



## Silent Alarm

*Jennifer Banash*

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Alys's whole world was comprised of the history project that was due, her upcoming violin audition, being held tightly in the arms of her boyfriend, Ben, and laughing with her best friend, Delilah. At least it was—until she found herself on the wrong end of a shotgun in the school library. Her suburban high school had become one of those places you hear about on the news—a place where some disaffected youth decided to end it all and take as many of his teachers and classmates with him as he could. Except, in this story, that youth was Alys's own brother, Luke. He killed fifteen others and himself, but spared her—though she'll never know why.

Alys's downward spiral begins instantly, and there seems to be no bottom. A heartbreakingly beautiful story.

## Silent Alarm Details

Date : Published March 10th 2015 by Putnam Juvenile

ISBN :

Author : Jennifer Banash

Format : Kindle Edition 336 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Realistic Fiction, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Silent Alarm for online ebook

### **Jeraca says**

Wow. What an emotional novel. Reading about a school shooting is gut wrenching itself, but reading about the shooters family's backlash and how it affected them... Banash did a wonderful job, in my opinion.

I could not imagine my sibling doing this. Alys not only lived through it, but she saw her brother in the act. In fact, she could have easily been one of the victims. Then to have to live everyday knowing that, knowing the people her own flesh and blood shot... Not that I have any experience, but I think the way Alys coped and lived afterward was very mature almost.

The situation with her parents was bound to happen, even before Luke took a shotgun to school. They were always arguing, never happy. Maybe that could have been a factor in Luke's decision. Maybe not.

I like how Banash didn't make excuses for Luke. The event happened. Nothing could have happened to change it. But the way Alys coped through it? That can be changed. It has stages and Alys had to figure out how to live again after her brothers actions.

Reading about it happening through Alys's eyes at the beginning of the novel was surreal. I had goosebumps and tears were building in my eyes.

Riley and Alys's friendship made me smile. They needed to lean on each other and hopefully when they both have moved on their friendship will last and they will stay in touch. Delilah and Ben are jerks. I can understand Ben's point of view because of his sister but Delilah has no excuse what so ever and she is just a terrible friend. Good riddance getting rid of her.

Seriously, this was an amazing novel, even though it is a terrible subject. I think Banash did an awesome job with this book and I will not be forgetting it any time soon.

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### **KrystalTickles says**

I didn't know how this book was going to go. I'm very happy read it. I was taken away by the writing and the emotion. The thoughts from aly's are bone chilling accurate to what you would suspect to a victim/survivor and sister to a killer. This story grabs you from the first chapter and makes your soul discover sympathy where you hadn't thought possible.

Positives:

- 1)Emotional depth
- 2)Emotional roller coaster
- 3)Thought provoking
- 4)Well written
- 5)well developed characters
- 6)A protagonist to cheer for and feel connected to
- 7)moving plot

- 8)entertaining
- 9)Heartbreaking
- 10)realism is profound

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## **Sara Gochowski says**

In her newest novel, *Silent Alarm*, Jennifer Banash explores the emotional topic of school shootings and their aftermaths from the point-of-view of the shooter's sister. Alys is a daughter, a musician, a best friend, and a girlfriend, but, after her brother opens fire on their school campus and then kills himself, Alys is only the sister of a murderer. Her parents, incapacitated by grief and guilt, retreat within themselves, leaving Alys to work through her complicated feelings and confusion by herself. Because Luke took his own life as well, the entire community, including Alys's best friend and boyfriend, blame Alys for not noticing her brother's dangerous downward spiral and preventing its culmination.

*"I'm sorry,' I say for what feels like the millionth time. I know, even as my mouth forms the words, that I will say them for the rest of my life. Forever. That there will never be a time when I am not, in some small way, apologizing for the damage my brother has wrought. Luke is dead too, like Katie, I know, but this makes no difference. My grief will always be less important."*

A large part of Alys's inner struggle centers around her inability to completely hate and revile her brother like the rest of the community does following the shooting. She is angry, hurt, and shocked, but she still loves him. Her final images of him, pointing the shotgun at her face, then turning and killing a girl nearby, doesn't match the brother she grew up with. The brother she rode to school with every morning, bickered with, and loved, even after he seemed to withdraw from their family and succumb to his dark moods, turning inward. Her confusion is pervasive, jumping off the page in an affecting way, forcing the reader to confront the difficult truth that Luke, despite her actions, is neither wholly good nor bad.

*"The choir box is empty this morning, and I long for some kind of melody, the crash of the organ, the flight of angelic voices. My fingers twitch against the fabric of my dress and I close my eyes, remembering the Debussy, the Brahms lullaby I played each night before bed, my face pressed to the pad beneath my chin, arms cutting the air around me. The fact that Luke doesn't deserve music, the blissful lilt and salvation of it, make me, for some reason, saddest of all."*

Music is an important part of Alys's life, but, after the shooting, she separates herself from her violin and the solace it provides. Not only does Alys feel that she has lost that part of herself, she feels she no longer deserves to feel the joy it brings her. She questions whether she could have prevented her brother's actions - if only she had been less involved in her own life, if only she weren't so distracted by music while her brother suffered enough that he brought a gun to school and murdered their friends. She believes that, if her brother does not deserve music, she doesn't either. I especially loved Alys's conversations with her violin instructor, an older woman who has lived a long life filled with both love and loss. She is one of the very few characters in *Silent Alarm* who recognizes and acknowledges Alys's pain.

