Still Alice by Lisa Genova, Pocket, 2009

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Still Alice by Lisa Genova is one of the most poignant books I have read in a long time. It follows Alice Howland, a vibrant middle-aged tenured professor of neuropsychology at Harvard, as she becomes more and more forgetful, starting small with misplacing everyday objects, to finding herself completely lost and disoriented in her own neighborhood on one of her daily jogs. She is unable to decipher the reason why, blaming the events on menopause. While seeking answers she discovers, to her dismay that she suffers from the early onset of Alzheimer’s disease.

Published in 2009, marvelously written, the story takes on the perspective from Alice’s point of view as she slowly loses touch with reality. We see, in Alice’s eyes, how people around her start changing their behaviors and treating her differently while Alice still clings to her past, hopelessly trying to stay normal and to lead a normal life. We also see how her family and loved ones react to the change, and how their own lives take the toll that Alice’s new condition brings. Unable to reverse the effects, Alice slowly spins out of control as she is more and more forced into the shadows created by that unbeatable disease. An absolute must-read!

- Eloise Sureau-Hale is Associate Professor of French at Butler University.