



# Anything But Ordinary

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## **Anything But Ordinary** Valerie Hobbs

From the moment their romance begins in eighth grade, Winifred and Bernie are individualists. They pride themselves on being different, and have each other for support through the tough years of high school. So when they consider college, they send off for the same catalogs, promising never to separate.

But Bernie's mother dies and Bernie more or less drops out of school, becoming an ordinary guy working away in a tire shop, while Winifred goes about as far from New Jersey as a girl can go: the University of California at Santa Barbara. College is a culture shock to Winifred, but her three savvy roommates teach her how to fit in. By the time Bernie catches up with her again, Winifred has become, well . . . ordinary. Can they rediscover their true selves - and true love?

Told from alternating viewpoints, with a sense of humor and a deep appreciation of first love, Valerie Hobbs's novel captures an endearing young couple's search for independence and identity.

## **Anything But Ordinary Details**

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Author : Valerie Hobbs

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## From Reader Review Anything But Ordinary for online ebook

### Lyn says

Bernie Federman moves to Pittstown when he is thirteen. New to the school, he is a back-row kid wedged between the gangsters and the makeup girls. He meets Winifred, who is a front row girl with a pop-up arm - no matter what the question. Winifred is smart and about as popular as cafeteria meatloaf.

After starting numerous school clubs and having no one join them, Winifred starts the Green Hat Club. Teased and beaten down, Winifred stops raising her hand but refuses to give up her olive green hat with a bright red pom-pom on top. Bernie sympathizes, finds the ugliest green hat he can and joins her club.

Opposites in almost every way imaginable, they fall in love. Through middle school and high school they make plans for their future together when they'll go away to college and get out of Pittstown.

The year of their graduation Bernie faces a tragedy that throws him off course and Winifred goes to college alone. Taken up by her savvy roommates who remake her, Winifred becomes Wini and for the first time in her life begins to fit in. Realizing he is losing her, Bernie travels across country to find her.

Winifred and Bernie's unusual love story is touching, funny, and heartbreaking. Will Bernie reach his potential and will Winifred trade his love for being normal?

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### Fiona says

In the book Anything But Ordinary, Winifred is a strange girl who doesn't belong anywhere and her ideas have been rejected by everyone in school. But then a boy name Bernie pops into the picture and Winifred finally feels like there's somewhere she belongs. After that day they've met, they've grown up close together. One day a tragic event happens to Bernie, and all the plans he had with Winifred were all ruined and gone to waste, because he decided to quit college. But then Winifred decides to go to college as far away as possible, so then what happens? Bernie drives all the way to Winifred's college, but isn't enrolled. What does he do with his life?

This book leaves you with questions in every chapter, but the answers are so intriguing and you won't stop until you read the rest of the book. I would recommend this to everyone who likes to read about life stories, and close relationships. It's a very touching book with lots of mixed emotions. It might even make you cry if you can relate to the sad moments of this story.

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### Lucy says

Winifred and Bernie have always been outsiders. From the moment they met in eighth grade, they have been weirdos, individuals, and in love with each other. They have vowed to each other that they will never be the most dreadful thing of all--ordinary--and that they will stick together through college and beyond.

But then Bernie's mother dies, and Bernie falls behind. His grades drop, he doesn't apply to college, and when Winifred goes off to University of California at Santa Barbara, for the first time since eighth grade, they leave each other behind.

College isn't everything Winifred hoped for, but fortunately, she has three savvy, popular roommates to show her the ropes, remake her in their image, and rename her Wini. By the time Bernie has caught up with her, she's become, well, ordinary.

Bernie and Wini need to find themselves before they can rediscover each other.

This book reads like a fairy tale, the kind where you know love will come through in the end, but that doesn't make it predictable. Somewhere in the middle you start to be afraid that maybe this fairy tale won't have a happy ending after all. And somewhere in the middle of the story, the stereotyped characters start becoming real people. The potential cliches never come together--instead, they become real stories of real people, trying to make their way.

