



Alive

Chandler Baker

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Stella Cross's heart is poisoned.

After years on the transplant waiting list, she's running out of hope that she'll ever see her eighteenth birthday. Then, miraculously, Stella receives the transplant she needs to survive.

Determined to embrace everything she came so close to losing, Stella throws herself into her new life. But her recovery is marred by strange side effects: Nightmares. Hallucinations. A recurring pain that flares every day at the exact same moment. Then Stella meets Levi Zin, the new boy on everyone's radar at her Seattle prep school. Stella has never felt more drawn to anyone in her life, and soon she and Levi are inseparable.

Stella is convinced that Levi is her soul mate. Why else would she literally ache for him when they are apart?

After all, the heart never lies...does it?

Alive Details

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Author : Chandler Baker

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From Reader Review **Alive** for online ebook

~Tina~ says

4.5 stars

Well dame! This book is not what I was expecting. **Alive** is a spine-tingling, creeptastic thriller contemporary that was both emotionally moving and chill-worthy. I get all goose-bumpy just thinking about it!

Stella Cross, was only 15 years old when her heart started to fail her and has been on a waiting list for a transplant for the last two years, but she finally gets the heart transplant that saved her life. Not being able to really do anything since she got sick, Stella is living large and doing things that she wouldn't be able to do before. But the side effects are starting to wear her down. Hallucinations, nightmares and extreme pain at the same time each day has Stella writhing in exhaustion. So when new student, Levi Zin arrives and he and Stella seem to hit it off instantly, Stella is shocked to learn that there is no pain when Levi is around and is convinced that he is the only thing she'll ever need. After all, the heart wants what it wants....right?

First off, I gotta say that I really loved the direction Baker took with this story. I went into this expecting it to go a particular way only to be shutter-shocked when it took the less obvious approach. I also didn't expect this to be such a thriller and loved that gripping and dark edge laced throughout the entire story. I thought the hallucinations and nightmares were wickedly freaky but it was the connection that we learn later that made them such a huge impact. There was also some much needed suspension of disbelief that I had to take with this book, but I still wish we could have gotten some more answers for the why's and how's of it all. Still, I can't deny everything really flowed together at an exciting and intriguing pace and the writing was simply incredible.

Stella isn't a character I come across very often. She's developed in a particular way that made her come off as stubborn, reckless, uptight, jaded and if I'm being truthful, not very likeable. But by the end of the story I realized that certain elements may have played a larger role for Stella's attitude and how she treated everyone around her, so really, how can I fault her for that?

Levi Zin is one complicated hot mess. He's mysterious, complex, intense and very charming and had more than his share of swoon-worthy moments. But there was always something in the back of my mind that made me not want to trust him. Something off. Very off.

Believe it or not, the relationship between Stella and Levi wasn't exactly insta-love, but it did border on unhealthy obsession to the point where Stella would be unhinged whenever she is with Levi or apart. Henry and Brynn were my only constant characters that I really loved. Henry is such a sweetheart, adorable, supportive and protective and everyone needs a Brynn in there life to tell ya how it really is. The overall ending was a little quick and I wish we could have gotten some kind of plausible explanations, but it was still satisfying enough and left me happy and content.

Bottom line, I had a lot of fun with this book. It's unpredictable, mysterious, emotional and fantastically twisted. Chandler Baker is an author to look out for. This was an amazing debut and I look forward to seeing more books in the future from this talented author.

Jen says

This is how I feel about the person who pitched this book to me as Contemporary YA...

This, my friends, is not a contemporary--well, I mean, it *is*, but I was totally expecting to read an endearing story about Stella's second-chance-at-life that would make me laugh, cry and feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

But no.

That is not what I got.

I got a book that scared the sprinkles off my cupcake and gave me nightmares. LEGIT NIGHTMARES. I bolted upright at 4a.m. and frantically checked to make sure my heart was still inside my body, scaring both the Husband and myself half to death. So thanks for thank, publicist person.

I DID get a well-written and eerily entertaining story with relateable characters. Stella has a good family and several close friends to help her adjust to life post heart transplant. Brynn adds a dose of reality and Henry provides the swoon, but Levi...well, let's just say he provides something altogether "different".

