



Every Note Played

Lisa Genova

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From neuroscientist and New York Times bestselling author of *Still Alice* comes a powerful and heartbreaking exploration of regret, forgiveness, freedom, and what it means to be alive.

An accomplished concert pianist, Richard received standing ovations from audiences all over the world in awe of his rare combination of emotional resonance and flawless technique. Every finger of his hands was a finely calibrated instrument, dancing across the keys and striking each note with exacting precision. That was eight months ago.

Richard now has ALS, and his entire right arm is paralyzed. His fingers are impotent, still, devoid of possibility. The loss of his hand feels like a death, a loss of true love, a divorce—his divorce.

He knows his left arm will go next.

Three years ago, Karina removed their framed wedding picture from the living room wall and hung a mirror there instead. But she still hasn't moved on. Karina is paralyzed by excuses and fear, stuck in an unfulfilling life as a piano teacher, afraid to pursue the path she abandoned as a young woman, blaming Richard and their failed marriage for all of it.

When Richard becomes increasingly paralyzed and is no longer able to live on his own, Karina becomes his reluctant caretaker. As Richard's muscles, voice, and breath fade, both he and Karina try to reconcile their past before it's too late.

As poignant and powerful as Jojo Moyes's *Me Before You*, *Every Note Played* is a masterful exploration of redemption and what it means to find peace inside of forgiveness.

Every Note Played Details

Date : Published March 20th 2018 by Gallery/Scout Press

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Author : Lisa Genova

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Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Adult Fiction

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From Reader Review Every Note Played for online ebook

Jen says

ALS. Another disease that robs people of who they are and leaves them in a carcass of who they once were. Richard, an established and famous pianist, develops ALS and loses his ability to play and so much more. His ex-wife, Karina, in a unselfish act to reconcile their differences as he nears death, offers to assist him with what's left of living.

Genova is a masterful educator. Not only skilled in the neurological expertise she possesses but shares it in a story telling fashion that takes the cold science out of the disease and makes it compassionately human.

4.25??

Debbie says

I couldn't take it!

No no no!! This read like a detailed, precise instruction manual for caregivers whose patients are dying horrible deaths. I wanted fiction! The fact that the book had characters and a plot couldn't save it for me—I was too distracted by the endless and often gross descriptions of the ALS demon. I might as well have been reading about a puppy getting tortured to death.

It's just me, folks. Genova is an excellent writer and educator. I just think she went overboard this time. Everyone else loved this book, so just ignore my review. It's so hard to admit that I hated it; I wanted to be in the gush club with all my buds. Perhaps a fuller review to follow.

Thanks to NetGalley for the advance copy.

Lisa says

Every Note Played

Lisa Genova

MY RATING ??????????

PUBLISHER Gallery/Scout Press

PUBLISHED March 20, 2018

An emotional profound chronicle of the terrifying effects of ALS disease and the opportunity for redemption it brought to one family.

SUMMARY

Richard Evans loves the attention and applause when he plays. He's an accomplished classical concert pianist and has played in the most famous concert halls all over the world. His fingers are finely calibrated instruments that dance across keys, making music come alive. But now Richard has ALS and his right arm is paralyzed, his left is not far behind. Karina, his forty-five year-old ex-wife is also paralyzed, paralyzed by excuses and fear, and stuck in an unfulfilling life as a piano teacher, having given up her dreams of a jazz pianist long ago. She despises Richard and blames him for their failed marriage and her lost career. As Richard's ALS progresses and he is no longer able to live on his own, Karina becomes his reluctant caretaker.

"He counts five other people close enough to hear him if he yells, but they might as well be in Timbuktu because he'll never ask any of these strangers for help. And he'll never ask his father or brothers in New Hampshire or his daughter in Chicago. And he can't ask Trevor in New York or his medical team at Mass General or even Bill, who is somewhere with his next client. He is alone in the Public Garden. He's alone in his home, He's alone in his ALS. And he's suddenly, overwhelmingly terrified."

