



## Zelah Green

*Vanessa Curtis*

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**Zelah Green** Vanessa Curtis

My Name is Zelah Green and I'm a cleanaholic.

I spend most of my life running away from germs. And dirt. And people. And I'm just about doing OK and then my stepmother packs me off to some kind of hospital to live with a load of strangers. It's stuck in the middle of nowhere. Great. There's Alice who's anorexic. Caro who cuts herself. Silent Sol who has the cutest smile. And then there's me.

## Zelah Green Details

Date : Published October 1st 2011 by Egmont UK (first published January 5th 2009)

ISBN : 9781405255059

Author : Vanessa Curtis

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Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Health, Mental Health, Mental Illness, Realistic Fiction

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## **From Reader Review Zelah Green for online ebook**

### **Stephanie (Stepping out of the Page) says**

I enjoyed this book. It was very cliché and it felt a little unrealistic, but it was enjoyable all the same - it was just such an easy read. I thought that the mental health issues were covered quite well but they were described in a very stereotypical manner. The characters were likeable enough and very interesting - they all had distinct feelings and personalities. Though the character development wasn't very deep, I did feel very aware of all of the inpatients of Forest Hill and they were all intriguing. The novel was certainly a page turner as the plot was good and flowed at a relaxed pace.

I'd be interested in reading the next book, but I'm not desperate to.

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### **Nina says**

Zelah Green is an interesting book that gives you an inside story of a teenager who has to live with OCD. OCD stands for Obsessive (Compulsive) Cleaning Disorder. Zelah has to jump up and down on the stairs, has to scrub her face a certain amount of time and has other rituals that literally take over her life.

I felt sorry for Zelah and that she has to deal with the disorder and the fact that her dad isn't around to help her. When she's sent to Forest Hill House, she learns these unique persons that have different troubles, but yet share the same path to recovery. Zelah has a strong voice and is really a typical teenager who wants to be loved.

Throughout the story we get to know Zelah better and the reason why she started with the rituals. Vanessa Curtis has done a wonderful job researching the disorder and how a teenager deals with it. The writing feels light, nothing too heavy. Therefore a lot of teenagers can read Zelah Green and get a more insightful look into a life that has to deal with OCD.

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### **Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says**

#### **SUMMARY/PLOT**

Zelah's stepmother can't handle her OCD, so she tries to ship her off to a mental hospital. Zelah ends up in Forest Road House under the care and guidance of a lovely female doctor with some other misfits – an anorexic, a cutter, and a mute. There she learns to face her OCD and her abandonment issues with her father.

#### **CHARACTERS**

Zelah is, from what I can gather, bi-racial. Her father is white and it is hinted her mother is black. Zelah has out of control frizzy curly black hair and needs to wash her hands and face 31 times, and jump over 100 times at the top and bottom of each staircase she uses. She is also a germaphobe and won't touch anything without the assistance of a tissue. The doctor helps her overcome some of the more powerful 'rituals', although she's not 'cured' by the time she leaves the house.

## WRITING

The writing was decent, nothing particularly wrong with it. I enjoyed Zelah's narrative voice. There was nothing really to stand out about it either. I liked the respectful way the author approached not only Zelah's mental illness but the other kids at the house as well. I liked how it turned from Zelah having 'rituals' to admitting her OCD and trying to get it under control.

## PACING

I took a while to get through this audiobook. I had to renew it twice. I think it might have been the pacing, because there wasn't really anything big or exciting happening to make me want to return to the book. It didn't feel like a chore to end it, and I did want to know how it ended up finishing, but I simply wasn't in a hurry to get back to listening to it.

## OVERALL

I think Zelah Green is a really good novel for a young adult audience looking to explore an 'issues' novel about mental illness, specifically OCD. I didn't enjoy it a huge amount but like I said, there was nothing particularly awesome about it. It was kind of blah, but I think other readers could enjoy it.

