



## **The End of Always**

*Randi Davenport*

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## **The End of Always** Randi Davenport

*A stunning debut novel, THE END OF ALWAYS tells the story of one young woman's struggle to rise above a vicious family legacy and take charge of her own life.*

In 1907 Wisconsin, seventeen-year-old Marie Reehs is determined: she will not marry a violent man, as did her mother and grandmother before her. Day after day, Marie toils at the local laundry, watched by an older man who wants to claim her for his own. Night after night, she is haunted by the memory of her mother, who died in a mysterious accident to which her father was the only witness. She longs for an independent life, but her older sister wants nothing more than to maintain the family as it was, with its cruel rules and punishments. Her younger sister is too young to understand.

At first, it seems that Marie's passionate love affair with a charismatic young man will lead her to freedom. But she soon realizes that she too may have inherited the Reehs women's dark family curse.

Set in the lush woods and small towns of turn-of-the-century Wisconsin, and inspired by real events in the author's family history, THE END OF ALWAYS is a transcendent story of one woman's desperate efforts to escape a brutal heritage. Both enthralling and deeply lyrical, Randi Davenport's novel is also an intensely affecting testament to the power of determination and hope, and a gripping reminder of our nation's long love affair with violence.

## **The End of Always Details**

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Author : Randi Davenport

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## From Reader Review The End of Always for online ebook

### Christine says

I wonder how this book got published without a YA rating. I even wonder who proof read this story and said it was okay, cuz it wasn't! The first half of the book was muddled.

To start off, I had no idea WHO the narrator was.. I gathered it was a girl at about page 10 when a comment was made about the father being the only male. The name wasn't given but once in 5 chapters! The mother is brought home bloody and dies. There is no mention of abuse or violence happening until about chapter 10ish.

Usually the rule is to grab the readers attention within the first couple chapters, this story avoided all the content that could have done that.

Maybe younger readers would enjoy this.

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### MaryannC.Book Fiend says

This was a somber, beautifully written, almost poetic novel. Mary lives in a time when husbands and fathers ruled the household with an iron hand and they were not to be questioned otherwise the consequences were usually physical. One day Mary's mother dies under mysterious circumstances and this sets a chain of events that leads Mary to discover her first love and break free from the cycle of abuse. This is a novel worth venturing into.

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### Jeanie says

When there is always ugly, there has to be one who ends the ugliness. The End of Always shows the beauty of courage of Marie who in her time is a voice for women in abusive relationships. In reading the author's acknowledgements, this novel is based on her family in the early 1900 set in Wisconsin. The writing is breath taking, as we read in Marie's voice her struggles to overcome the oppression and abuse from her father and her employer. After her own mother's questionable death, Marie recalls the stories from her mother's homeland to make sense of the world she is in and to find some hope. To escape the situation and for something better, she falls in love only to find out that she is living in her mother's world. With all the selfish men in her life, Marie does find some help from her lawyer that gives her the courage and hope to stand on her own.

In reflecting on Marie's story, you feel so many emotions. I think what drew me in, is Marie's innocence to the selfishness of others. It reminds me that making judgments on what would I do in similar situations is not realistic. There are so many variables that it would be difficult to be honest with yourself. Compared to Marie's sister whose heart was hardened and Marie whose heart longed to love and be loved. That makes all the difference in the world how we respond to evil.

Thank you goodreads for the free book and the opportunity to review a great read. I loved this one.

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### **Leslie says**

I am currently working on my next book review for work so I won't say much here. Just that this book is excellent! I didn't even realize until the end while reading the Acknowledgments that it is based on the author's family history.

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### **Hollie says**

3.5 if it were an option. I almost didn't finish this book. 100 pages in I was still waiting for it to grab my attention and then by 150 I wanted to see where it was going...

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### **Georgiana Huizenga says**

Just couldn't get into this one, so gave up on it.

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### **Tara says**

4.5 stars. This book was a welcome surprise. It was longlisted for an award and I saw it mentioned on someone's list, so marked it to read. I did not expect such fine literary writing.

This book is not for everyone. For folks who like action, neat romance, dialog, movement, it won't be enough. But for anyone who loves a well-turned sentence, exquisite observations of the natural world, and an author's ability to capture deep emotion, it will be plenty.

