



# Never Say Goodbye: A Novel

By Susan Lewis

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Josie Clark, a loving wife and mother, struggles to make ends meet by cleaning homes and working at a diner while her husband drives a taxi. Josie's joy is her two children, just entering adulthood. But with her son recently imprisoned for a crime she is certain he didn't commit, and her daughter marrying too young, Josie now worries about the future—and wonders if she'll ever be able to ensure their safety and happiness.

Across town, in a gorgeous house by the sea, successful property developer Bel Monkton lives in comparative luxury. But she has struggles of her own. Since the death of her twin sister more than a year ago, Bel has been unable to rebuild her shattered world, and the troubled past she thought was behind her haunts her ever more.

Faced with uncertainty and heartbreak, Josie and Bel find each other and a surprising friendship that will change their lives.

## Praise for Susan Lewis

“A master storyteller.”—**Diana Chamberlain**

**Look for special features inside. Join the Random House Reader's Circle for author chats and more.**

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

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## **Never Say Goodbye: A Novel By Susan Lewis Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #407653 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-04-08
- Released on: 2014-04-08
- Format: Kindle eBook

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## Editorial Review

Review

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### About the Author

**Susan Lewis** is the internationally bestselling author of more than thirty novels, including *No Child of Mine*, *Don't Let Me Go*, and *The Truth About You*. Having resided in France and the United States for many years, she now lives in the rural county of Gloucestershire, U.K.

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### Chapter 1

“So what do you think all that’s about?” Josie Clark murmured, almost to herself, as she put down the phone.

“All what?” her husband wondered from behind his latest copy of *Exchange and Mart*. It would be a flipping miracle if they could afford a new car, secondhand of course, but there was no harm in looking.

Josie’s lively violet eyes flicked in Jeff’s direction. Though she couldn’t see his face, her own was partially reflected in the mirror hanging over their faux-brick fireplace, and what she could see were small, delicate features, with a pixieish chin and nose that seemed to belong more to a child than a woman of forty-two years. Her crowning glory, as her dad used to say, was the mop of honey-red curls that shone and tumbled about her head as though they had a life all their own.

“That barnet of yours is the envy of half the women I know,” her neighbor Carly regularly complained. Not that Carly’s hair was bad; it just wasn’t naturally blond, and in truth it didn’t have all that much verve in it either. However, on Friday nights when Carly went out with the girls, her artful handling of it ensured that no one would ever have guessed how many extensions, pieces, pins, and lacquer sprays were holding it all up.

At five foot two, Josie could never be described as tall, but then neither could Jeff, at five-five. What he was, though, or certainly in her opinion, was the best-looking bloke in Kesterly-on-Sea. Or on their street, anyway. Probably on the whole estate, because not a single one of the blokes she knew, young or old, looked a bit like Tom Cruise when they smiled, nor could they make her heart skip a beat the way Jeff sometimes did. That was really saying something after twenty-two years of marriage, which didn’t mean they hadn’t had their ups and downs along the way, because heaven knew they had. In fact, there had been a time when she’d seriously feared they wouldn’t make it, but she didn’t allow herself to dwell on that too much now. No point when the other woman, Dawnie Hopkins, had moved up north after it had all come out about her and Jeff. That had happened five years ago this Christmas and had totally spoiled the holiday, that was for sure. In fact, Christmas had never really been the same since, given all the painful memories that seemed to pour down the chimney instead of seasonal cheer.

Last Christmas had been the worst, though not thanks to Dawnie this time—in the circumstances Josie might have actually preferred it if her former best mate had staged an unexpected return. No, the source of their upset last year had been Ryan, their eighteen-year-old son, whose gift for getting into one scrape after

another after another had surpassed itself so spectacularly that Jeff would no longer have the boy's name spoken in his hearing.

Oddly, the crisis of Ryan's trial and imprisonment had seemed to bring Josie and Jeff closer together for a while, probably because it had given them more to think about than how much damage the shenanigans with Dawnie had done to their marriage.

She still couldn't help wondering if Jeff ever regretted staying.

