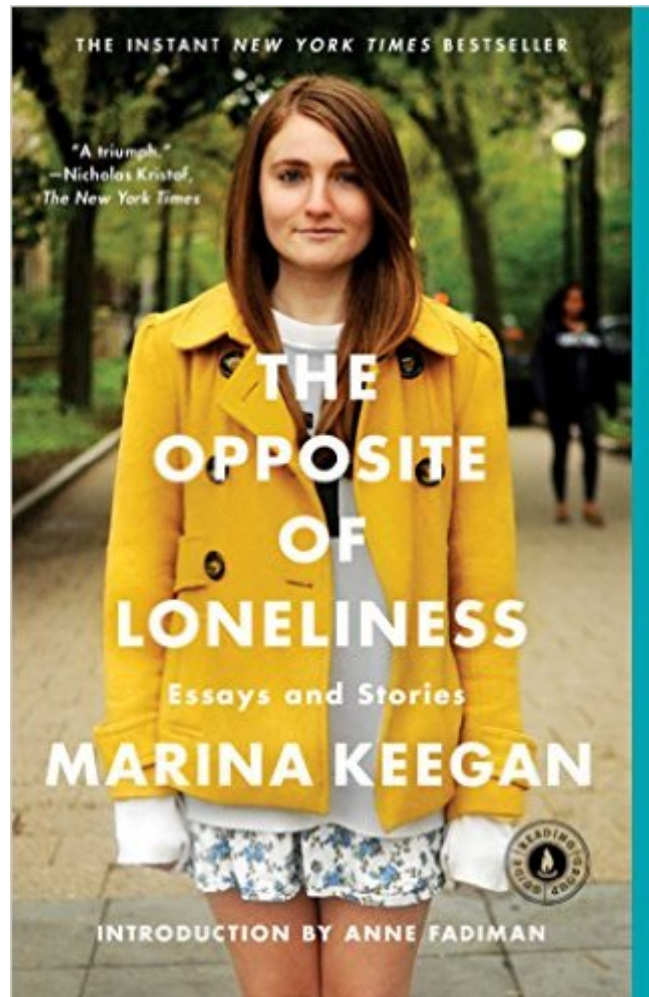


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The Opposite Of Loneliness: Essays And Stories



Synopsis

The instant New York Times bestseller and publishing phenomenon: Marina Keegan's posthumous collection of award-winning essays and stories sparkles with talent, humanity, and youth. (O, The Oprah Magazine). Marina Keegan's star was on the rise when she graduated magna cum laude from Yale in May 2012. She had a play that was to be produced at the New York Fringe Festival and a job waiting for her at The New Yorker. Tragically, five days after graduation, Marina died in a car crash. Marina left behind a rich, deeply expansive trove of writing that, like her title essay, captures the hope, uncertainty, and possibility of her generation. Her short story "Cold Pastoral" was published on NewYorker.com. Her essay "Even Artichokes Have Doubts" was excerpted in the Financial Times, and her book was the focus of a Nicholas Kristof column in The New York Times. Millions of her contemporaries have responded to her work on social media. As Marina wrote: "We can still do anything. We can change our minds. We can start over. We're so young. We can't, we MUST not lose this sense of possibility because in the end, it's all we have." The Opposite of Loneliness is an unforgettable collection of Marina's essays and stories that articulates the universal struggle all of us face as we figure out what we aspire to be and how we can harness our talents to impact the world. "How do you mourn the loss of a fiery talent that was barely a tendril before it was snuffed out? Answer: Read this book. A clear-eyed observer of human nature, Keegan could take a clever idea...and make it something beautiful." (People).

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Customer Reviews

It's poignant enough that this gifted writer died at 22. Such promise. But Keegan writes about death -- her own, the planet's -- and her drive to do something meaningful with her life. It's a beautiful book, astonishingly insightful and ultimately heartbreaking. But one of Keegan's professors at Yale wrote that "Marina wouldn't want you to read her book because she is dead, but because it is good." It is very good. Please read it.

ARC provided by NetGalley Writing an honest review for any book can be difficult, but this type of book is especially difficult. Marina was already garnering praise before she graduated: her essay "Opposite of Loneliness" went viral, she graduated magna cum laude from Yale, a job all lined up, things being published...and she died tragically five days after she graduated. It's not the type of book that you want to write and say that you didn't like, for fear of pitchforks and torches and shouts. But, here's the thing...I don't have to write that type of review. Honestly. This book is many things: a grieving process for the family, a memorial to a friend, and more importantly a powerful monument to a writer that is able to distill the essence of humanity onto paper. The book is composed of several different parts: the introduction essay that the book takes its title from "The Opposite of Loneliness," several of Marina's short stories, and several of her essays. Intermixed in are quotes and snippets from poems that she wrote, although these are not shown in full, at least not in this galley copy. All in all it captures some of the best work of this young writer. The first quote we see is from Marina's poem Bygones: "Do you wanna leave soon?" "No, I want enough time to be in love with everything. And I cry because everything is so beautiful and so short." The title essay, "The Opposite of Loneliness" went viral after it was published. And you really don't have to stretch to understand why, as it's something that many of us can relate to. While it is written about graduating from college, it also applies to the leaving of home, of a comfort zone, of going off into the unknown. And while there have been hundreds of writers that have written about this topic before, Marina's take is different. She states simply, and eloquently, that the feeling of leaving the known is scary. Of walking away from having friends right next door, of structure, and everything taken care of is one of the scariest things possible. And all of these people saying "oh this is the best time of your life, cherish it" makes you afraid of what's to come. But Marina stands up and says, my life isn't over, I'm going to continue to have fun until I'm old. And while there are many things to quote this one "What we have to remember is that we can still do anything. We can change our minds. We can start over." Life isn't over because of moving on, it's just beginning. While there are several of Marina's stories in the book, they didn't stand out to me as much. Not because they aren't good, but because her essays are that much better. In the essays that are shared, it seems obvious a couple of them