Some of the best prose I've ever read. Reminds me of Alice Hoffman at her best. Also, Debra Magpie Earling's Perma Red. Dark stories of women being abused.

I did not realize till I read the acknowledgments that this story was based on the author's ancestors. That did not really matter to me. Marie's story is one of many. One many of you have lived in some way. While it takes place at the turn of the century, many of the issues that women face are still relevant today.

What starts off as magical love turns into abuse: "So this is what comes of love, I thought, and felt that everything I had known could be held in a cup marked with that word and the cup itself was something horrible to behold."

Though the ending is a tad muddled, I recommend this book highly to fans of Hoffman, to readers who want to read a book that manages to capture young love in a way only a poet can, and to women who are interested in reading about our history or the natural world. Davenport has a new fan.

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### **Kelsey Hanson says**

Finally, Wisconsin is on the map. This was a unique and look at the cycle of abuse and how difficult it can be to escape it. This is based on actual events and tells the story of a young woman struggling to escape the violent men of her life in the early days of Wisconsin. I love that someone finally used my home state as the backdrop to a story. It does a great job of showcasing the various psychological, familial and legal factors that made it so difficult for women to escape their conditions. This book focuses heavily on the characters who were actual historical people which is good but it sometimes leaves the details a bit sparse, but overall it was a pretty good book.

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### **Alesha Leveritt says**

I will admit to reading through this quickly, which means the author did an excellent job of keeping me interested in the story. I like the historical period, and the characters were engaging, if the subject matter handling was a little...heavy-handed.

The Good -

It was paced well. After chapter 3, there was no struggle to pay attention.

The Eh -

The characters were a little flat and one-dimensional. There were also too many almost bizarre inclusions (James Pulliam's home for deformed children) that needed a bit more back story. No one reading a novel wants to spend two or three hours trying to find out what those people are doing there.

The Ugly-

The serious Atheist bent was irritating. It seemed that the characters took every opportunity to proclaim their lack of faith, which indicates anger, not unbelief.

All those fables. They were difficult to decipher and the metaphors were overdone. I skimmed them, due to boredom.

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### **Pamela says**

I received a free copy of “The End of Always” through Goodreads First Reads. And I’m extremely grateful. For it is a rare literary achievement: the blending of a masterful pen with a captivating story of substance and depth, delivered with exquisite finesse. Randi Davenport, through her novel “The End of Always,” has proven to be one of those rare literary-gem authors. Not only was I taken in by her writing style and mastery of craft, I was enchanted with the Old World Rugen fairy-tales infused into the novel through storytelling; a creative and relevant use of foreshadowing and symbolism. And I was so totally vested and immersed into the life of narrator/protagonist Marie that the world around me ceased to exist. I had become one with her story; a painfully beautiful story, fact based and timely relevant yet today; delving into the complex and controversial, generation-repeating of oppression, devaluation, and sordid abuse against daughters and

sweethearts and wives and mothers – the American female populace, representative, within every state, city, town, ethnicity and socioeconomic class.

“You should have seen it coming they said . . . You should not have made him angry. And so we are shamefaced and still and silent and scared. We are afraid of him and afraid that no one will save us, and sure that we cannot save ourselves . . . You know us and you have been us and you might be one of us yet.”

Certainly, despite the inclusion of fairy-tales,” The End of Always” isn’t a lighthearted, happily-ever-after-tale: “Love is not always like a love song. It is the darkest emotion and has to masquerade as joy or else we would never dare swim in its river.” There were portions of this emotionally-charged story that caused me to cringe with pain and tears. However, the overall spirit of the story is hopeful and strong. It breathes of self-forgiveness; letting go the naivety of youth to rise in maturity of strength; the power of determination - to stand up and make a declaration for change, which starts with just one willing voice.

The End of Always: five exquisite, masterfully crafted, hauntingly-beautiful stars

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### **Chris Sienko says**

"Some nights he hit me for no reason. Other nights I seemed to be the cause. One morning he took a razor from his kit and stropped it and then held it next to my face. One night he flicked a knife at me. Afterward, he always said he was wrong. He always said it was his fault. He always said he wanted to do the right thing. I often thought that if August were president, he could enact a hundred laws against the things he did, but still, he would do them. A hundred years from now, a thousand years from now, I would read newspaper stories about girls who disappeared at the hand of some man. And August would be the same. Law or no law. This I believed to be love."

