



Calvin

Martine Leavitt

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As a child, Calvin felt an affinity with the comic book character from Bill Watterson's *Calvin & Hobbes*.

He was born on the day the last strip was published; his grandpa left a stuffed tiger named Hobbes in his crib; and he even had a best friend named Susie. Then Calvin's mom washed Hobbes to death, Susie grew up beautiful and stopped talking to him, and Calvin pretty much forgot about the strip—until now. Now he is seventeen years old and has been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Hobbes is back, as a delusion, and Calvin can't control him. Calvin decides that Watterson is the key to everything—if he would just make one more comic strip, but without Hobbes, Calvin would be cured. Calvin and Susie (is she real?) and Hobbes (he can't be real, can he?) set out on a dangerous trek across frozen Lake Erie to track down Watterson.

Calvin Details

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From Reader Review Calvin for online ebook

Chris says

This is a clever scenario: high school senior Calvin has his first psychotic episode while at school, and when he wakes up in the hospital, he hears the voice of Hobbes, the stuffed tiger character from Watterson's Calvin and Hobbes cartoon strip.

Calvin's troubled, of course, by the risk of going/being crazy, and he decides that he can be cured if he can get Bill Watterson to draw a new Calvin and Hobbes strip, one that shows a healthy 17 year old Calvin, without Hobbes. He rashly decides to make a pilgrimage to Cleveland to find Watterson. To do so, however, he will hike across the frozen Lake Erie.

The premise may sound corny or hokey, but it reads smoothly and entirely plausibly. Leavitt creates a likable narrator who is motivated to heal himself. It's a wonderful novel, a real pleasure to read.

Jenn Bishop says

Beautiful. Moving. Deeply profound.

::hugs book to chest::

Brittany says

I really liked this book. It's a disconcerting journey through the mind of a mentally ill, yet artistic and wonderful high school student who sincerely believes he is the human version of Calvin from the famous comic strip.

His imaginary tiger friend, Hobbes, is kind of a sassy, snarky, selfish jerk and I found him hilarious.

And the plot, this desperate pilgrimage to change the course of his future, it's so honorable and crazy, you can't help but enjoy the ride.

Cassandra says

This is an interesting book--it's written a (long) letter, which in this case works for the novel. It deals with schizophrenia, though it's mainly the drive for the story-but still, the only book I can think of that involves schizophrenia is Alice in Wonderland, but that's only the other people besides Alice. Characters are funny and more or less realistic, though their relationship was predictable. The plot was also pretty predictable, but I didn't really seem to mind. In all honesty, I think the ending could've been more spontaneous; this is an unreliable narrative after all! However, I thought that the size of the book was decent and was a well fit for the story. While I wasn't blown away, I was entertained and really enjoyed this book!

Jessica says

What an odd little book, and highly enjoyable. Calvin, our hero (of sorts) is born on the same day that the last Calvin & Hobbes comic runs. He has a stuffed Hobbes toy, and a cute neighbor named Susie.

He also has a mental illness.

And so he goes on a quest to find Bill Watterson and have him publish one last comic, one that will be about this Calvin, the real Calvin, living a happy and healthy life.

I dare not say more, because that would be spoiling things, and as this book is under 200 pages, I assure you that it would a) be worth your time and b) take very little of your time, to read it for yourself!

Christina says

This brief, refreshing little book is so awesome.

1star- it was a great look into schizophrenia. For anyone who doesn't have it, it is a safe way to explore the symptoms one might have.

2stars- I could picture this as a play! The dialogue helps this, but the set would be so simple.

3stars- for a fun vignette of characters! From Hobbes to Noah, it was cool.

4stars- while the ending isn't satisfying, it is the realistic one. And I love that Leavitt places support in someone with a sickness as the real way they can get better. I think this is a good story for many people.

Ashley says

Rating: 2.5/5

Minor spoilers

Calvin has always felt connected to Calvin and Hobbes. In fact, he was born on the day the last Calvin and Hobbes comic strip was published. He seems perfectly fine, just a teenager struggling to finish some projects at the last minute, when he has a schizophrenic episode and is later diagnosed with schizophrenia. He begins to see Hobbes and speak to him, and he wants him to go away but he's unable to get rid of him. He believes that if he just convinces Bill Watterson, writer of Calvin and Hobbes, to write a comic with only Calvin, he'll be okay again. So, he sends an email and plans to get his attention by walking across Lake Erie, so that he can get a comic with only Calvin.