I would classify this story as horror, a la Stephen King, which I don't willingly read. Usually. But I did enjoy Chandler Baker's story-telling and I look forward to what she comes up with next. Unless it requires me reading under a blanket or with my eyes covered. Maybe.

Giselle says

An unsolicited Advanced Reader Copy was provided by the publisher for review.

Stella believes that her heart transplant is a defect. That it changed her for the worse. She gets nightmares and pain in her chest that flares every now and then. Wondering if it has something to do with her transplant, she tries to find out once and for all what happened to her.

Most of the beginning I felt my eyes would fall out of its sockets because Stella was one of the most annoying teen characters I have encountered. She becomes obsessive about this boy she's only known for five minutes. She ends up changing herself for Levi and I assure you it's not a healthy relationship. She felt cared for when it's with Levi but if anyone else does it, it's not okay? Then there's the love interest Levi who is super creepy! He is possessive, controlling, aggressive and abusive. I can't tell you how many times I wanted to kick him in the face. I know that he manipulates her, but still it was hard to see her brush off the people who actually do care for her.

There's instant love, a love triangle and stalking involved. But that's only for the first half of the book. Because the middle starts to get better. There's a mystery and all things start to turn into a paranormal mystery. I was quite surprised that it changed direction but I was also happy for it too.

I'm glad I stuck with *Alive* because so far it managed to be a little boring but by the end, I was creeped out to the max! Overall, it's a good mystery thriller that will definitely make you think twice.

RATING 3/5

QUOTES

"I'm not going to change what I like just because other people like it, too." (103)

"What else is pain but convincing fiction?" (107)

"I'm done with having other people decide what's safe for me and what's not." (209)

"Life has a way of changing plans on you." (353)

Charlotte Huang says

I had high hopes for this dark contemporary thriller and I was not disappointed! *ALIVE* is both creepy and emotionally wrenching. Also, it's beautifully written.

Stella Cross is a fantastic character--smart, witty and utterly relatable. I was absorbed in her story from the very beginning.

I don't think it's a spoiler to say that things go SERIOUSLY AWRY. In my opinion, one of the the best things about this book is how the MC is the architect of her own destiny, in good ways and bad, but never becomes unsympathetic. You'll root for Stella the whole way!

Loved this one and highly recommend it!

Kelley says

I highly recommend *Alive*!! I got an advance copy, dug into it immediately, and was not disappointed! This book draws you in with a compelling story about the strange events following Stella Cross's post-heart transplant surgery, but what keeps you turning the page is the thrilling hallucinations that keep you on the edge of your seat. I was entertained from cover to cover. I can't wait for the rest of the world to have open access to this book!

Jordan says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Stella Cross's life has been saved by receiving a new heart, just when she thinks she won't survive. Equipped with a new heart and a realization that she still has her whole life ahead of her, Stella re-enters her life

determined to make the most of it. When she meets Levi Zen, she falls hard and fast, drawn to him. But there's more to Levi than meets the eye, and Stella must decide who she can really trust before it's too late.

I'm having a hard time sorting my thoughts out about this book, so this review may be all over the place. When I finished reading, the best way I could describe how I felt is confused. The book started out seeming like a contemporary read, but then towards the end suddenly it was a paranormal story.

I enjoyed the first part of the book when Stella has just started back at school and is trying to readjust to the life she'd started to accept she wouldn't have. But as soon as Levi entered the picture, my like for the book instantly plummeted. I do not like it when people enter a relationship and suddenly that's the only person who matters, completely dropping their friends, putting this person who is honestly essentially a stranger first. I've had it happen and it's not fun. So of course it's also not enjoyable to read about. I just wanted to shake Stella because suddenly this boy she doesn't even really know is the only important thing in her life and no one else matters, and it even gets to the point where she's having panic attacks when they're apart.

I feel I should pause here and say that I did like the idea behind this book. I thought it was very original. Unfortunately, it was executed poorly. The entire book felt rushed. As I stated earlier, it wasn't an obvious paranormal story until towards the end, which completely threw me off. Stella was not an enjoyable character. She was rude, and made bad decisions throughout the entire book.

It's hard to put my finger on it, but I feel like this story just didn't reach the right depth, like it only scratched the surface of what it could have been. That's the only way I know how to put it.

I give it 2/5 stars.