This isn't always an easy read--watching Wini and Bernie both self-destruct in their own ways is difficult and sometimes painful. But it's very honest, and it feels real and true, and sometimes, that's the best thing of all.

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### **Gina Wymore says**

“Anything but Ordinary,” by Valerie Hobbs is a young adult novel that recalls a love story of two young individualists. At the age of 13, Bernie Federman’s family moved to Pittstown, where he must begin a fresh start at a new school. After struggling to make relationships with fellow peers, he befriends Winifred Owens, an equally unique and socially rebellious girl. They two become best friends, refusing to conform to societal norms. They share a distinctive trait in that they cherish individuality, and as the title states, anything but the ordinary. After Bernie’s mother dies, he falls into a state of depression that hinders his academic success and college aspirations. While Winifred continues to excel, she leaves Bernie and attends college across the country in California. Bernie’s despair in her absence drives him to travel to California in search of her. After eventually seeking her out, he realizes Winifred is no longer the girl he once fell in love with. In his efforts to win her back, his personal anguish and newly formed relationships eventually help him establish an identity of his own.

I enjoyed reading this book very much. It was a relatively quick read and easy to follow. It revealed realistic life circumstances and illustrated many believable events that take place in high school and college. It was relatable and realistic in its descriptions of school and young relationships. Hobbs tells a love story that becomes inspiring, yet heart aching. From a teachers point of view, I feel that middle school and high school students would enjoy this piece because it addresses important issues that many students often deal with, such as young love, family heartache, college endeavors and future expectations. While teenagers may struggle to deal with personal or academic issues, the books serves as proof that hope remains in troubled times. This book promotes optimism though change and reveals the importance of relationships and maturity.

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### **Books and Literature for Teens says**

Courtesy of B.L.T Reviews: [booksandliteratureforteen.blogspot.com](http://booksandliteratureforteen.blogspot.com)

Winifred and Bernie are best friends, and most of all they like to be different. When the kids at school would

wear Nike shoes, they'd wear Converse. When the latest fad was designer clothes, they would wear "recycled" t-shirts and jeans from the second hand store.

They were different.....until Wini left for college, then everything began to change. Fearing Wini would become like everyone else, Bernie decides to go after her.

But by the time Bernie shows up at UOC, it's too late, Wini changed so much that Bernie isn't sure he loves her anymore.

In the end, they both discover that being different is what they should be.

## The Review

This book was terrible. It started out okay, but by the time it got to UOC, it mentioned all kinds of disgusting dorm room secrets. Sure Hobbs did give a point: you shouldn't be like everybody else just because you don't fit in; but by the time it got to that part, Wini and Bernie had made all kinds of bad decisions (mostly Wini). My recommendation to you is skip the book and take the advice from above..... and don't go to the University of California.

REVIEW BY MORGAN @ B.L.T

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## Kati says

### Decent

I love Valerie Hobbs, she's probably my favor author at this point. This is probably my least favorite book of hers. At one point I wanted to kill the characters. The writing was fantastic it's down fall is that I'm not the target audience. I'm glad I read it though, probably would have liked it a lot more if I read it when I was 15-18.

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## Sequoia says

Summary- Anything But Ordinary by Valerie Hobbs, is about two people's life that are anything but ordinary. The two people are both shy, intelligent, and not so normal. The way the narrator tells this story follows both Winfred and Bernie's story. It shows Winfred's adventures in some chapters and Bernie's in others. It goes back and forth from Bernie to Winfred in almost every other chapter. Winfred was very unpopular she had no friends just like Bernie. Bernie made up the courage to ask to be in one of her club ideas that her teacher said was a bad idea. Ever since they were in 8th grade they did everything together. When Bernie was seventeen his mother died and a short while after that year Winfred decides to go off to college. Bernie is already depressed without his mother and now the love of his life is leaving for college. What is he going to do? Read the rest of this book to find out. (If you are to read this DO NOT read the book jacket it gives away way too much information and will spoil everything.)

