crescem juntas partilhando o mundo, até àquele dia fatídico que Laurel, se possível, eliminaria do calendário, para que tudo regressasse ao outrora!...

Laurel e May, May e Laurel, irmãs e cúmplices, juntas e felizes, duas e uma!...

Com o trágico desaparecimento da irmã, Laurel perdera aquele mundo construído e partilhado. O mundo em que sempre se conhecera, desaparecera! Só ficara ela - Laurel - mas onde raio estava o resto? Aquele resto que também era ela e sem o qual se sentia perdida?!...

Invadira-a uma incómoda sensação alienígena. Era agora uma estranha numa terra estranha!

Que fazer para recuperar nem que fosse um pedaço, desse mundo amado e perdido?

Passar a vestir as roupas de May seria um contributo, talvez?! Aquelas mini-saias e vestidos arrojados - roupas corajosas como ela, que tão bem a definiam!...

E escrever... escrever a outros de vidas truncadas, ainda com tanto por dar e receber! Jovens cadáveres, tal como May!

Iria chegar à irmã através deles, e... desabafar!...

Deixar sair as memórias, numa purga mental - numa catarse que a levasse a retratar-se, reencontrar-se, e finalmente rumar em frente! Iria socorrer-se da escrita para reviver, analisar e compreender...

"Cartas de Amor aos Mortos" é poesia em prosa que nos toca a todos:

Os que já sofreram perdas irão revisitar-se, confrontando as suas experiências com a de Laurel, e quiçá aprender algo mais !...

Quanto aos restantes - aqueles felizardos que ignoram o que é perder alguém próximo - têm aqui um "Alerta Preparem-se" pois isto das perdas é duro, e a dor acumulada é demasiada, sempre que não partilhada!...

“Acho que quando perdemos uma coisa que nos é tão próxima é como se nos perdêssemos a nós próprios. É por isso que, no fim, até mesmo escrever se torna difícil. Mal conseguimos lembrar-nos de como se faz. Porque já mal sabemos o que é.”

---

### **Ashley Daviau says**

This book tore my heart into pieces and left me a total mess. It was both absolutely beautiful and devastating at the same time. I wasn't expecting the whole book to be in the form of letters but when I saw it was, I was thrilled. I loved the idea of it and it totally sucked me in. I related to the main character Laurel in many ways and I think that's a big part of why I loved this book so much. I went through a very difficult period right around the same age as she is during the story and so I really connected with her that way. As I was reading this it brought up a lot of emotions and seeing Laurel deal with her own emotions almost brought me a sense of peace. And then it ended it such a perfect, beautiful way that it brought me to tears. I absolutely LOVED this book!

---

### **Anj (seaweed books) says**

Underwhelming. I had expected a beautiful story when I went into this book. What I got was an annoying protagonist, one-dimensional characters and a history of celebs who died at a very young age. If I had written this review right after I had completed the book, I'm sure that half of it would have been in caps. I was that annoyed.

The beginning was quite slow and I had to plough through those pages. I was expecting the book to get better, but then, how wrong was I? I was completely wrong. Things took a turn for the worse and each page seemed to drag on forever. Let me tell you this: Laurel, our protagonist is very one-dimensional. She didn't really convince me at all. And what's with her obsession with this "mystery" dude Sky? At first it was all about her observing him from a distance and him, staring at her. Fast forward to fifty pages, they've already developed a romance. Love at first sight never works. Most of the times. \*there are a few exceptions, like me, falling in love with Newt Scamander the moment I saw him\* I cannot tell you how annoying Laurel was. Agreed that her sister died, yet, she seems to put the blame on herself for something she had NOT done. Speaking of which, I was pulling out all my hair off my head because the story behind her sister's death is revealed much later in the book. So, what did Anj do? She googled it up and read spoilers! Yay. I felt that the story could have been revealed much earlier in the book because the delay just made me impatient and irritated. That is not suspenseful. (I ain't giving you the spoilers. Go and look it up. I'm not going to waste my hard work lol)

There was no depth to the characters. Sky behaves like a jerk for a minute and then he goes all lovey-dovey. Laurel's words don't have the depth they should have in them. She doesn't believe in embracing her personality, but rather wants to embrace what her dead sister's personality was. One moment, she uses shiny metaphors, beautiful writing filled with emotions and the next moment, she's writing the biography of a dead celeb filled with cringe-worthy life lessons. Save us the biography. I'm sure that we've all got access to Wikipedia.

