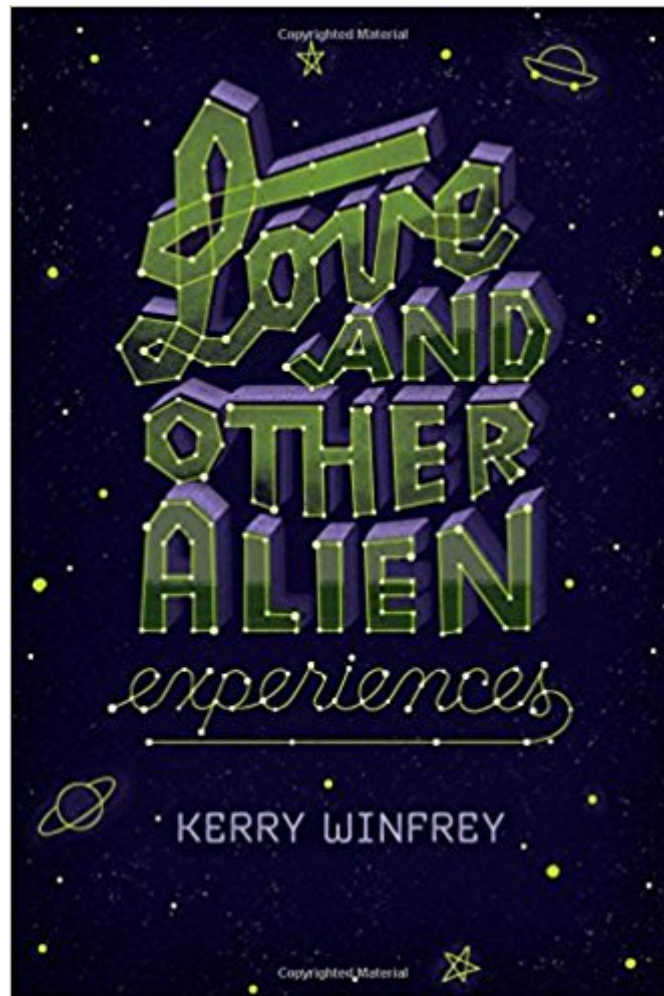




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Love And Other Alien Experiences



Synopsis

I'm never going outside again. Mallory hasn't left the house in sixty-seven days--since the day her dad left. She attends her classes via webcam, rarely leaves her room (much to her brother's chagrin), and spends most of her time watching The X-Files or chatting with the always obnoxious BeamMeUp on New Mexico's premier alien message board. But when she's shockingly nominated for homecoming queen, her life takes a surprising turn. She slowly begins to open up to the world outside. And maybe if she can get her popular jock neighbor Brad Kirkpatrick to be her homecoming date, her classmates will stop calling her a freak. In this heartwarming and humorous debut, Mallory discovers first love and the true meaning of home--just by taking one small step outside her house.

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Customer Reviews

"This is a charming take on high school—the friendships, the romance, and the snubs—that also tenderly explores mental illness and the stigmas that accompany it. A sweet and funny debut." —Booklist ". . . This YA version of The Shop around the Corner remains entertaining, and Mallory's quick wit, biting sarcasm, and sardonic narration give it bonus flair. . . Her descriptions of the panic when it does hit are dead on, though, and the very real pain she's in comes through with palpable intensity." —Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

Kerry Winfrey grew up in Bellville, Ohio, where she spent most of her time reading inappropriate books at the library. Not much has changed. Kerry writes for HelloGiggles. She lives in Columbus,

Ohio, with her husband, their son, and their dog, Merlin. Love and Other Alien Experiences is her first novel.

