



The Program

Suzanne Young

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In Sloane's world, true feelings are forbidden, teen suicide is an epidemic, and the only solution is The Program.

Sloane knows better than to cry in front of anyone. With suicide now an international epidemic, one outburst could land her in The Program, the only proven course of treatment. Sloane's parents have already lost one child; Sloane knows they'll do anything to keep her alive. She also knows that everyone who's been through The Program returns as a blank slate. Because their depression is gone—but so are their memories.

Under constant surveillance at home and at school, Sloane puts on a brave face and keeps her feelings buried as deep as she can. The only person Sloane can be herself with is James. He's promised to keep them both safe and out of treatment, and Sloane knows their love is strong enough to withstand anything. But despite the promises they made to each other, it's getting harder to hide the truth. They are both growing weaker. Depression is setting in. And The Program is coming for them.

The Program Details

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Sarah says

“Don’t say that,” he snaps. “Don’t even think of it.” He lets go of my hand. “I’ll kill myself before they ever take me into The Program.”

This was an okay story, and I liked parts of it (mostly the romance), but the pace was very slow, and it dragged a bit.

I felt quite sorry for both Sloane and James in this story. Both of them had lost Sloane’s brother who was a best friend to both of them, and to lose other friends too, it really wasn’t a nice situation for them to be in, and their depression was evident.

“They’re taking my memories,” I whisper to her. “They’re erasing me.”

The storyline in this book was about Sloane and James ended up in the program, and what happened to them afterwards. I found the pace really quite slow though, and the whole thing just dragged. There was some romance though, and that kind-of saved the book for me. It’s hard to explain without spoilers, but Sloane and James together was just really sweet.

“I know James loved me,” I tell Dr. Warren as tears run down my cheeks. “Because I knew him better than anyone ever could.”

The ending to this was quite interesting, and I liked that we finally got a bit of excitement, and a question over whether there is a way to reverse the program! I’ll read the second one too, and I hope the pace isn’t so slow.

6 out of 10

Kate says

Edit, July 2014: Wow, so much passion about this review over a year later! While you can certainly feel free to leave comments on this review, I don’t see my opinion of the book changing. The fact that the book is fiction does not change my opinion that it’s irresponsible and unrealistic (particularly in a science fiction novel, which is supposed to be based on scientific fact) to portray mental illness in the way it is shown in *The Program*.

Books don’t usually piss me off, but then I don’t usually read books as poorly researched, offensive, and

misleading as *The Program*.

The premise is that suicide is claiming the lives of one in three American teenagers - an epidemic. The government has developed a brainwashing program to remove the memories of teens they flag as suicide risks, thinking that if they remove the bad memories from someone's brain, they will magically stop being depressed and stop wanting to kill themselves.

Number one, this is some flawed science right here. DECADES of research has shown that chemical imbalances are what cause depression, not bad memories or personal experiences. There are people who have been through hell and back who don't have depression, and people who have led positive lives who do. I don't think the scientific community would suddenly throw all that research away and decide that brainwashing teenagers would be a good method of suicide prevention. Decades of research have also shown that repressing your feelings doesn't get rid of depression either, which Sloane and James seem to think it does.

Number two, this seems to take place in the extremely near future - as in, maybe a couple years from the present. Does Young seriously expect us to believe that NO ONE - no governing body, no organization, no suicide awareness charities - would intervene to try to stop this "Program" from development and implementation? That no uprising of mental health advocates would take place to protest this wildly inappropriate treatment of minor children?

Number three, you cannot "catch" depression and suicidal thoughts the way Young depicts in this book. You will not become suicidal by hanging out with suicidal people. It might not be the most pleasant experience, but it won't make you suicidal by association, as if it were a virus. I know that this is a fiction book, and that teens reading this book will be able to tell the difference between fantasy and reality. But when dealing with issues like mental health, which are ALREADY so misunderstood and stigmatized, I consider it irresponsible to paint depression and suicidal tendencies as contagious and something worth cutting ties with someone over.

There were other problems I had with this book, such as the codependency between Sloane and James being painted as "romantic," but the big ones above were enough to make me stop reading about halfway through. Don't, just *don't* collect this book.

Christine Wallflower & Dark Romance Junkie says

4.5 Mental Stars

Imagine a world where suicide is an epidemic. Where showing signs of depression could get you sent away, and you'd come back as only a shell of your former self. Where shedding even one tear could wipe away your entire past...

I've always had a fascination with mental illness and how it works. Sloane, lives in a world where anti-depressants have been banned, after her brother committed suicide she couldn't even mourn because that

would've have gotten her flagged and sent away to **The Program**. The Program is the cure for suicide, an epidemic that seems to only be targeting teens. When you come back from the program you come back fresh and crisp, a brand new sparkling person. At least that's what the adults see.

For Sloane, going to The Program would be losing her entire life, it would mean losing the only boy she's ever loved. Suzanne Young, the author of this amazing book convinced me that the suicide epidemic was real and that The Program was something to be feared. The thing about this book is that yes it's a dystopian, but to be quite honest it reads like a thriller. The idea's never felt far fetched, as far as I'm concerned all the stuff that happened in this book could really happen.

Suicide is a behavioral contagion. It's old adage "If all your friends jumped off a bridge, then would you, too?" Apparently, the answer is yes.

I hope my review isn't fooling you into thinking this book was clinical because it really wasn't. I spent about 70% of this book in tears, shaking my head or just getting angry, because this book is about death and grief. It's heartbreaking and scary because imagine a society that isolates youth to the point where they are too scared to show emotion of any kind. Then there's the love story between, James and Sloane. I'll even go as far as saying it's an epic love story, that it knows no bounds, and never fades with time. Yes, I know it's corny but true. James is the sweetest, jerk you'll ever meet, he loves Sloane with all his heart, and I felt that from just reading the book.