REVIEW

Every Note Played is about much more than ALS. It is about taking something as horrific as ALS, and using it to make amends, to set things straight and to apologize for all the hurt Richard and Karina have caused each other, before it's too late. Basically it's about forgiveness. The feelings and emotions brought out in the story were striking and the character development was superb. Lisa Genova's writing is amazingly lyrical, much like the beautiful Schumann's Fantasia in C Major that Richard played at Carnegie Hall. Genova derived her vivid descriptions of Richard's symptoms and her understanding of the disease and its progression directly from several very dear friends with ALS. Similar to her 2009 book *Still Alice*, and her mother's Alzheimer's disease, for her, it's personal. That is precisely what makes *Every Note Played* one of the best books of 2018.

Thanks to Netgalley, Gallery/Scout Press and Lisa Genova for an advanced reading copy of this book in exchange for a honest review.

"Every note played is a life and a death. "

JanB says

Lisa Genova has done it again – this is an absolutely brilliant book about ALS and the effects on the entire family. Genova has a gift for putting her readers right there with her characters. She does a great service in fostering knowledge and empathy for all those affected by the diseases she writes about. I buddy read this with my GR friend Victoria and it inspired some truly fantastic discussions. Thanks Victoria!

Richard is a world-class pianist who is "loved by everyone and by no one". His professional career has never been better while his personal life is a disaster. He's divorced from Karina and estranged from Grace, his college-aged daughter. Yet, when it becomes clear Richard can no longer care for himself, Richard moves back to the family home and Karina becomes his reluctant caregiver.

This is not an easy book to read. It's messy, it's horrifying. The situations are so vividly drawn, so real, I could feel Richard's pain, shame, and humiliation. Genova unflinchingly shows us the physical and emotional devastation as ALS robs Richard of everything he holds dear. The difficulty of the caregiver role is not ignored or glossed over as we see Karina struggle with emotional and physical exhaustion.

It can be uncomfortable reading, but how can we have compassion and truly empathize without fully understanding what it's like to walk that path?

The work of dying is emotional as well as physical. There are a lot of unresolved issues this family must work through: regret, guilt, anger, resentment. As their past is revealed, there are a few surprise revelations in store for the reader. The family is a dysfunctional one and no one talks to one another about the stuff that matters, which can be frustrating as a reader. So much pain, so much misunderstanding could have been resolved if only they talked to one another long ago. I didn't find Richard and Karina the most likable of characters and the fact that I felt enormous empathy for them is a testament to the author's talent. Seeing growth in the characters was one of my favorite parts of the book.

The epilogue was moving as Lisa Genova gives credit to the people affected by ALS who opened up to her as she did research for the book. Sadly, none are alive to read this book.

Highly recommended!

Cheri says

4.5 Stars

"If Karina had grown up fifteen kilometers down the road in either direction, north or south, in Gliwice or Bytom instead of Zabrze, her whole life would be different. Location matters in destiny as much as it does in real estate."

Growing up in Zabrze, Karina had the advantage of learning how to play the piano by Mr. Borowitz, who taught his students to play Chopin. The piano became her way out of Poland to America and to everything that life brought to her after. In America, she met the man who would become her husband, Richard, and together they brought a new life into this world, their daughter Grace. As this begins, Grace is off to college, not quite one year after Karina and Richard's divorce was finalized the September before.

Richard is a classical concert pianist, world renowned, as this begins, and he's just been given the diagnosis of ALS. For a while, he's in a bit of denial, and then, one day he can't control the rhythm of his hand trying to keep time with the music. And then there are other symptoms, dropping a half full cup of coffee, no longer having enough strength to clip his toenails, spasms in his fingers, his thumb.

"This is not a temporary problem."

When Karina hears this news, not – of course – from Richard, but at a party, she can't believe it is true, and so she makes an impromptu visit to Richard's place, and it ends with Richard angry, upset, and Karina sitting on the steps outside crying.

Coming to terms with this disease can't be an easy thing to face, and just as Lisa Genova excelled in 'Still Alice' on the topic of early-onset Alzheimer's, robbing the victim of memories and abilities over time, she excels in this disease that slowly robs Richard of more and more of his ability to take care of himself, to do the one thing that brings him joy: playing the piano.

Eventually, he moves back to the home he had lived in with Karina before they divorced, and even while

she's offering this option to him, she can't believe that she is offering to do this, to care for this man who was unfaithful to her, and physically and emotionally distant to both her and their daughter. Richard has a difficult time believing it, either.

