



Just Like That

Marsha Qualey

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When Hanna breaks up with her boyfriend of almost a year, she knows she's supposed to feel...*something*. Liberated, maybe? Sad? Instead, there's only one thing she feels for certain: She's in for a pretty dull winter. Well, there is her job in the swimwear department. What better way to spend her time than watching strangers squeeze into bikinis?

But then, in an instant, everything changes. Hanna finds herself the bearer of a major secret. She can't possibly tell her mother or her two best friends. She can't tell anyone. Even drawing and painting—always her therapy in the past—even these things aren't the recipe for the calm they once were. So when Hanna finds herself drawn to Will, the elusive boy she's noticed around town, the kind of boy who'd increase any girl's pulse, she doesn't hold back. Anything. What she learns about him will astonish her. But what she learns about herself—her friendships, her family, her life—will affect her far more.

Acclaimed author Marsha Qualey explores, with honesty and wit, the heart of a young woman coming to grips with her life and the people in it—and getting used to the fact that everything can, and will, change. Just like that.

Just Like That Details

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Alexa says

(Review originally posted on Alexa Loves Books)

The premise of this book seemed interesting - but I found that I didn't enjoy it as much as I thought I would.

I did come to semi-appreciate our MC, Hanna, who is experiencing an incredible amount of change in her life. Qualey managed to convey most of the reactions and emotions that one would feel in Hanna's place quite accurately. I felt quite compassionate for her during some of the more crazy scenarios that occurred; there were also times however when I wanted to give her a shove and basically offer my own unsolicited advice.

What I felt turned me off of the book, however, was that, apart from occasionally feeling for Hanna, I just didn't really care about much of the story or the characters. I'm not heartless, but I felt like the story was just a bunch of dramatic events pieced together haphazardly. Some of the characters also, were a bit two dimensional.

All in all, this is a pretty average read for me.

April James says

This book really makes you think. The story is sad, but makes you grateful for the little things in life. It could all be lost *Just Like That*.

Krystle May says

It surprised me how much I loved this book. Sure, the preview intrigued me, thus I took it out of my library, but there was so much more to the story. I loved how this had so many elements to it that just smoothly transitioned into each other, considering things happened 'just like that.' This book is about love, friendship, betrayal, tragedy, laws, passion, and so much more. This isn't just a story of a girl, it's a story of Hanna's life! She was so much more than 'just another character,' she was so real! I cannot stress how much I love this book, even if I was yelling at the main character for some of her choices. And I absolutely enjoyed the ending. When it came down to the final chapters, I was so confused as to how it was going to end. When I finally finished the book, I was happy that a certain question was answered, and even though it left just enough to my imagination, it might have been better to see how Hanna's relationship progressed.

Also, I have to say I cannot believe how much my perception of one character changed after we learned something about him. In my mind he was one way, and then my mental image of him changed for the rest of the book. It's funny how things do that to us.

Anyway, I just wanted to say that I recommend this book to everyone, for it's truly rare to find a book this great. I was so absorbed with it that I actually read it in three and a half hours. =]

I hope everyone that reads this book enjoys it as much as I have!!!

Melody says

I was deeply engaged by the protagonist of this one. Hanna deals with her world through her paints, her pencils, her crayons. She's prickly and sensitive and awkward. I liked her a lot, and was grateful for the last chapter. The plot's complex and interesting, the characters quirky and real. I want to read everything Marsh Qualey ever wrote, right away.

Aileen says

This book was kind of weird in the beginning and then it just got confusing, since you had no idea who people were or why they acted the way they did. This book could have been so much better, had there not only been a bit more detail but also some more information about the characters, since it was not until very late in the story did you realize why the characters had for example, tried to commit suicide, hid their identities, etc. This book was okay, but it's not one I would readily recommend, it was kind of like the entire beginning of the story was just filler for the ending. I think it could have been much better.

Lily says

This book had an intriguing take on the involvement of art in an ordinary girl's life. Feeling like a scapegoat in an extremely awful incident that might have been somewhat avoidable, art is her only reprieve.

I think art was an interesting symbol to use to display a sense of belonging in a teenager's life. Feeling responsible for the deaths of two young people and carrying the burden of the secrets of the last moments of their lives is a hard thing to do.

This kind of concept reminds me of something we are learning about in American History. It is called escapsim and it is a form of entertainment (mostly books) read mainly during the Great Depression in order to escape the disastrous reality. I think that this is a really interesting concept, and one that can be very useful. Art and creativity fall in the same category as books and plays do, and that type of imagination can be very useful when one (like the protagonist of this novel) wishes to distract oneself from reality.

This was not the best book I have ever read, and was not written to impress, but had a couple of interesting factors to it, like the one i just discussed.

Shekaina says

it was ok. really. but the way marsha qualey wrote it, it was not ok. it was poorly written. you don't know what the characters were talking about and why all of a sudden, a character is talking to this one when they barely knew each other. I felt lost while reading this. But then again, I pushed through the feeling and found some answers on few pages ahead. Just continue reading I told myself and bam, the answers were there.