"I think I'm in love with you," he whispers. "Is that crazy?"

His words strike my heart, and the ache that's been a constant in my chest goes away completely. I lick my lips and smile. "So crazy."

"Then I guess I love you madly."

*****WARNING*****

This book is riddled with teen angst! It's not annoying, it's excruciating, it got so bad that at one point I asked myself, "Was I honestly ever this bad?" And to be quite honest, yes I was, I was probably worse.

Besides the teen angst, this book is incredibly depressing. Just when you think things couldn't get any worse, you find out that they can, they can get a lot worse. If you'd like to try dystopia, but don't want something too heavy then I think this would be the perfect book. Just be warned that it is a very emotional read.

FYI: Although this YA, it's more mature YA as there are sexual situations (view spoiler)

Jamie says

Suicide rates are higher than ever in the time period for this book. Seems mostly similar to current time but medical technology is higher and civilization control it tighter. Why? because 1 in 3 teens are offing themselves.

Right from the beginning the program annoys me in how high risks are decided. I see why people are concerned... But they are asked these daily questions such as "Are you overwhelmed or lonely?" Who isn't, once in a while at least, 1 of those things. Ugh...they need a better set of standards to filter people. You can't cry in public that is bad. If you know someone who died that is bad and if you dare contact with someone just out of The Program, WATCH OUT!

The Program is there to take away teens that an adult considers a suicide risk (see the paragraph above for what can quickly get you there). The take you in and six weeks later you are re-introduced to society, happier than ever. Sounds good, right? Except for one major catch. The Program strips you of many of your memories. So students return not knowing their classmates and friends.

Sloane has had one of her good friends taken away. Not she only has 2 left. One of them is her steady boyfriend James. But when she loses them what happens to her? You got it...into The Program. For this I hate her mother. I understand not wanting to lose your daughter but just because others are gone does not okay what she does. I can't say too much without spoiling things so I will leave it off there.

Now I get that suicide is bad. I get wanting to get it under control but there is one thing that is in this book adults seem to have no control over. QuikDeath. A drink you take that will kill you in minutes. Why don't adults work harder to get rid of something students can buy (even at school) that can easily kill them? The lock windows and ask you questionnaires and have you living in constant anxiety but can't work to remove a drink or get better control of it?!

In the program Sloane is harassed by a scumy handler, monitored by nurses, questioned by therapists and makes a few new friends. But the ultimate questions are what is going on and who is being honest with her and does she have any hope of remembering when all is said and done...

This book was emotionally hard for me at times. Having to deal with a loved one with amnesia once. It is beyond a horrible feeling to look at one you care for and see a totally blank stare and know they have no idea who you are to them. I think this alone could break a person. No wonder suicide is on the rise! if you don't lose someone to death, you lose them in your life and you always need to wear an emotional mask in case adults begin to wonder if it is your turn.

Sloane is actually a very strong character. I feel so bad for all she has to endure. There were many times I was cheering her on, others biting my fingernails out of worry and others smacking the book for her reactions or lack thereof or those moments she is too naive for her own good.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. It hits on levels of adult and government control, fear, love, loss and so much more. Lots of depth. Suzanne Young did an amazing job in getting me to empathize with Sloane. I will be sure to read the next book!

Maureen says

Well I had a lot of issues with this book, but there were *some* good things so I don't think a 1 star was necessary. It was very nearly that though! IF YOU LOVE THIS BOOK YOU WILL PROBABLY NOT LOVE THIS REVIEW JUST PRIOR WARNING.

Before we go further in this review, let me just say this book (and review) will have some trigger warnings for suicide, self harm, & depression.

Let's start with the positives. The plot of the book was really interesting and the writing was alright. I definitely sped through it because I wanted to know what happened. The ending was really interesting as well and makes me curious about the rest of the books in the series. It's fast paced and easy to read and get through.

NOW FOR THE NEGATIVES. The main plot of this book is that suicide is a contagious disease that The Program is trying to eradicate. THIS IS WHERE MY ISSUES BEGIN. Making suicidal thoughts and

depression a disease to further the plot in a dystopian book is something I am not okay with. It trivializes it in SO MANY WAYS. And I am sure some misinformed people believe depression and suicidal tendencies are already contagious - we don't need a fictional book to further that point. YO EVERYONE DEPRESSION IS NOT CONTAGIOUS YOU DONT NEED TO AVOID PEOPLE THAT ARE DEPRESSED YOU CAN'T CATCH IT FROM THEM. At one point a character self-harms and it is described as a symptom and I just could not. "Suicide" was a disease that started with the same signs and the same types of depression leading to the same result. Mental illnesses ARE diseases of the mind, but they are not all the same, nor are people the same under their influences. That was another issue I had - how depression was dealt with. It was all portrayed the same way with the same symptoms in different people...and depression isn't the same for everyone. It looks so different to so many people.

I am sure the author was trying to bring mental illness into the light since it is so often shunned and run from, but I don't think a dystopian book was the best place to do that. At all. To me, it just made these important mental illnesses seem like a trivial thing and a plot device. There are so many great ways to shed light on mental illness and this book did none of those things.

Other unrelated issues: there was some instalove and overall the characters were pretty not great. I didn't love Sloane as a protagonist, but I did like James a bit more than everyone else!

