



We're All Damaged

Matthew Norman

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Andy Carter was happy. He had a solid job. He ran 5Ks for charity. He was living a nice, safe Midwestern existence. And then his wife left him for a handsome paramedic down the street.

We're All Damaged begins after Andy has lost his job, ruined his best friend's wedding, and moved to New York City, where he lives in a tiny apartment with an angry cat named Jeter that isn't technically his. But before long he needs to go back to Omaha to say good-bye to his dying grandfather.

Back home, Andy is confronted with his past, which includes his ex, his ex's new boyfriend, his right-wing talk-radio-host mother, his parents' crumbling marriage, and his still-angry best friend.

As if these old problems weren't enough, Andy encounters an entirely new complication: Daisy. She has fifteen tattoos, no job, and her own difficult past. But she claims she is the only person who can help Andy be happy again, if only she weren't hiding a huge secret that will mess things up even more. Andy Carter needs a second chance at life, and Daisy—and the person Daisy pushes Andy to become—may be his last chance to set things right.

We're All Damaged Details

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Author : Matthew Norman

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From Reader Review We're All Damaged for online ebook

Catherine McKenzie says

Matt Norman does it again! Funny, thoughtful, fast-paced. Loved it.

Matt says

I appreciate what the author attempts to show, but I expected better. The idea that everyone is (at least a little) fucked up resonates with me. I liked the writing style and the humor...but there's something about this book that irritated me. Perhaps it was the ballsy, tattooed heroine who comes to the narrator's rescue. She's the nerdy guy's femme fatale. I've seen her before, and I'm a little tired of it. Like a knight in shining armor, she devotes herself to the lonely, lame dude through no effort of his own.

The battle between the Nancy Palin wannabe & the Glitter Mafia...Geeez. It's annoying in real life and annoying in this book. The Glitter...Mafia...really? Norman tries to round out these characters, make them more than they are at face value, but they still seem so flat.

I didn't care much for the plot. Andy's dumb decisions had me sighing throughout the whole novel. I enjoyed the ending, so maybe 2 stars is a little harsh. 2.5?

Siv30 says

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Zoeytron says

There wasn't much sparkle here for me. It's a perfectly nice story about a man who continues to pine for his ex-wife a year after their divorce. She blindsided him at Applebee's over dinner by announcing she was tired of it all, finished with him. She moves on with her life, while Andy flounders miserably.

This was a Kindle First for the month of May, and I chose unwisely. It was just a little lighthearted and saccharin for my taste, although the garden gnome fiasco was amusing. The cover reminds me of a box of Wheaties.

Gabriela says

Wow, talk about a book written rigorously to follow the Nice Guy and Manic Pixie Girl trope to a T. I'll give Norman the advantage that a) his writing style is funny and b) there was an interesting plot somewhere buried all the terrible faux poetic analogies and Daisy's entire plot and purpose.

But this book was so...tepid. I am so tired of this narrative of "quirky" girls "saving" loser guys like our protagonist. Also, girls don't talk the way Daisy talks. Girls don't act the way Daisy acts. Only girls in our dear author's fantasies, who I hope has actually talked to a real woman, act this way.

I truly hope Norman uses his talent to write dead pan humor (I am still laughing about the Hot Pockets line) and use it to write stories with actual real character. We've had enough Nice Guy mopping around stories to saturate the market. Not once did I care whether Andy, our main protagonist, would get over his past issues. He was completely unlikable. Which made it harder to understand he found someone like Daisy that was actively interested in him, no matter her ultimate ulterior motives. Interesting guy characters do exist!

Kit Vogler says

I was getting kind of worried these last few months with the Kindle First picks. I seemed to have picked the duds of the bunch month after month. Now, BOOM! This book! I was about a third of the way in and started to get annoyed because I realized that I now have another author I will be putting on me "Keep Tabs on this Author" list.

The characters were interesting. I was sort of annoyed with Andy's friends and family at first. They all acted like they had their business on the up & up, and almost all of them had negative kinks in their lives in one form or another (the title of the book ain't wrong).

Most of all, I enjoyed the open yet hopeful ending. I was worried that it would have a cliché ending. You know...where everything is wrapped in an annoyingly perfect bow. But it didn't...and I enjoyed it all the more because of it.

Liz says

This was a great mixture of hilarity and seriousness. It was like being transported to the good ole days of when sitcoms were the thing (The Wonder years meets Parenthood). Great MCs and dialogue!!

Larry H says

Matthew Norman aims for full-on Jonathan Tropper territory with his newest book, *We're All Damaged* . He doesn't quite hit that target, but the effort is still both funny and bittersweet.

"I don't have a problem with Applebee's per se. But I think we can all agree, as a civilized society, that lives shouldn't change there. Significant things should begin or end at Applebee's. You shouldn't walk into Applebee's as one thing and then leave as something else entirely."

When Andy Carter's wife ends their five-year marriage (at Applebee's), he is completely shocked, although he probably should have noticed the signs along the way. Their breakup throws Andy into a tailspin which results in him losing his job, ruining his best friend's wedding reception, and utterly crashing and burning. (At least the crashing part.) He flees his Omaha home for New York City, where he's the third-best bartender at a bar, removes himself from the social media grid, and he shares an apartment (at least sometimes) with Jeter, a cat with a nasty disposition.