*"It feels like I died with Luke, alongside all of those kids who looked up from gossiping in the quad, from the useless pages of their books in the library, to meet the barrel of my brother's gun, his face filled with hate. In a way, I died the moment Luke walked into that library, the moment we came face-to-face. Now I'm trapped in the land of the dead, a barren landscape, shards of bone cutting my feet, their voices a soft chatter, telling*

*me to follow."*

Banash's decision to tell this story from Alys's point-of-view, rather than Luke's or a classmate's, was insightful. Alys provides the reader with a singular context through which to view the shooting because she is both a victim and a relative. It's unlikely that any other narrator would have the same struggle as Alys, whose two very different mental images of Luke - one as loving brother, one as murderer - are at war. Because of Alys's distinct voice and unique view of the situation and its aftermath, I was able to connect to *Silent Alarm* in a very real and powerful way.

Highly recommended.

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### **Melissa says**

It's tough to say this was a fantastic book because of the horrific events that take place. However it is a fantastic book and once again, #Penguin, #PenguinTeen #GPPutnam #PutnamBooks and this author have brought yet another memorable and wonderful #book to my #2015Reading year! ~\*Thank You\*~ For the pleasure to have been able to read this book.

Due for publishing in March so I'll have a better review posted before then. However, right I do highly recommend it. Can't hide from reality and reading it from the perspective of the MC was a nice change for me. Again, the horrific topic aside, but it's done so tastefully, respectfully and what seems to me to be very true to what the reality of it all is.....Beautifully written!

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### **Jennifer Daniel says**

A frank look at how a school shooting affected the shooters sister and parents. I wish they would have given a little more insight into Luke's motivation. They spoke of him having "moods" and being depressed but I wanted to know more. Maybe the author didn't share that since the family didn't have that information and she wanted the reader to feel that frustration.

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### **Giselle says**

This was *very* dark, very gritty, and very powerful. I have read a few books about school shootings, and while my favorite will always be *Nineteen Minutes*, this is one I'm not likely to forget any time soon.

*Silent Alarm* focuses more on after the fact than the shooting itself. We do see the event unfold, but the story is more about Alys having to live with what her brother did. As expected, there's a great amount of grief, of guilt, of "what ifs" on her part. Her character is developed in a way that even though she closes herself off emotionally - self preservation and all - she still lets us in. With many emotional books like this, I keep myself at arm's length due to the overwhelming nature of the character's state of mind, but with Alys, I was still able to fully immerse myself into her shoes. I didn't fear the grief she was trying to push away, I wanted to be there for her.

This highly character based novel touches on many aspects surrounding such a tragedy. The reaction of the

community - the need for everyone to lay blame on the family - is very real and very hurtful. People do react like that in real life, and it's unfortunate, yet you can't help but understand both sides. Blame is a natural human response to grief, a destructive response, but we rarely put ourselves in the others' shoes. In this novel, we see exactly how this affects Alys's family. A family that is stopped in its tracks, shocked by what their son did, but a family that is grieving like all the others nonetheless. It's sad to see her friends and even boyfriend turn against her for what she couldn't control, but it's also good to see who your real friends are in these situations. I was happy that she had at least one shoulder to lean on -her brother's best friend - to help slow down, even if it's just a little bit, this downward spiral. Don't take this as a sign of romance, however. This book has only the tiniest touch of romance - if I even dare call it that. It's more like a longing of what she once had.

Even though the writing overall was good and emotionally charged, I was not a fan of the style she uses to convey Alys' real opinion of what her brother did. We'd get random bits of internal dialogue inside parenthesis, usually mid sentence, that I found pretty distracting. Fortunately it's not used excessively, so it doesn't become a huge deal. Also, don't expect some clear-cut, intensely plotted book full of twists and shocking turns. This novel is a character-driven story, through and through.

Highly recommended to fans of dark contemporaries, *Silent Alarm* is an honest and raw look at grief, at someone's life changing drastically one tragic afternoon.

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*An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.*

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at Xpresso Reads

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### **Em &#x1f352; says**

This book gripped me in so tightly that I started it around 8pm and here I am now, sad and touched by it at 2am.

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### **Miranda Lynn says**

#### **4.5 stars**

Wow. Just...wow.

*Silent Alarm* was such a gripping, powerful, and *emotional* book. It's going to take me **a long time to recover** from this one.

I tend to gravitate towards dark contemporaries like this, and *Silent Alarm* was exactly what I was hoping for. It's one of those Horrible Event books, but instead of focusing entirely on that Horrible Event itself, Banash decided to make **the recovery process** take center stage. And I *loved* that.