Many, maybe most, people live their lives without taking too much time out for reflecting on why they've behaved badly toward another, to make amends, to find a sense of peace for all. This is quite reflective on the subject of forgiveness, both offering it and receiving it. It is also a thought-provoking story of how quickly ALS typically progresses, and how quickly life can change with just three letters.

There are also the thoughts of a man whose life has changed from touring the world, playing at such venues as Carnegie Hall, and when he wasn't playing for others, he would play for his own enjoyment. To go from that to losing some ability to play, eventually losing more abilities, having less freedom to go and do, and being left with little alternative to spending entire days with only his thoughts.

As bleak as that may sound, this isn't a depressing story. It's sad, of course, but Genova does such a wonderful job of injecting humour and lightness through the darkness.

"Someday, scientists will discover a vaccine, a prophylactic, a cure, and people will talk about ALS the way they talk about polio. Parents will tell their children that people used to get something called ALS, and they died from it. It was a horrible disease that paralyzed its victims. Children will vaguely imagine the horror of it for a moment before skipping along to a sunnier topic, fleetingly grateful for a reality that will never include those three letters."

From your pen to God's ears, Lisa Genova.

Many thanks, once again, to the Public Library system, and the many Librarians that manage, organize and keep it running, for the loan of this book!

Emily May says

His neurons are dying, and the muscles they feed are literally starving for input. Every twitch is a muscle stammering, gasping, begging to be saved. They can't be saved.

I don't know what it is that makes these, um... medical dramas(?) of Genova's so damn compelling. Some writers just seem to have that certain way with words that draws you into the story and the characters' lives. It doesn't matter that her books aren't action-packed; **they are pageturners anyway.**

Every Note Played sees a famous and extremely talented pianist developing ALS (or Lou Gehrig's disease). Richard has dedicated his entire life to the piano and music. It is who he is on a deep, cellular level. In fact, he has sacrificed many other areas of his life to focus on his career playing with various orchestras around the world. When his precious hands start to fail him, he is forced to look at what's left of his life.

It is obvious that the author is a neuroscientist. She knows the details of the disease and takes us through the grueling daily challenges of living with ALS that most of us probably never thought about. She dispels

myths surrounding the disease - such as that ALS sufferers tend to live a long time, like Stephen Hawking. Hawking has lived an abnormally long time with the disease, and most people die within a few years of diagnosis. There is one pitiful treatment option available. There is no cure.

Genova also creates some **really interesting character dynamics**. There's no pity party for Richard. In fact, the perspective of the novel moves between Richard and that of his ex-wife Karina, and we discover that Richard has kinda been an asshole for a lot of his life. Arrogant. Self-absorbed. And yet this works really well and feels less manipulative than if Richard had been a saint.

You might think we would have less sympathy for a man like this, and yet there is something deeply sad about it. To see this proud, arrogant man dress up in his tux, alone in his apartment, and play left-handed until he can play no more is hard to witness. In both this book and *Still Alice*, Genova explores what it means to experience an ultimate loss of self - an intelligent woman losing her memories, a pianist losing use of his hands - and how a person must live with this.

Her books are often sad books, but they feel refreshingly free of manipulation. They are not tear-jerkers that set out to make us cry. She simply creates interesting characters in terrible situations and explores how they deal with them. I like this. I equally like that she chose to focus on an unusual dynamic - that between a divorced middle-aged couple who really dislike each other. The relationship between Richard and Karina is as fascinating as everything else.

Also, I was surprised how the author pulled me into the music part of the story. I'm not a musical person, to be honest. I love listening to all kinds of music, but I often feel cold when authors describe the feeling of being extremely passionate about playing an instrument and getting lost in the notes. That's not something I've ever really understood and if you played me a note I couldn't even hazard a guess if it was ABCDEF or G, so books about music are usually boring to me. But the passion for music here really worked. The intoxicating feeling of the music as Richard uses it to escape reality is a good source of relief between the progressions of the disease.

In short, *Every Note Played* is an unputdownable character portrait that informs about ALS on a painfully human level.