This is the predicament of Marie Reehs. Born into a family in which violence is commonplace, she sees few other options for herself. She and her sister see their mother carried home by their father and his friends. She has been critically injured, and dies at home. No one will say what happened. Marie believes her father killed her mother. Her older sister Martha will only call it "mother's terrible accident." Younger sister Hattie is too young to know better. All the men stand guard outside, their silence a wall.

Set in rural Wisconsin in 1907, "The End of Always" presents us with the type of closed system that is a daily reality for women all over the world, in all walks of life. Marie and her sisters live in constant fear of their father, but cannot live on their own until they find a man to marry. Their father rejects all candidates for marriage. Hattie, once diagnosed with one leg longer than the other, must wear painful leg braces when it is clear that she walks better without them and has clearly grown out of them. If she refuses, her father will beat her.

The situations in this story are painful, hard to look at, and most tragically, based in real life. The real life Marie Reehs with author Randi Davenport's great-grandmother, and she researched court documents and divorce records to create the bones and tendons of the story. But at its heart, this is a novel, not a biography, and the story is just specific enough to be universal.

In attempting to escape her father's wrath, Marie falls in love with a tough but sensitive man named August Bethke (pronounced "beth-key" by the town, "bait-ka" by August and his immigrant family, who are still not many generations removed from the old world). The Bethke family is notorious, but Marie believes August

is not of that world. Against all warnings from her sister and the townspeople, Marie falls in love with and covertly marries this man who will take her away from the pain and despair. But, as you remember from the first paragraph, her next life is even worse than the previous.

The darkness and despair of this story is hard to shake. The few moments of joy and genuine abandon come from Marie's mother, who is remembered to have told her children stories from the old world, about a magical place called Rügen, in which kings and queens and chivalry still rule the day. But all else is grim. If, while reading, you find yourself mouthing the words "Wisconsin Death Trip," it's no accident -- Davenport cites a copy of "Wisconsin Death Trip" received on her 16th birthday as a big influence in both literature and life. The details are rendered with a fine literary hand, creating gossipy washerwomen, shadowy deals in the backs of bars, and a slow man who lives in the basement of a church. There's a lot of squalor, but it's all appropriately placed.

If Marie's labyrinth indeed had no entrance or exit, the horror of "The End of Always" would run the risk of veering into melodrama or hopeless despair. But as Marie escapes a near-death beating and is rehabilitated elsewhere, she sees that not every woman is conditioned to think of this as an appropriate life. While she rehabilitates in a nearby town, her new neighbor Bertha lets her in to her own life, one more loving and mutually respectful between a man and woman, the type of which seemed as mythical as the ancient fables of Rügen. Contrary to the laws of the time (which offered little recourse for women who were beaten by their husbands), none of this has to keep happening. It's cyclical, but cycles can be broken with a lot of effort. But even as Marie undergoes the considerable toil of trying to extricate herself from August, the comfort of returning to the old patterns is strong. Just apologize. Go back. Maybe it will be different. All the world wants you to go back. Just endure it. Be stronger.

I have seen a fair number of reviews of this book say that the situation seemed unrealistic, that no one would endure such suffering for so long without attempting escape. Unfortunately, human history shows otherwise. Women stay in abusive relationships all the time. They feel that their attacks are a fault of their own character. It is a psychological strange-loop as old as the world. And it's not just spousal abuse. It's all people who endure all manner of horrors everywhere without resisting. We look back on Apartheid and wonder how the majority couldn't just rise up against the infinitesimally small minority that was holding them down. The idea that "the people" will eventually rise up once they've been oppressed enough has shown time and again to be a falsehood. Resistance almost always comes from other, external factors, not from the application of enough pain. When all the laws favor those oppressing you, an exit of even average size can appear to be no bigger than a mouse hole. No act of courage is ever inevitable, and no amount of pain and hopelessness automatically turns to rebellion.

Saddest of all, things haven't changed all that much in the intervening century. This story set in 1907 is not a whit different than stories happening every day in 2014.

"The End of Always" is a great exhaling of toxic, pungent air that will hopefully allow for the possibility of a great intake of cleansing breath.