I personally felt like this book made light of a lot of serious topics that should be talked about in the correct way to help people that suffer from them. It's not edgy or cool or a disease that can be cured in a certain spoilery way (which I ALSO didn't agree with but didn't want to spoil). I just...really was annoyed with this book. And angry because it could've been so much better.

p.s. I am not a perfect person, so if I misrepresented something up in this review somewhere, plz let me know respectfully and I will change it! THANKYEW.

Angela says

<http://southernbredsouthernread.blogs...>

I put off reading *The Program* for so long. I had really no idea what it was about and I haven't truly known anyone whose read it. It's been in my TBR pile for about four months if not more. So I finally picked it up. I wish someone would have recommended this to me so I would have done it sooner. *The Program* was a huge surprise.

With suicide rates at and all time high, and it being considered a disease you have to be careful of what you say or do at all times. There

are handlers that keep their eyes out for at-risk teenagers between the ages of 13 to 17, and at the first signs of depression, they enroll them in The Program that erases their memories and emotions. After the six weeks of treatment, they are carefully immersed back into society with a fresh start and a clean slate. *The Program* reminds me so much of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, one of my all time favorite movies, except you don't have a say in if/what you have erased.

After her brother and best friend Miller commit suicide things go way down hill emotionally for our two protagonist Sloane and James. They are both trying to hold it together till they turn 18, but that seems easier

said than done. Both Sloane and James are taken at separate but almost same times after they both have melt downs.

This

story was so intensely sad and the characters were even more so. But it's not just a story about suicide, it's also about how true love really is a juice worth the squeeze. With a romance that doesn't start with insta love, but instead with a friendship that builds to this realistic and sweet thing. From becoming friends through her brother, to secretly dating, to being inseparable. Their relationship has to be one of my favorites. They both perfectly play off each other...

"I think I broke my femur," James says, as he lies underneath me.

"On the console when you were attacking me? I think I broke it."

I laugh. "Shut up."

"I didn't mind though," he says conversationally. "Like when you bit my shoulder. It was—"

I reach up and put my hand over his mouth, not moving it even after he licks my fingers. "Shut up." As if agreeing, he pulls me closer, resting his cheek on top of my head. When it's quiet, I move my palm and rest it on his chest.

"It was nice," he whispers, but not jokingly. "It wasn't weird, either. And that's... kind of weird."

Like come on, tell me that doesn't sound too cute!

After being taken into the program Sloane is left alone and finding out how to beat the system alone. When they start to explain how the program works they also uncover Sloane and James' past. They play heavy on her and James' memories and it both broke and mended my heart. The memories are amazing and I loved reading them. There is a small introduction of a "love triangle". It really isn't a triangle, but I know that's what most will call it. The sub characters like Realm, Lacey, and Kevin are also lovely aspects to the story. I loved loved loved Realm even though I hated him at the same time.

Even with a minimal amount of scenery being described this book still didn't let me down. My only complaint is that to me the cover didn't do it for me. It's probably the main reason I put off reading it for so long. *The Treatment: book two in The Program series* has me looking forward to my 2015 TBRs.

Please don't make the same mistake I did and put this book off.

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

I'll make this quick and painless like 'DeathQuik'.^^ It's a cheesy, gooey, melodramatic love story in the guise of a dystopian novel with a futuristic setting in which people are plagued with an epidemic that makes them want to go and kill themselves. Don't bother with the whys because you won't get any. Just go along with the story and the half absurdity of it all and I'm sure you'll enjoy. Lol. If you don't like that kind of stuff I'd say you skip it but if you gather much enjoyment and entertainment out of them like me, then go for

it. ^^

For a beautiful, more elaborate, more positive review, do check out Chelsea's review.^^

Renata says

This book was an entertaining read, I will give it that. Unfortunately, I had some major problems with it. For one thing, you didn't get any good descriptions of anything really besides James. It is true it leaves the reader to his or her imagination, but a better writer would give you some of both.

Secondly, Sloane was very dependent on boys. She depended on James to get her through Brady's death, she depended on Realm to get her through the program, and she even depended on Roger to help her remember one memory. And that memory was about two boys.

Third, Sloane doesn't love Realm, she states that to the reader but she stays with him and lets him call her "sweetness". Even after she is reintroduced to James and starts to have feelings for him, she stays with Realm. It is like she wants to insure one boyfriend before she leaves the first.

Fourth, besides from boys Sloane's character wasn't that great. She couldn't even figure out how to not eat the pills she was given when she knew they were erasing her memories.

Personally, I don't like reading books that depict the main character as a needy, dependent on boys female, who can't think for herself. I understand that it might have been intentional, but if it was the author should at least use her character then. I felt as though the only reason her character was like that was to express how true love will find a way. Apparently the only way to express that is to wipe a naive girl's memory and make her fall in love with her boyfriend again. And if you are to express it in that way, it could have been just fine done with a more independent character, while making the story a more entertaining read.

Blythe says

ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC.

Mitch says

Reactions to *The Program* will differ I think based on which of these two scenarios you were expecting:

A) a thought provoking treatment of teen suicide

-or-

B) a typical dystopian that co-opts yet another attention grabbing premise only to degenerate into the same evil government conspiracy keeping apart the star crossed lovers plot

If you thought B), *The Program* is a perfectly fine book. Ignore this review and enjoy the book for what it is. Personally though, I thought A), so my reaction went from intrigued, to somewhat disturbed, before finally

settling on disappointed. Suicide is, don't get me wrong, a serious issue of mental health, but while I certainly don't expect every young adult book to handle it with the grace of say, Karen Healey's *The Shattering*, I do think Suzanne Young could have done a much better job tackling the issue rather than just using it as gimmicky setup fodder for an otherwise average dystopian.