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Lindsay - Traveling Sister says

4.5 stars!

Powerful. Emotional. Heart wrenching. Captivating. Eye-opening. Informative.

Every Note Played is the story of Richard, a world famous pianist who, in the midst of his thriving career, develops ALS. We witness this devastating disease take over and paralyze his body, stripping him of his career, relationships, pride, independence, freedom and more.

I admit I knew next to nothing about ALS prior to picking up this engrossing book. Lisa Genova beautifully writes an engaging and deeply moving story that took me on a journey that I will never forget. Genova compassionately reveals the private details - the symptoms, medications, side effects, equipment needed and

family decisions that this devastating disease forces upon you. It is not an easy read, but it is an important one.

This book impacted me so deeply. At the end of the novel, there is “Lisa’s Call To Action”. It asks the reader to put ‘empathy to action’ by making a small donation to ALS care and research. (For more information, please visit www.lisagenova.com and click on the “Readers In Action” button). Upon finishing this novel, I headed straight for that website. My donation is in the hopes of research finding a cure, but also as a way to ‘thank’ Lisa Genova for writing this deeply touching and unforgettable book.

This was a Traveling Sister Read which largely enhanced my reading journey. To find this review, along with the other Traveling Sister reviews, please visit Norma and Brenda’s fabulous blog at:

<https://twosisterslostinacoulee.com/2...>

A big thank you to NetGalley, Simon & Schuster Canada and Lisa Genova for providing me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review! It was an absolute honour and pleasure to read this fantastic book!

Esil says

Lisa Geneva’s novels are purposely didactic, in the sense that she uses her fiction to teach. In her case, she strives to teach her audience about medical conditions and illnesses. For example, she’s written about Alzheimers (Still Alice) and autism (Love Anthony). Every Note Played focuses on ALS or motor neurone disease.

I have found Geneva’s books uneven as fiction. Still Alice blew me away, but some books felt like the didacticism overtook the story. Every Note Played didn’t blow me away, but it’s definitely one of Genova’s strong books in my view. Richard Evans is a forty five year old concert pianist when he is diagnosed with ALS. Out of necessity, his ex-wife Karina becomes his caregiver. The book is fairly short and Genova does not dawdle on the progress of the disease. Rather the story moves forward in robust increments, showing the brutal rapid devastation caused by ALS.

Besides the story of the disease, Genova does a good job with Richard and Karina. As Richard’s disease slowly traps him in an increasingly uncooperative body, she shows how people can trap themselves in their own thought patterns. Karina helps Richard out of a sense of duty and he accepts her help because of necessity, but there is nothing sweet or easy about this. There is some reckoning at the end, but Genova does not lapse into sentimentality. Much remains unsaid and regretted. Sad but realistic.

As I write this, I’ve just found out that Stephen Hawking died today. He had ALS. The course of his illness was unusual. Most people with ALS die much younger and most do not continue to live brilliant productive lives. Genova does a good job of highlighting this brutal disease with unsentimental humanity.

Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for an opportunity to read an advance copy.

Erin says

Thanks to NetGalley, Simon& Shuster Canada, Lisa Genova, and all those who shared thier personal ALS journey in the makings of this book.

First, I have to stop crying. This is perhaps the most powerful book Lisa Genova has written since *Still Alice*. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis(ALS) is the medical storyline brought to the surface in this contemporary family drama. Richard and Karin are the divorced couple that reluctantly find it becoming part of their world. Both Richard and Karin are carrying a lot of anger and hurt from their rocky road of a marriage, but when Karin becomes the default caregiver for Richard- both must confront the past. As well, the couple's only daughter, Grace, has a rocky relationship with her father and Lisa Genova skillfully weaves this into the story as well.

Lisa Genova is the master storyteller of our era, bringing very difficult diseases(Alzheimer's, Huntington's and ALS) to the attention of her readers. She does it the hard way too! Like her other books, we are told the story not just from the spouse's point of view, but the patient himself. That alone can be a daunting task, but LG does it with the utmost care and respect.

I am beyond excited to talk about this book with my fellow readers! But they might have to bring their own Kleenex box!