There were two positive things about this book though. One: it focused on issues like domestic violence and abuse. And I highly appreciate that the author decided to put those issues into this book so that the readers become aware of it. Two: HANNAH AND NATALIE. THEIR LOVE WAS 95542588854% REAL AND NOT LIKE THE STUPID, BLAND RELATIONSHIP SKY AND LAUREL HAD. They were the only rays of sunshine in this book.

Amidst all those things I said about this book, there are only two positives. The book ended on a hopeful note, which prevented me from giving this book an even lower rating. One final thing I've got to say: there's a part where Laurel lies down on a busy road to challenge a bully to do the same. This trick eventually scares the bully off, but mind you, the road was a busy one. Had she not moved at the right second, she would've turned into tomato ketchup under the wheels of a car. \*okay, my humour is weird\* Dear readers, that is not how you fend off bullies. Don't put your lives at risk. I warned you.

That is all I have to say about this book. I'm glad that I didn't buy it.

---

## Laz says

“What I told you about saving people isn't true. You might think it is, because you might want someone else to save you, or you might want to save someone so badly. But no one else can save you, not really. Not from yourself. [...] You fall asleep in the foothills, and the wolf comes down from the mountains. And you hope someone will wake you up. Or chase it off. Or shoot it dead. But when you realize that the wolf is inside you, that's when you know. You can't run from it. And no one who loves you can kill the wolf, because it's part of you. They see your face on it. And they won't fire the shot.”

I didn't read this having high expectations, in fact, I thought that I wouldn't even like it and know this, prejudice is a very bad thing because I actually loved it. I loved how deep and simple it was, it approached the problems teenagers can sometimes face in a really touching and beautiful way.

We all know that sometimes parents can be of no help to us, there are things that every single person has to cope with alone with no help from loved ones and that does not only apply to the grown ups, it also applies to kids who've been through things & are still going through some tough stuff that they cannot talk about to anyone because they feel like they can't be helped, or saved. It's what leads many teenagers to committing suicide.

If you have a friend like that, please, don't ignore them, don't let them push you away, be there for them, care for them, stand by them and help them not slay the beast that's hiding inside them but simply let them know that they are not alone, that they have someone to fight and win for and there are people who love them.

This book was a great example of it. There were all kinds of problems to a bunch of children, I mean, sure, the heroine was one and her problem was pretty tragic but there were all of these stories woven into them. Kids with sexuality problems, kids who had to come apart because of how things change, kids with no worthy parents. It targets lots of problems in a very wide spectrum and that was awesome to read and experience through the eyes of a teenage girl.

“I think a lot of people want to be someone, but we are scared that if we try, we won't be as

good as everyone imagines we could be.”

It all eventually comes down to this. Don't be naive enough to think that you're not worthy, that you're not loved or that you won't be accepted. In the end, just be yourself and don't give a fuck about what anyone else feels. I'm tired of doing everything in order to be liked or acceptable, I just want to be and if you're not in for it, I'm sorry there's nothing I can do for you to like me. If you fake it then don't expect anyone to love you for who you are. They'll just love the facade that you created.

Thanks for reading! :)

---

## **jayne says**

*Nothing is worse than when someone who is supposed to love you just leaves.*

3.5 STARS

**I felt a bit like climbing a ladder with this one.** Only the rungs felt a little rusty and unstable at times. At first, I thought it was more along the lines of, what I call, a 2 star book, but slowly, and steadily, I watched my opinion of this book rise. I definitely considered giving it a 4 star rating, but whilst, there were parts where I stopped for a second and thought 'wow', unfortunately I had to chip it down a notch to the just-slightly-above-average rating, 3.5.

The thing about this debut of a novel, is that it felt very, very warm and somehow gentle, **like a hug you get from someone you've missed.** Ironically it felt down to earth... nothing was sugar coated nor were the colours saturated to make it a typical, happy-go-lucky teenage contemporary. It was, what is very important in books like this, **honest.** The story felt delicate, and innocent, like it was going to crack in my hands. **But, it also felt, like a story of strength, acceptance and humanity.** It was, in a nutshell, a good book, and a stunning debut.