Even though I ended up DNFing it, that specific aspect and the tone of *Silent Alarm* actually **made me think of The Last Time We Say Goodbye** by Cynthia Hand. I'm not sure how deep the parallel goes, because I

only read 50 pages, but there are definitely some similarities in my opinion.

**"Of course, now after what Luke has done, people will say, *Oh, the Aronsons. I always thought they were weird.* But we weren't. We were just like you. Except we weren't. But we didn't know it yet.**

**But you knew it, Luke, didn't you?**

**Didn't you."**

I also could really relate to one of the largest themes in *Silent Alarm*, of how, after tragedy strikes close to you, even if it's completely not your fault, it *sticks with you*. This is **something I've experienced firsthand** over the past year or so, after watching how people have reacted towards myself, but even more so my dad, in the wake of my Mom leaving him. Their separation has created an explosive reaction within the communities they're each a part of, and even now, a year later, the social ramifications it's had on him are still very much there.

The aftershock concept is just something that's not always discussed in YA, or even in books in general. Most of the time, if there's going to be some big climax, it will be towards the end of a book, and we will then only get a glimpse of the fallout. In *Silent Alarm*, **the climax takes place in the prologue, and the fallout is the book itself.** I loved this type of plot line, and very much enjoyed reading about what Alys' family went through *after* the shooting vs. what actually led up to it.

I also think that it just gives you this REALLY tangible example of **how it is for the families of criminals and killers** such as Luke. People often spend so much time worrying about and considering the feelings of the victims — as they well should! — and don't so much focus on how it's affecting that person's family, too. Both families have lost. But I think that many people consider the victims' families to have MORE of a loss, even if that's not technically true (although, really, how could you measure such a thing?).

**"Don't we have the right," my father says, the words coming thick and forced from his lips, "to get on with our lives? Don't we, Alys?"**

**"I don't know," I whisper, dropping my eyes away. "I don't know if we have the right to do anything anymore."**

And, god, the prose in this book was gorgeous. **So many highlight-able lines.** I wanted to take a bath in this book's prose. It was so sad, yet so beautiful.

I've never read anything by this author before this book, but I'm very very excited for more! There have been so many dark Contemporaries of this type come out in 2015 so far, but if you're going to pick and choose a few to read, *Silent Alarm* should definitely be on your list! It's definitely **in my Top Five Dark Contemporaries of 2015 so far!** This book is not to be missed.

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**-RadioactiveBookworm- says**

Goodreads Synopsis:

Alys's whole world was comprised of the history project that was due, her upcoming violin audition, being held tightly in the arms of her boyfriend, Ben, and laughing with her best friend, Delilah. At least it

was—until she found herself on the wrong end of a shotgun in the school library. Her suburban high school had become one of those places you hear about on the news—a place where some disaffected youth decided to end it all and take as many of his teachers and classmates with him as he could. Except, in this story, that youth was Alys's own brother, Luke. He killed fifteen others and himself, but spared her—though she'll never know why.

Alys's downward spiral begins instantly, and there seems to be no bottom. A heartbreakingly told story.

#### My Review:

I absolutely loved this book. I got it at chapters because I liked the cover and the description sounded like it would be interesting and way different than anything else I've read lately, and it sucked me into the story immediately. I don't regret buying it at all and am so glad I got to read it.

It's about this girl Alys, and her brother Luke, and their family's life after a school shooting. It's something you don't really want to think about because you hear it happening on the news but I was really interested in it for those reasons exactly. It starts off with Alys studying like any other day in the library. And just by being there, at the right place at the right time, her life is changed forever. She's haunted by what she saw and there's tons of flashbacks in the book. She just has to pick herself up and put herself back together, save herself.

The characters seem realistic and act their age, I didn't feel too old reading this book. It's so exciting and I really just couldn't put it down once I picked it up. I just kept saying, okay, one more chapter. And before I knew it, it was over. I'm so glad I read it though and I think you should check it out if you haven't yet.

Thanks for reading! Check out this review and more at my blog.

(Radioactivebookreviews.wordpress.com)

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#### Trisha says

*"You should have aimed higher, Luke. You should have.  
But not with that gun."*

Wow, this is a powerful book. A powerful story for all the wrong reasons.

School shootings. I hate them. As a mother, they honestly scare the crap out of me. And they just happen so often.....

But this story isn't from the shooter's perspective - it's the unique perspective of the aftermath of the *family* left behind by the shooter. They didn't know - *how did they miss it?* the world thinks. *What did they do to make him snap?*" they wonder.

And in it all, no one's wrong. Sure, we all wish people would rise up - be more, do more. Forgive, just like the principal commands. But to forgive is such a huge leap - and these are kids and grieving parents.

This is a powerful story, one that is important to tell because we don't always remember the ripples that happen after a shooting - that sometimes they go back to the family themselves (who are just as much victims as those at the school.)

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