This was another book I had to read for White Pine at my school. I thought it was alright, but I didn't enjoy it all that much. I feel like it would've been better to me if I've actually ever seen a Calvin and Hobbes comic strip, but I haven't. It was kind of like missing out on an inside joke throughout the whole book. Fortunately, that's only one part of the book and there's other stuff to focus on. However, I couldn't really enjoy it that much for a few reasons.

I wasn't a fan of the style this was written in. It was mostly dialogue, written like a play where it says "Me:" and then a line, then "Susie:" and then her line. In between dialogue, there were some paragraphs but for the most part, it was that sort of dialogue. I found that because it was written like that, I couldn't get that strong of a feel for the two main characters, Calvin and Susie, since having mostly dialogue means I don't get to see into his head as much.

Overall, the book was decent but it wasn't really my thing. I couldn't connect with the stuff about Calvin and Hobbes, and the dialogue made it hard for me to enjoy. The plot was entertaining enough, but I couldn't get excited about it or anything. The whole book just gave off a feel of "not bad, but not great either." I can't quite say I would recommend it to anyone in particular, but I don't think you'll have a bad time reading this. It's a pretty quick read, so if you're interested then it's worth a shot.

Kate says

Calvin wasn't named after the boy from "Calvin & Hobbes," but he was born on the same day the last Calvin & Hobbes comic strip was published, and now his old tiger stuffed animal (named Hobbes) has come to life and is following him around, talking to him.

So, Calvin is diagnosed with schizophrenia. But he's come up with a solution: walking across Lake Erie to Bill Watterson's house, which hopefully Bill will have received his letters and drawn a final Calvin & Hobbes strip where Calvin is seventeen and doing just fine. His old friend Susie wants to stop him, but when she can't, she joins him on the treacherous journey. But is Susie real, or just one of Calvin's delusions?

I thought this was an interesting way to tell a story - it was all in a letter to Bill Watterson that was a school project for Calvin - and I suppose the way the dialogue was written effectively conveyed how Calvin wasn't sure if whomever was speaking was real. I wasn't sure that the schizophrenia was accurately portrayed, although given that this was all in first person and highly subjective it doesn't matter much. I also felt that this was a bit short and I didn't really feel the depth of the story by the ending. But definitely a cool idea and a fast read.

Nancy says

Calvin is a Canadian high school youth who experiences a schizophrenia episode, and believes his childhood stuffed animal Hobbes is alive and speaking to him. Cognizant that Hobbes is a delusion, he latches onto the idea that cartoonist Bill Watterson (Calvin & Hobbes creator) can cure him if he would just draw Calvin a new strip showing him grown up without Hobbes. He decides to walk across frozen Lake Erie to meet Watterson in the US, and his neighbor Susie tries to stop him, but gets sucked into trekking across the dangerous lake with him in search of what Calvin feels will cure him. The two meet other ice lake inhabitants, and with a dialogue heavy narrative, there are times the reader is unsure what is real and what could possibly be another delusion. Calvin's mental illness is handled in a respectful manner, and a (somewhat) believable romance develops between Calvin and Susie.

The author, Martine Leavitt is the aunt of one of my book club friends, so our book club had the pleasure of speaking to the author the night we met to discuss this book. She was a lovely well spoken woman, who added more insight to the reasons why she wrote this story. She is not constrained by writing only one genre

of books, so I look forward to reading some of her other novels.

Paula Soper says

How should I write a review about a story that has had me in its grasp since the day, three months ago when Tyler Oswald told me about it? I love Calvin and Hobbes. I love Spaceman Spiff. I love alien teachers, and Mo the bully, Susie, and I love, love, love Hobbes.

You do, too, or you wouldn't be reading about this book.

This book is lovely. I would walk across a frozen Lake Erie with Martine Leavitt if she would just tell me the story again.

How can a story of a 17 year-old schizophrenic boy who is obsessed with Bill Watterson and his creation be fascinating? Because it is. Because it's moody, wonderfully written, and takes Calvin on to a completely new adventure.

Well done, Martine.

Well done, Calvin and Susie.

Well done, Bill Watterson.

