



Alice at Heart

Deborah Smith

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This special collector's edition of bestselling author Deborah Smith's first romantic fantasy novel has been called "Magical" by Romantic Times Magazine, which awarded the novel its top rating. Publishers Weekly says of the story, "love and dark secrets abound." Acclaimed fantasy author Anne Bishop calls the novel "wonderful," and Library Journal describes *Alice At Heart* as "a compelling, intricately plotted story of love and acceptance."

Alice At Heart is simply this: a rich, whimsical, intelligent and romantic launch for Deborah's WaterLilies series about the lives, loves, and dramas of a secret society of people endowed with supernatural traits in the water and a solemn mythology that insists they're descended from ancient (and not stereotypical) "mermaids."

An earlier e-book edition from TimeWarner's iPublish division was published in Spring 2001; however, the BelleBooks collector's edition of *Alice At Heart* includes extensive new material added by the author, as well as original artwork and a classic 1920's Maxfield Parrish painting as the cover art.

With 1.5 million copies of her romantic Southern novels in print, Deborah has been named a top all-time author by Romantic Times. Her past and current titles include *A Place To Call Home*, *On Bear Mountain*, and *Stone Flower Garden*.

Alice at Heart Details

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From Reader Review Alice at Heart for online ebook

Cindy says

I don't see what others liked about this book. It started off with an interested opening, but I lost interest pretty soon. Alice was a good character with a background that made me care about her, but what's with all the other stuff going on? And then more explicit content than I wanted to be reading. How old is Alice, anyway? I got confused and lost interest. No thanks.

Debbie says

I had zero expectations going into the book. I'd heard of the author before but hadn't read anything by her. I have had *Waterlilies #2* on my shelf forever, so decided I should finally get around to reading the first in the series.

I liked this book. It's a very different take on mermaids, and had a very sensual, lush narration. I really liked how Alice and Griffin were both finding themselves together, and how the plot line ties into very intriguing backstories of the sisters.

Plotwise, this book was a four. But the writing seemed a bit unpolished and simplistic. And I thought the endnotes by "Lilith" were a little too cutesy, but did appreciate the extra information about the Water People.

Jennifer says

Cute. I liked it better in the beginning, when it was darker and more about two misfits finding each other. Once the Southern magnolia mermaid mythology and backstory kicked in it got a little too sweet for me - and there was less of a focus on the characters that interested me most, Alice and Griffin.

Susana says

Disclaimer:

I read the ebook edition, so it's possible that the new edition corrects some of the issues I mention in this review.

And here it is: Another story with an interesting premise but which, in the end, falls short due to an abundance of the most clichéd paranormal traits.

As a magical realism story this had great promise... had the development been more focused on the characters, and ultimately on their interactions; instead of endless descriptions of clothes and bracelets.

Alice, as a character, was interesting to read about. And I was particularly interested in seeing her breaking

the bonds to her old life.

But an author can't expect their readers to believe _and no, I'm not going to mention the more fantastical bits! _ that someone who has been basically mistreated by her family for as long as she can remember, would fall into a relationship _as magic as it was _ just like that.

Thirty four years old is a long time to have acquired some strong protective barriers against "third parties".

The what was to be the sensual elements _ and I'm far from being a prude!_ were overdone. The description of that part of their connection was basically ...

What was that? Mental connection sex? o_O

lol Between scrunching my face and just laughing at it, well you can see my reaction.

I wanted more from Alice and from the three women.

I wanted to feel real bonds between all of them. not cliché descriptions of stereotyped characters:

The older one with her wise woman role, the middle sister, the warrior, and the younger sister with her kind easy ways.

Of the three, Mara was undoubtedly the one I wanted to read and to know more about. Her relationship with C.A. could have been used to let us watch them actually interacting, and not telling us about it.

This is not my first book by this author.

It is, however, the first fantasy book by this author that I've read, and it shows.

Basically I want to say: There's a gem hidden in this story, so, delete all of this, and rewrite it once again.

And forget about the over the top drama...

Also the cover art, could use a very necessary update to our day and age...

Cara says

This is definitely not a book I would have picked up on my own,(It's a firstread book from goodreads giveaway)but I'm glad I did.