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## **K. Wills says**

Marie Reehs Bathke - the narrator of this novel - has been whispering in my ear for two days now, ever since finishing this book. I can't get her out of my head - her story, her heartbreak, her determination, her ultimate triumph. Hers is the voice of powerless women everywhere, and it offers courage to those who think they

can't break the cycle, helps them see that you do have power even when you think you don't. Your own strength can be your light, your salvation - if you let it. If you enable it, believe you have the right to be safe in this world, safe from anyone who would hurt you.

This is a novel about power and violence, but that's not all it is. It's also a novel about love - what it is, what it isn't - about the kindnesses human beings can offer one another, and about how such kindnesses can create hope in someone who thinks they have no hope. It reminds us not only what women have suffered in the past, but what they still suffer - in America, though it occurs less often than it once did, and in many places all over the globe - and it prods us to look around ourselves and be more watchful. Who can I help today? Can I offer hope and kindness to someone who feels helpless in her situation? Because any one of us could be Martha, the older sister who encourages Marie to return to her abusive husband, who thinks Marie has no future outside of her marriage; but any one of us could also be Bertha, who protects Marie, nurses her wounds, drives her to the lawyer who will fight for a divorce at a time when women simply were not granted divorces. We might also be the nameless woman who saves Marie one last time. We could even be an Edwin, a flawed person, an outcast, who nevertheless sees a wrong and tries to right it, even though society hasn't been particularly good to him.

The language in this book is what gripped me at first. Marie has a simple, believable voice, but her descriptions are lyrical and lovely - not flowery, but vivid, real, tangible. I could see the leaves on the path at her feet, the black ribbon of the river under the stars. I could feel August's fingers in her hair. And sadly - almost horrifically - I could feel August's charm in my heart, the charm of a man who knows he is charming, who can, at the flip of a coin, spin a perfectly believable lie, one with all the required details such that anyone would believe him. And because of his lovely smile, his gentle touch, we believe him. We think he is kind. But such a monster beneath it all.

I just really have no words that are adequate to describe how this book affected me. You will never forget Marie. But please - whatever you do, do not read the author's note at the end until you have finished the book. The book and its characters will have more impact for you if you wait. The author's words hit me like a blow in the chest, and I am still getting over it.

I paid much more for the Kindle book - \$12.99 - than it is currently being offered for (\$4.99 at this writing). But it was well worth every penny. I love historical novels and generally prefer strong male characters - but I will never forget Marie. Not ever. She will live in my heart always.

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### **Suzanne Gudjonis says**

The story was moving however there were times in the book that the character reflects back on special stories and it seems to overpower the initial plot.

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### **Judy Collins says**

A deep and thought-provoking historical novel, THE END OF ALWAYS is about one young, sad, yet brave and courageous woman's struggle to change her life, and break the cycle of family violence of men against women.

Randi Davenport is a talented writer and gets into the mind of seventeen- year- old Marie, the main character, set in 1907 in the rural area of Wisconsin.

There are many common threads when comparing 1907 to 2014, as violence still exists today in many families, with unhealthy learned behavior, continuing the vicious cycle. Sadly, may still apply behind the closed doors of many households today.

Like Marie's family—her dad was a very violent man, with cruel punishments, for the three daughters, even killing her mom. She vows she will never marry a violent man, as did her mother and her grandmother. She is continually haunted by the memory of her mother and longs for a better life, a more independent one without the abuse.

However, her older sister (she totally frustrated me), feels the woman has to cater to the man's wishes, and ensure he does not get mad, doing whatever they want to make peace, as part of a duty as a wife, daughter, or mother.

The punishments and abuse were horrific, and at times the audiobook was difficult to listen to, even though the narrator did an outstanding job depicting the moods and emotions of each character.

Marie meets a charismatic young man, August, and is blown away by his affections and thinks this is her way out of her bad home situation. She falls in love very fast, and disregards the signs. She is convinced he's a kind, gentle man who will never harm her.

After they eventually marry, Marie notices signs that August might not be perfect after all, but she does what other women have done for years—ignores her instincts and then hides evidence of abuse from prying eyes. Like others before her, she's too ashamed to reach out for help. But before she ends up like her mother, strangers and a relative step in, and with their backing Marie decides she can no longer be a victim.

When she jumps out of one fire into another, a controlling and abusive man, who makes her quit her job and gives her no money for food. When she tries to get money for food from her sister (money she gave her sister), he beats her. Marie falls under August's spell so easily.