Opinion/Rating- I would rate Anything But Ordinary by Valerie Hobbs a 4 out of 5 stars because it has some great detail, adventure, and the way the story is told makes it even more interesting, you can see both sides of the story. This story is not only romantic but an adventure in many ways. This book is for more mature teens because there are some intimate situations that would make some people uncomfortable. I would definitely

recommend this book to more people.

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## **Andie Z says**

Reviewed for Flamingnet Reviews

When he is thirteen, Bernie Federman moves to Pittstown, New Jersey. Proudly different than anybody else, he doesn't know anyone in the eighth grade, and from the very first day of school sits in the back of the classroom. Then he meets Winifred Owens, also fiercely individualistic, and possibly the only person less popular at school than Bernie. They fall in love and begin planning their life together. Both very intelligent, they are at the top of their class and apply to all the same colleges, neither of them dreaming they'll end up somewhere different than the other.

Then, shortly before graduation, tragedy strikes for Bernie, and all his dreams fall apart. He stops going to school, dropping to the bottom of the class, and starts working in a tire shop, abandoning his plans for college. Winifred is heartbroken, but presses on, going across the country to attend the University of California at Santa Barbara. Once there, she realizes just how much she doesn't fit in, and with the help of her new roommates, she gets a makeover and becomes 'Wini,' changing her major from nanoscience to communications and spending her time partying, gossiping, and drinking lattes. Meanwhile, Bernie realizes he may have lost her forever, so he travels crosscountry to catch up with her. However, once he finds her again and realizes that she's become 'ordinary,' it may be too late for them.

I really loved this book. It's different than a lot of the teen romances available today in that it deals with the dark horses, the underdogs, the "unpopular" kids. You really find yourself rooting for Bernie and Winifred to make it work, for Winifred to wake up and realize how silly she's being, and you want them to get back together in the end. From the moment I picked it up, I didn't stop reading ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY, and I would definitely recommend it. It's a great look at the first year of college and how much it can change a person (for better or for worse), and although the ending is slightly bittersweet, it still leaves the reader with a smile. I'll definitely keep my eyes open for other books by Valerie Hobbs.

Adult guidance recommended, as this book involves the lives of college students and deals with alcohol and sexual situations.

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## **Lucy says**

The crux of the novel surrounds Winifred's college transformation from quirky individual to popular princess, all as she tries to fit-in with her roommates and reforge her identity. After some life-changing events, Bernie decides not to go to college, but eventually follows Winifred (now Wini) across the country to her college in California, and tries to reawaken the girl he fell in love with.

It's a cute story, and very neatly explores the confusing first year of college, when you're trying to decide who exactly you are and want to be. However, it's painfully short (only 168 pages), especially for a YA novel right now. And the book suffers for it. It could have easily used another 100 or even 200 pages. The beginning is very fast and not very active. We're mostly told about Winifred and Bernie's early relationship, as the author tries to hurry us along to what seems to be the story she really wants to tell. Things pick up once Winifred gets to college, but more time could have been spent leading up to it. The voice of both

characters is very strong, but does tend to slip into narration throughout the book, instead of keeping us actively in the moment.

I like the cover well enough, it's what made the book jump out at me. But at the same time, it looks a little haphazard, especially the back (what's up with the ice cream sundae?), as if the designer was sort of just throwing things together and hoping it would look good. The model they used makes a convincing Winifred, even if they got her characteristic hat wrong (it's supposed to have red pompoms, a very obvious detail that I'm surprised they overlooked).

The interior isn't bad, but it feels like they were very clearly trying to make the book longer by having wide margins and lots of white space between lines. It looks ok, but it's just on the cusp of being too much. Again, if the book had been longer, they wouldn't have had to pad it so much to get it past 150 pages.