Then again, it's no wonder the strongest elements of *The Program* are in the first of this three part book, when Young seems to be actually writing about suicide. Normally, I'd find the idea of people in white lab coats just waiting to haul kids away at the first sign of mental illness ridiculous, but in this case combined with the depictions of rampant depression and the threat of the radical fix provided by The Program, I had a lot to chew on. I liked trying to figure out whether Sloane was an unreliable narrator because she could've been depressed herself (explaining her attitude towards The Program), looking at the situation from the parent's point of view (which for once is actually believable for a dystopian, I totally get why parents would put their kids through The Program rather than standing by, doing nothing, and allowing something bad to happen), and having to decide whether the results of The Program, in lives saved, are worth the costs. Heck, I even liked how Sloane and James sort of had to rely on each other after Sloane's brother's suicide, so for a brief while at least, I could definitely say I was intrigued by the whole setup.

Unfortunately, it really was a brief while, because even though thoughts were provoked, they never went anywhere. Instead, it seems to me like Young never really planned to explore the suicide issue in the depth I was expecting and instead just takes an almost simplistic, black and white view to the whole thing. There really aren't any shades of gray with Sloane and her friends being 'good' while The Program is 'evil', and where does that lead? Don't join The Program because you'll leave a mindless zombie, but what's the alternative? Denying reality until one day you just off yourself? I just really didn't feel like it was Young's intent to explore suicide as an issue; instead her intent all along seems to be for The Program to be the evil government conspiracy doing bad things to Sloane and her friends disguised in this case as suicide prevention and treatment, and it just didn't feel right without having some sort of effective alternative; Sloane doesn't want treatment and she doesn't really want to kill herself either (at least when she's not sick), but what should she do then? It's hard to blame a government conspiracy for being evil when they're doing exactly the kind of thing I would expect a government to do given an epidemic of teen suicide - step in and stop it.

Now that brings me to Part Two and Three, where the book really falls apart. I don't have a problem with Sloane's time in treatment or how she tries to beat The Program once she gets out *per se*, but it's nothing more or less than any other dystopian plot dealing with government conspiracies or memory loss - although it's kind of weird Sloane's magically all better once she arrives without going through any sort of treatment or healing process. Instead, it's what Young doesn't say about suicide treatment that really bothers me. What she's saying I guess is in the world of *The Program* depression is linked to certain memories, and excising them causes the subject to be cured (ok... incredulous but sure I'll accept this for the book to work), and yet to fight The Program Sloane ends up looking for her lost memories. The same ones that supposedly made her suicidal in the first place. Wouldn't she become depressed and try to kill herself again then? Has she really been cured then? Do these plot twists really explore the suicide aspect? Or are they just to set up yet another true love will overcome the evil dystopian government conspiracy induced memory loss plot because Sloane obviously reunites with James on the outside?

I guess my problem is, for a book about teen suicide, *The Program* isn't really about teen suicide. The suicide angle ultimately makes very little sense and the treatment aspects of The Program are only superficially explored, the rest of the book is just a generic dystopian that doesn't build upon the teen suicide premise as much as exploit it for world building points, and that just doesn't feel right to me.

Sandra says

After having some time to think, i made the overall conclusion that this book is the most frustrating and saddest book i have ever read.

The Program is set in a world where depression and suicide are considered a virus. If you are thought to have caught the virus, the handlers come to get you and take you to a facility known as The Program.

Little teaser..

I look back at James one last time, and he gives me his signature smile, wide and cocky. But it's not real. Sometimes i think it's never real. James is the best at hiding the pain, disguising the feelings. He knows what it takes to stay out of The Program. He'll keep as safe.

He promised.

Sloane knows not to cry in front of anyone. One sign of sadness will land you straight into The Program. Her parents have already lost a child. She knows that anyone who returns comes back with no emotions - a blank slate. Their depression is gone, but so are their memories.

Under constant supervision and observation, Sloane puts on a mask, which she hides her feelings behind. James is the only one she let's in. She knows their love is strong enough to survive, to withstand anything. But despise the promises, it's getting harder to hide the truth.

Depression is setting in. They're coming for them. It's only a matter of time before there'll be...nothing left.

I have been **crying my freaking eyes out** since page 50- 160. And then from there on, i have been so

frustrated and angry that i swear to God i could freaking see red.

Having anger problems/issues it wasn't a good nor healthy idea for me to continue reading. But i couldn't stop. The writing style just pulls you in, and you have so many compassion and feelings for the characters you just have **HAVE** to know what will happen to them.

Here are some examples of how i looked...

I didn't get angry at the book. Not really. It was mainly about the characters. I DESPISE reading about helpless characters that just can't fight back. I don't know. It was always my issue with things in general. I don't understand how you don't want to kill someone when they take your opportunities. When they take your freedom away. Especially when they tell you how to live your life.

It's just so...AHHHH! ***calm down, Sandra. Deep breaths***.

If someone would hold me captive and force me to do things, i would fight until my very last breath. I would unleash the freaking hell on earth. I'm so not even kidding guys.

The characters were great! Loved them! Especially **James**.

He was so sweet, funny, caring and protective. ***swoon***.

Sloane was a pretty good protagonist herself. But i must admit i was rather annoyed with her for being sometimes really naive and stupid. Especially about crying every freaking time she was reminded of her past. That was getting on my nerves.