Thanks to you all

Steph VanderMeulen says

I'll say it right off, in case you don't feel like reading this whole post: Calvin is the best YA book I've read in eons. A 17-year old kid has a schizophrenic episode and thinks he's Calvin from Calvin & Hobbes. He hears Hobbes with him. There are just too many coincidences for him to think he's not. He was born on the day the comic strip ended. His parents named him Calvin. His uncle gave him a stuffed tiger named Hobbes. He's just like Calvin. He has blond hair and had a red wagon. His dad wears glasses. And his first grade teacher's name is Miss Wood. "How close can you get to Miss Wormwood. Huh? Huh?" And of course, there's real-life Susie, his ex-friend, or frenemy, with whom he's grown up and who happens to carry the same name of the indomitable Susie in the strip.

Calvin becomes convinced that if he goes to see the author of Calvin & Hobbes, Bill Watterson, Bill will write a comic with him but without Hobbes, to "properly" end the series and thus cure him of his mental illness. So he sets off across frozen Lake Erie to Cleveland, Susie along for the adventure. (Or is she?)

How to describe the book I read in only a few hours, an epistolary novel (Calvin's writing the story to Bill)? It's beautiful! The workings of this kid's gorgeous, tragically ill mind! (The workings of Martine Leavitt's beautiful, creative mind!) I loved how because he's unreliable you have no idea whether anything is really happening, whether anything but him is real. And whether he's even on the adventure. And there are even Spaceman Spiff and Stupendous Man episodes!!

A few of my favourite lines:

They say a person my age knows maybe thirty thousand words, so picking the first word out of thirty thousand is the hardest part. After you pick the first word, it weirdly picks the next one, and that one picks the one after that, and next thin you know you're not in control at all — the pen is as big as a telephone pole and you're just hanging on for dear life... [Just like writing a story, yes?]

Doesn't it make you feel kind of awesome that the world is beautiful for no other apparent reason than that it is? Like beauty has its own secret reason. It doesn't need human eyes to notice. It just wants to be glorious and unbelievable.

Do you ever wonder what life is all about, Calvin? Yeah, I know you do. You're one of the few guys I personally know who stops to wonder about that. For me — I've decided maybe that's the cool thing about it. Life lets you decide for yourself. I mean, it would be awful if it wasn't up to us, wouldn't it? If life said, this is what I'm about and don't go getting any ideas of your own?

Augh, this book. Read it. It's such a lovely, imaginative story, and if you've been an undying fan of Calvin & Hobbes since you were young, like me, it's that much more special. The world is a magical place.

*Thank you so very much to Cindy Ma, from Anansi Press, for knowing me and loving like crazy sharing any book she adores. You're always right, Cindy. Always.

Kaethe says

Calvin was born on the day the last Calvin and Hobbes ran. His grandfather gave him a stuffed tiger, he grew up with a best friend named Suzie, and now he's older, and schizophrenic, and maybe an epic journey will make everything better?

The author's tone is empathetic, but never pitying. There's just enough humor to the whole thing to keep it from being melodrama.

Library copy

Erikka says

First of all, this book made me think of this:
<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/...>

Second, what a positive representation of mental illness. A lot of people fear schizophrenics, so I was pleased to see such a sweet and loving character who wouldn't hurt a fly. It was a lovely way to dispel a myth and I think any readers with schizophrenia would be grateful.

Third, I loved the unreliable narrator. Even after the end I still wonder how much was in his head. The events of the story are just unlikely enough so as to ring false. Even the conclusion might be false--maybe he's in the hospital the entire book. It's never established and that is awesome.

Finally, I loved the idea my brain created that maybe, just maybe, he isn't crazy at all. What if, and it's a big if, what if he's Calvin? And she's Susie? And he has a stuffed tiger that he's gone on adventures with, is now outgrowing, and his brain is compensating by trying to end the relationship before he can fully realize adulthood? What if, instead of this being a letter to Bill Watterson, what if this is all in the mind...of Bill Watterson? A stunning and appropriate conclusion for the little boy he spent a decade raising? And Ms. Leavitt is just telling his story? That's rather comforting in its own way.

Also, I wonder if Bill Watterson has read this? If not, he should--it's a tale of appreciation for him and his works above all else.

Anurag Sahay says

This is an amazing book.

The plot is as follows: Calvin, a 17 year old High School student, has always had an affinity for his namesake from the *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip - as a kid, his best frenemy was a girl next door named Susie McLean, his favourite toy was a tiger gifted to him by his grandfather, and his life was full of sledding and snowmen and creativity. However, he has a problem: he has two upcoming deadlines for an English and a Biology project, neither of which he is prepared for.