But when Andy learns that his grandfather is dying, he must head back to Omaha, no matter how painful it all will be. And a lot has changed—his ex has moved in with her new boyfriend (a muscular paramedic named Tyler), his retired father spends his leisure time shooting squirrels with paintballs and defying the neighborhood rent-a-cop, and his conservative radio host mother is being courted by Fox News. Then there's also Daisy, the quirky stranger who is determined to make rebuilding Andy her latest project.

How do you pick yourself up again when your life as you know it has come crashing down? How do you save face in the wake of near-total public humiliation? And how do you keep from dwelling on all that has gone wrong, so you can focus on what is going right?

I really enjoyed *We're All Damaged* , even when I felt it tried a little too hard to be funny and edgy. I like the way Norman writes and he really created a motley crew of characters with both positive and negative attributes that (for the most part) were fun to read about. I thought a subplot involving the "Glitter Mafia" and marriage equality was unnecessary, and threw the book off track for me every time it came up, although I understand why Norman included it.

This book read a little bit like a movie and it definitely made me laugh from time to time. I think many of us have had some of the same feelings Andy has, although hopefully we've not had to experience the kind of outrageous incidents he did! A fun one to pick up...

Kindle First and Little A provided me an advance copy of the book in exchange for an unbiased review. Thanks for making this available!

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blo....>

Jessica says

I know that everyone's family's got issues. But sometimes it feels like it's just you, like your family's complicated baggage outweighs whatever anyone else has going on. I have definitely felt that way. I have had three different therapists throw up their hands in defeat when discussing my relationship with my father and say, "I don't know what to tell you. I'm at a loss." And yet, it was only relatively recently – over way too many margaritas with the half-sister who entered my life as an adult – that I realized that he's actually kind of "damaged" in the colloquial sense, that he probably could've used some therapy in his own right somewhere along the way, and that many of my own issues are directly descended from those issues that he left largely unaddressed. It kind of validated my neuroses a bit.

But! I am not the only one who feels that way. The idea that everyone's kind of damaged is, not surprisingly, the central theme of this book. The title kind of hits that one right squarely on the head.

I was incredibly excited to grab a copy of this book off of Netgalley because I was so terribly fond of Norman's first book, *Domestic Violets*. It was funny without being too wacky or too vulgar, it was heartwarming without being overly sentimental, and it was populated with realistic, complex, and empathetic characters with good intentions that sometimes go awry.

We're All Damaged stays very much in the same vein as *Violets*. Andy's a thirtysomething man who melted down when his wife left him for another man. He lost his insurance sales job, made an ass out of himself at his best friend's wedding, and moved from Omaha to New York to work as the third-best bartender at a bar. He's kind of a mess. Then he gets word that his grandfather doesn't have much time left, and he reluctantly makes his way back to Omaha to say goodbye.

Home is a complicated place for Andy, where his mom's a conservative talk radio host/aspiring Fox News star, his brother is kind of an unforgiving Alpha, Bluetooth-earpiece kind of dude, and his retired father is disengaged to the point where he spends his days shooting squirrels with paintballs. His ex-wife's moved in with her new man and his former best friend hasn't quite forgiven him just yet. While visiting his grandfather at the nursing home, Andy crosses paths with a young woman named Daisy who's cryptically, overly invested in rebuilding this total stranger.

This book was funny and ultimately heartwarming without being too serious. If it were written by a female author, it would instantly be labelled "chick lit" (a label I revile). And it's got a nice little nod to readers who loved *Violets*.

In some ways, this felt like it could have been a five-star read if it had gone through one or two more rounds of revisions. There's some amazing insights to be had here, once you wade through all the wacky, and I loved the way Norman wrapped up everything at the end. But I was troubled by Daisy's presence in this book. She barely rises above the cliché of Manic Pixie Dream Girl and her presence goes so thoroughly unexplained for so long that my *Why the fuck is this character here??* frustration was at times hard to overcome. The gay marriage/Fox News stuff with Andy's mom seemed a little too over the top for me, and we didn't really get to plumb his father's issues enough. It's a pleasant-enough read, but stops juuuuust short of *Violets* greatness. **3.5 stars**, rounded up for an excellent ending.

Michaela says

Well, I'm on page 61, but I'm worried I might be about to fall into a very cliché'd Manic Pixie Dream Girl story... guy meets strange girl after she sends him an anonymous note. she's covered in literary tattoos, drinking out of a hello kitty flask.

Here's the evidence:

"It's official... You, Andy, are now my motivation."

"What does that mean?"

"You've had a tough year," she says. "And I think I can help you."

"Help me with what?"

"Come back to life."

sigh

Bianca says

3.5 stars

I've requested this novel because of its title, as I like obvious truths. ;-) I imagined/expected it to be edgy and angsty. It so wasn't - serves me right for not reading the blurb.