Tara Weiss says

Found this on a backroom shelf and couldn't put it down. Made me feel that it no matter how many challenges come your way, you can't focus on the negative and "wallow" in self pity. You have to move on and make the choices that are right for you.

Cara says

Isn't that cover wonderful? How could we get a bad story from that? Well it happened. I actually was really into it in the beginning, but it seemed too dramatic. Can't say I could really relate to the main character. I actually would have rather read a book about Will's sister. I bet that would have been interesting.

The title is very fitting though, because before Hanna knows it things change instantly, which is how most things are. There is this sort of twist in it that really didn't set well with me, and I'm sure it won't bother some people but I just couldn't take it. One of the redeeming qualities of the book is that Hanna doesn't feel like she has to stay with her boyfriend she has in the beginning of the book. Glad to see some gumption, but still it felt like it was trying to be dramatic for the sake of being dramatic. Lots of girls will love this book, but it's just didn't speak to me.

Joni Thomas says

Hanna Martin has just broken up with her boyfriend of almost a year and is unsure how to feel about life. She knows she should feel sad or angry but instead she feels nothing. But then one midnight walk to clear her head changes everything about her life and makes her question her beliefs about love, friendship, and family.

I am so glad that I found this book in my local library. First off, the cover is beautiful. And I love the title, it is so thought provoking. Which describes the book as well, very thought provoking. I will admit that the writing style bugged me. The dialogue seemed a bit forced and just unnatural. But as a writer I understand how difficult dialogue is to write so I am looking passed that. Just throwing it out there as a warning.

Hanna comes across two couples on her midnight walk by the lake in her neighborhood. The first is a couple skiing and they warn her not to go out on the lake because although it is winter in Minnesota the ice is thin in some places. The second couple rides by on an ATV and they are laughing, celebrating their one year anniversary. They stop by and briefly talk to Hanna. And though she knows she should tell them not to ride on the lake, she doesn't. Instead she lets them drive off and then she gets up and walks home. The next morning she finds out that the couple died. The ATV crashed through the ice and they were killed. Hanna is overcome by grief and guilt and cannot bring herself to talk to anyone about what happened. Until she meets Will, a boy who has secrets of his own.

This story idea is so original and it was like a breathe of fresh air after reading about five books in a row that I was able to predict the entire plotline about five pages into the novel. This one was different. I had no idea what to expect or where the story would go. I really like Hanna. She is down to earth and a very believable character. I also love the relationship between her and her mother, which is featured prominently in the book. They seem to have a near perfect relationship and I hope to have a similar one to my daughter when she grows up.

To get into the details that I loved about this book mean revealing basically the entire plotline. But to summarize, please read this book. Dig it out of your library's YA section, request it through interlibrary loan, order it on amazon, do something. It's an older book, written in 2005. But it's too good to be forgotten about.

It's realistic, thought provoking, and has the right mix of intrigue, romance, mystery, angst--basically the recipe for the perfect teen novel. I will say that I plan on finding a copy on amazon and ordering ASAP. This book will definitely be added to my list of books that can be read over and over again. Read this book, you won't regret it.

Jason says

Whenever I hear someone say "Twilight is the worst book I've ever read!", I always look at them with envy. If only I had such a blessed life as that, that in all the books I've ever read for Twilight to be worse of them. Sadly, Twilight looks like fine, classic literature in comparison to this book.

The plot makes absolutely no sense, the characters are completely unbelievable, and when the main character says on the first page that people think she's a bitch, they aren't kidding. Honestly, I think the author had come up with about 10 pretty good book ideas and decided to shove them all into one book.

I regret the day that I ever picked up this book, however at least I now know the true definition of atrocious writing.

Jay H says

Maybe I'm expecting too much out of a young adult book, but the whole book left much to be desired. The writing was bland and less than spectacular, there were rarely any time I could sit back and think "what great imagery" for example, and there were tons of places where the author could have been more descriptive but instead hit us with the hard facts. Instead of a sudden passage like "I walked in and [name] was sitting there. It took me a while to realize it was her," it would've been much more effective to describe the features of [name] that the narrator takes in so that we too can work to the conclusion of who it is with her. A lot of the book was like that, stripping the reader of what could have been very suspenseful scenes or at least nice images to paint in one's head. Other times, it would talk about things in such a way that the reader feels they missed something and might even be compelled to go back and look up a certain name or event. The author thought she was letting the reader piece together a mystery, but in reality it just felt like she shoved the reader into a soap opera after withholding the last few episodes because all of the "clues" to the mystery were in dialogue. What about the first person narrator? She hasn't been shy sharing her thoughts with the reader on every thing else she's been narrating - why can she suddenly provide no information for us and we have to rummage through tons of dialogue to clue ourselves in? It just didn't match up, and it was very confusing.