I think **what was the best about this book was the romance** between James and Sloane. It wasn't forced. It wasn't fast (i mean, they are already together at the beginning). It was just...perfect. We get to see how they formed that relationship. We get to see the flashback, and i absolutely loved those moments. They are definitely the most beautiful, realistic and sweetest couple EVER. ***sight***

Overall *The Program* was a satisfying and captivating read. It was heart wrenching, frustrating to the point where i wanted to shred the book to pieces, and had beautifully written romance. I would highly suggest this to patient and strong minded people. If you have anger problems, make sure you don't read this! Also, this

book was so depressing it got me depressed. Oooopps... i guess The Program will be coming for me..

Giselle says

If I wasn't so bored with dystopians lately, this one might have been more enjoyable for me. Although it has a little contemporary feel to it more than most, and the plot direction it takes is different from the expected and clichés "run and hide from the big bad government", in the end I still felt that it was yet another dystopian novel that doesn't particularly stand out from the rest.

A little reminiscent of Delirium, The Program involves teen suicide and how its become an epidemic, and the cure involves wiping them out into a clean slate. This means memory removal of anything that could cause negative feelings. Thus, if you're a teenager and you show any sort of negative emotions like crying, you better make sure no one sees you! I liked the idea of this world and I personally found it much more believable than Delirium, in the sense that I can see how society agreed to this mind erasing program if it will save their children from suicide (I had difficulty believing that society could be convinced love was a disease--but that is a review for another time >.<). I found the system intimidating and quite the paradox--some rather die than go through the program if they're flagged, for others, having your best friend, or anyone you love, not remember who you are is heartbreaking in every sense turning you emotionally vulnerable. Although it delivers a fairly predictable story arc, The Program is ultimately a tragic love story and this part was done quite well.

While the plot itself was enjoyable, I did not find myself connecting to the characters as much as I would have liked. They were likeable characters, but Sloane didn't strike me as an especially memorable MC. Same goes for the side characters, Sloane makes a few friends throughout the story, and none of them were well developed. They were used as nothing more than "extras". There is even one character who was kind of a creep for the bigger part of the book that annoyed me senselessly. He seemed to always be sneaking around intimidating Sloane every chance he got, and I didn't see the point of it. The book could have gone without him; he was gross, his storyline felt random and out of place, and when he had done his "task" to help the plot along (which could have been achieved without him), he was just gone and forgotten. He might be back in the sequel, but really I don't see the point--it seems his only role is to add unnecessary ickiness.

In the end, The Program is a love story. The main reason I didn't love this book is due to my distance from the romance itself. I have a hard time falling for a romance when one is already established beforehand. I love seeing connections strike and relationships bloom, when I get into a book with it pre-existing, I don't get that fluttery young love feeling towards it as much. There were flashbacks that showed the strength of their love for each other which helped, though this helped me understand their relationship, it didn't leave me swooning over it. Therefore, while I cared about the protagonist and what she was going through, and I deduced the implied sadness or tragic nature of it all, I felt like I was more of a curious observer than someone invested into the heart of it.

With so many previously failed dystopians this year, The Program is easily one of the better ones I've read lately. If I hadn't read so many I might have given this one more slack; as it stands I liked it but I don't see it sticking out from the masses in the cluster of dystopians in my memory.

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

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Sophie says

4 madly stars

Imagine a world where teenagers are in danger of themselves. A world where teenagers kill themselves and suicides are contagious.

"If all your friends jumped off a bridge, would you, too?"

Apparently, the answer is yes.

To prevent this situation, the school district made the Program. Handlers will take anyone with suicidal tendencies. They will lock them in their institution and there they will take away their memories. When they get out they will be sent in a private school designated just for other returners.

Sloane and James are a couple who is against the idea of the Program. They're both fighting with their overwhelming emotions, especially when they are surrounded with friends and family who have killed themselves or tried to. They're trying not to show any kind of unhappy emotion in front of others, even in front of their parents, even when they lose beloved ones. **They are scared of getting infected, but even worse, they are scared of getting into the Program**, because they know afterwards they are going to lose themselves in there.

I'm still reeling from my recent experience of the Program. This book was one hell of a ride, my friends.

Intense, suspenseful, full of angst and depressing as hell.

It sounds bad, but it was probably even worse. It was actually a **thriller**. I was turning the pages and I was scared, because this book is cruel. It brought out so many emotions to me. I even shed a couple of tears and I was still early. (view spoiler)

The book is divided in **3 parts**. I can't really say what happens at each, but in the second part we're also introduced to Realm, a person who becomes an important part of the book and I still don't know what to feel about him. Let's say that I'm not his biggest fan, but I still liked him as a character and felt for him. The second part was also the most painful part. It was so **cruel and inhuman**. If you have read the Asylum by Lily White, let's just say that this reminded me of that book. But this one may be even worse. If I could, I would have smashed my device with all the anger and pain I had inside.

"My memories... I don't have many left."

I really loved James and Sloane, they were so amazing together. I felt so much for them and how it was just them against the world. I highlighted so many scenes and quotes and every dialogue was just the silver lining in a really moody world. It was what kept me reading, the curiosity what would happen to them and to the special bond that existed between them.

"I think I'm in love with you.. Is that crazy?"

"So crazy."

"Then I guess I love you madly."

The epilogue was a total mindfuck. I was reading and even though it felt like someone cleaned the fog, I was even more confused afterwards. Does it make sense? I was shaking my head, feeling so mad, but also so mindblown.

My only complaint against this book was that even though I really liked the writing, I felt like I have gaps. So many questions have been unanswered and I'm not sure I'm going to pick up the next book at the moment, so now I have to make peace with those gaps.