And then, the unexpected happens: he starts hearing his old friend Hobbes. Within days, his situation deteriorates, as he starts seeing Hobbes and having full conversations with his "imaginary" friend until it all culminates in a psychotic breakdown in class. Calvin, it turns out, has developed schizophrenia.

The story is written as a letter from Calvin to Bill Watterson, narrating the events leading up to his diagnosis, and then his response to the diagnosis, and his pilgrimage to go to the place where Watterson lives in a hope to convince Bill to draw a comic in which Calvin is a 17 year old, normal adult, without Hobbes, in the hopes that this would fix him. He is accompanied in this trip by the imaginary man-eating tiger Hobbes, and his childhood friend, Susie - except the evidence suggests that Susie herself is a figment of Calvin's schizophrenic mind.

I really enjoyed the book. It is full of callbacks to the original comic strips, and seems to have a fairly accurate depiction of mental illness. The book deals delicately with the issues associated with mental illness and how it affects the lives of teenagers, and in some sense answers the questions, "What if Calvin is really a maladaptive schizophrenic when he grows up?".

Highly recommended for any fans of the original comics, or for anyone who wants to read a relatively non-offensive depiction of mental illness. It drags a little in between (it would have been a lot better with some trimming, even though it's only about a hundred pages), but the ending is really good.

Brenda Ayala says

This is a love story disguised as a mental illness story.

I had hoped that we would have a story that allowed a teenager to be every part of himself without the mental

illness defining him, at least at the end. I wanted something where we saw him come to terms with it and grapple with how to handle himself.

Instead I got a supremely idiotic scheme--one that no sane person would *ever* agree to, even a hormonal teenage girl--that not only proves he's incapable of making rational decisions, but also that this whole book is a travesty on contemporary realism.

Seriously, it was so ridiculous. You find out your best friend is schizophrenic, and he wants to travel across a frozen lake; a process that would take at least a couple days. Is your response to:

- 1) immediately call a doctor and tell them your friend is having an episode?
- 2) talk your friend down from the precipice of stupidity
- 3) laugh in his face, because you're close enough that you can do that
- 4) decide that yes, hiking across a frozen lake with no real expertise is a great idea!

It was just silly. Which is a big bummer because I was looking forward to this book a lot. Mental illness is massively stigmatized and I thought this would help shrink that mentality.

Miriam says

A smart teen, newly diagnosed with schizophrenia, goes on a quest across frozen Lake Erie to find the reclusive Bill Watterson, accompanied by his probably-imaginary tiger and possibly-imaginary former best friend.

This is a fast read, almost entirely in dialog. It is entirely different in tone and content from the previous Leavitt I had read, Keturah and Lord Death. I am glad I picked this up despite not enjoying my first experience with Leavitt and will be open to reading more of her books.

Samantha Ania says

4.5 stars. I'M NOT CRYING, YOU'RE CRYING. Okay, fine, I'm crying, this book is beautiful. Probably especially if you are a long time fan of Calvin and Hobbes but also hopefully if you aren't.

Scribs says

Martine, you kind of amaze me.

This latest book, especially since my own daughter was diagnosed with something difficult like the MC's bipolar disorder, made me wonder (for the millionth time) at your incredible insight into us. Mere humans. I'm not sure I'd count you as one of us in all your brilliance, though how else could you understand us so well?

Here are just a few of my favorite quotes (though it's hard to choose):

"I'm already broken. This is about putting the pieces back together."

"You know what makes me crazy, Susie? Being crazy, that's what. Try staying sane when everyone treats you like you're insane."

"Doesn't it make you feel kind of awesome that the world is beautiful for no other reason than that it is? Like beauty has it's own secret reason. It doesn't need human eyes to notice. It just wants to be glorious and unbelievable."

"Sometimes our disappointments can be the best thing that ever happens to us."

I can try and give you a synopsis of the book, but it wouldn't sound as good as it should. Calvin was born on the day the last Calvin & Hobbes cartoon strip was published. He feels a connection to Calvin his entire life and even talks to an imaginary Hobbes. But this isn't what the book is about--this is about what Calvin has to do to make his life right.

Unbelievably, this means walking across a frozen lake in the middle of winter. Yep, a lake hike, where he hopes Bill Watterson will be waiting on the other side with one final comic strip.

This is the story of his self-discoveries on that ice. There. That's the best I can do. Now go read it because it's darn beautiful.

