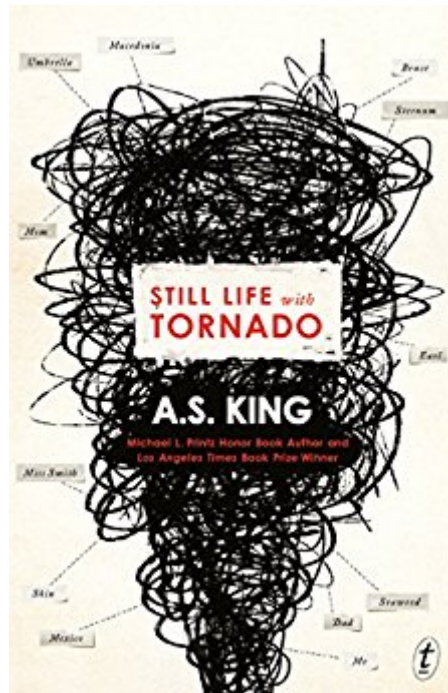




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# Still Life With Tornado



## Synopsis

'Moving, unapologetically strange, skilfully constructed' – *Â*. Read this book, whatever your age. You may find it '...the exact shape and size of the hole in your heart.' New York Times

Sixteen-year-old Sarah can't draw. This is a problem, because as long as she can remember, she has 'done the art.' She thinks she's having an existential crisis. And she might be right; she does keep running into past and future versions of herself as she wanders the urban ruins of Philadelphia. Or maybe she's finally waking up to the tornado that is her family, the tornado that six years ago sent her once-beloved older brother flying across the country for a reason she can't quite recall. After decades of staying together 'for the kids' and building a family on a foundation of lies and domestic violence, Sarah's parents have reached the end. Now Sarah must come to grips with years spent sleepwalking in the ruins of their toxic marriage. As Sarah herself often observes, nothing about her pain is remotely original – and yet it still hurts. Insightful, heartbreaking, and ultimately hopeful, this is a vivid portrait of abuse, survival, resurgence that will linger with readers long after the last page. I am late to school because I don't exactly remember the bus I took to get here before. The minute I step into the building, I open the umbrella and walk toward my locker. Superstition abounds. Students act as if I've brought a curse upon the building, but that's only because they don't know that there is already a curse upon the building. The curse is: Nobody here focuses on the now.

Â A.S. King is the award-winning author of eight acclaimed YA novels. Her novel *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* earned a 2011 Michael L. Printz Honor and *Ask The Passengers* won the 2013 Los Angeles Times Book Prize. John Green called her '...one of the best YA writers working today.' King lives with her family in Pennsylvania, where she returned after living on a farm and teaching adult literacy in Ireland for more than a decade. 'A.S. King has always brought her unique touch to her YA novels, but she may have outdone even herself in *Still Life with Tornado*.' *Bustle* 'You'll find *Still Life*...s exploration of an artist's inner strength... particularly enriching.' *Teen Vogue* 'The presentation of the surreal as real, the deeply thoughtful questions she poses, the way she empowers her teenage characters to change the trajectory of their lives... King writes with the confidence of a tightrope walker working without a net.' *Publishers Weekly* 'King understands and writes teen anxieties like no other, resulting in difficult, resonant, compelling characters and stories.' *Kirkus* '...A slow burn of a novel concerned with the difficulty of coming to terms with life as it is...A riveting and rewarding read.' *Adelaide Advertiser* '...*Still Life with Tornado* is a slow-burning but fascinating book... With elements of magical realism, this novel is one that will have you glued to the pages. The writing is

as lyrical as it is poignant, and I couldn't recommend this one enough for people wanting to delve into the sub-genre I call existential contemporary. Written Word Worlds

Still Life With Tornado is the perfect blend of magic, mystery, and real life. It's clever, heartbreaking, and hopeful. Bookish Manicurist

A.S. King shows a deep understanding of teen anxieties and writes with streetwise humour, tenderness and originality. Hers is a magical style that dances off the page. Otago Daily Times

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Crafted with the author's usual brilliance when it comes to capturing complex characters in simple, elegant strokes. The parallels drawn between the main character's past, present and future selves adds a depth to a haunting subject that many readers will relate to--the problems that arise when love is coupled with fear. A quick read and worth every penny.