So, if you need a light, happy read, this is not the one for you. But if you need something **angsty, that will punch you emotionally**, then I dare you to pick this up.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

I can see why some readers of young adult are swearing off dystopian stories now. I actually like dystopia, but I can see that they are beginning to suffer from the same story different day tropes. This for me is one of those.

First of all, you have suicide as an epidemic. WTF?

Supposedly, one in three or four kids are killing themselves. Why? I don't remember reading why in this book. It vaguely mentions that anti-depressants have been over prescribed and that "might" be the reason. Dude, I don't care if it's a young adult book. I need facts. At least part of the story, but I know it might come in later books so I'm gonna work past it.

Sloane's brother fell to the epidemic, he "caught" depression and ended up killing himself. So Sloane and her brother's best friend James had been in a relationship and this part of the book was actually pretty good. They look out for each other and want to keep the other from either being "infected" or being snatched up by the PROGRAM.

The Program. That's kinda big brother watching the teens for any signs of suicide signs. They take the teens and wipe their memories clean so viola! they are cured.

Creepy cured. Because they come back with no memories and everything is squeaky clean and new.

It's pretty predictable where the story goes. I mean they are terrified of the program so you know it's coming. MAY BE SPOILERY:

Then Sloane gets eyeballed by one of the creepy "handlers"...yep, know where that is going also.

(view spoiler)

There of course is the resident "friend" guy. Who helps Sloane through her rough spots and hopes to help her "forget" James. (love triangle trying to happen-surprise!)

Now as to how the Program works. Crap on a stick. I hated this part. They feed the teens pills.

[image error]src="http://i.imgur.com/hEFD0LN.gif" title="source: imgur.com" />

They will help them "relax". Sloane takes the flipping things! I wanted to jump in the book and smack her upside the head.

If you want a cookie cutter book this one might be the one for you. The only redeeming thing I found in the whole dang book was no insta-love.

I GOT THIS BOOK FROM THE LIBRARY...ADDED FOR DISCLOSURE WHERE I GET MY BOOKS.
THE LIBRARY GIVES A SHIT LESS HOW I RATE THEM.

Arlene says

Okay, I've put this off long enough, so I'm just going to power through this... See, I've struggled for over a couple of weeks putting into words what **The Program** is truly about. My hesitation lies with the possibility that when I say, ...*This book is about suicide, but it's really not about suicide...* someone will take that one statement and not only get irritated with my lacking analogy but also not give **The Program** a chance.

So allow me a few moments while I try to convince you not to make the same mistake I did. I put this book off for so long because of the subject matter. I mean, who gets excited about reading something so dismal when you can pick up a love story? That was my first error in judgment. This book is *really* good and it's truly not just about depression and suicide, but more about hope.

The Program is quite unique in its own right. In the book, we learn about a society that faces a teen pandemic, where suicide rates are out of control and society has responded with an aggressive treatment strategy with The Program. There are handlers that keep their eye out for at-risk teenagers between the ages of 13 – 17, and at the first signs of depression, they enroll them in The Program that erases their memories and emotions. After the six weeks of treatment, they are carefully immersed back into society with a fresh start and a clean slate.

Brilliant right?!?! Not so much... Teenagers fear losing their memories and the emotions tied to friendships that are meaningful to them.

Sloane's brother and best friend have both committed suicide and her friend Lucy is taken into The Program after attempting the QuickDeath. When her boyfriend James, who promised to never let them fall victim to The Program, is taken by the handlers, Sloane is left to fight, scheme and sacrifice to hold on to what's hers.

Overall, **The Program** is about fighting society in an attempt to hold on to what's yours... your memories, your emotions, and your feelings that make you - *you*. The writing is flawless, and the message is clear. If I had to sum up in one short statement what Suzanne Young is trying to convey, I'd have to say she was clear about sharing how important it is to not lose sight of who you are and what you cherish.

The concept is pretty severe; and like I said, it took me a while to get into the right frame of mind to jump into the book. But, once I read a few short chapters, I quickly experienced that "tell me more!" feeling. My only regret is that I feel this book would have made a magnificent stand-alone, but I understand that it's part of a series. As much as I was awed by Young's writing and impressed with her plot, I can't see myself buying into the propaganda of "the story continues..." I appreciated my time with Young's characters and I applaud her writing skills, but I can pretty much figure out the rest from here.

Overall, though, **The Program** is truly a story not to be missed. It may seem daunting, but not without a good serving of hope. Color me impressed!

Emerson Forest-angelos says

Probably the worst book I have ever read. Concept is absolutely awful, makes a joke of eating disorders and depression like everyone can magically get infected for no reason. Suzanne Young's writing is reminiscent of Stephanie Meyer's because it is really just downright awful. Main characters have sex right off the bat in the beginning, and it's pathetic, strange, and sporadic. The opening of the book feels more like an erotica, then the middle turns into this unrealistic stupid crap about the PROGRAM, which scientifically and legally makes absolutely no sense. But with all of the legal things aside, and how this would never, ever happen in the future or in an alternate universe, lets consider all of the lazy routes she took with this book.

NO explanation for teen suicide increases. NO explanation for why antidepressants are "banned". NO explanation for why her brother killed himself aside from him being "INFECTED" which dilutes a serious mental illness down to it being contagious or happening at random. Nothing had to do with brain chemistry. Nothing explained the reason behind her parents reasoning, aside from them from just being 'stupid adults'. Anyone with a normal functioning brain would be able to tell that the PROGRAM is a bad idea, but apparently these adults thought it was just swell to erase the memories of minors? In addition to that, the only way to really remove someone's memories is to give them a orbital lobotomy, but even that pretty cool concept was thrown into the trash.