'We're All Damaged' reads like a women's fiction novel, but this time, it's written by a man and the main character is Andy Carter, a recently divorced thirty-one-year-old, who's kind of lost. Andy is from Omaha and is a kind man. Albeit he's kind of boring, without much charm or an interesting personality.

As his maternal grandfather is close to dying, Andy returns to Omaha, where he has to deal with his newly reinvented, right-wing, radio personality mother, his recently retired accountant father and his brother and his family. Still in Omaha is Andy's ex, Karen, who now lives with the man she left him for.

Luckily for Andy, he meets his total opposite, Daisy, beautiful, dark, tattooed Daisy, who's working on reinventing Andy.

There are a few dramas and epiphanies. Will Andy manage to forget, forgive and just move on?

I thought this novel was pleasant, although not mind-blowing. I do like nice guys as main heros. While I didn't hate Andy, I didn't care that much about him either. He was very beige. I do not like beige.

There were a few amusing situations and comments that made me giggle, but not laugh out loud(ly).

This was an easy, quick read - a perfect novel for reading while on a holiday.

I've received this novel via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Many thanks to the publishers, Little

A, for the opportunity to read and review this advance copy.

Pouting Always says

Andy has to go back home from NY after his grandfather dies which he really does not want to do because it means facing the life he left behind after his divorce. The plot was a little lack luster but I think the voice makes up for that. The writing was funny and witty and so many hilarious things happen in the book that kept me reading. Especially everything that happens between his mother and the gay people angry at her. A little ridiculous but if you're in the mood for funny then this is a good choice.

Katharine says

Yet another Kindle First book, from a while back. This was the most appalling book I've read in a while. I have read about the Manic Pixie Dream Girl but this was my first encounter in the wild, as it were, and I now understand how obnoxious the trope can be. The plot is about a man whose wife cheats on him and then divorces him so he moves to New York City to be Hapless and Pathetic although he is a Nice Guy, don't you know, who doesn't really deserve to have his heart broken by those Cold and Heartless Enchanters which according to this book is basically all women. I know the guy, whose name I've already forgotten because he made such an impression on me, is a Nice Guy because the book informed me in so many words, even though if you actually pay attention he acts more like a self-absorbed jerk. So when he finds out his beloved grandfather is dying, Mr. I'm-a-Nice-Guy has to leave NYC and go back to his hometown in Nebraska where he will encounter his equally Hapless father, his Cold and Heartless Ann Coulter-clone conservative radio host mother, his overachieving jerk of a brother, and the aforementioned Manic Pixie Dream Girl who adopts him as her Project like Cher adopts Tai in Clueless, only with 97% more Icky Male Wish Fulfillment. She lives life to the fullest! She has quotations from hipster male authors and indy rock bands tattooed all over her body! She makes Mr. I'm-a-Nice-Guy-no-really-I-creepily-stalk-my-ex-but-that's-because-my-love-is-so-true-and-hopeless eat pistachio ice cream instead of vanilla! She makes him wear hipster t-shirts! She is cooler than anyone! She has a mysterious and possibly tragic background! She just wants to save all the Hapless and Misunderstood Nice Guys in this book! She is slightly morally ambiguous but only in the way that's secretly cool because she's untrammelled by boring socially acceptable expectations! Oh my gooses I hated this book so much! The fact that it's well-written just makes it worse! I only finished it in order to justify writing a full rant of a review. I want to rant some more but I'm running out of time. SO BAD.

Rick says

Matthew Norman is a new-to-me writer and one whose work I will seek out in the future. He truly knows how to tell a heart-wrenching, heart-rending, heartbreaking and, at the same time, hilarious story peopled with very flawed, human characters you'll come to love.

Melki says

Poor Andy!

He was dumped by his wife, in Applebee's, of all places, with Wham playing in the background! Tragic, eh? His mother is now a right-wing radio pundit - *Nancy Knows - Always Right, Always Right!* - and his befuddled dad is shooting squirrels with a paintball gun. Just when he thinks life can't get any worse . . . well, you know IT DOES!

Poor Matthew Norman!

His book will be compared ad infinitum to *This is Where I Leave You*. There are similarities: two male main characters recovering from nasty breakups head home due to a relative's illness and/or death, where they spar with family members, meet hot women, grow up a bit, learn something new about themselves, then leave home again, refreshed, renewed, slightly better men than they were before all this stuff happened. I like *this* book more than the other. I wanted to punch Jonathan Tropper's hero - Judd. Oh, I really, REALLY wanted to punch that guy! Here, our Andy gets punched and battered so much by other characters, I wanted to hand him some ibuprofen and frozen peas for the swelling.

The only reason this very funny book got four instead of five stars from me was the incredibly annoying Daisy, the manic-pixie-dream-girl woman. Though she served as part of Andy's healing process, she got on my nerves. Thankfully, the book did NOT end the way I thought it would, so kudos to Norman for that.

I'm sure this is going to make a great movie. Note to casting agents - Jason Schwartzman is about the right age and height. Note to the scriptwriter - don't forget to include that amazing Greek chorus of multicolored, paintballed squirrels.

* This is a Kindle First freebie for all Amazon Prime Members for the month of May.