I wonder what could have stopped Dad from leaving. A cup of coffee from Mom? Tripping over the rug? One less sarcastic remark from me? If I could live it over again, could I fix it and avoid all this? I wish I could be like Lincoln. His reaction was the exact opposite of mine. While I shrunk further into myself, Lincoln seemed to grow two inches overnight. He got more extroverted, he smiled more, he laughed all the time. It's almost like he was relieved. He just says I need to move on, like Dad has. But how am I supposed to move on without an answer? Isn't it normal to be concerned when one of your parents disappears without a trace? I'm not the weird one here, am I? A self-proclaimed alien obsessive who enjoys spending time with her best friend, Jenni, and perusing We Are Not Alone, an online message board for all things extraterrestrial, Mallory Sullivan is an ordinary girl with her head in the clouds or cosmos and her feet firmly planted on the ground. Or, more precisely, within the confines of the home she shares with her mother and younger brother, Lincoln. In fact, Mallory hasn't left their home in sixty-seven days, her ever-present anxiety having escalated into debilitating agoraphobia after her father's sudden disappearance from their lives. When it's announced that the Birdwatcher's Association, a group in which her father had always been a devoted and passionate member, will be holding their annual excursion in November, however, it seems as though Mallory finally has an incentive powerful enough to inspire her to conquer her fears and confront the man for whom she has so many unanswered questions. The only problem? The five hundred dollar admission fee. With little money and fewer means of earning any when stepping foot outside her front door is a virtual impossibility, it seems as though all hope of attending is lost. That is, until an unexpected nomination for homecoming queen and the accompanying five hundred dollar prize for the winner offers Mallory the opportunity to recapture some semblance of normalcy that she's so desperate to acquire. As Mallory struggles to juggle spirit points, dress fittings, conspiracy theories, therapy sessions, X-Files reruns, and an out-of-this-world physics assignment, life and her known universe will never be quite the same again.

BeamMeUp: Pizza demands to be eaten with hands. I can't believe you're a forker.

AlienHuntress: A forker?! Come on. Pizza is hot, it's greasy, and it's way easier to eat with a fork.

Also I'm civilized.

BeamMeUp: Cute.

AlienHuntress: Did you just call me cute?

BeamMeUp: I called your pizza-eating style cute. Don't get too full of yourself.

AlienHuntress: What do you eat your pizza with, your massive ego?

BeamMeUp: Sounds like something a forker would say.

don't participate in blog tours very often. In fact, over the course of my entire blogging career, you could likely count those I have taken part in on two hands. When I was approached by Paper Lantern Lit and invited to participate in the blog tour for debut author Kerry Winfrey's *Love and Other Alien Experiences*, however, I didn't need to think twice. Putting aside the fact that I've long been an ardent fan of Kerry's current project, *A Year Of Romantic Comedies* "Seriously, it's absurdly cute. You should read it. Go on. I'll wait here." As a sufferer of anxiety, my own personal connection to Mallory's story ensured that Winfrey's debut was one book I couldn't bear to miss. Written with the same effervescent wit, vivacity and humour that I have now come to recognize as Winfrey's signature style, *Love and Other Alien Experiences* is a sweet, gentle exploration of one girl's journey of self discovery and first love which is sure to appeal to the hopeful romantic inside us all. If you've ever dreamt of a bouquet of freshly sharpened pencils, questioned whether men and women can ever truly be friends, or have sworn that the truth is out there, *Love and Other Alien Experiences* might be the book for you. Dana Scully would never sit around and wait for a guy to send her a message. That's because she's way too busy performing autopsies or trying to convince Mulder that the Loch Ness Monster isn't real, but still, she's a woman of action. And I can be, too. When I was a child, I was what one might call fretful. I worried. About everything. While other kids were riding their bikes and scraping their knees, I was eating my peanut butter toast with a knife and fork and checking to make sure that the doors were locked and the stove was off. Again, and again, and again. I wasn't able to shed these obsessive thoughts like my baby teeth and untameable curls. And though I'm fortunate enough to be able to manage my anxiety through routine and medication, and have not suffered from agoraphobia firsthand, aspects of Mallory's story are not dissimilar to my own. I know what it's like to allow my anxiety to overwhelm me. To feel frustrated and trapped and embarrassed by feelings largely outside my control. To long for a less complicated version of "normal". While one needn't discover a new best friend or potential lover in a story in order for it to resonate or be deemed "valuable", there's no doubt that a personal connection with a character can be a transformative experience. In this case, seeing some variation of my own story on the page was as empowering as it was liberating. As she's eventually told by her devil's-advocate-turned-friend, BeamMeUp, Mallory is a force to be reckoned with. Smart, sarcastic, brave, and resilient, Mallory recognizes her failings and actively works to confront them head-on. This journey can be messy and ugly and even unkind, but it is never untrue. With a deft hand and thoughtful sensitivity, Winfrey's exploration of

Mallory's anxiety is authentic and harrowing while also remaining hopeful and optimistic. Best of all, her growth and transformation are entirely self-motivated. While there is a romance-inspired secondary storyline, this is by no means presented as an answer to Mallory's problems. A number of people contribute to Mallory's recovery in a positive manner – her mother, her brother, her therapist, and her best friend – but ultimately her strength and healing come from within.

“Not fair,” Jake protests. “You get the star player and I get Mallory?” No offense.

“Plenty of offense!” I yell back.

