

Bella Ross

LIS7630 - Book Reviews - Word Count: 1017

### **Part One: *Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke* by Eric LaRocca**

Finding reviews to look at for *Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke* was an interesting experience. I had difficulty finding professional reviews for the book, which wasn't too surprising as it is a little more niche. *Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke* is an extreme horror novella detailing two women's unstable and obsessive relationship via chat room logs and emails. It was published in June of 2021.

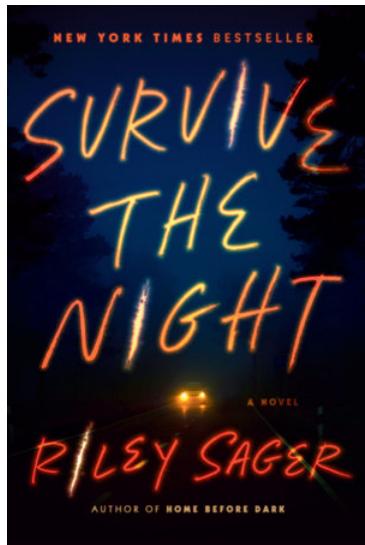
The first review I looked at was published in *Three Crows Magazine*, written by Alex Khlopenko, and published on June 1, 2021. *Three Crows Magazine* is a Science Fiction and Fantasy magazine that publishes quarterly. The review is 725 words and paints a brief description of the world created by LaRocca. Khlopenko points out similarities between *Things Have Gotten Worse...* and other works while offering insight into what he believes the story's underlying message to be.

The second review I looked at was from *Library Journal*, written by Emily Vinci and published on July 9, 2021. The review is 198 words and acts far more like a synopsis to entice readers to look into the book. There is less personal commentary on the story or comparisons to other works; this review is a brief glimpse into the plot.

The third review I looked at was from *Sketching Details*, an online Genre Media Criticism site, written by Robert J Gannon and published on August 24, 2021. *Sketching Details* is a site that has been active for the last 17 years (as I said, it wasn't easy to find professional reviews of this book) and focuses on providing critical discussion around current trends in horror, fantasy, and sci-fi. The review is 592 words and offers an in-depth synopsis as well as

detailing what Gannon did and did not like about the book without giving the plot away. This review was far more like Khlopenko's but also offered content warnings and an audio format for ease of access.

### Part Two: *Survive the Night* by Riley Sager



(image retrieved from <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/646656/survive-the-night-by-riley-sager/>)

**Genre:** Thriller/Suspense

**Appeal:** Intricate plot line, plenty of twists and double-crosses, and a final big twist and showdown at the end of the book.

**Characteristics:** Rapid plot pace - the story takes place during a single night - that is pushed forward by the constant threat of danger the protagonist faces. The protagonist, Charlie, is easy to sympathize with and is faced with trying to find people to trust as she attempts to survive the twists throughout the story. The reader

does enter into the viewpoints of several other characters at various moments throughout the book, including the antagonist. Time jumps are also used to unfold the whole story and provide insight into the protagonist.

**Mimicked review:** I primarily was trying to mimic the *Library Journal* review. While I did actually like the reviews that included the reviewer's thoughts on the book, they had way more wiggle room in terms of word count, and mimicking *Library Journal* helped me stay on track with the word count.

#### 50 words:

Following the murder of her best friend, Charlie just wants to get home, but she's forced to use her wits to outplay her driving companion, a man she believes to be a killer. *Survive the Night* is a fast-paced thriller sure to leave you on the edge of your seat.

**Notes:** This one was hard! I kept getting around 50-60 words, but any attempts to use filler words had to be quickly discarded if I wanted to stay within the word count.

**100 words:**

All Charlie wants is to go home and leave the past behind. Caught in a tragedy following the brutal murder of her best friend, Charlie's attempts to return home hit a road bump when she's forced to accept a ride from a man she doesn't know. Desperate to leave, Charlie finds herself trapped in a car with a man that she begins to suspect may be a killer. Stuck in a whirlwind of grief and terror, Charlie must sift through what is real and what is not if she wants to make it home alive. Can she survive the night?

**Notes:** Much easier than the first review! Still a little tricky to get the wording just right. The end part of this review was slightly based on the synopsis on the back of the book. "In order to win, Charlie must do one thing--survive the night" (Sager, 2021). While it's a bit of a cheesy line, I thought it was still fun and wanted to bring that spirit into my review.

**150 words:**

The brutal murder of a young woman. A serial killer on the loose. A desperate best friend just trying to get home. Meet Charlie Jordan, film studies major and best friend to Maddy Forrester, the third victim of the Campus Killer. All Charlie wants to do is return home and leave her life at Olyphant University behind, including the grief and guilt caused by the loss of her best friend. After finding a ride on the campus ride board, Charlie finds herself increasingly unnerved by her companion and slowly realizes she may be alone with the man who murdered her best friend. With nowhere to go and no help in sight, Charlie must use everything she has to figure out the truth and discover what really happened the night Maddy was murdered. *Survive the Night* takes you on a heart-pounding journey that will keep you guessing until the last page.

**Notes:** This review was the easiest to write. I felt like I had plenty of room to expand and make the review more interesting and detailed. I'm most satisfied with this review as I feel like I was able to convey the tone of the story more clearly and make the plot sound more enticing for any potential readers. Overall, this was a really interesting exercise - I'd like to keep working on creating more in-depth 50-word reviews.

## References

Gannon, R. J. (2021, August 24). Things have gotten worse since we last spoke by Eric LaRocca review. *Sketching Details*.

<https://sketchingdetails.com/sketchy-details/things-have-gotten-worse-review>

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LaRocca, E. (2021). Things have gotten worse since we last spoke. Weirdpunk Books.

Sager, R. (2021). *Survive the night*. Dutton.

Vinci, E. (2021, July 9). Things have gotten worse since we last spoke review. Library Journal.

<https://www.libraryjournal.com/?reviewDetail=things-have-gotten-worse-since-we-last-s-poke-2121256>