Emily says

Amazing debut novel! I was lucky enough to score an advance copy and I started reading mostly because I liked the cover (yes, I am a marketer's dream!). What kept me reading, though, was the thrilling and fast-paced story. In fact, I completely devoured this page-turner in one sitting! Engaging characters, exciting story and truly excellent writing - I was sad to leave Stella Cross's world so quickly but I couldn't put it down!! Highly recommend for any YA fans!

Ai Haibara says

Stella is convinced that Levi is her soul mate. Why else would she literally ache for him when they are apart?

I hope this is not going where i think it's going because that would be the cheesiest trope ever- along with the soul mates shebang.

Liviana says

Person receives a transplant organ that turns out to be ~evil is quite the cliche, so I appreciated that Chandler Baker didn't go for the obvious in her debut novel *ALIVE*. Stella Cross just got a new heart, and the surgery was a success in everyone's point of view but her own. Every day at 5:08 she's struck by intense pain.

Then she meets Levi Zin.

When Levi is close, the pain is gone. It doesn't hurt that he's handsome and charming. Stella doesn't just fall hard; she's totally obsessed. Her relationships with her best friend Brynn and it's complicated Henry fall to the wayside. She ignores everyone who tells her that this relationship is unhealthy, and that there's something off about Levi. That he's controlling and always around. She wants him to be always around. Until she doesn't.

ALIVE is an excellent horror story about obsession, ownership, and life after death. Stella's visions and pain are quite horrifying and liven up the more romantic first half of the novel. I particularly liked the combination of the paranormal creepiness revolving around the donated heart and the human creepiness of stalking and other forms of obsessive love. It was a one-two punch of horror and both strands worked together.

I also liked how much detail was given to Stella's friends. Brynn isn't as important to the story, but she clearly has a life off the page. Henry and Stella's complicated relationship is a nice counterpoint to how easily things go with Levi (at first). They're the best friends who kind of have a thing for each other but always admit it at the wrong point. It was easy to see that they could work it out if they gave a romantic relationship a chance, but that they could also manage to maintain a friendship if they didn't.

ALIVE is an assured debut. It does take awhile to pick up, but if you stick with it, it is a fun little horror story. There's even some nifty bits of mythology explaining how everything is happening. I look forward to Baker's High School Horror series, which will start in February 2016.

Sam says

4/5 Stars! Full review to come soon.

I was provided an eARC in exchange for an honest review. Thanks Disney-Hyperion!
This review will be cross posted to my blog.

I loved *Alive* by Chandler Baker. It was totally different from what I was expecting but I was extremely eager to follow Stella's story.

The entire novel was extremely unique. I went in expecting a to read about a girl who receives a heart transplant and gets involved in a love triangle while also recovering. My expectations were literally shattered to pieces. I got the love triangle and recovery, plus a completely original, paranormal dark story.

I thought Stella was a great character. She isn't always the nicest, and doesn't make the best decisions but I was captivated by her. Her way of narrating is very detailed, which makes you feel like you're right by her side.

Levi & Henry are the two "love interests", and I cannot explain how shocked I was with the path the love triangle took. I mean it when I say I wasn't expecting the paranormal turn at all.

Aside from that, Levi was a very interesting, mysterious character, but I loved Henry from the start. (I was totally team Henry and Stella.)

Complete with hallucinations, first loves, high school parties and plot twists, this book is a page turner that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

I'd love to know your thoughts on *Alive* if you've read it! If you haven't read it and it seems like something you'd enjoy, let me know!

Peach says

2.5

Y'all have no idea how many GIFs from Selena Gomez's "The Heart Wants What It Wants" I had to hold off on.

Stella Cross is dying. Literally. Her heart has failed her, and after being on the organ donor list for so long, she has since lost hope at living a full life. So when a new heart unexpectedly arrives, she and her family are gracious and Stella is wanting only to return to school. Her friends are welcoming. Her parents worry after "the Replacement Child," their toddler, Elsie. All is well. So when the mysterious Levi Zim moves to town, every girl in school is immediately enamored by him and Stella is one of them. However, Levi only has eyes for Stella and feelings are mutual, obviously. Soon, they begin a relationship.

During one of my reading updates, I classified this as instalove, but I'll take it back because it really isn't. It's more of an infatuation. Stella is monstrously obsessed with Levi. Her heart physically *aches* when she sees him. (Keep that little fact in mind.)