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## **Kat says**

I picked up Zelah Green on a complete whim. I'm a total sucker for realistic fiction, and OCD is a topic that I always feel drawn to for some reason. Coupled with the fact that it's set in the UK, I was always going to have to read this one.

Although it's aimed the younger end of the YA target age group, and therefore perhaps some of the issues are watered down a little, I thoroughly enjoyed the way that Curtis created her characters. Their problems are real, their personalities are big and distinct, and I loved all of them – whether they were lovable or not.

Zelah is obsessed with cleaning. She also has a few other little rituals to start and end the day. But it's not really a big deal – her stepmother obviously disapproves but can't do anything about it, and her best friend totally gets it. It's only when her stepmother sends her to hospital that she really stops to look at what she is doing – but only because she has to.

What I particularly liked about Zelah is that although she has a lot going on, she never really loses her sense of humour, nor her sense of self. She attempts to relate to the other people in the house where she ends up for treatment as much as possible, even if she doesn't quite understand why she is there – she doesn't get bratty or resentful, and is really very open to other people.

Zelah Green is a super-quick read (I read the whole thing in less than two hours) but it's also quite impactful – all of the characters begin to confront their problems and start to work towards a better life, and although there are some cute moments, there are also some very serious moments.

Perhaps the one and only turn off was the Happily Ever After ending – it almost felt a little condescending and stereotypical. However if you don't always like your contemporary fiction to be really gritty and dark, this may just be a book you'll love.

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## Jenny / Wondrous Reads says

When Zelah Green was originally released as Zelah Green: Queen of Clean, I paid little or no attention to it. I'm not entirely sure why, I just know I didn't give it a second glance. This new cover made me think twice, and I'm really glad I gave it a go. I loved the writing style and Zelah's personality, and am looking forward to reading book 2 as soon as possible.

Zelah has a form of OCD, which makes her jump on a step a certain number of times, wash her hands a certain way, and change her shoes on a particular step. These rituals have literally taken over her life, and lead her stepmother to ship her off to a kind of mental health hospital. There Zelah meets some brilliant friends and mentors, each with different problems of their own.

Although Zelah Green sounds like a serious read, it's actually quite funny. Zelah's voice is clever, hard to ignore and not easily forgotten. The way she deals with her rituals is often humorous, with her thoughts providing a great insight into her life and her past. The friends she meets at Forest Hill House, including Caro, Sol, and Lib, are all beautifully written, and are all supportive yet flawed characters. It reminded me of a Big Brother house, in a way, as each personality was so drastically different, and all forced to share the same space.

Zelah Green is a fantastic book, and one that I'd highly recommend. It's a quick read, but has so much more substance than you'd initially think. I think I'll be reading anything Vanessa Curtis writes, whether it be more stories of Zelah or something completely different.

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## Sarai says

I would have given this a 3.5 ranking.

Overall, I liked the book. It glossed over everything in a kind of superficial level and would have been better if there was more depth to it. The ending seemed a little rushed and the situation with her step mother was never explored to my satisfaction. The step mother was more of a caricature than a real person and I feel like there should have been more exposition at the end regarding Zelah's relationship with her father and Heather and the people she left behind. Just a lot of unanswered questions.

### Book Description

Publication Date: October 1, 2011 | Series: Zelah Green

A prizewinning story of a girl whose serious OCD starts to take over her life, how she conquers it with help and humor, and the friends with their own troubles whom she meets along the way

"My Name is Zelah Green and I'm a cleanaholic. I spend most of my life running away from germs. And dirt. And people. And I'm just about doing okay and then my stepmother packs me off to some kind of hospital to live with a bunch of strangers. It's stuck in the middle of nowhere. Great. There's Alice who's anorexic. Caro who cuts herself. Silent Sol who has the cutest smile. And then there's me." Zelah's candid

voice allows serious issues to be explored with empathy. With wonderful humor supplementing the emotional heart, this story presents real problems for teenagers while never being being heavy-handed.