Alice grew up in a mountain town as a freak. Her family barely tolerated her existence, and her mother committed suicide when she was just a few days old. Then, everything changes. Alice is out swimming when she rescues a child from drowning. The amazing thing is, she was quite a distance away from the girl when she fell in, and no one should have been able to get there that fast.

Alice has always known she was different. She is an extraordinary swimmer and can stay underwater for extended periods of time. She feels at home in the water, and although she hides her abilities from everyone

it doesn't stop her from swimming all the time even in frigid conditions. The cold doesn't bother her. Griffin Randolph was orphaned when he was just 4 years old. His parents died in a boating accident, and he almost died too. The mysterious Bonavendier sisters, Lilith, Pearl and Mara rescued him. He believes that they had something to do with his parents death. There has always been a feud between the Randolphs and the Bonavendiers. He gets in an accident while exploring an old sunken ship, and he almost dies again. Suddenly, a woman appears in his head, and tells him to breathe. When he asks her name she says 'just Alice'. Thus begins their journey and their destiny. With the help of the Bonavendiers past wrongs will start to be righted and old wounds will begin to heal. The voice that tells this story is fluid, haunting, and lyrical. It's easy to get lost in this story, and in these characters.

Kailey (BooksforMKs) says

In this book, Alice discovers that her extraordinary swimming abilities, her webbed toes, and the fact that she can breathe underwater, all mean that she is a half-human descendant of a mermaid. When her half-sisters come looking for her, and a mysterious man appears to her in a vision, Alice must decide if she really can believe in a new type of magical life, or if her damaged past will keep her from accepting the love of her new family.

I wanted to like this book because it's about mermaids, and I kept reading the book because of the mystery surrounding a shipwreck, but I didn't enjoy it that much. The writing is odd and strange, and I skipped a lot of random explanations of things.

A better title for this book would be "Mermaids Having Sex", because even though there's only one sex scene that I had to skip, every character in the entire book is overly sexualized, as if everyone's primary characteristic is their sexual identity, and they have no depth beyond that. And that got boring really fast.

The only part I liked was the mystery about the shipwreck, and even that was a disappointment at the end. The plot is too straightforward, and I was looking for more complexity and depth.

Stephanie says

This is a really sweet story about a woman who discovers how extraordinary she is. She grew up with her Aunt, who, alone with the rest of the town, made her feel like an outsider. Odd Alice, they called her. Through a accidental heroic act, she discovers her half-sisters, and finds out that all her oddities are really the traits of a very old, very powerful, family.

Cheryl says

First, I am a realistic "rater". 4-star and 5-star ratings are not easily earned from me. 3-stars means I'm glad a read the book. It was a good choice. 1-star rated books I either could not bring myself to finish, or I feel I wasted time from my life I can never recover. So, a 2-star rating, like this book, is a book that had some potential, some elements that appealed, but simply didn't fulfill that potential. I read the e-book version that was free for a time for the Kindle. I understand another version of the book has been released with enhanced and additional content. It is possible that content addresses some of the shortcomings I found in the book.

I love the premise of the Water People. Very enchanting. However, I found the character development lacking and very flat. I found it difficult to understand or even really like the characters (or hate them for that matter). Plot was OK, but seemed to get in it's own way a little. The best part of the book were the legend and explanation of the clans at the end of the book. Would like to have had this information intertwined within the story itself or at least better references to them.

I didn't like this enough to read anything else by this author. Which, for me, is one of the true measures of success of the book. So, while I didn't think I wasted my time, I can't recommend this book.

Lydia Presley says

What an..odd book.

First, the bad things. The cover art is HORRIBLE. Seriously, I never wanted to pick up this book. It looks like something out of the 70's. Horrible, horrible cover. Also, the type is horrible. It's huge. The book should have been half as long as it was because of how big that type was.

Story-wise, this was like reading ..hm, a peaceful mystery? I guess. The characters had interesting depths and quirks to them. Their motto really made no sense and the story moved at a snails pace.

I'm being generous giving the book 2 stars, and it only gets that because the characters were interesting - but they aren't interesting enough for me to read the sequel.