“Yeah, offense is super important!” Brad adds, not even ironically.

Of equal importance are these secondary characters who buoy Mallory's spirits and traverse their own equally compelling adventures over the course of the novel. Most prominent of these is Lincoln, Mallory's younger brother, who recently came out and is embracing his sexuality and embarking on his first serious homosexual relationship. Though the two are more likely to exchange sarcasm than sincerity, the reader is left with absolutely no doubt as to their depth of feeling and the lengths to which they will go to help one another. Equally engaging is Mallory's closest friend, Jenni, an Indian beauty blogger who is always ready to lend a helping hand, whether it be in achieving the perfect winged eyeliner or earning enough spirit points to win the homecoming crown. Jenni is ineffably charming and undeniably quotable (“If you wear your look with confidence, people will accept it, no matter what. Just pretend you're Beyoncé at the Grammy's, or Beyoncé at the Met Ball or, actually, just pretend you're Beyoncé. It's a solid life philosophy.”) Each of Winfrey's characters, both primary and periphery, shine more brightly than the last. Everything in the universe – that's everything, no matter how small – exerts a gravitational force on everything else. A pencil exhibits a force on the sun. A quarter on Jupiter. A scoop of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream on a scoop of chocolate ice cream. And that means you exert force on the universe, too. You, Alien Huntress, are a force to be reckoned with. Don't count yourself out before you even start the game.

Perfect for fans of Paula Stokes and Lauren Morrill, *Love and Other Alien Experiences* is a charming, hopeful, heartening contemporary romance that has a little something for every reader. Whether you're interested in a little fun flirtation or a sincere reflection on mental illness, this debut has it all in a darling story that can easily be devoured in a single afternoon. A novel that focuses not on the destination but the journey, *Love and Other Alien Experiences* celebrates the infinitesimal triumphs and failures along the way, and reminds us that showing up is often half the battle. With a dash of humour, a drop of affection, a pinch of mystery and a generous helping of heart, Kerry Winfrey's winning recipe for romance will quickly

have readers exclaiming "I have what she's having!"

3.5 stars
Honestly, I didn't remember requesting this, but I was intrigued by the synopsis when it came up in my review pile. I liked Mallory. She is a dynamic MC and I did like being in her head. It was interesting to see her navigate her world and eventually branch out. She was definitely easy to root for. Plot wise, it was a bit repetitive, but it makes sense in the story. I liked seeing all of the shenanigans that Jenni and Lincoln set themselves up for. And the last couple of chapters were the best part of the story. Overall, it was a cute story and a quick read. **Huge thanks to Feiwel and Friends for providing the arc free of charge**

I LOVED this story. It's most definitely a new favorite for sure. Mallory is such a likable character. It's laugh out loud funny at many parts but it also pulls at your heart strings. I think her anxiety was handled realistically but I don't have agoraphobia so I can't for sure say if that was. I want to say so much more about this amazing novel but I don't know what else to say except read it!!
Rating: PG-13: a bit of drinking, mention of drugs and profanity

I read this book in one sitting. It kept me hooked without relying on GRRM's lazy "every chapter ends in a cliff-hanger and is only 7 pages long so you feel like you can just keep reading" gimmick. It was just solid, consistent, and entertaining writing. I don't like YA at all, but I loved this book. It made me laugh out loud. I identified with the characters--they were all flawed and believable. The story resolves in a satisfying way without being cliché.

I couldn't put this book down! Ok, I did to sleep for a little bit, but the next morning I was almost late to work because I just had to get to the end! This book touches on serious topics like anxiety disorders and absent parents but mixes it in with such likable characters that it never feels too dark. The love interest is dreamy, the lead character is funny and smart, and the supporting characters feel anything but cookie cutter, you care about their lives too! This is a fun read that will make you laugh and bring you back that nostalgic high-school-crush feeling (or make you relate to that feeling if you're still in high school!). Highly recommended!

Kerry is an amazing writer. Her character, Mallory, is quirky and relate-able to so many teens (and even adults) who struggle with introversion and the overall awkwardness that comes with being a young adult.

The characters are great. They will draw you in so close with familiarity that you assume you can predict them, but they continue to surprise you with small detours from where you expected them to go. The quips and emotion between Mallory and Lincoln define sibling relations. From the carefree optimism of Brad to the introverted forum poster online, there's something for every reader to relate to.

The best fiction I have read lately. I really appreciate an author who not only has an intriguing tale to tell, but can tell it so well. I was hooked after the first chapter. I spent several hours into the wee-hours at night because I just couldn't lay the book down.

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