A book for all ages wonderful and healing. For anyone looking for answers, looking for meaning, looking for art. It is a journey we all have taken or will take. A great read for anyone who is feeling stuck. Still Life with Tornado will help to melt away the glue. I had wanted my daughter, 14, to read the book, but I read it first, so glad I did.

Will read anything A.S. King writes. This one will not disappoint! Excellent book.

This book is stunning. I don't always understand AS King's work, but I always admire it. She's so fearless. This is my favorite of her books so far.

I love A.S. King and this book just proves why. The way that she writes about her teenage characters is so vivid and true. It gives teenage life a realistic perspective which is hard to capture. We follow our MC 16y.o. Sarah as she tells her story in a stream of consciousness style, exploring her past, what it means to be present, and glimpses to her future. We unburden secrets with her, face harsh realities about domestic abuse, and we find out what a purpose in life means and how we find it. Basically, this book is like a tornado itself. We are introduced to so many threads, but they all interrelate, make sense and come together beautifully as a story. A.S. King keeps her surrealist vibe and fresh voice in her latest book and I read the whole thing so incredibly fast. The whole way though I wanted to stop and savor it, but it was just too good. So many times I read a line or a thought that resonated with me so deeply. I am in love with how this book made me feel and what it is trying to say. Excellent, excellent story.[...]

different concept

I enjoyed reading this book and became attached to the main character and finished it just to find out what happens to her but I wouldn't say the book is anything special.

“Maybe I pretend that my family is normal when I know it’s not normal to have a runaway brother. Maybe my whole life I’ve been living inside of an imaginary painting. I can’t figure out how I feel about this. But I know I feel uncomfortable. All the time.” Still Life with Tornado is the eighth novel by American author, A.S. King. Sixteen-year-old Sarah has always loved art, and she’s good at it. But something happened at school, and now she can’t draw at all. And nothing

ever happens there anyway, everything is always the same, nothing new or original, so she begins to skip classes. It eventually becomes apparent that an act of theft and wilful vandalism has set in motion an existential crisis. As a truant Sarah wanders the streets of Philadelphia, she encounters other versions of herself: aged ten, then aged twenty-three and later, forty. Conversations with her other selves lead her to recall the events of the family's Mexican vacation six years earlier, the vacation that triggered her brother Bruce's disappearance. Sarah benefits from the clear, innocent perspective of her 10 year old self, the cynicism of her 23 year old self and the wisdom of her 40 year old self. King employs three distinct narratives: sixteen year old Sarah relates present-day events, while ten year old Sarah's account of the Mexican vacation slowly reveals the cause of Bruce's exile.

Helen's view of her marriage to Chet completes the picture of a family destined for crisis. There's a bit of magical reality going on (the four Sarahs) but it's deftly done and not so weird as to be completely bizarre. Watching her ten year old self in the gallery: "I see her looking around for the security guard. I remember being her and thinking 'just one touch as if touching the same thing Picasso touched would give her the talent to become him'." What at first seems to be a book about teen angst goes much deeper: psychological abuse, domestic violence, sexual predators, bullying, homelessness, friendship and loyalty also feature. King skilfully builds her tale, gradually revealing the true situation as her protagonist's appreciation of the facts develops. Eventually Sarah sees how it really is between her parents:

"Good," they say in unison. And then they look annoyed that they said something in unison. Then they fake smile at each other, but I'm starting to understand that smiling is really just another way of baring one's teeth." This is a novel that is original and different: it's clever and thought-provoking, and is bound to have wider appeal than the Young Adult genre in which it sits. Recommended.

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