Norma * Traveling Sister says

Wow!! EVERY NOTE PLAYED was an absolutely phenomenal book and it was quickly placed into my 2018 favourite reads shelf!

EVERY NOTE PLAYED by LISA GENOVA is a deeply moving, sad, and an absolutely fantastic novel that had me totally emotionally engaged and interested throughout the entire book. I was totally immersed in this story making it extremely hard for me to put down.

LISA GENOVA delivers an empowering and beautifully written story here with an extremely enthralling storyline that was easy to understand and follow. The story is told in two different perspectives from Richard's point of view who is a world-renowned concert pianist living with ALS and his ex-wife's, Karina his caretaker. I was totally in awe with what I learned about ALS, the characters courage throughout this book and the familial dynamics between the characters.

To sum it all up it was an interesting, powerful, unforgettable, emotional, and an enjoyable read with a very touching, heart-wrenching, and bittersweet ending. Would highly recommend!!

Thank you so much to NetGalley, Simon & Schuster Canada, and Lisa Genova for the opportunity to read an advanced copy of this book. It was an absolute pleasure!!!

Review written and posted on our themed book blog:

Two Sisters Lost In A Coulee Reading

<https://twosisterslostinacoulee.com>

Coulee: a term applied rather loosely to different landforms, all of which refer to a kind of valley. Where I live I am surrounded by Coulees!

Dorie says

To me there is no doubt that the main “character” in this book is ALS. I had watched someone, from a distance, at the Y where I belong go from being a Navy Seal to losing everything. It was terrifying just from the little that I saw every few weeks.

Richard is not a likable character. He has led a selfish life centered around his career as a concert pianist. He distanced himself from his parents and brothers, was never present for his daughter Grace and moved the family to Boston. His wife Karina gave up her Jazz piano career as there were not a jazz movement in Boston. Then she had Grace and centered her life on her.

When Richard first hears his diagnosis he is in denial, as I guess most people would be. He is convinced that somehow the disease will not progress in him. When his arm and hand begin to stop working and he can no longer play the piano, the awful weight of this disease is finally apparent to him.

The novel is told from Richard’s point of view and Karina’s. They have both hurt each other, Karina denied Richard more children without his knowing and blamed him for her stymied career. Richard was selfish, unfaithful and never encouraged Karina’s career.

This book is about ALS and we are informed in very descriptive, sometimes scary language which at times is hard to read. This book is also about forgiveness, redemption and telling those you love how you really feel.

The writing is very good, sometimes too technical and unfortunately the only glimpse of hope comes in the author’s notes “about the same time that I finished the final draft of this book, the FDA approved a new drug for the treatment of ALS. Radicava will become available by prescription to patients in August 2017, after this book goes to press” “In a trial in Japan Radicava slowed the decline in physical symptoms by 33%”.

I received an ARC of this novel from the publisher through Edelweiss, thank you.
Resubmitting my review because I would like my Facebook friends to share it :)

Elyse says

Any reader or movie goer by now has at least heard of “Still Alice”, about Alzheimer’s and dementia by Lisa Genova, which was first published in 2009.

I read that book back in 2009...before the entire world had started raving about it — which they should rightfully so - for being one of the best books they had ever read about the disease —hearing specifically from the person who ‘has’ the disease.

I had bought the book myself many times and given it as a gift.

I’ve never thought of Alzheimer’s the same again since first having read Lisa’s book. “Still Alice” literally change to me.

I’ve since read all of Lisa’s books. In each one I’ve learned about a disease from a PERSON WHO HAS ITand/or such as the people (family), whom the disease also most effects in a very real/personal - raw way —while also being accurately educated on the grueling gut wrenching factual details of the disease itself —

the developmental stages - the care involved - not leaving out any of the painstaking realities. Every book has been worthy of my time to read.

Lisa's comprehensive research- being a brilliant Harvard/linguistics teacher and researcher....along with being a wife and mother brings so much compassion and sincerity to her books, that I can barely pull myself away.

I had recently read a couple books on ALS. One was an excellent graphic memoir , about how one wife coped with her children when her husband was diagnosed with ALS, called "Last Things", by Marissa Moss...which was very moving and powerful..... so, although I wanted to read Lisa's book, before I began, I had mixed feelings because I already knew this was a horrifically sad disease. I thought I pretty much knew everything.