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### **Richie Partington says**

17 November 2006 ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY by Valerie Hobbs, FSG/Frances Foster Books, March 2007, ISBN: 0-374-30374-6

"Kid, what changed you?"

--The Pretenders

In the back row of the room, "wedged between the makeup girls and the gangsters," there sat tall and gawky Bernie:

"In the eighth grade other kids seemed to know who they were. They were 'into' things. Skateboarding, soccer, Xbox, iPods. Clubs. Eighth grade seemed to be a time for joining clubs. Bernie was a reader and a pretty good chess player, but Pittstown Middle didn't have a Reader's Club or a Chess Club. Playing chess meant you were a nerd, but there wasn't a Nerds' Club either."

Up in front, there sat short and square Winifred:

"Winifred was a front-row girl, one of those with a pop-up arm. No matter the question, Winifred had the full and complete answer. Bernie could tell she was about as popular at Pittstown Middle as the cafeteria meat loaf, except of course with teachers like Mrs. Nelson."

Becoming increasingly frustrated as she proposes a series of clubs for which not a single student expresses any interest -- the International Club, the Journaling Club, the Renaissance Comedy Club, the Live Poets' Society -- Winifred appears at school one day wearing a green knit hat with a bright red pom-pom and proposes formation of a Green Hat Club.

" 'Now, Winifred,' Mrs. Nelson said, 'of what possible social significance is a Green Hat Club?'

"That was when Winifred lost her cool. With a face red as her pom-pom, Winifred stood up and rattled off all the names of the other newly formed clubs -- the Jim Carrey Club, Bling Bling on Mondays, the PBJs (members had to have names that begin with one of those revered three letters.) She saved for last the Fashionistas, all six members of which had worn shocking-pink boas that day and sat in a bunch like a chummy family of flamingos.

" 'Social significance, Mrs. Nelson? Social significance?' By that time, Winifred was on the verge of tears and her voice shook dangerously. 'Popularity, Mrs. Nelson. That's what clubs are all about. Don't you know that?'"

After a couple of weeks of Winifred's incessantly wearing her green hat at school, she is joined at a table in the cafeteria by Bernie who is wearing a 99-cent puke-green stocking cap he's found at Kmart. A minute later they are formulating a club constitution. And thus begins the friendship and subsequent romance between the pair, who pledge their mutual allegiance to always be anything but ordinary.

"Striking out? Well, count me in.

I'm gonna stand by right your side through thick and thin

Ain't no doubt. Gonna win.

A walk through hell ain't bad compared to where we've been."

-- Clarence Clemmons & Jackson Browne, "You're a Friend of Mine"

ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY is a book that quickly surprised me, for after only a couple of dozen pages the tale morphs into a story of the pair as two college-age kids who are now connected by considerable mutual history and separated by...well, by the stuff that life throws at each of them.

For Bernie, it is the death of his mother during his senior year of high school: "His mother was strong and gentle and funny. She made Bernie laugh, even when he didn't feel like it. Like a best friend, she believed in him." With his mother gone, Bernie is alone with his father, a man with whom he has rarely talked, "a man who worked in a tire shop from six a.m. until six p.m." and "was snoring in his La-Z-Boy halfway through Wheel of Fortune."

With his father drinking, and the house a pigsty, Bernie hears a little voice asking him, "Why bother?" and so it is that Bernie lets his grades -- and their dreams -- slip, and Winifred heads across the country the following fall to the university in California that they were supposed to be attending together.

In Valerie Hobbs' finest piece of writing to date, this smooth and quirky tale portrays the very believable transformations that each of the two young adults undergo. The question is, after everything they go through, are Bernie and Winifred really still the same friends-in-love deep down inside?

