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The Summer Of Chasing Mermaids



Synopsis

From the bestselling author of *Twenty Boy Summer*, a talented singer loses her ability to speak after a tragic accident, leading her to a postcard-perfect seaside town to find romance. The youngest of six talented sisters, Elyse d'Abreu was destined for stardom until a boating accident took everything from her. Now, the most beautiful singer in Tobago can't sing. She can't even speak. Seeking quiet solitude, Elyse accepts a friend's invitation to Atargatis Cove. Named for the mythical first mermaid, the Oregon seaside town is everything Elyse's home in the Caribbean isn't: an ocean too cold for swimming, parties too tame for singing, and people too polite to pry except for one. Christian Kane is a notorious playboy insolent, arrogant, and completely charming. He's also the only person in Atargatis Cove who doesn't treat Elyse like a glass statue. He challenges her to express herself, and he admires the way she treats his younger brother, Sebastian, who believes Elyse is the legendary mermaid come to life. When Christian needs a first mate for the Cove's high-stakes Pirate Regatta, Elyse reluctantly stows her fear of the sea and climbs aboard. The ocean isn't the only thing making waves, though swept up in Christian's seductive tide and entranced by the Cove's charms, Elyse begins to wonder if a life of solitude isn't what she needs. But changing course again means facing her past. It means finding her inner voice. And scariest of all, it means opening her heart to a boy who's best known for breaking them.

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Customer Reviews

Even though I still think the "rich guy heartbreaker" trope has been done to death in too many YA and NA books, I am still giving *The Summer of Chasing Mermaids* five stars (and I wish I could give it more). I wish I could give a copy to every YA/NA author who thinks slut shaming, whitewashing, and flunking the Bechtel Test somehow makes for compelling reading. This year hasn't been great for my IR romance reading habit. Between the colorism fail and the endlessly tired tropes of billionaires and bikers, I've just been kind of bored. If anything, I've found more awesome heroines, especially darker-skinned heroines with natural hair styles in comics like *Princeless* #1, *Fight Like a Girl* #1 and *Jem and The Holograms* #1. There are few romances that I consider really feminist. I need a heroine who may go through trials but is always strong or growing towards strength without needing a man to get her there. I need to see real female friendships. I need to see body acceptance. I DON'T need slut shaming or virginity-worshipping. I had that strong heroine in *Elyse* who, in her own words said: "I was in love, just like in the stories. But unlike those fairy-tale girls, love didn't save me; it changed me. Changed me into someone who could save myself." Save herself? Give that chica a prize!!! A tragic boating accident silenced her voice for good, and she moved to Oregon in order to heal (and perhaps to run away). And though there were times I wanted her to stop feeling sorry for herself, it made sense that she struggled but kept going on, finding a purpose to her life and finding her voice. From helping Christian restore *The Queen of Cups* to hunting mermaids with his adorable little brother Sebastian. The female friendships just had me cheering. It is so great to read a novel in which the women aren't stabbing each other in the back over the hawt guy du jour. I loved how *Elyse* (in her way), Kirby and Vanessa talked so openly about their sexuality, owning it as something healthy. I really loved *Elyse's* guardian Lemon and her coven of witches who actually celebrated menstruation as a ritual. How often do we EVER read that in a YA book? In fact, how often do heroines have periods? It's like authors are terrified to write about something so natural. And I loved how the circle of women were so supportive of one another. At first, I thought Christian would just be another in a long string of "sexy misunderstood playboy" types that the romance genre is swamped with, but Ockler gave him depth. She didn't concentrate on his

past nor did she have him slut shaming the women he'd been with. And once he decided to be with Elyse, he really was WITH her. He listened to her voice, treated her no different than any other person, even though she couldn't speak, and he was vulnerable in a way that heroes of this type are seldom allowed to be. Christian had as much to learn from Elyse as she from him. I really loved his relationship with his brother too. While Elyse and Christian were awesome, my heart was smitten by Christian's little brother Sebastian. He was just so sweet and innocent with his love of mermaids. I hated those who tried to steal his innocent joy and cheered when determined women stepped up to allow him his moment to shine. The part where Elyse, Kirby and Vanessa dressed him up to march in the mermaid parade just had me saying "you just go boy!" Sadly, there were some readers who read far more into Sebastian's wanting to dress as a mermaid as some kind of "agenda". I just saw a little boy who liked what he liked and didn't know until later that there are small-minded adults who didn't approve. What I appreciated about Ms. Ockler is that she cared enough about writing a real character and not a stereotype. She did her research on Trinidad and Tobago. She wrote Elyse not as some "exotic" character, but as a real young woman that EVERY reader, regardless of race, can relate to in some fashion. And that's what any GOOD author would do. It was a wonderful, evocative and poetic tale of tragedy and triumph, of love and friendship and the things which matter most. It was about finding your voice when others try to keep you from speaking or ignore you. I truly loved this book.

The more I think about *The Summer of Chasing Mermaids*, the more I realize how much I loved this story. When stripped down to its bare bones, this is the story of a guy and a gal, both facing personal issues, who meet one summer and find their lives irrevocably changed. This is the type of story we've all read, yes? What makes this one unique, however, boils down to the unique & diverse characters, the problems they face, the unexpectedly appealing setting of the Oregon seaside and the hints of the fantastical sprinkled all throughout these pages. Elyse D'Abreau was born and raised in Trinidad and Tobago, which grants her a unique history that is showcased through countless little details. But she's also like any other teen girl: she deals with hard stuff the best she can, longs to belong somewhere, falls in love and forms friendships, discovers passions and allows herself to be carried on the wave of her feelings. Ockler has successfully written a character that's different from any other I've read, but remains just as easy to relate to, and I certainly think that's something worth celebrating. Elyse meets several people during her summer in Oregon, and they encourage her to open up her heart and move forward with her life. Enigmatic Christian, who has secret vulnerabilities of his own. Innocent Sebastian, a young boy who believes wholeheartedly that he can find

mermaids if he looks hard enough. Generous Lemon, who offers Elyse her own place in her home. Caring Kirby, Lemon's daughter who does her best to open her heart to Elyse. Bubbly Vanessa, who doesn't waver in offering Elyse her friendship from the moment they meet. Just as in real life, these people (among many others who I didn't single out) had significant parts to play in her journey. Ockler goes one step further and doesn't only make them a part of Elyse's life; she ensures that they each get arcs of their very own. But it is mainly Elyse's tale that readers are treated to in *The Summer of Chasing Mermaids*, in particular the loss of her voice and how it has dramatically sidetracked the plans she had for her life. The grief, the anger, the denial, the fear, the uncertainty - all of these emotions are swimming around in Elyse's mind and heart. I was immediately swept up in her story, hoping against hope that Elyse would find her way by the time we reached the end. Her journey is compelling, so utterly realistic in how painful and jagged, how beautiful and happy, how complex all her feelings and experiences could be. While I've never experienced what Elyse has gone through, it certainly felt like I had; that's how immersive Ockler's writing is. While there are so many things I loved about *The Summer of Chasing Mermaids*, it is really the impression it left on my heart that is most remarkable. Elyse might be unable to speak or sing, but she certainly still has a voice - a fact she doesn't fully understand until she allows herself to. The importance of that, of recognizing that each and every one of us has a voice and can use it, is definitely the biggest takeaway this novel has to offer readers. Characters, relationships, setting, theme and just a hint of magic - Sarah Ockler has nailed it all in *The Summer of Chasing Mermaids*, and there's no doubt in my mind that I'd recommend this one.

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