Stella is also occasionally attracted to her good friend, Henry. He protected her from fuckboys and I honestly didn't think she deserved him. He was so nice. Stella was so wild and batshit manic, trying to jump into his window in the middle of the night and popping off on him for no reason, and he'd still be like, "Wassup?"

I hate love-triangles. Back in the day, I was a big fan of *Twilight*. I remember how obsessed everyone was with the Edward/Jacob/Bella mess. I was crazy about Edward myself. Other reviewers claimed how this love-triangle was something so vital, so important, but it *wasn't*. It was messy and something not. One minute, Stella would be all, "Levi is so sexysexy. I need him all day, every day." And in the next, she'd been pawing after Henry.

Stella believes her heart is possessed. She faints and sweats and has gory, *Carrie*-esque hallucinations, which were legitimately terrifying. But instead of doing the right thing and telling her doctor, she tells Henry

and, after a predictable plot-twist, (view spoiler)

And Stella is all too willing to hand it over. If we were to flash-forward through the unimportant bits, we wouldn't have a book. The ending was irritating. (view spoiler) Why? (view spoiler) An uncool, vague mess. Really, I only liked Brynn, but she couldn't even save this trainwreck for me. Definitely a read to pass up on.

Rachel (APCB Reviews) says

Initial Review: Oh this one was good!! It wasn't at all what I was expecting. I was theorizing like mad, I was looking over my shoulder every so often, I was freaking out! This one was a pleasant and spooky surprise that I'd definitely recommend!

Find the review @ A Perfection Called Books

There's something utterly captivating about this book that kept my eyes glued to the pages. I must admit that the synopsis is a bit misleading. This book starts off contemporary and then does a 180 switch to paranormal/thriller. I enjoyed this, but it might annoy others who don't know this ahead of time.

Stella Cross has a heart condition that she'll die from if she doesn't get a heart transplant. It's highly unlikely that she'll find a donor match, so everyone is thrilled when a match miraculously turns up and Stella gets a second chance at life. Soon after her transplant though, she struggles to readjust to school life and ride out the crazy side effects of her operation. I really liked Stella's character. She's got varied interests, she's funny, and she doesn't pity herself.

Eventually the stunningly attractive new kid Levi Zinn appears and shows a keen interest in Stella. When she's around him her new heart hurts less. She feels alive when she's with Levi. The romance in this one was a bit tricky. I'm not sure if I'd call it insta-love, and it's a bit hard to explain without spoiling anything. It felt a tad rushed, but maybe it was just lust at first sight between Stella and Levi. There's also another love interest involved, but that didn't bother me too much. Besides that she starts to have psychotic hallucinations. These hallucinations are so messed up and scary at times. My one problem with the hallucinations is that after the first time or two, you can easily tell what's real and what's not even if Stella can't.

Stella has some wonderful friends too. Brynn is the brash and honest one who you can always count on to tell it to you straight. Stella becomes pretty dependent on Levi and turns away from her friends. She starts blowing them off, especially her friend (and former crush) Henry. Stella and Levi's relationship is sooo unhealthy, and I really hated Stella's behavioral shift towards her friends after she started dating Levi. Henry is sweet and forgiving and a great guy!! I really liked him much more than Levi. Levi's mysterious and dark, the guy who does all the crazy things in life just for the thrills.

Just as I mentioned before, this book warps from a contemporary novel into a horror/mystery/thriller story. I found it highly entertaining as the story got spookier and spookier and the mystery evolved. My heart started racing, and I was on the edge of my seat in anticipation. I thoroughly enjoyed this novel, and I'd recommend it to you!

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Disney Book Group and NetGalley.)

“Blood sprays up at my face. Several droplets dangle in my line of vision. They cling to my hair. Gagging, I cover my mouth.

Only, my wet fingers slip across my skin, leaving warm patches of blood on my face. Blood that pours out onto the table.”

This was a slightly strange story about a girl haunted by the previous owner of her transplanted heart.

I felt quite sorry for Stella, she'd obviously been through a lot, been held by her heart, and even felt like she'd been replaced when her parents had chosen to have another baby. To then feel like she was going crazy because of her transplanted heart all seemed like a bit too much.

“My chest convulses, and I lurch off the bed, then slam back down on the ground. It convulses again and my body is tossed as if I’m possessed by demons.”