Jennifer Kronk says

Deborah Smith wrote one of my favorite romances ever, *When Venus Fell*. *Alice at Heart* is nothing like book. It is hard to see that they were written by the same author. *Venus* is an unlikely love story between two bitter, damaged and funny people. *Alice* is a fairy tale with a lot of romance, lyricism and passion. At some point I would like to read more in the series but I do not feel compelled to run out and get something from the library right now. If there was a new book about Venus, I would be there in a second. Overall, I greatly enjoyed this book, it was just odd and very different from what I expected.

Lisse says

I like the idea behind Alice at Heart - a mermaid (not the kind with the tail that we grew up hearing stories about, but the real deal with webbed toes, hair that grows about two inches a day and the ability to swim under water for immense periods of time. Oh, there's also the talking with dolphins thing and their singing to your soul bit as well) who doesn't know she is one until her sisters come and find her and show her her true self. I like the way Alice comes into her own in the book, but I felt something was lacking and I'm not sure what exactly it is. I think the characters could've been flushed out a bit more as could the story itself. Since we are delving into a world none of us knows about, I think there could have been a lot more detail given.

I think my biggest problem with the book was that it is a story about a woman coming into her own, but it seemed to happen so easily for her - or at least we didn't get much info otherwise about her struggling to find her way. I guess as someone who is also trying to find her way, I would have liked to hear more about Alice

in general and what she was going through.

I give Smith credit for coming up with a great idea and I feel bad about giving the book only two stars, but it just didn't floor me like some books do. It is a nice easy read for anyone who likes fantasy, the ocean, the idea of mermaids living among us, or anyone who would like to read a book about a woman coming into her own.

Kim says

Alice Riley is a special young woman, with mysterious abilities, an affinity for water, and webbed toes. She has always been an outsider, but when she rescues a little girl from drowning, she is thrust uncomfortably into the spotlight and draws the attention of the Bonavendier sisters, who claim to be her kin. . .and mermaids. Alice moves from the insular world of Riley, Georgia, to the Bonavendier's actual island of Sainte's Point, she learns about her past, and is torn between loyalty to her new-found kin, and the charming Griffin Randolph, with a grudge against them linked to his own dark past.

I have always loved mermaids, but it can be difficult for authors to treat them in a non-cartoonish manner. In the Waterlilies series, there are actually few water people who fit the stereotypical half human, half fish mold; most walk on two (webbed) feet and live harmoniously with the "Landers" (people of the land), but possess various abilities such as breathing under water, psychic communication through singing, and great longevity. It's an original take on the merpeople legends, supplementing rather than overturning folk traditions, and the end result is a world that is easier to believe in than many fictional mermaid tales. The language is often quite lyrical, the inclusion of detail neither too sparse nor too effusive. The Bonavendiers are glamorous and eccentric (and on a totally superficial note, I really want their wardrobes!), and Alice's journey towards self-discovery fascinating to follow. This is a book that walks the line between fantasy and literary fiction, with a healthy dose of romance thrown in as well.

Melissa says

I didn't hate it, but I wanted so much more from this. I though the concept was interesting and different from other things I have read, but the entire book was so slow I felt like I was waiting for it to ~really~ start the entire time I was reading it. I also didn't find the main character and her entire change of attitude very believable and there wasn't really anything about her I was drawn to or interested in. The author did a fairly decent job on scenery description, though, and it made me want to go back to visit Georgia. I know it doesn't sound like a big thing, but it really helped keep me reading.

Maggie says

This book was free on Amazon (Kindle edition), which was why I downloaded it. I'm glad I didn't pay money for it. It didn't suck really terribly, but definitely lacked the depth that would have made it satisfying. I have nothing against mermaids and I like this concept, but it was wrapped in a superficial, cheesy, romance-novelish shell that made me embarrassed to be reading it and glad that I was reading the Kindle version, as I'm sure the printed version would have had Fabio on the cover. (I know I know, it doesn't, I'm just saying.)

Heather says

This was a quick read between "heavier" novels to refresh my imagination and give me a bit of fantasy. That being said, I do like my fantasy to be a bit believable in order to really suck me in, and this delivered only some of the way. Where the story becomes far-fetched or a little dramatic I became less interested, but the story and plot was enough to carry me right to the end of the book without wanting to give up. Fun for the imagination and a different take on "mermaids" than what we grew up with.