are school assignments. The first one is about her first car. Now in the hands of most college students they would write about how awesome and cool the car was, or how stupid it was they were driving the station wagon that had been in the family for 10 years. Probably something with a few laughs, but not memorable. Marina's essay though...is different. Marina doesn't just write about the car, but she connects it to her essence. We learn how the car came to her after her grandfather passed away and her grandmother wanted to only have one car. That when she got the keys for it she and her grandmother drove stopped, listened to an old tape of a favorite artist, and opened the moonroof to look out, and smiled. That the car had the scent of her grandmother's perfume in it for a long time, that it was organized like her with a spare sewing kit and other items, until gradually it became Marina's. The tin foil balls from breakfast biscuits on the way to school on the driver's side door, the dents in the steering wheel from her fingernails after crying because a boy just wanted to be friends, the smells and papers that lived in the car. Until it was time to pass it on to her brother and she wondered if she could recapture the scent of her grandmother's perfume one more time. You can't but help be entrapped by that overwhelming feeling of humanity. She paints a picture with her words and you can see it before you and get swept up in it all. And her other essays are no less powerful. We read and nod along as she describes growing up and wanting to fit in and she could...except for her diet. Because she needed to be gluten free, before anyone else knew what that meant. And we understand and cringe at the embarrassment she felt as her mom tried to keep her healthy and safe, but made her feel singled out. We understand the constant struggle of wanting to belong, but of having to follow a diet, but balancing the needs of family, but wanting to be normal college girl and not worry about kissing a boy after he drank a beer or ate a pizza. Or in the essay where she writes about beached whales, and the tens of thousands of dollars spent in rescuing them, but we do nothing for the homeless in front of us, but the whales are special, but are fellow humans are right there. Marina makes us proud and sad of our humanity. She captures it so expertly and shows us what we're doing that is so right...and so wrong. Marina died young and while we may mourn that, we are left with her essays and other writings that have the power to change the world. And while that may be an over used phrase, I think it accurately describes Marina's style. Her ability to capture the very essence of humanity! and to distill it onto paper, to share raw emotions with you via words and make you feel what she does...tis a rare gift and talent. While Marina may be gone, we need to read and reread what she has written and take it to heart. Let it give us chills, fear, hope, anger...whatever emotion it brings to you, let it come. I highly recommend this book to all readers. 4 out of 5

Based on all the good reviews, I expected a collection of stories that portrays the twenty-something generation in an original way. However, when I read this book, I felt like reading a string of essays from a college-kid (which I guess is precisely what this book is), but I searched in vain to find that special spark that I believed this book would have. I could not see originality in these texts, they felt like any other of the thousands of college or post-college writers in the blogosphere or in print could have written this - more or less mature thoughts about first time experiences, about the uncertainties in their young lives, about weird or awkward situations their parents never prepared them for. The stories are nice enough for sure, but to me they lack any character that could not be found elsewhere. I also quickly grew quite bored of the privileged college girl perspective that permeates this book, and I did not manage to finish reading it. I think it is a very nice way to remember a young promising writer who died in an accident by publishing her writings, and I think it is great to read her prose and marvel at the endless possibilities of what may one day become of her. Keegan was only starting to explore her potential, and the book reflects that she had not really blossomed, yet. Maybe the younger readers will find the special appeal in this book that I could not. To me, Keegan portrays the twenty-something generation in a way that it has been portrayed in countless times before.

I'm old. Well, old enough to be this author's mother. But I enjoyed reading this book, especially Marina's essays. They are full of hope and wonder and excitement and fear. Something we have all felt at one time or another and something we should strive to feel again. Because I think as we 'grow up' we lose touch with certain feelings. Like hope. It was refreshing to read and be admonished by the words of a 22 year old. She reminded me of thoughts and feelings I haven't had since my own college days. Every generation thinks they are special. Different. But they're not. We all have the same desire to find our place and leave our mark. Many forget the passions and dreams of the young, their own cocooned in blankets of responsibilities and 'adulthood'. Marina Keegan left this world too soon, but she also left her mark. This book reminds me to stay in touch with that youthful search of a life worth living.

I bought this book after reading about the author, just after her death. I bought it for her essay, 'The opposite of loneliness'. Sometimes a person's death erases all the missteps and mediocrity of which he or she is guilty. A sporting sense, perhaps? 'He can't fight back...' It is not the case here. The author was excellent, perceptive, articulate. This is a good book. The title essay, however, is magnificent. Read it. Read the book. And smile. She did.

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