The storyline in this was about Stella feeling pain and hallucinating every day at 5:08, and not knowing why. I thought that the pacing in this was quite slow though, and the book seemed to drag a bit.

“It’s... terrifying. Like time is working against you. Like there’s a literal hourglass that contains the minutes of your life.”

We also had a bit of a love triangle happening Stella, a new boy called Levi, and Stella's friend Henry.

“We’re two magnets. I feel the instant pull at that moment we decide we’re going to kiss.”

The ending to this was okay, and I thought the author did a good job of ending this happily.

6 out of 10

Nicola says

Stella Cross has spent years on the transplant list and is finally getting a new heart. Being given a second

chance pushes Stella to live her life differently. She wants to be different from the old Stella and say yes to things she normally would have said no to. Unfortunately her ambitious plans are marred with hallucinations and a recurring pain at the same minute of every day. Then the new boy at school, Levi, turns up and Stella becomes drawn to him in a way that she isn't to anyone else. But things aren't as they seem and Stella has to quickly decide who she can trust.

I really liked the premise of this book but sadly it didn't live up to my expectations. The main problem I had was Stella. I just couldn't sympathise or connect with her because she is so annoying. She is ridiculously unfair and rude towards her family and her small circle of friends. She is one of those girls who completely ditches her friends and acts horribly to them as soon as a boy comes into the picture. Including the boy, Henry, she has been friends with for years who almost became more than a friend before her transplant. I get that feelings change, that's perfectly fine, but the way she handled it wasn't all that great. And of course her feelings haven't really changed anyway it's just the hot-boy-showing-interest-in-me effect. I really liked Henry and was totally rooting for him throughout the book.

I will say that the last 30% of the book does salvage this somewhat. I enjoyed this section where the truth starts to come out, mysteries start to unravel and Stella starts to act like a better person. It's not made entirely obvious in the blurb for this book but it's actually paranormal. The paranormal genre tends to be a little hit and miss with me but I did quite like that element to this. It's something different that you don't always see in this type of storyline. I think with a more likable character it would have been even better.

If you are a fan of paranormal then I would definitely still give this book a try. It reminded me of *The Unbecoming of Mara Dyer* in places. It is fast-paced and I found the descriptions very well done. In the end it just wasn't for me.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Tonyalee says

Find this review and more on my blog, [Lilybloombooks](#)

Wow. We can file *Alive* under TOTALLY UNEXPECTED.

However, I didn't have any expectations when heading into *Alive* - the premise is interesting and I have this morbid fascination with the possibility of organ transplants gone wrong. That's not to say that is what happened, *per se*, but I have a wild imagination on a good day.

Ella was, in short, a hard character to like. I was sympathetic to her situation, but there were times when I was just so flabbergasted by her gall and questioning her sanity at almost every turn. And that doesn't even have to do with the hallucinations. BUT. I understood her. I could not image practically knocking on death's door for years. After her transplant, she wants to be different, dive into life and live how she wants to. Can you blame her? She has a lot of growth to her character too, and once she starts to piece some things together, it was literally a smack in the face.. err, jolt to the heart? >.< I also loved her sense of humor.

Her attraction to Levi wasn't really.. insta-love. It was.. obsession. The added piece that he literally took her pain away just adds to the connection and I was beyond fascinated with why. However, there was an underlining creepiness about Levi that I couldn't shake, which is the point I'm sure, and the suspense had my

heart a pitter-patterin.

I also adored her friends, Henry and Brynn. Henry was such a sweet, supporting best friend and it killed me to see him pushed aside. Brynn is straight forward and to the point and loved her to pieces. Also, the family dynamic is strong. Even with the comments of the little sister replacing Ella, you can tell she really did love her family.

The writing is just superb. I loved the medical files, the chapter headers and I loved the paranormal twist that was thrown in. The hallucinations and nightmares were flat-out creepy and gave me goosebumps! I didn't even know until AFTER the fact, that they were hallucinations! I was FREAKING OUT.

My only small issue was the quick resolution. It's only barely enough to satisfy my questioning mind. I also can't figure out why (view spoiler)

Alive was a such an unexpected, creepy but REALLY GOOD READ with a dark undertone. I highly recommend it!

I received this book for free from The Publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.