This is a stupid dystopian book written by someone who never developed their frontal lobe. I pray she doesn't keep writing, because this was downright awful.

Erika says

VIDORECENSIONE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qcvdy...>

The Program mi ha completamente stregata. Con una trama originalissima, uno stile di scrittura accattivante e dei personaggi coi fiocchi non può fare altro che annoverarsi tra i miei libri preferiti e lasciarmi trepidante in attesa del secondo.

In un mondo dove il suicidio è una malattia, vivono due giovani innamorati: Sloane e James. Non possono piangere o mostrare dolore e non devono assolutamente, in alcun modo, dare segni di debolezza o saranno i prossimi ad affrontare il programma. Che cos'è? Semplicemente, l'annientamento di sé stessi. Brutale e doloroso, il programma cancella tutti i ricordi, belli e brutti, facendo ritornare il soggetto una pagina bianca, tabula rasa.

Io non credo di avere abbastanza parole per descrivere questo libro. La premessa, fin da subito, mi ha intrigato tantissimo e, sin dalle prime pagine, mi sono innamorata della storia e dei suoi personaggi.

Ecco cosa mi è piaciuto di questo libro:

- Lo stile di scrittura. Crudo, intenso, misterioso, diretto. Lo stile della Young avviluppa il lettore, lo trascina nella storia e gli permette di assaporare ogni momento, ogni ricordo e ogni emozione.
- La trama. Come ho già avuto modo di dire, l'ho trovata molto originale e per niente scontata. Questo libro è stato un susseguirsi di avvenimenti che mi hanno incantato, emozionato e coinvolto tantissimo.
- Mi è piaciuta molto l'idea di base e come è stata sviluppata, credo che l'autrice abbia costruito molto bene il programma rendendo ogni particolare assolutamente plausibile.
- Il realismo. Questo libro è terrificante proprio perché questo mondo distopico potrebbe tranquillamente essere il mondo del nostro domani. L'epidemia dei suicidi viene affrontata in maniera brutale, ma la società sembra quasi non notarlo perché pensa di essere dalla parte della ragione. E questo è un aspetto che mi ha spaventato molto, specialmente la violenza che si perpetra nella mente dei ragazzi per cancellare ogni loro ricordo. *Davvero terrificante*.
- I personaggi. Dio, quanto mi sono piaciuti! Li ho trovati reali, emozionanti e la Young li ha descritti così bene che non ho potuto fare a meno di affezionarmi a loro quasi immediatamente. Non sono assolutamente stereotipati, ma hanno delle caratteristiche particolari che li contraddistinguono da qualsiasi altro personaggio di YA che io abbia mai letto. Ho apprezzato molto, in particolare, i due protagonisti. Li ho trovati molto forti e determinati. -- Sloane e James formano poi una bellissima coppia, li ho adorati e leggere del loro amore me l'ha fatto quasi sentire anche sulla mia pelle, in qualche modo.
- I colpi di scena. Questo libro non è un libro pieno di azione e quant'altro, ma ci sono stati alcuni momenti che mi hanno lasciato con la bocca aperta. Suzanne Young ha reso questo libro assolutamente imprevedibile, non riuscivo mai a capire cosa sarebbe successo in seguito!
- Le emozioni che mi ha fatto provare. Ci sono stati molti momenti in cui leggere questo libro è stato quasi "doloroso" (view spoiler), altri che mi hanno fatto inumidire gli occhi e altri ancora che mi hanno strappato qualche lacrima. Il realismo e la brutalità di questo libro mi hanno fatto venire la pelle d'oca ed emozionato moltissimo.
- L'alone di mistero che c'è dietro l'epidemia. Per tutto il corso del romanzo mi sono domandata da dove provenisse questa "malattia" e, per me, è stato (ed è ancora) uno dei quesiti più grandi dell'intera storia. Spero che venga rivelato qualcosa di più nel seguito, sono davvero curiosa!
- LA MANCANZA DI CLICHE'.

Ora, sull'ultimo punto vorrei potermi esprimere in maniera più approfondita perché penso che sia stato proprio questo aspetto a dare quel "qualcosa in più" al romanzo. La storia che Suzanne Young ci ha regalato non riporta i tipici cliché che non fanno altro che ripetersi e ripetersi nei romanzi per giovani adulti. Qualche esempio:

- I due protagonisti, Sloane e James, stanno già insieme all'inizio del romanzo. Non è un amore istantaneo che nasce fin dal primo sguardo, ma è un qualcosa che subentra piano piano tra i due, che matura e che cresce col tempo. E' un amore sincero e puro dove entrambi si donano completamente all'altro senza riserve. E' quel tipo di amore giocoso e ironico che c'è tra due migliori amici.
- La sessualità. Solitamente nei romanzi YA la sessualità e, specialmente, la verginità dei personaggi sono un "great deal": i personaggi non riescono a togliersi le mani di dosso, ma trovano sempre qualcosa che li frena

dall'andare fino in fondo e, nella maggior parte dei casi, consumano poi il rapporto nell'ultimo libro della serie/fine del romanzo quasi come se fosse un "premio" dopo tante fatiche. In questo libro, invece, i due personaggi sono entrambi sessualmente attivi da tempo. Sloane e James fanno l'amore, non hanno paura di toccarsi, si comportano come una qualsiasi coppia di adolescenti (e non) e tutto ciò è descritto con estremo realismo, ma senza mai cadere nel volgare.