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### **Jessica (Jess Hearts Books) says**

I hadn't heard very much about this book at all other than it kept coming up in my Amazon recommendations, so when I read a book bloggers review and found out that it was about a teenage girl with OCD I knew I just had to buy it and bought it prompt on my next trip to the book shop. I, like Zelah, suffer from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder more commonly known as OCD which I developed in my teen years after going through a rough time. I know that there are a lot of books on depression out there for teens but I haven't ever heard of one that's based on OCD before. I think it's great that Vanessa Curtis decided to write a book on this subject because unfortunately whether we like it or not mental illnesses are on the rise in today's society and I find that books are a great comfort to those suffering with one. When you're a teen with a mental illness – no scratch that – anybody with a mental illness a lot of the time people are too ignorant on the subject to see that it is an actual illness and are quick to just label the person as 'weird' and when you're a teen life's hard enough, add a mental illness on top of that and people avoiding the 'freak' it's possibly one of the hardest times to have to deal with having a mental illness. So I salute Vanessa Curtis for writing this book – hopefully it will make anyone out there going through this feel less alone and help everybody else understand the illness a little better.

Zelah Green is a cleanaholic. She spends most of her life sticking to her harsh schedule also know as germ alert and dirt alert. This involves Zelah washing her hands up to 31 times, jumping on the stairs 128 times and having to touch everything with a tissue between her hand and the item. If Zelah doesn't stick to her rituals or they go wrong she has to do them again to avoid having a panic attack and something bad happening to the people she loves. With her mother dead and her father gone Zelah's left with her stepmother who can't stand Zelah's routines anymore so she ships Zelah off to Forest Hill House to get treatment for her OCD. There Zelah meets Alice the anorexic, Caro the cutter and Silent Sol who's gorgeous but doesn't speak to anyone. Zelah's mortified to be at Forest Hill and worst of all having to live without her routines, but the teens soon become friends and with a little help from each other they help work through their problems and what follows is a heart-warming story that will have you laughing one minute and teary eyed the next.

This was a short sweet read that I read in two sittings. Zelah's an endearing, hilarious character who you can't help but want the best for. The book remains sweet and funny whilst at the same time deals with some serious issues. At no point did it ever feel heavy so I think that Vanessa Curtis got this just right for the teen reader. I immediately after finishing this bought the sequel Zelah Green: One More Little Problem and I can't wait to read more of Zelah's adventures and struggles with OCD. Recommended whether you want a funny, quick, quirky read or whether you want to learn more about teens with a mental illness from the view point of lovely awkward Zelah. This book has a nice balance between both making it a very good read indeed. 4 stars.

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### **Rebecca says**

I thought that Zelah Green was quite a short book so it didn't take me very long to read at all. I quite enjoyed

it though.

The only other introduction to OCD that I had ever had was through the television programme, Monk. Zelah Green actually gave me a different perspective on it and made me rethink what OCD was actually like as Zelah was completely different to Monk.

I liked Zelah's voice and for quite a bit of it I didn't realise that Zelah was fourteen, she seemed more like a sixteen year old for a while there. The supporting cast were all very interesting too. I quite liked Heather and Caro the most but I did like all the characters except for two.

I thought that Zelah Green approached a few teenage issues quite well, although at times I felt that some of the issues presented were made to seem a tad to blasé for my liking.

While I enjoyed Zelah Green I thought that some parts were quite unrealistic and rushed through. I felt like we could've gotten to know the characters and the story a little more than we did. I wouldn't have minded if the book was longer.

However, Zelah Green is quite a light, quick read and I think that it introduced the issue of OCD in quite an interesting way. I look forward to reading the sequel at some point in the future.