WHO WAS I KIDDING? Geeeee. What I knew only skimmed the surface.

Lisa COMPLETELY CHANGED how I see *ALS* - my relationship to it if you will - not sure how to express it — my association with ALS has completely been shifted- elevated - and turned upside down and around! (and I knew about this disease) —I actually didn't know about Alzheimer's in 2009, when I read Still Alice.

Today I do know more. Lisa opened the door to Alzheimer's awareness ...with more research being done maybe even because of her.

I'm suggesting that ANYONE who reads this book will walk away with MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ALS than any other mainstream book. (unless this is your field of study or you have the disease yourself or are living with someone who does). I'm shocked and humbled by just how much I really didn't get — not the nitty-gritty details which Lisa gives us. Lisa actually trusts us - the reader to hear the truth leaving nothing out. And its not pretty. Wasn't for me.

I thought this book was brilliant, and possibly Lisa's best book to date. It was GUT WRENCHING— I MEAN GUT WRENCHING for me to read some of the chapters —

GRUELING- PAINFUL - I WAS IN TEARS:

....reading about feeding tubes, choking, shitting, pissing, breathing, swallowing, all the equipment, the details about the ALS clinic, the neurologist, pulmonologist, radiologist, speech-language, pathologist, gastroenterologist, barium mixed in applesauce, x-rays, special wheelchair, the BiPAP cart, the HeadMouse, liquid shakes, worry not to lodge the windpipe, aspiration pneumonia, food syringes....all of it could make me cringe.

Honestly- I just wanted THE SUFFERING to end - I WISHED FOR A MERCY KILLING.

I HATE HEARING ABOUT THIS DISEASE- THE FRICKEN WORSE!

I'm sooooo sorry for those who have it - and God Bless the caretakers.

BUT WAIT.....THERE IS ALSO STORY IN HERE TOO... about love, family, regrets, forgiveness and music.

I'm a weeping mess.....THIS IS LISA'S BEST!

.....You'll meet Richard Evans- concert pianist.

.....You'll meet Karina - who not only was once an excellent pianist herself who now teaches piano out of her home - but that woman can cook Polish food like nobody's business. She's the ex-wife to Richard. They had one hell of a nasty divorce.

.....Grace- is their daughter in college.

.....Elise — (always fun to read about a character with my own name) is Karina's friend.

.....Bill — Richard's loving - fun - gay caretaker

My heart is enrapturedI have a much deeper understanding for what it feels like to live with ALS.

Lisa invited readers to take a moment to make a donation to ALS.....@

www.LisaGenova.com. "Readers in Action: ALS". - button to donation.

ALS ONE, is an organization determined to deliver treatment or cure for ALS by 2020 and dedicated to offering improve care now.

For more information on ALS ONE, go to www.ALSONE.org

Thank You Gallery/Scout Press, Netgalley, and the inspiring dedicated Lisa Genova

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

5 educational and emotionally resonant stars to Every Note Played, my first Lisa Genova novel! ? ? ? ?
?

I cannot imagine this book being any more emotionally-engaging than it was! I was enthralled from the first chapter, and part of it may have been due to a small personal connection.

Richard is a famous concert pianist diagnosed with ALS. His ex-wife, Karina, teaches children piano lessons in his shadow. When Karina learns of Richard's diagnosis, she walks through many different expected emotions, especially since their divorce was less than amicable.

As the heartbreaking effects of ALS ravage away Richard's body and his ability to do what he loves most, he is forced to accept help, and eventually it comes from the most unexpected person, Karina. What follows is a captivating tale of redemption and sacrifice.

I learned a vast amount about ALS- its effects, how it progresses, but most importantly, how it might affect the emotions of the individual with the diagnosis, as well as the loved ones impacted.

On a personal note, my dad was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease a few years ago. While it is not ALS, I felt an attachment because as Richard lost his ability to play piano, what he loved most in his life, I was repeatedly thinking of my dad who has lost his ability to sing due to Parkinson's. My dad studied voice and music, and even though he's self-conscious about singing now, he was able to sing a few words of Happy Birthday to me back in December. A memory I will treasure, as I will cherish the experience of reading this book. I couldn't help but feel personally connected to Richard's story.