- NESSUN. MERDOSISSIMO. TRIANGOLO. AMOROSO. Entrambi i protagonisti sanno con chi vogliono stare, sanno chi amano e chi vogliono amare e qui si conclude la questione. (view spoiler)

- La Young non ha paura di trattare gli argomenti pesanti. Credo che, specialmente quando ci si rivolge ad un pubblico di giovani adulti, sia importante trattare anche gli argomenti più "ostici". Suicidio, morte, tradimento, sesso, violenza: sono tutte cose che vediamo nel mondo d'oggi e dovrebbero esserci più libri che ne parlano.

- Sloane, la protagonista, non è un'inetta ed è completamente diverse dalle tipiche protagoniste degli YA. Non dice di essere brutta quando non lo è, non perde tempo in inutili pensieri, è coraggiosa e forte, non permette che le si mettano i piedi in testa, è pronta a sacrificarsi per ciò in cui crede e per i suoi affetti e non è una completa e totale incapace. In un universo dove le protagoniste sono tutte fatte di zucchero e insopportabili moine, Sloane è una boccata d'aria fresca.

Cos'altro posso aggiungere? Sono curiosissima di leggere il seguito, il prequel e le eventuali novelle. Non sono assolutamente pronta ad abbandonare il mondo creato dalla Young (seppur terrificante) e sono davvero entusiasta all'idea di vedere come continua questa magnifica storia. Un libro davvero fantastico, consigliatissimo!

ZEYNEP DERYA says

Ne mükemmel bir kitaptın sen söyle! Program ı son zamanlarda okuduğum en iyi distopyaydı? sanırmam - özellikle konu bakımdan- hatta favorilerimden birisi oldu an itibarıyle. Serinin ilk kitabı söyleyse devamı nasıldır diye düğünüp sabırsızlanıyorum :')

İlk sayfasından itibaren merakla ve keyifle okudum. Tempo hiç düşmedi, özellikle son bölümlerde tam bir distopya tadı vermeye başladım diyebilirim. Yazar tabii ki hiç acımadı ve okuru meraktan ölürecek bir yerde bırakmadı. Yine devam kitabı beklemek için erimiz solacak ama olsundu. Bu kitabı okuyun. Cidden. OKUYUN.

Harriet ~ bookworm says

5 stars

Usually when I love a book as much as I did with this one, I normally can't wait to write a review, things will pop in my head and I even just start writing things down in my notes if I'm busy. With this I couldn't do either of those things just because of the fact it is so hard to review. I actually feel like this could be the trickiest book to explain, this is because it's one of the most **angsty, twisty, mind fuckery, heart-breaking, depressing and so out of the ordinary** books I have ever read.

The first 13% to me was a tiny bit slow but it had a nice gradual build before shit completely hit the fan, I really want to try and express my feelings and go into detail without giving too much away or feeling like I

have gushed too much.

Sloane who is the heroine, she goes to school and tries to act completely normal, why? well teenagers from the ages 13-17 are being taken away when they have risks or symptoms of depression. Who ever has these symptoms will be taken into the program where their memories and anything that made them sad, angry, happy will be wiped away, these handlers say it's like having a new life 'a clean slate' but what happens when they come out and they don't remember anyone or anything? Well Sloane wants to avoid this, she wants her memories, she wants to remember her brother who sadly committed suicide rather than being taken into the program, she wants to remember and be happy with her boyfriend and love of her life. Will she be able to keep on faking happy and normal even though this depression is grabbing her? Sloane was a strong heroine and even though everyone around her are either dying or being taken she tries her hardest to stay strong, or act strong at least.

"I know you do." he answers seriously. "And that's why I won't let anything happen to you. It's me and you, Sloane. Forever just us."

James, he was the one who tried to hold everyone together, to keep everyone strong, but what happens when everyone falls apart in front of him? His and Sloane's relationship **Killed. Me.** the times I had to pick up my broken heart and fix it while reading this book was just silly, the love they have for one another is so strong and beautiful that you can feel it, you just want everything to be ok so they will be ok. He was perfect and I loved every scene he was in, that boy gave me billions of butterflies but his story, *this story* shattered my heart!

All characters were incredible in this, the good and bad, you didn't know who to trust. I was forever wondering who to trust, this story plays games with your mind and I loved that!

I absolutely adore a dystopian, it's something about them, the feelings I get that I don't get from a NA, you feel **everything**, their worlds and lives are crashing around them and I feel it. This book has the angst, drama, **little** love triangle and pretty much every chapter had some heartbreak, it left me tired and so so drained but I could not stop until I had read it all, I read this in one sitting, I went to bed with a migraine and woke up with a headache but I didn't care this book was so worth every single painful emotion I had.

I wish I could explain this book the way it deserves but I just can't. I would so love for all my friends to read this and feel what I felt but I understand dystopian isn't for everyone. This has and will always be a forever favourite. it was **epic** ♥

For more reviews, check my blog..

Sophie says

This is one of my new favorite books.
And I mean it's a top favorite.

I can't even explain how much I love this book. And I think a lot of my love for it could come from the fact that it really hit home. I've never personally had depression, but when I was in high school there was someone in my life who was really, really important to me. And I was right there during every second of his battle. It was really devastating, and something I don't like to remember very often, but this book brought me right back to that. I don't know if I would have picked up this book if I knew that it would, but wow... I'm so glad that I did. Reading about Sloane and James was like reliving my own memories and it was really strange and bizarre and beautiful and overwhelming and terribly heartbreakingly and I couldn't believe how much this book stole my heart.

5 trillion stars.

(I may or may not be ordering the sequel on my kindle right this second to dive into it. Heh.)