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## **Lauren (Northern Plunder) says**

**This review was first posted on Northern Plunder, if you want to see more reviews please [click here](#).**

I was browsing my local library for something new because I needed something that wasn't in my usual reading genre but at the same time I needed a short book so I wouldn't be spending ages on it as I have a habit of renewing library books a lot so I refuse to borrow something over 400 pages cause I'm lazy I guess! I found the lovely light green and small book, the title grabbed me first because lets face it Zelah Green isn't an ordinary name and I also ended up really liking the cover too, something about its cleanness just makes sense to me - then of course I read the synopsis and found out it was about a girl with OCD which explains the lovely clean and mess free cover! I hadn't read a book with a character who's dealing with OCD before. I sat in the back of the car on the way to a university open day and read the whole thing then and there, I loved the book page after page and felt the story was super gripping, if you break it down there isn't a lot that happens compared to my usual reads - no mysterious murders or zombies trying to tears your insides out - but its much more focused on happenings around her, really personal things from finding out who true friends are, overcoming her OCD little by little, helping others with their problems and waking up from a dream world. The whole book just felt right, I'm sat here trying to find a fault with it but I really did enjoy it and I can't wait to read the sequel cause it has such a teasing ending. The only reason its not a full five stars is because I think it was aimed at a slightly younger audience, maybe 15 year olds? but luckily it was the perfect read to escape from a horrendous car journey and just relax. Recommend? Yes its a lovely short read.

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## **Michelle (Fluttering Butterflies) says**

I really loved Zelah Green by Vanessa Curtis. I was told beforehand that it's a very loose retelling of Snow White, but if I hadn't known that, it probably wouldn't have been obvious to me while reading it as there is so much that is different. And I do love a really original retelling.

Instead of being perfect and beautiful, like Snow White, Zelah Green has plenty of problems. She begins her

story by explaining her unusual name with a really romanticised ideal of what might have happened and then shatters it all with a bit of reality. Her parent's arguing, her mother choosing a name out of spite. It's not a fairy tale with this book. Zelah's mother's death really affected her and instead of dealing with her wild emotions and grief, she tried to force it all away and focused on other things that she could control. So begins her obsessive compulsive disorder. Washing each hand 31 times. Not being able to touch other people or anything that might be unclean. Sitting on a tissue everywhere she goes. Being on Germ and Dirt Alert. Those rosy cheeks that Snow White is famous for? Zelah's cheeks are red from all the scrubbing she does.

When Zelah's father goes missing, she's left with her step-mother who doesn't really understand her. The step-mother asks her neighbour to drive Zelah off to a mental institution instead of dealing with Zelah's 'little problem.' But Heather, Zelah's neighbour can't bring herself to do that, and instead takes 14 year old Zelah to Forest Hill House, where a whole house of troubled teens live, each battling with their own demons. There, Zelah is able to understand herself and her OCD a little better, come to terms with some of the events that led her here in the first place and move on, just a bit. But it isn't easy.

I really loved the people at Forest Hill House. From The Doc, Zelah's behavioural therapist, Josh, her Jesus-lookalike husband. The other teens - Alice, dealing with anorexia. Sol who doesn't speak. Caro, who had such an attitude and cuts herself. Each had their own stories and grief to deal with and they are a far cry from the happy dwarves of the fairy tale. Zelah is an interesting character, I've never had much experience with obsessive compulsive disorder and I did learn quite a bit about her mental processes dealing with her impulses. She had a great voice and while sometimes she did observe the actions of behaviours of those around her, Curtis did a great job of letting the reader come to their own conclusions about what is going on.

This book was a really wonderful and gritty alternative look at a modern-day Snow White. Zelah Green opened my eyes about OCD and it's symptoms while at the same time giving us a very likeable main character who we can all root for and get behind.

## Sadaf Rasouli says

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## Emma Maher says

Another one fights the dust, *Zelah Green* written by Vanessa Curtis is about a 14 year- old girl named Zelah who has a over cleaning disorder. Not only does human interaction, germs and dirt scare Zelah, she also has a set of rituals she must complete everyday other wise she is convinced something bad will happen, for example she jumps 128 times at the top of the stairs before going down them, scrubs her hands 31 times each and always has her clothing spread exactly 4cm apart in her wardrobe. Zelah's step mother had enough of these rituals and decided to send her away to a place named "Forest Hill" where there are other people who have their little problems too, this is where the characters are introduced.