**I believe debut novels should be taken with a grain of salt,** because, although they do hint at whether this author has potential to deliver the kind of books you're looking for, it's a little bit like a try-out. It doesn't always work out the way you want it to, but then again, sometimes it really can be the gateway to achieving what you want. I think **Ava Dellaira has huge potential,** and I will certainly be giving her other books a read in the future. She deserves applause for taking a step towards her goal, whatever it may be

WHAT I LIKED:

✓? - **The letters.** There's something about letters that make them special to me. Whether it is because **they feel so personal** or because they simply have a 'different' vibe to them - I think the concept of writing letters to dead people was a fantastic idea. I had to look up a few of the celebrities the letters were addressed to, and also learned a lot about them through the pages of this book, for which I am really grateful. **I learned about people who left a permanent mark on this world, something that will outlive them, and stay in the hearts of many others.** But, we didn't only see them through a filtered light of perfection. Throughout the letters, we learn about some of their flaws - and that's just what makes this book even more special. **We're all human, in the end.**

✓? - **The writing style.** From what I understand, this book was written under the mentorship of Stephen Chbosky, who wrote 'The Perks of Being a Wallflower'. I have yet to read that novel, therefore I'm unable to say whether or not her writing style is simple to his, but I can say, that **it was very interesting and different from what is usually offered in young adult books.** If you like exploring different writing styles, I think you'd be intrigued by Ava Dellaira's - it was a refreshing change.

✓? - **Laurel.** Laurel is the protagonist, and for some reason, I really did like her character. **Perhaps, it was for her innocence, and how it was involuntarily snatched away from her, or maybe, because I could see a little bit of myself in her at the beginning of the novel.** I read reviews claiming that Laurel had no personality - but I couldn't disagree more. Laurel felt such strong love and admiration for her sister, that **she forgot to actually be her own self.** Henceforth, after May's tragic death (this is not a spoiler), Laurel was left with **nothing**, but this very strong sense of loss. The person she relied on most and loved was gone. That's why this novel is about **her slowly developing as a person.** She was used to wanting to be like her sister, and therefore being herself, was a challenge.

✓? - **The focus on grief.** I think the way this novel dealt with grief, was done very delicately, but also, honestly. People might think that their way of grieving is wrong. That they're not normal for feeling the way they do. This novel is both comforting and utterly heart wrenching in the way that it explores such ideas, and sets the beautiful message, **that there is nothing wrong with the way you feel, and that we all grieve differently.**

✓? - **The focus on friendship and family.** Family played a big role in this novel, and while it was a complicated mess - it was also realistic, and I was impressed by the way **Ava Dellaira managed to incorporate family problems into the equation.** The focus on friendship was utterly heart warming. Natalie, Hannah, Tristan, Kristen and Laurel's friendship was golden. Also, although I don't want to spoil anything, there were lesbian characters in this book - so the **representation and diversity** was also an important aspect of this book and much appreciated, especially because **it wasn't something swept under the carpet.** Laurel's story wasn't the only one slowly unfolding; the other characters had stories of their own, which were also focused on throughout.

✓? - **The focus on growing up.** No more needs to be said. As someone who is also growing up, I can confidently say, and I'm sure most people will agree with me that growing up is a windy, very unpredictable, wild path that we all have to follow against all odds. Ava Dellaira does a great job of presenting the ups and downs of growing up, **and finding yourself in our modern day world.**

#### WHAT I DID NOT LIKE:

✗ - **The romance.** This book is labeled as being about 'first love'. I thought it would be slightly different. I'm fifteen years old, and I can say that my first love was no where near the same as Laurel's. Laurel and her love interest **fall in love at first sight** (literally the guy just invites her out on a ride in his truck before he even knows what grade she's in) and it feels incredibly unrealistic and just unnatural. **Hello, instalove, my old friend. I've come to talk to you again.** Ugh. And, I'm sorry, if I burst any bubbles, but I think most people can agree with me that first love is not like that. Hm, in fact, I'd say it's the **polar opposite** in many cases. My first love was a boy I really liked for two entire years, before realising he had a girlfriend all this time, and feeling extremely stupid for ever wondering if he liked me back. Yep, that's my story. So, I think **this story sets an unrealistic bar for first love.** Kids, it's going to hurt, whether the person you like is a close friend, or a person you barely talk to you, or a person you've dated or loved in secret - it's going to hurt. But, don't worry, it gets better.

✗ - **Sky's character.** He felt very bland and personality-less. I had trouble understanding why Laurel liked

him, and I felt a lot of distaste towards the way he treated her. It's not that I didn't like him, it's just that **I had no opinion on him**. Which, I think is even worse.

All in all, I recommend this book. It's a great debut of about grief, growing up and, ugh, I guess I'm obliged to say 'first love'.

