



How It Ends

By Laura Wiess

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Following her stunning and critically acclaimed novels *Such a Pretty Girl* and *Leftovers*, Laura Wiess crafts a riveting and emotionally powerful tale of beauty, destruction...and love.

Seventeen-year-old Hanna has been in love with Seth for as long as she can remember, but now that she and Seth are in an actual relationship, love isn't all it's cracked up to be. Seth is controlling and all they seem to do anymore is fight. If that's what love is, Hanna doesn't want any part of it. Besides, she has something else on her mind: graduation. But she's been ignoring the school's community service requirement, and now she needs to rack up some hours in a hurry.

Hanna volunteers as a caretaker for her neighbor Mrs. Schoenmaker—an elderly woman with advanced Parkinson's whose husband can't always be there to watch over her. While caring for Mrs. S., Hanna becomes mesmerized by an audiobook that the older woman is listening to, a love story of passion, sacrifice, and complete devotion. She's fascinated by the idea that love like that really exists, and slowly, the story begins to change her. But what Hanna doesn't know is that the story she's listening to is not fiction—and that Mrs. Schoenmaker and her husband's devotion to each other is about to reach its shattering, irrevocable conclusion....

Spellbinding, timeless, and achingly poignant, *How It Ends* is a story of how love ends, how it begins, and how people and events have the ability to change who we are without our even realizing it.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Laura Wiess has written more than fifteen novels under various pseudonyms. She lives in Cumberland Valley, Pennsylvania.

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Chapter 1

Hanna

This is not exactly the exciting new high school experience I had in mind.

I'm a month into St. Ignatius, a regional, parochial school nine miles from home and I still don't know what I'm doing, where I'm going, or how I'm supposed to be.

Plus, this is the ugliest uniform in the world. It's true. I would like to know what girl-hating hag cursed us with knee-length brown plaid polyester skorts, long sleeveless vests, and baggy yellow polyester blouses.

I wish Crystal's parents had transferred her here, too, instead of keeping her in public school. Then we could be miserable together.

Oh, and I definitely need new shoes. Mine are loser wear.

Sigh.

I'd still rather be here with five hundred new kids, though, than stuck with nobody but the same boring, cliqued-out crew from junior high. They move in huddled masses just like they did in ninth grade, and seeing that makes me feel like some kind of intrepid pioneer striking out on my own.

Hanna's big adventure.

It's scary but I kind of like it.

(Cue Grandma Helen's voice) *Back straight! Stand tall! Look 'em in the eye! Smile! Never let 'em see you sweat!*

(Cue my voice) Be brave, Hanna.

School would be a lot easier if I had a partner in crime.

I miss Crystal.

I've done some research and found that most of the older girls' uniforms are way shorter and tighter than mine. I asked someone about it and she said that's because everybody hems them up and takes them in. They wear killer heels and black panty hose, too. All against the rules, but most of the nuns are old and slow, so even if one tries to snag you on a dress code violation, you can usually outrun her before she IDs you.

Turns out only us lame sophomores wear long, baggy uniforms.

Time to convince Gran to do a serious overhaul on this hideous skort.

Well, it took whining, pleading, and begging but she's hemming my skort even though my father said he didn't spend three hundred dollars on a uniform to see it turned into something too small to wear to the beach. I said everybody wears them that way, and he said (of course), *Come on, Hanna, if everybody else jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge...*

He is so tiresome sometimes.

My mother laughed and told him it was just history repeating itself because *she'd* gone to parochial school, too, and had a uniform just as ugly, and she'd always rolled her skirt up at the waist because feeling ugly was no way to spend your whole high school career.

My father just looked at her and shook his head like she was hopeless.

She laughed again and tickled him in passing. He told her to quit it but I could tell he was trying not to smile.

I love it when everybody's happy.

Oh my God, I'm in love.

Seth Kobilias.

I must have him.

He's a junior, beautiful, sexy, sweet, and I found out that Bailey, the girl he really loved last year, broke his heart so now he supposedly parties hard and goes out with a lot of different girls because he was too hurt and doesn't want to be again. He plays guitar, too, and hangs out in the courtyard.

I need to make the courtyard my new hangout ASAP.

I never felt anything like this before. I love his eyes and his smile and his hair and just everything. He's really tall, blond, and a little skinny but it looks perfect on him. He even makes a uniform jacket and tie look hot.

He hasn't noticed me yet but I can change that, I just know it. Good thing Gran Helen hemmed this uniform. Now at least when he *does* look at me, he'll be able to tell I'm a girl.

Also, I hung out with another sophomore named Sammi Holloway who I think might be my next partner in crime. We're pretty different -- she's thinner, flatter, richer, and sleeker than me, and next to her I feel like nothing but flyaway hair, frayed edges, and loose ends -- but she cracks me up bad and so far I like her a lot.

I think we could have great adventures together.