There's Alice who doesn't eat, Caro who has a big attitude and blasts heavy metal music all day and Sol who doesn't talk. At Forest Hill there a doctor who helps these people overcome their problems. The characters in the novel seemed realistic, this is because instead of having a physical antagonist their own problems are their own antagonists. This makes the novel more realistic, because in real life it is not likely to have a physical antagonist. OCD, being Zelah's personal antagonist, effects Zelah beyond an ordinary cleaning disorder. OCD has began to effect Zelah's whole life style, she can not touch anyone without freaking out which can effect her relationships, not only that, she's also slowly becoming more and more controlled by her rituals each day. This is why it is so important for Zelah to overcome this antagonist, it will give her a normal life again.

Although Zelah's in denial attitude creates conflict, this is where the major themes of the novel are created. The first major theme is facing reality, Zelah does not think she has a problem, she is in denial that the way she is living is wrong and bad, this is where she must face the real world and begin to try to overcome these challenges. Another major theme created is overcoming weaknesses and fears, Zelah believes that her OCD and rituals are apart of her and she is afraid that is she looses these traits that she will not be her true self. Zelah must overcome this fear and begin to try to defeat her OCD and rituals.

The novel was written very well as it has a good plot and the characters were extremely developed making the whole novel extremely fascinating, each page has something new on it you never know whats going to happen next. My favourite parts of the novel is when Zelah has sessions with the doctor, it's really interesting to see if she can fight this part of herself and watching her slow progress makes the novel even more realistic.

Overall this was a really good and interesting book. It has a very unique story line which makes it so tempting to continue to flip the pages. People who enjoy realistic and detailed story lines will really enjoy this book, there is also a sequel to the book called "One more little problem" that picks up several months after where the first book leaves off. Other novels written by Curtis such as "Lilah May's Manic day" would also appeal to people who enjoyed *Zelah Green*, this is because Vanessa Curtis continues to write in the realistic fiction genre.

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## Nicola says

A super short book that makes a huge impact. It's full of fascinating characters and I can't wait to read the next one!

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## Miss Bookiverse says

### Lang und breit

Zelah war mir auf Anhieb sympathisch. Sie ist ein liebenswertes, 14jähriges Mädchen, das ein großes Problem hat, nämlich Zwangsstörungen. Diese äußern sich meist in „germ alert“ und „dirt alert“ (also Bakterien- und Dreckalarm). Zelah muss sich nach dem Aufstehen und vor dem zu Bett gehen 31 mal die Hände waschen, Körperkontakt verursacht bei ihr Panikattacken und ungewaschene Gegenstände kann sie nur mit Hilfe eines Taschentuchs anfassen. Ach und dann wäre da noch das Hüpfen auf den Treppenstufen. All diese Macken werden auf amüsante Art und Weise geschildert. Der Ernst der Lage fehlt ein wenig, aber die Krankheit wird auch nicht auf den Arm genommen.

Ich finde es immer sehr interessant Romane über solche Krankheiten zu lesen. Andere OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) Fälle, an die ich mich spontan erinnern kann, findet man in Lisa McManns *Cryer's Cross* und Kate Ellisons *The Butterfly Clues*.

In so weit ich das beurteilen kann, bringt Vanessa Curtis Zelahs Zwangsstörungen realistisch rüber. Allerdings muss ich dazu sagen, dass Zelahs Heilungsprozess ziemlich problemlos verläuft. Sie ist sich ihrer Krankheit bewusst, verdrängt aber gern darüber nachzudenken. Dennoch nimmt sie die Ratschläge ihrer Ärztin an und setzt sie sofort in die Tat um ohne je Rückschläge zu erleiden. Das macht das Ganze ein wenig spannungslos, passt aber auch zum kurzen, lockeren Ton des Buches.