---

### Evie says

Reminiscent of Perks Of Being A Wallflower, Love Letters To The Dead is too beautiful, too meaningful, and too heartbreaking to describe with words. An incredible, moving and very important story with a beating heart and bright soul. It's one of those books that everyone ought to read, own, and share with all their friends.

don't miss it

---

### Josu Grilli says

Una historia con la que he conectado por pasajes, con personajes secundarios que realmente no aportan nada y en general, una trama que da tumbos.

*Cartas de amor a los muertos* me ha parecido una novela simple, llena de situaciones clichés y con una manera de ser narrada que creo que a veces era más una lacra que una virtud. Que está bien 'introducir' a personajes como Kurt Cobain o Amy Winehouse, pero queda demasiado en el rollo alternativo que se convierte finalmente en mainstream, y por tanto, no es para nada sorprendente.

La historia que se cuenta es, como comento, típica. Los personajes son meros peones, pero sin rumbo fijo: aparecen, hablan y poco más. La verdad es que me ha dado pena ver cómo se utilizaban relaciones como nexos de otras situaciones, porque la relación de Hannah y Natalie tenía un potencial que no ha sido para nada explotado.

En cuanto al tono de la novela... En general me ha gustado, pero creo que era demasiado pesimista e incoherente en ocasiones; Ava Dellaira ha tirado demasiado del *unreliable narrator* y en muchas ocasiones quedaba forzado, y más cuando descubres las causas. (Que ha sido un tema que me ha sorprendido, pero creo que era un tema demasiado importante como para dejarlo pasar a la primera de cambio.)

En general es una novela básica pero al menos entretenida, con la que aprendes detalles muy interesantes sobre las vidas de los personajes célebres que se mencionan, y sobre todo, es un pequeño viaje de descubrimiento y de aceptación. Sí, se saca algo de la novela, pero vamos, que una novela más..

---

### May says

UNA NOVELA UN TANTO DECEPCIONANTE PERO A LA VEZ SORPRENDENTE.

Cartas de amor a los muertos es una novela autoconclusiva epistolar recientemente publicada en español. Llevaba mucho tiempo queriendo leerla y tenía unas altas expectativas que de alguna manera no ha cumplido

pero a la vez me ha sorprendido porque es muy diferente a como esperaba.

Como digo, de alguna manera he sentido cierta decepción con este libro. Había un gran hype en el Estado español, unido a las opiniones buenísimas que había leído, por lo que mis expectativas eran altas. De alguna manera me ha decepcionado porque me esperaba algo más fuerte, más contundente y mejor escrito.

Aún así, también es cierto que Cartas de amor a los muertos ha sido una novela que me ha sorprendido gratamente. Si bien creo que la escritura es superflua, que el estilo tiene mucho que mejorar y que la autora usa pocos recursos estilísticos; también creo que ha construido dos personajes redondos que no dejarán indiferente a nadie.

Dellaira construye el personaje de Laurel y May a través de los sentimientos de dolor y frustración de la primera. Hace ver al lector cómo Laurel está traumada por la muerte de su hermana con sus cartas. Algo que me pareció increíble, el hecho de poder construir a dos personajes (uno de ellos ya fallecido) a través de unas cartas y del dolor del otro.

También creo que fue un acierto contar la historia a través de cartas dirigidas a famosos fallecidos. Es original dentro de la literatura juvenil, le da otro aire diferente a la historia y la convierte en algo nuevo.

En general ha sido una lectura que he disfrutado bastante, que se lee rápido y que entretiene. Pero la he visto falta de trama, creo que es demasiado simple y que además, todo se simplifica aún más por el hecho de ser epistolar. Me ha faltado algo y por eso mismo me ha decepcionado un poco. Sea como sea es una lectura amena, aunque fácil de olvidar y poco relevante.

---

### **Yonaily says**

Tedious. Repetitive. Pretentious. *Love Letters to the the Dead* is too similar to *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky. Yes, a copy.

---

### **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

This book is a hard one for me to decide how to rate. There were parts of it I really liked and there were parts of it when I thought my eyes would glaze over and never recover.

Laurel is given an assignment to write to a dead person. She begins to do so and never turns in the assignment. Once she starts she keeps going with it and changes to several past celebrities and historical figures. She has moved to a new school to help cope with her sister Mae's death. Hoping that a new school will shield her from any one that knew her sister.

The teenage angst in this book is way over the top for me. I felt old just reading it. I love YA books and have read some great ones but this one fell so very short for me.

I did like some of the letters. The ones to River Phoenix, Heath Ledger and Janis Joplin just about broke my heart. There is a side story of Laurel's two friends finding love with each other that I would have loved to had more of.

All in all the best I can give this book is a 2 star.

---