She didn't ask. It wouldn't do any good, not only because she was nervous about the answer but also because she herself had banned Dawnie's name from being spoken inside 31 Greenacre Close. This was their home, a tidy little semidetached house at the far end of a cul-de-sac, next to a lane that ran through to the playing fields behind, and they didn't need to sully its fresh, lemony scent with stinky reminders of a so-called friend's betrayal. (Josie would never admit this to another living soul, but she actually missed Dawnie more than she'd imagined she would. Though she supposed it wasn't all that surprising, given they'd been best mates practically since birth.)

Just went to show you could never trust anyone, even those closest to you. It had been a very painful lesson for Josie to learn, as she herself was so loyal she didn't even like to change a dental appointment.

The real light of her and Jeff's life was Lily, their twenty-one-year-old angel of a daughter, who was currently at uni doing a BA honors degree in history and politics! Imagine that! No one from either of their families had ever done so well—nor, come to that, had anyone else on their street. However, Lily was special; everyone said so, and had been saying it for most of her blessed little life. She sparkled and laughed and made everyone feel so good about themselves that love just came cascading back at her like a rainstorm of stars.

"She's her mother all over," Dawnie always used to say, but Josie didn't think she'd ever been as lovely as Lily. True, she enjoyed a good laugh, and she wasn't backward in offering a kind word when one was needed, but she didn't have the same inner glow or the innate belief in goodness that constantly shone out of her daughter.

Maybe she'd had some of it once, but definitely not anymore.

Now she had scars on her hopes and shadows over her dreams, though to look at her or talk to her, no one would ever know it. She simply went about her days in her usual cheery way, with a duster and polish in her hands on Mondays and Wednesdays, a teapot and frying pan on Thursdays and Fridays, and, until recently, a telephone headset plastered to her ears while she engaged in a spot of telemarketing on the weekends. (Living where they did, on the notorious Temple Fields council estate, there wasn't much in the way of swearing, cursing, and death threats she hadn't heard before, but not until she'd taken this last job had she ever been on the receiving end of it. Honest to God, the things some people said when you rang them up out of the blue .??. She'd never repeat their abuse, not even to Jeff, who, it had to be said, had some choice phrases himself for when his taxi broke down. And best not get him started on the kids who vomited in his backseat after a skinful on a Friday night, because that really wasn't pretty, for anyone.)

The telemarketing had ended up proving a waste of her time, since she'd never made a red cent out of it, so these last couple of weekends she'd been enjoying a bit of time to herself. Just as well, given the commitment she had for every other Saturday, and nothing was ever to get in the way of that.

She had to wonder if it was why her reflection was showing a woman who was worried, stressed, even drawn. Strange, since she wasn't aware of feeling anything in particular at the moment, apart from mildly intrigued to know what was behind the call she'd just taken.

So, should she run upstairs now to make herself a little more presentable for the visit? A quick rub of foundation, brightened by a couple of dabs of blusher and several waves of the magic mascara wand? She didn't usually wear makeup on her cleaning days, and since today was Wednesday she hadn't bothered when she'd got up this morning. Jeff always said, in his usual gruff way, that she didn't need it, she was lovely *au naturel*. He didn't often lace his compliments with fancy French phrases, mainly because that was the only one he knew, but on the rare occasions he remembered it, it pleased her no end, especially in light of all they'd been through.

"Have you got any bookings today?" she asked, going through to the kitchen to put the washing machine on for a second spin. One was never enough these days, a warning that the old tub was probably about to break down. Joy! Another expense they couldn't afford.

"Mm?" Jeff grunted.

"That was Lily on the phone," Josie called out. "She and Jasper are on their way over."

Sounding surprised, he said, "In the middle of the week? To what do we owe the pleasure?"

"She wouldn't say, but she wants to talk to us both, so if you've got any fares .??.?"

"Nothing so far," he admitted despondently. "I'll go over to the cab office later and check out what's what. Are you putting the kettle on?"

"If you like." After doing the honors, she went to stand in the doorway between the kitchen and living room, taking a moment to enjoy their new wallpaper with its smart gray stripes and floral border. They'd got it for a third off at the B&Q end-of-season sale, and it didn't really matter that there hadn't been quite enough, because no one ever looked behind the sofa, so who cared if there was a bare patch there? What was important to Josie was the fact that it really was quite similar to the paper in the extremely elegant drawing room at John Crover-Keene's. This was one of the big houses on the other side of the hill that faced down over Temple Bay, where she cleaned on Mondays and did the laundry on Wednesdays. She used to do for a couple of his neighbors until they'd asked her to stop coming after the unfortunate business with Ryan last year. Mr. Crover-Keene wasn't like them. He was sweet and considerate and understood completely that she wasn't to blame (actually she probably was, in a way, but it was really good of him to take such a kindly view). Sadly, he was hardly ever at home, since the Close, as his house was called, was really only a weekend place for him, so it was usually empty when she went flitting about with feather duster and vac.