No content warning. Recommended for ages 12+.

Brittany (The Book Addict's Guide/Novelly Yours) says

Initial Impressions: Wow, that ending was kind of a let-down. That was not how I thought it was going to go!

The beginning was pretty decent. I was definitely interested and was invested in Calvin's journey. The middle started to get slow and didn't really seem like it was going anywhere. The ending was utterly disappointing but that was mostly because I thought I was onto something here and it didn't play out like I thought.

The writing wasn't anything spectacular and although the book did give us a good example of someone suffering from schizophrenia, I don't feel like there was really much discussion about details or education at all. It's not always something I need from a book concerning mental illness but when it's in a contemporary aspect, I do feel like that's something important to include. Calvin did have his own discussions about it but I just feel like it wasn't really talked about in detail like I had thought it would.

To be honest, it was hard to read the end of the the book because... well, spoiler: (view spoiler) For those not viewing the spoiler, essentially the book just didn't seem like it was going anywhere and I didn't feel like anything was developing. Calvin also wasn't a very emotional person and I had a hard time connecting to any characters. There was a lack of personality there. Wasn't terrible but also wasn't good for me.

Full review as originally posted [HERE](#) on The Book Addict's Guide 1/6/16: CALVIN seemed like a really interesting concept as well as a quick read (the book is under 200 a pages!) and with the end of the year drawing near, it was the perfect time for me to grab a book that would keep me intrigued and help me get that much closer to completing my reading challenge for 2015!

CALVIN is the story of a boy named Calvin who discovers that he has schizophrenia. He believes that if Calvin and Hobbes creator Bill Watterson would just write one more comic, he would stop having visions of a real (to him) version of Hobbes and his life could just go back to normal. Calvin then leaves on a quest to go find him by walking across the frozen lake from Canada all the way to the US. As interesting as this concept sounded, the book really fell a bit flat for me. I've always been interested in psychology so naturally, books with a psychological aspect of any sort tend to grab me. I started out really interested but the book quickly lost steam for me and despite its short length, I had trouble focusing and staying interested.

Calvin as a character didn't really seem to have a lot of depth. I suppose it's hard to have a well-rounded character when the whole point of the story is a single obsession but I would have loved to see more emotion from him throughout the book! I suppose because I knew Calvin was having schizophrenic episodes, I also found it hard to get a grip on what was real and what was being manifested inside Calvin's head. Obviously I knew Hobbes wasn't real but I found myself questioning the entire situation and several characters so just the smallest of doubts really threw off my whole reading experience. That's also how I am when I read books that I know involve psychological aspects or psychological twists — I'm always looking for a twist, even if it isn't there, so I actually ended up making this book more complicated than it really was.

I was actually not too impressed with the book overall. It should have been a quick read but I didn't find the writing terribly engaging and (though possibly due to my own faults), I was kind of let down with the ending. I just didn't really feel like the book was taking me somewhere and the middle really dragged for me. I kept hoping for something to reel me back it but I never quite made it there. I was also sort of upset that the author didn't really include any information about schizophrenia and what it is. There were some quick passages where Calvin is trying to explain it to Susie but I just always feel like books dealing with mental illness should educate the reader a little bit since most people don't know details. I feel like CALVIN missed an easy opportunity to just open that conversation up to the readers.

CALVIN wasn't a bad read for me but I'd have a hard time recommending it. I can usually zip through a nice, short book and I felt like this book actually dragged a bit. It really didn't impress me on any level and like I said, not bad but just didn't really stand out in any way for me.

Sheila Beaumont says

I'm so glad I ran across this wonderful book at my local library. I love it!

The story is about a boy named Calvin, who was born on the day Bill Watterson's "Calvin and Hobbes" comic strip ended. His grandpa gave him a stuffed toy tiger named Hobbes, with whom young Calvin had many adventures. And he has grown up with a neighbor named Susie.

When Calvin is 17, Hobbes returns, this time as a delusion. After a diagnosis of schizophrenia, Calvin decides he can be cured if he makes a dangerous pilgrimage across the frozen Lake Erie to find Watterson and get him to write one more strip in which a healthy, sane Calvin appears without Hobbes. On this trek, Calvin is accompanied by a (delusionary) Hobbes and a (real or delusionary?) Susie.

I love this book so much that I'm going to have to buy my own copy of it. This is a must-read for everyone who loves Calvin and Hobbes!