" She smiled a sad, brave smile. 'Sometimes I look at you and suddenly I remember some silly little thing we did. Nobody was as close as us, nobody!' "

Richie Partington, MLIS

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## Wing Kit says

This book was about how a Bernie and Winifred seem to have been bounded together by fate because of how different they were from everyone else. Only they respected what the each had and everyone else was ordinary. They planned their life out together since high school but everything changed when Bernie's mother died. He began to abandon his own unique trait of being different and became normal. His dream he once shared with Winifred was lost, but Winifred still continued it. They began to separate from each other more when Winifred left for college. Is this going to be the life they both anticipated or are they going to bring it back?

This book was told in 2 perspectives, Bernie's and Winifred's. This allowed me to get into each of their

minds more easier and think what they thought. They both felt the same for each other but could never really say it to each other as they separated more. The awkwardness between them grew and so did they separate more. Being different from everyone was difficult for both Winnie and Bernie, since pressure caused them to become normal. One can't be different forever because not many other are.

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### **Jen says**

Awesome book...it made me cry!! Not like your typical YA in that it is in third-person but the POV really makes this novel I think. The characters are great. The story is so simple but a stand-out for how the feelings really hit home.

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### **Stephanie A. says**

They won my heart in five pages, broke it within 30 as intended, and spent the rest of the book tenderly putting it back together. Been a long time since I was that taken with a teenage love story.

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### **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Sally Kruger, aka "Readingjunk" for TeensReadToo.com

Winifred and Bernie have been best friends, and yes, in love, since middle school. Both were a little different and found fitting in difficult. Their friendship began with Winifred's creation of the Green Hat Club, and then it blossomed.

High school brought an even closer relationship. Winifred and Bernie were excellent students and hoped to place first and second in their graduating class. They studied together, lunched together, and basically spent every waking moment together. Romance became part of the friendship when they shared a first kiss, then a second, a third, etc. Although the physical side of their relationship advanced, both agreed that they would wait until marriage for the final act.

During senior year the hunt for colleges began. They agreed to find a place that would suit them both. Bernie's father worked in a tire shop which made money an obstacle. Winifred searched for a school that would recognize Bernie's academic achievement with a scholarship. All was going as planned until Bernie's mother returned one day from the doctor's with the news that she had ovarian cancer. She was gone in just a few months.

Life for Bernie and Winifred began to change. Winifred set off for California, and Bernie stayed in New Jersey. Headed in different directions for the first time, could their love and friendship remain strong?

ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY is the story of whether or not relationships can endure when faced with individual growth and change. Valerie Hobbs presents Winifred and Bernie in her simple, straight-forward prose. They are regular people living regular lives, but as the title suggests - "anything but ordinary." Readers hear the story from both perspectives and will come to know and care for both Winifred and Bernie.

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## Cassidy Charles says

This better be the only rotten apple in my book crop.

The method in which I select some of things I read hasn't failed me until today. Amazon likes to suggest books for me, based on other books I have viewed. In turn, I will read a summary of them, check if they are available in a library within my county, and then order them for my crop. I understand why Amazon suggested this for me (It's tags are YA Literature, Romance...), but I wish it had a quality filter.

Summary:

Love story about unique guy and girl, Bernie and Winifred. Then, Bernie's mom dies and he turns into a total recluse. Bernie and Winifred are both brilliant, but the Bernie doesn't want to go to college anymore. Bernie doesn't want to do anything anymore. Winifred gets fed-up and decides to go to college across the country, where she becomes a tricked-out, idiotic, Barbie clone. Bernie drives across country to reunite with her, but is horrified to find the clone that has replaced his girlfriend. He bums around the city for the year (His father is under the ruse that he is auditing courses at the university), and falls for the Winifred's T.A. The ending is proportional to the given plot, but lame nonetheless.

Usually, I try to find the good in books, but this one was straight-up awful. There was so much room for plot expansion (The guy's road trip across country is summed-up in one paragraph...what?) and the characters felt so unrelated-able. We all have hardships in life, but Winnie and Guy were shallow, in depth (not in the actuality of the story). Very happy that I got this off my reading list.

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