Imagine having all those bedrooms (six in total, all with their own bathrooms), a separate laundry room, a kitchen as big as the downstairs of her whole house, and acres of landscaped garden with a tennis court, pool, and fabulous view of the bay, and the place wasn't lived in all the time. What it must be like to be that rich and single .??. She didn't really envy him, though, because he always seemed quite lonely to her in spite of all the friends who came for weekends. She often thought of this when money was tight for her and Jeff, which was most of the time these days; at least they had their health, their kids, and each other.

Well, they certainly had Lily, anyway, who'd rung a few minutes ago to say she was on her way home to have a chat with them. And Jasper was coming too. Josie liked that name; it made him sound as though he

came from a classy family, which actually he did. Jeff thought it was a bit pansyish, though he was fond enough of the boy. Jasper and Lily had been going out together since their first year at UWE—University of the West of England—and as far as Josie knew, Jasper’s Kent-based family were as smitten with Lily as their youngest son clearly was. She just hoped Lily didn’t end up going over to the southeast to live once she graduated, though of course Josie would never say that to her. After all, she couldn’t be tying her to the West Country forever, though if they were able to find some work in Bristol or Exeter, the nearest big cities, that would be lovely. Neither was too far away, about an hour on the train, a bit longer in the car, and they were really happening places, as Lily kept telling her.

Actually, Josie had been spending a little more time in Bristol these last few months. After she went to see Ryan at the prison, she and Lily would shop and chat, drink wine in harborfront cafés, and take in all the culture Lily could cram in before Josie had to catch a train home. It was just how Josie imagined her life might have been had she been able to go to uni, though back then she’d never even considered it an option. Certainly it wasn’t something her parents had encouraged. Actually, her dad might have if he’d lived long enough to see her scoop up five As and four Bs in her GCSEs, but he’d had a heart attack one Saturday afternoon at a football match when she was fourteen and hadn’t even made it to the emergency room. By then her parents had been divorced for almost ten years, so her mother, Eileen, hadn’t felt the loss anywhere near as deeply as Josie had. In fact, she’d uttered something horrible like “good bloody riddance” when she’d heard the news and hadn’t even bothered coming to the funeral. Jeff had been there, of course, and loads of her dad’s mates from around the estate, who’d all expressed how sorry they were that old Bill had gone and popped off at such a young age.

It was quite typical of her mother to make herself scarce at such a harrowing time, since she’d always been more about Eileen than about anyone else. Her dad hadn’t been like that. When he wasn’t drunk, which admittedly wasn’t often, he always showed an interest in her education, and every time she earned herself some good grades he’d taken her for a pizza to celebrate.

“Bet you’ll be a high-powered lawyer, or even prime minister, one of these days,” he used to tease her.

“Well done, it’s what school’s for, to keep you out of trouble,” was about the most Eileen could manage as she got ready for a hot night out, or to work a double shift at Tesco.

Since there was often a lot of trouble on the north side of the Temple Fields estate, it was a constant worry for those on the south side that the druggies, thugs, and hoods who kept the Kesterly police in business would surge over the border formed by the busy high street on some sort of teenage recruitment drive. It rarely happened that way, mainly because the south-side youths all too often took themselves north in search of adventure.

Josie herself never went much farther into the estate than the high street, and if Jeff was ever called to an address in the Zone, as they sometimes called it, he made sure he kept all his doors and windows locked until he was safely out again. In his opinion, taxi drivers should be allowed to carry guns into those streets, which Josie calmly agreed with since it could never happen. Her mother was forever telling Jeff he should arm himself with a baseball bat at the very least, since he never knew what sort of lowlife he might be picking up, whether on the estate or anywhere else, come to that.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**



**Bert Gomes:**

Spent a free the perfect time to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their friends. Usually they performing activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book might be option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the guide untitled Never Say Goodbye: A Novel can be fine book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

**James Boyd:**

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**Henry Jones:**

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