

## Until It's Over

Dorothy Van Soest

Apprentice House (2026)

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Reviewed by Holly Smith for Reader Views (04/2026)

5\*- Solid Mystery with Much-Needed Catharsis

Friends J.B. Harrell and Sylvia Jensen are standing strong together at a protest regarding uranium mining on indigenous land. Not too long into the protest, U.S. Senate candidate Anthony Jordane begins his speech. That is when things take a sinister turn.

J.B. sees Sylvia—who is 83 and generally uses her power through established legal systems—lunge for Anthony. J.B. has never seen Sylvia act like this, but his concern over her sudden personality change is quickly overrun by his concern for her health when she then collapses.

J.B. makes sure Sylvia is rushed to the hospital, but as she slips in and out of awareness, she says strange and vaguely disturbing things about Anthony and her past. J.B. knows he owes much of his life's success—both professional and personal—to Sylvia. She needs him now, and he won't abandon her. Not until it's over.

*Until It's Over* by Dorothy Van Soest fulfills all my wants in a mystery. Van Soest crafts real-feeling characters with their own traumas that are definitely their own, but that also speak to broader injustices carried out against larger populations, such as women and indigenous communities. I don't want to give too much of the plot away, but I do feel the need to give a warning that this book does cover the horrific crime of sexual assault.

That said, I think Van Soest handles the first crime that cascades into Sylvia attacking Anthony, as well as crimes that came after, with deft clarity and genuine sensitivity. There are no egregious scenes that are carried out purely for shock value or any grim notion of voyeurism. Everything that Van Soest describes is intentional and believable.

There is something deeply timely about *Until It's Over*. While I wish I could say all of the crimes, coverups, and traumas that are present in this novel are purely gritty works of fiction, they are all too real for many people. *Until It's Over* felt to me like a call not just to action, but to remember how far we have come, but also how far we still need to go. The novel was deeply satisfying to me as someone who often feels that violent acts are too often swept under the rug or not believed to begin with. *Until It's Over* provided a catharsis I didn't know I was craving.

I want to quickly add that I know that Van Soest has other books featuring the character of Sylvia Jensen; I have not read them. I mention this to emphasize that while I'm sure Van Soest's other novels are just as engrossing as *Until It's Over*, but I was not lost during my reading. Van Soest does a wonderful job of giving readers enough easy-flowing backstory of all of the

characters for readers to fully understand the gravity of Sylvia's situation as well as the depth of her and J.B.'s relationship. I'm sure it would have had added nuance had I read her other books, but *Until It's Over* can be read and appreciated as a standalone novel.

*Until It's Over* struck me. I think this is the best way to put it. Yes, I knew I would be reading a mystery featuring a shady politician and a bond between two members of a found family, but I didn't know how timely the novel would prove to be. In a world often filled with dark headlines, it was so refreshing and energizing to read even a fictional story of not revenge, but justice well-served.