Life is very exciting these days.

I took too many classes. I have to drop some right now. They're interfering with my chance to meet Seth. The days are rushing by and I'm not getting anywhere because of all these stupid classes! I tried to dump algebra and physical science but Mr. Sung in guidance won't let me. So maybe journalism and...what? There's nothing else I can get rid of. I don't mind dumping journalism; it's all about facts, and who needs

facts when imagining what could happen is so much more satisfying?

I kept creative writing but dropped journalism so now I have an extra free period *and* I just found out that for some reason my name isn't on the sophomore Mandatory Community Service list. Yay! I probably should be worried about this but I'm not, and I'm sure not bringing it up. I can use the time for my Seth quest. I'll just make it up next year or something.

I love a good computer glitch.

My parents went on a date last night -- which kind of freaked me out because the last time they did that was like two years ago, and right after, they argued about growing apart -- so I went down to Crystal's and we passed the time hanging out with her older brother and his friends. They were full of compliments and if I didn't like Seth so much, I probably could have found myself a boyfriend.

I hope he appreciates this sacrifice.

Oh. My. God.

Seth noticed me today. For real. And it was good.

No, better than good.

Great.

I was caught in a stream of kids changing classes, flowing down the right side of the hall, and there he was, heading toward me in the stream on the left side, ambling along, head and shoulders above the crowd, laughing at something somebody said and kind of scanning oncoming traffic as he walked.

I looked at him right as he looked at me and I swear time stopped. He held my gaze for like a full three seconds, then smiled this sweet little sideways smile and lifted his chin in a *Hi*. I smiled back and then we passed and he didn't break the connection until he was almost past me.

He saw me. Out of all the hundreds of other people in that hall, it was *me* that he smiled at. Me!

These teachers take their classes way too seriously. I mean, I'm fifteen; I have like another *seventy years* to worry about zygotes or circumferences or whatever.

I wish I could just learn what I'm interested in, which would be creative writing, psychology, and nature stuff. And not biology. I don't want to hack open dead animals; I want to study them alive and healthy.

If I ever have to take biology, I'm boycotting carving up dead things, and too bad about the grade. If anybody makes me do it, I'll just throw up on purpose every single day all over the lab until they let me out. I don't care. I will not mangle dead animals.

Gran won't mind. Heck, she'll probably give me a medal.

(Cue Gran's voice): *No, Hanna, we don't kill spiders; they're the perfect natural insect control. Careful, you almost stepped on that beetle. Look, the spring fawns are out frolicking on the lawn!*

Yes, she actually uses words like *frolicking*.

She is so embarrassing sometimes. (I would never tell her that, though. It would hurt her feelings too badly.

Actually, I'd better call her soon or else her and Grandpa will show up at school or something just to make sure I'm still alive.)

Anyway, what I really need is less classes and more free time. How else am I supposed to develop into a sociable, well-rounded human being if I never have the time to get my hands on Seth?

Sammi's doing trash pickup along the roads with a bunch of other kids for her community service, and yesterday some lady in a Lexus stopped and asked if they were from a juvenile detention center because usually only prisoners from the county jail pick up garbage, but they wear orange jumpsuits so everyone knows they're prisoners out on work detail.

Sammi, being tired, disgusted, and a smart-ass said they usually wore brown plaid uniforms and wouldn't get released unless they completed their mandatory service, too.

The lady looked righteous and said, *Well, I don't know what you did to get into this situation, but I certainly hope you've learned your lesson*, and drove away.

Sammi said it was funny but also pretty humiliating, and next year she's just gonna stuff envelopes or something instead.

God, I'm glad I escaped this.

I've been sitting out on the curb in the courtyard in my free time, pretending to read or page through my notebooks but really watching Seth from beneath my hair and trying my hardest to will him to come over and fall in love with me.

So far, it isn't working.

I *am* learning him, though, by watching and listening, and sooner or later that's got to be worth something. I've already discovered that he smokes Marlboros, loves *South Park*, and is a killer flirt when he's high. He also seems to be addicted to bitchy girls with long nails, ankle bracelets, and cool, you-can't-touch-this smiles, which is kind of depressing.

"Hey," Sammi said, plopping down on the curb beside me. "Anything good going on?"

"You-know-who likes ankle bracelets," I said glumly.

"So?"

"I hate ankle bracelets," I said.

"I like them," she said, leaning back on her hands and turning her face to the sun. "I think they're hot."

"I don't," I said. "They remind me of shackles."

She snorted, amused. "Oh, c'mon Hanna, you can't tell me that if he walked up to you and said you'd look hot wearing an ankle bracelet, you wouldn't go right out and get one."

"No," I said, irritated, and then, "You're a pain in the butt, you know that?"

"I love you, too," she said, smirking and bumping her shoulder against mine. Copyright © 2009 by Laura Battyanyi Wiess

Users Review

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Willard Griffin:

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