Overall, Every Note Played is a book I highly recommend because it's well-written, thoughtful, enlightening, and poignantly powerful.

This was a Traveling Sister Read with the best kind of book to share with my sisters. Please check out Brenda and Norma's blog for all the Traveling Sister reviews: <https://twosisterslostinacoulee.com>

Thank you to Lisa Genova, Gallery/Scout Press, and Netgalley for the copy.

Susanne Strong says

4 Brilliant Stars.

Lisa Genova does it again. In “Every Note Played” – she tackles the toughest of medical diseases: “ALS” – also known as “Lou Gehrig’s Disease” and she does it with dignity and finesse.

Richard is a successful classical concert pianist. His life is his work. He gave up his family for it: his marriage fell apart and his daughter Grace has become a stranger to him. Yet his career has thrived. One day however, Richard loses all feeling in the fingers of his right hand and then his entire arm becomes paralyzed. Unfortunately for him, this is only the beginning. Karina is Richard’s ex-wife. She too, is a pianist. If Richard is honest, she was a better classical pianist than he was. After they got married, Karina had Grace and her life took on a different path, one which she has never truly been satisfied with.

Once Karina finds out about Richard’s disease, everything changes for both of them and she steps into a role she never imagined. Being Richard’s caretaker is not easy on either of them. Karina and Richard each have to find a way to let go. Of the pain and the resentment they feel. Richard towards the cards he is dealt and Karina towards her ex-husband.

At its core, “Every Note Played” is a novel that explores pain and suffering, love, loss and forgiveness and what it means to find peace within oneself and with one’s life.

Lisa Genova is an incredible storyteller. In “Every Note Played” she expertly tells the story of a man who has ALS. She provides information about his disease in a way that gives us background, without overloading the reader with medical jargon. Ms. Genova makes it about Richard, Karina and Grace rather than just about the disease itself. Having read all of Ms. Genova’s prior novels, I can say that she always does her research and that was clearly the case here. I say this speaking from experience having lost two relatives to this awful disease.

There are no winners here. ALS is heartbreaking, completely unfair and just plain horrifying. “Every Note Played” reminds us how important it is to hold your friends and relatives close and make sure we show and tell them each and every day how much we love them. At times, this novel may tear your heart to shreds, make your heart flutter and make your eyes fill with tears which simply can’t help but runneth over.

Thank you for bringing such an important story to the hearts and minds of all of us Ms. Genova. Well done.

This was a Traveling Sister read. It was an extremely emotional book for many of the sisters and I was lucky to read it with them. Thanks for the discussions sisters! For the Full Traveling Sister Group Review, please see Brenda and Norma’s Amazing Blog: <https://twosisterslostinacoulee.com/>

Published on Goodreads, Amazon and Twitter on 3.29.18.

Diane S ? says

Once again Genova takes us deep into the world of a debilitating illness, and it's effects on the person and their family. Richard was a man who was considered a success, a world renowned pianist, he has played all over the world, with many different symphonies, in many different venues. Piano has been his life since he was a young child, much to his father's dismay, and he has lost much in the quest for his career. Divorced from his wife Karina, his only daughter who he barely knows, now in college, he is basically alone. First his right hand would no longer respond, a doctor's visit, eventually the diagnosis, ALS.

Although I have heard of this devastating condition, I had previous to reading this, no first hand knowledge of this disease. Genova does not spare the reader as they learn of the horrifying progress of this disease. We read Richards thoughts as the degree progresses, as he loses not only his career, his love for his piano, but control of his body, step by step. Forced into a situation he has no choice but to accept, we watch as this very self involved man regrets many of the steps he took in his life. Karina, narrates her own story, the back story of she and Richard, and why she is doing what she feels she needs to now.

Sad, yes, but this is also a novel of love, courage, second chances, regrets, responsibility and family. The hardships of caregivers, the fear of failing, and the amazing people who make this their career. It is humbling, scary, and emotionally engages the reader. All the things, this author, does so ably, both informative and personal, another unforgettable story.

ARC from Edelweiss.