Um mit ihrer Krankheit besser umgehen zu können, wird Zelah von ihrer Stiefmutter in eine Art Heilanstalt gesteckt. Es handelt sich dabei um ein Haus mitten im Nirgendwo, das eine Ärztin mit ihrem Mann gemeinsam bewohnt, um dort „gestörte Teenager“ zu behandeln. Dieser Ort bietet zwar ein schönes Setting, aber wirklich realistisch fand ich ihn nicht. Dafür werden dort einfach zu viele verschiedene Krankheiten behandelt, von Anorexie bis zu Selbstverletzung und Depressionen ist alles vertreten. Außerdem scheinen im Haus ziemlich laxe Regeln zu herrschen. Ein paar der Jugendlichen rauchen ganz offen und ein Junge verbringt sogar eine ganze Nacht in Zelahs Zimmer ohne, dass es jemand mitbekommt.

Nichtsdestotrotz habe ich Zelahs Mitpatienten schnell ins Herz geschlossen. Vom stillen Sol bis zur launischen Caro, jeder von ihnen hat seine eigenen Probleme und ich wette die Autorin könnte jedem ein eigenes Buch widmen. Ich würde sie auf jeden Fall lesen.

### Hörbucheindruck

Nach den ersten paar Sätzen war ich mir sicher, dass Lisa Coleman eine viel zu alte Stimme für die 14jährige Zelah hat. Zum Glück konnte ich darüber hinweghören. Viel auffälliger ist nämlich der breite britische Akzent, der mich hin und wieder zum Lächeln gebracht hat. Muss man mögen, zur Story passt es auf jeden Fall, da diese in Großbritannien spielt. Lisa Coleman liest auf jeden Fall gut, betont an den richtigen Stellen und gibt den verschiedenen Charakteren leicht unterschiedliche Stimmen.

Das Einzige, was mich beim Hören immer wieder ein wenig irritiert hat, war das Erwähnen der Ärztin, die sich von allen „Doc“ nennen lässt, ich habe aber immer „dog“ gehört und mich ein paar Sekunden lang gewundert, warum der Hund plötzlich sprechen kann ;)

### Kurz und knapp

Zelah Green ist ein süßes Buch für zwischendurch. Es behandelt ein ernstes Thema, geht aber recht locker und ohne deprimierende Nachwirkungen damit um. Die Geschichte kann man in einem Rutsch lesen. Sie bietet einen interessanten Einblick in das Teenagerleben mit Zwangsneurosen, setzt aber eher auf Würze in der Kürze.

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## Vee ?Under Mountain Books? says

Zelah Green is a wonderfully quick read which I devoured in about an hour. It was great to delve into such a simple story, without loads of characters, complicated plot line and boys with rippling muscles! Okay, so it's not the most realistic but that's the beauty of it - simplicity. Who doesn't enjoy a piece of pure fluff every now and again?

The issues dealt with are OCD, cutting, anorexia and probably a couple of others that I don't remember. These are all mentioned in a very light way and the characters with these illnesses don't have too much character development, yet I still loved them all, particularly Caro, the cutter. Caro is almost the opposite of Zelah - she's loud, outspoken and rude and prone to sudden unexpected outbursts, smashing tables or screaming and breaking things (admittedly, I can relate to this, although maybe not as extreme!). In contrast, Zelah is quite, polite-spoken and keeps her room tidy. In fact she keeps everything tidy as she has OCD. She has rituals she has to do every morning, including hand washing and stair jumping (often to avoid anything seriously bad happening) but her almost fairytale-like wicked stepmother is having none of this after Zelah's father disappears. She packs Zelah off to the local hospital but Zelah's next door neighbour takes pity on her and takes her to Forest Hill House instead, where her new life begins.

The ending was very fluffy but I enjoyed it immensely and found myself rooting for Zelah all the way through. I can't wait to start the next book and I dearly hope that we'll see all my favourite characters again - Caro, Alice and Sol. I hope they've all mostly worked through their problems and the sequel shows them coping with the outside world once more.

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