I felt very detached from all of the characters as I was reading: it seemed that I could not really connect with any of them. For a good first portion of the book, Hanna (the narrator) doesn't talk much at all about her connection with drawing and how it's meaningful to her - it just seems like a tidbit stripped from a character bio and thrown in every so often - lines with the same sentiment as "I draw sometimes" and "you know, because I draw". For that whole while, the act of drawing seemed to have no significance to her except as something that the author could wave around as if to say, "look, I've made a unique character; this is what makes her unique!" Only later did Hanna's artistic talents become not only important to the character, but critical to most of the book.

I could just barely empathize with Hanna's situation - not because I'm cold and heartless, seeing as her situation would rough anyone up, but because the writing was so lacking that I could never feel what she felt. I was just hearing a narration, and nothing more. I felt even less with Will, who got very few chances to make the reader feel his situation - and when he did, it was the same as Hanna's. I might as well have been reading a therapist's file on what shook him up. I did not feel like I was reading a novel - at least the kind with words that reach out and grip you and your very soul. No, I felt like I was reading a rushed, detached story about a girl who encounters sex, best friend betrayal, relationship drama, and death. Well ain't that just the perfect combination for the average gossip-hungry teenager who never quite learned how to read past a middle school level. I understand that somewhere is a cute little story about a boy and girl thrust into a similar situation that find each other (although it's not about them anymore by the second half of the book) and great themes such as coping and your true family. However the writing was not able to bring those themes/that cute little story alive.

Mikha ? says

I loved it. I didn't like the ending though.

It shows that everything can and will change, just like that, without you expecting anything.

Trici Candelario says

I just finished reading the book titled just like that by Marsha Qualey. A fiction book about a young girl's life and how everything in her life can change just like that. The main character is a girl named Hannah who's life changes after she learns a secret that caused a terrible accident.

This book is based on her life and the things that she goes through after the accident. Not only does her life change, but she changes a different person's life as well, a boy named will. She meets will after the accident happens and she then finds out that he has a secret about it as well. I can't write anymore because then I'll give out too much of the book, read it for yourself and then find out what happens.

This book was interesting because while you read it it keeps you guessing what's going to happen next, and you'll be surprised by what happens when you read it. This book was very descriptive and you can visualize everything that was happening in the book. They really described "will" and the way that he is in the book. This book is like a mystery, the characters were always trying to figure things out. This book also relates to the world because, in the book there are people who used to be foster kids and are now in a better family. My favorite character is Hannah. She was just like me because she always did things to help other people but she didn't think of herself.

I would recommend this book to teenage girls who like reading books based on bad experiences in life and having secrets that they could never find someone to tell. If you like the book this lullaby then you would like this book because it's based on a girl that goes through a lot of things like the girl in this book. So they are a little similar.

This book is very interesting and a lot of young people will enjoy reading it. A lot of things go on in this book that some people may have gone through it as well. It's a good book to read. So read it.

Mari says

I bought the paperback copy of this book and started reading it while I was at the office. My co-worker took off the thin plastic covering, thumbed through the pages and handed the book back to me. I noticed something different as soon as I touched it. The texture of the cover felt funny. It wasn't glossy like most book covers usually are but it wasn't exactly matte either. It felt kinda fuzzy. Do you know how it feels when you run your hands over a dusty table top? It sort of felt like that and I couldn't get over it. While I was trying to figure out what was different with it's texture, I was sitting on my desk, holding the book between my hands and was repeatedly running my palms on the front and back cover. When I got to the "dusty table" conclusion, I looked up and saw my co-worker looking at me funny. So I asked him what was wrong. He said that I had been "rubbing" (!!!) the book for about five minutes with my head cocked to the side and my forehead knotted in concentration. Not only that, he also saw me smelling the book at one point. Niiice. I know I must've looked like an idiot but I had to defend myself! So I told him (quite adamantly) that I wasn't "rubbing" the book (well, not like THAT!) and told him about the weird texture thing. He checked it out for himself but thought there was nothing weird about the cover's texture at all. BUT THERE IS!! The whole time he was squinting at me and he was probably thinking that I'm a nutcase. GAHH! How dare he question my sound-mindedness! And so we've come to this - To the Goodreads peeps out there who also have this book in paperback, will you please let me know what you think about the cover's texture? Doesn't it feel weird? Your responses would be much appreciated.

Moving on...

The story is about Hanna and how her life changed after an accident that happened to complete strangers - two teenagers she didn't know but with whom she exchanged a couple of words with on the night of said accident. I can't say anything more without revealing too much of the plot but I liked how the story unraveled. I got her connection with Will and was rooting for them though their relationship was doomed from the start. Will's family was intriguing, especially his sister Aerin. I thought the part where Hanna met Will moved way too fast but I realized it was necessary in order for the story to get going. There were times though when it felt there was too much happening with Hanna's friends, with her family and with Will's family all at the same time that the story became somewhat muddled. The ending was kind of open. I read someone's review here in GR and said that she's a hopeless romantic and she just knew things would work out but I disagree - too much time has passed. And if I learned anything from this book, it's that things can and will change, just like that.