Marie changes drastically during second half of the novel, fighting for herself. Finally, this courageous young woman gets help from other nearby neighbors, and goes up against a man's world with an attorney, to save herself and her future, with court battles which will try and tear down her self-esteem; the actions of officials all catering to the man. Which is worse, a husband or the father?

This incredible journey to self-discovery and triumph was inspired by real events in the author's family history as Davenport begins reading her great-grandmother's court records, who also worked in a laundry. The author began thinking what it was like, and her great-grandmother's dreams. As she began researching the family and the time period, she discovered the history of violence in her family. This related to the inspiration for the book as part of the American experience.

A powerful story of a woman's desperation and brave efforts to escape a brutal heritage, to end the family violence and help set a precedent for other women in the future. An intense statement to the power of determination and hope for a better future---a gripping reminder of our nation's long love affair with violence.

This story will ring true --women from generations past, prior to women's rights, and some even today. We

take for granted our rights in today's American society; however, there are many women who suffered severely in past generations, even our own mothers, grandmothers, or great-grandmothers. As the novel reiterates, some die at the hands of a man's violence and abuse, with no remorse.

THE END OF ALWAYS is a reminder of other addictive diseases, such as alcoholism, violence, drugs, or a specific unhealthy environment—devastating the lives of those in the household, their self-esteem and can destroy their lives and future. These victims(most of the time), want help to escape this abuse and addiction, unless they are brainwashed into thinking they are the cause, or a curse.

These victims swear they will never find themselves in this same situation. Yet, most of the time, they are the ones who live to repeat more of the same, choosing a spouse, or friend, exactly like the mother or father, and repeating the vicious cycle, carrying on to the next generation. If they do break away, will they be strong enough not to be pulled back in?

This insightful novel explores the intense emotions involved with women at the hands of men, before women's rights. They learn to live with it, subjected to cruel abuse, walking on eggshells, at the mercy of the man's mood or drinking. Most do not have the guts, or means to try and leave. Most men did not allow their wives to work, so they had no financial support to break free. Some are addicted to this personality, thinking they will change, or they need to change their behavior.

There are German myths and stories sewn into the narrative of THE END OF ALWAYS. I believe sometimes fairy tales and fables can cause certain false expectations in a realistic world, or the person looks to one person to change their future, versus trying to change their own fate themselves.

Rather than witnessing violence in THE END OF ALWAYS, we often see evidence of it on the bodies of women in the novel, including Marie and her mother. I feel Davenport focused more of the aftermath rather than the actual abuse, to offer readers more insight into the actual feelings, the emotions each character experienced at the time, their thought process, as well as options or course of action. You get a real insight into the character.

"Throughout the novel, men exert their control over women in many ways: Martha is forbidden to see George; Hattie is forced to wear leg braces she does not need; August has Marie quit her job and does not provide food for her. There are many other examples. How do you feel about these instances? Do some men still try to control women in the same way today?"

Yes, men with control issues and insecurities try to tear down a woman to make themselves feel more superior. There is still little protection for a woman, until the man actually does great harm, and sometimes this is too late. I believe it is worse for a woman with children at home with no income; thinking she is protecting her children, but may be doing more harm by staying, or a woman fears the unknown if she tries to leave. Most of the time an abuser does not allow a wife to have friends, as they run the risk of having support to go up against them.

There are women's support groups out there today, and as in the novel, Marie finds comfort and support with other stronger women and men as friends. You want to shake some sense into these girls and women and say just LEAVE; however, this is the era, with lack of education and resources... The government, officials, employers – virtually, no laws to protect, and no one respected women, nor cared about their opinions.

I would encourage readers to visit the author's website, to learn more about her books, background, history, violence, as well as some informative points for book clubs, and an excellent reading group guide.

A deep and moving story with rich characters, this book will appeal to those drawn to strong female characters, as well as readers of literary and American historical fiction. Looking forward to reading more from this new found author!

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### **Cheryl Ann says**

This was an interesting book.. Made me realize where my mothers generation came up with crap. Some of the statements in this book about mom saying to child and sister to sister were my own moms words. It is so sad the abuse that women went threw back in the day... They were considered objects for sale and owned. Also the woman who picks someone like her father as a husband becuse she know no different is sad.

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