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your next book

LoveReading Reader reviews of
The Last One
by Alexandra Oliva

PENGUIN
MICHAEL
JOSEPH

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Celia Cohen

A clever, superbly written psychological thriller which will haunt you long after you have finished reading it.

Wow, what a book. I can honestly say I've never read one quite like this. How clever to write a story about something that is so fashionable at the moment - a TV reality show. I never watch these shows as they make me uncomfortable and now I feel justified in that feeling. This is an uncomfortable book in all ways but having started it I couldn't put it down. I just had to know how it ended. I suppose the worse thing is that this fiction could actually happen, heaven forbid, and this will be the thought that will linger long

after you have finished the book. Alexandra Oliva has proved with her very first novel that she is a fine writer and I hope she will continue.

Helen Claire

'The Hunger Games' meets 'Running Man'!! This had me reading at the bus stop, on the bus, at lunchtime and way past my bedtime. All I wanted to do was read – Could not put it down.

Thrilled to have got an ARC of this, this girl is gonna go far in my opinion.

Alfred Nobile

*This book is set against a background of a reality TV show. Throughout the book alliances and enmities are forged and then are forever in flux. The unreality of the reality show and the reality of outside life begin to converge and intercept with each other and what is real and unreal becomes blurred. It is a book that keeps you guessing and forever changing your mind about what you agree or disagree with. It is a book populated with well fleshed characters. **A harrowing and intense read that grips and keeps you turning the pages.** Thanks to Lovereading.co.uk and the publishers for the ARC.*

Cathy Small

Imagine 'The Hunger Games' vs 'The Predator' and you will get a feel for this book but you will find yourself drawn to Zoo to see how strong she is and can she carry on.

Zoo thinks she has joined a survival challenge, her one last fight before she starts a family. She appears to be a favourite from the outset but as the challenge continues it starts to get strange and more and more alone. She bumps into Brennan a young lad who has got caught up in this adventure and she looks after him to try and bring him to the winning line. As she continues on her journey she starts to question the game and where this crosses the line with reality but she fights to the end to keep safe and make sure Brennan is safe to the end. It is a strange mystery as you follow the story but you are rooting for Zoo to finish and win the battle and race that she started.

Sheila Johnson

First of all let me say that I dislike reality shows on TV and have always avoided watching them. I believe them to be largely fake and even the celebrities do not persuade me to watch so I am surprised to find how much I enjoyed reading this book. I have read a fair amount of science fiction novels in the past particularly the post apocryphal type so I was pleasantly surprised to find this did not take the usual line with zombies. Rather it was hinted at by what the main character Zoe was seeing. The characters taking part in the

reality show were well defined and one was engaged by their efforts to outdo each other and win. But the constant swing back to Zoe made some parts of the story a bit disjointed. I had to really concentrate so that I did not lose the thread of what was happening. It was too easy to be caught up in Zoe's emotions! However **the book was a pleasure to read and would make a good escapist holiday read.**

Les Wood

An Interesting Concept.

This story brings back memories of 'Survivors', 'The Running Man' and 'I'm a Celebrity'. It appears to be the game show to end all game shows but, because of its isolation, world events are happening that contestants are not aware of. I enjoyed the writing but am not convinced by the story as a whole. I would have liked more about the individuals involved, their background and how they were chosen, especially Zoo. The twist in the tale a third of the way through is not unexpected due to the opening chapter and from there on we jump back in time through alternating chapters. There are unanswered questions, points that belie belief (do you really walk around with your spectacle prescription firmly printed on your brain?) and a suggested happy ending. Overall I don't think that the concept had enough meat to carry it off but it's always good to try new writing.

Val Rowe

I have never read anything quite like this before, but I am so glad that I did as it has made quite an impact on me.

Zoo is amongst several other contestants taking part in a challenging new reality TV programme 'In the Dark'. However, what is occurring in the real world outside of the show, involves her in a painful and shocking process where an outcome seems impossible.

I am delighted that I selected this book to review. It is completely outside of my usual genre and at first I wondered whether I would be able to stick with it. However, once I had grasped the way in which the TV show is operating and became familiar with the characters, I could not put it down.

Oliver's skill is evident in the way in which she brings her characters to life and her descriptive language works exceptionally well. I really suffered with the contestants and shared their successes.

The pace of the novel is perfect. Just as I thought I understood why or how an event was happening, another cliff hanger arrived to tantalise me.

Towards the end of the novel I was totally unable to predict the outcome and there were several shocks in store. It left me feeling quite lost for words but satisfied that I had experienced an excellent read.

