



The Afterlife

By Gary Soto

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You'd think a knife in the ribs would be the end of things, but for Chuy, that's when his life at last gets interesting. He finally sees that people love him, faces the consequences of his actions, finds in himself compassion and bravery . . . and even stumbles on what may be true love.

A funny, touching, and wholly original story by one of the finest authors writing for young readers today.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Not many authors kill their main character on page two, but when Gary Soto does in *The Afterlife* the tactic results in a richly textured coming of age story. Chuy is a normal teenage guy, making his way in the barrios of Fresno, California, and hoping to impress a pretty girl. Carefully combing his hair in the restroom at Club Estrella, he only has a few moments to consider his "loverboy" strategy before his young life is (literally) cut short by a knife-wielding stranger who misinterprets a compliment.

Soon Chuy is floating above his bleeding body, embarking on a journey of personal exploration. As he drifts through his hometown (tightening his stomach muscles so as not to get blown off course) he manages to achieve many of the things he didn't when he was alive--recognizing how much he is loved by family and friends, saving a life, punishing a thug, and even falling in love (with a ghost-girl who has committed suicide).

Soto has a knack for particularly apt comparisons ("the sun rose pink as a scar," "laundry hung like the faded flags of defeated nations,"), which brings beauty and clarity to this dangerous world of *cholos* and *cabrones* (and if you don't know what those are, there's a glossary in the back). Aside from a couple plot points left dangling, *The Afterlife* offers a tangibly detailed portrait of a young life worth living. (Ages 13 and older)--
Brangien Davis

From School Library Journal

Grade 6 Up--Soto's twist on the emerging subgenre of narratives in the vein of Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* (Little, Brown, 2002) offers a compelling character in the person of 17-year-old Chuy, murdered in the men's room of a dance hall the evening he plans to connect with the girl of his heart's desire.

Unfortunately for both Chuy and readers, what happens after death is that the teen's once engaged and engaging spirit seems to dissipate along with his "ghost body." He floats around Fresno, CA, making seemingly random sightings of his murderer, local kids, and--only after a couple of days and at a time when his ghost body is beginning to dissolve limb by limb--other ghosts. He finds a new heartthrob in the form of a teen who has committed suicide and is befriended by the wise ghost of a transient whose life he tried to save. Grieving friends and family unknowingly are visited by Chuy, and he is startled to discover that his mother wants violent revenge for his death. This plethora of plot lines wafts across and past the landscape of a narrative as lacking in developed form as Chuy finds himself becoming. After a strong start, *The Afterlife* seems to become a series of brief images that drift off as though in a dream. Soto's simple and poetic language, leavened with Mexican Spanish with such care to context that the appended glossary is scarcely needed, is clear, but Chuy's ultimate destiny isn't.

Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Gr. 7-10. Combing his hair in the dirty bathroom of a club where a dance is being held, 17-year-old Chuy makes the mistake of telling the rodent-faced guy next to him that he likes his shoes. The young man returns the compliment by stabbing Chuy to death. Where any other story would end, Soto's begins. It follows Chuy for several days after his death, as the teenager recounts what he sees and experiences. His parents grieve, and his mother asks a cousin to kill Chuy's assailant; then he goes to his high school's basketball game and sees the effect his death has had on his friends, realizing their sadness will be fleeting. He saves the life of a homeless man, albeit only temporarily, and improbably, he finds his first

girlfriend, Crystal, a specter who died from an overdose. Crystal's character is not as well developed as Chuy's, but their relationship is beautifully evoked, with Chuy grasping every thread of love he can as he slowly disappears. Soto has remade Our Town into Fresno, California, and he not only paints the scenery brilliantly but also captures the pain that follows an early death. In many ways, this is as much a story about a hardscrabble place as it is about a boy who is murdered. Both pulse with life and will stay in memory. *Ilene Cooper*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Raymond Hernandez:

The book *The Afterlife* give you a sense of feeling enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting tension or having big problem using your subject. If you can make reading through a book *The Afterlife* to be your habit, you can get considerably more advantages, like add your capable, increase your knowledge about a number of or all subjects. You can know everything if you like start and read a publication *The Afterlife*. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or other folks. So , how do you think about this publication?

Carrie Correll:

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Norman Brown:

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Scott Lowe:

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