Melanie Rose

Survival - real or staged?

*This is not a book I would have chosen to read but thought I would give it a go to see if it was a genre I could be interested in. Well, I didn't really enjoy it. The story was well written and descriptive and went from one chapter telling the story of the TV game-show back to the main character's view of it all (Zoo). Personally, I think there were too many characters each with their own agenda and felt it hard to keep up with their stories. Having been asked to review the book for free I felt I had to read it to the end but it was a struggle and took longer than usual because it just didn't engage me enough. The concept was good and would make for a good film (along the lines of 'The Hunger Games'). **Anyone into reality shows would enjoy this but it just wasn't my cup of tea.***

Sharon McKinlay

Very intense book.

Very intense book about reality based survival type show. Sometimes scary in parts.

Sally Doel

*I have just finished this book. I originally liked the sound of it when I read the original 'blurb', being a fan of reality TV (my guilty pleasure), but even if you were not a fan of this type of scenario, **this is a brilliant dark and psychological story that will appeal to everyone.***

Twelve contestants set out on a reality TV show designed to test their physical and mental capabilities and sort out their weaknesses. They are set challenges and sent off to fend for themselves and compete against each other for rewards to help them continue... The story focuses on the main character/contestant, a woman named for the sake of the show 'Zoo'. Whilst the contestants are in their

early days of the show, something awful happens in the outside world with changes everything. We follow Zoo's journey of discovery - at first she manages to convince herself that everything she encounters is 'set up' as part of the challenges she must face to complete the show. She treats everything as a challenge and as it dawns on her that the world has altered, she thinks about her husband and life and what she must do.

It's a fascinating book - I really enjoyed it and wanted to pick it up all the time! Would definitely recommend to lovers of psychological tales.

Jocelyn Garvey

'In the Dark' is a television reality show. Contestants have to show survival skills when left alone in the Forest.

However from the first page we know that something is going horribly wrong.

All the contestants are known by nicknames given to them by the producer. He has chosen the contestants to produce a complete mix of sex, ethnicity (black, white and Asian), competence, and appearance. The plot mostly follows Zoo, so named because her application showed her holding a small lizard.

There will be challenges all along the way. They have to learn to find food and feed themselves. Find water, make shelters, and make fires. Those who do best get rewards of differing types.

They all do small 'confessional' pieces for the cameras at the beginning as an introduction and then after each challenge so we know what they are thinking and feeling. They know that the only way off the show is to give in. There is no voting off the show.

As the show continues the contestants show their abilities or inabilities and if they can adapt to the stress of the challenges.

The story line is good and the writing engaging. As things start to go wrong we see them adapt and change.

Once you are into this book it grips as the show is meant to but we know more than they do!

This is one for the lovers of reality television.

Dawn Lynch

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this, it kept me gripped from

beginning to end. A big brother style show set in the jungle. Not something I would normally read but will look forward to reading more from Alexandra Oliva. A modern day paradise lost.

Teresa O'Halloran

A very clever debut from an author to watch.

I struggled for a lot of this book. Perhaps reality tv/pandemic novels are just not for me.

First of all I found it really confusing the way the author told us the characters names and then gave them all nick-names and one moment call them by their full names and then back again to their nick-names totally confused me, and I would say that the author lost me at that point.

But I will say that the plot was clever and picked up for me three quarters of the way through the book, and I did like the ending.

Margaret Madden

TV reality show that pushed its contestants to the limit. A cross between 'Black Mirror' and 'Survivor', this is a thrilling debut that will have you doubting what you are reading.

In The Dark is a reality survival show that pushes its contestants to the limits. The prize money is high but some are competing for more than the cash. Zoo is running from her own reality and thinks the show may give her a new perspective. Things start to go terribly wrong and one by one the contestants dwindle. But where are the crew and supplies, and is the whole world watching Zoo with admiration or horror as she battles the elements? This is such a clever novel. While the characters are given unusual names (and this takes a bit of getting used to) the concept is taught and as the game begins, the reader is right there alongside its participants. Zoo is a tough cookie, despite her slight appearance. She has an inner-determination that sees her holding her own against some of the tough guys. She soon gains some respect and the group begins to divide. Online comments are dotted through the start of the book and its easy to relate to how the viewers feel about the reality show and its stars. When obvious cameras begin to disappear, Zoo finds herself battling the elements with just her mini-cam and starts to suffer from paranoia. Can she survive through to the bitter end? Is it really worth it? A whip-cracking thriller that I can highly recommend.

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