

Love in the Asylum

Lisa Carey

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From an author whose work has been called 'haunted and joyous and heartbreaking all at once' (*Washington Post Book World*) comes an unforgettable novel of two lost souls who find love and salvation against all odds.

Can love save those who believe they are beyond redemption? In and out of a swank north-eastern rehab centre more than a dozen times in ten years, Alba Elliot, a 25-year-old children's book writer and manic-depressive, believes she is a hopeless case. But an unlikely relationship with Oscar, a 30-year-old drug addict whose 'recreation' has cost him everything, and a century-old story hidden in the institution's library bring about changes that Alba could never have imagined.

Brought together by fate, influenced by forces as beautiful and powerful as they are unforeseen, Alba and Oscar will slowly rise from the ashes of despair and self-destruction and, in the midst of righting an old wrong, begin to heal their battered spirits. A beautifully crafted, heartfelt tale of tragedy and triumph, Lisa Carey's moving third novel is a testament to the surprising resilience of the human heart.

Love in the Asylum Details


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From Reader Review Love in the Asylum for online ebook

Lavonne says

I liked this book and I'm not even sure why. It tells the love story of an addict and a bi-polar inmate, parralled by old letters from a woman who was institutionalized in the same asylum many years before. It questions the line between sprituality and sanity, and suggests that perhaps the two are not that far apart.

Erica says

I've read this book at least twice, and each time I get sucked into it. The characters are so real and moving that I can't help crying at parts, right along with them. This book really touched me, and I'd recommend it to almost anyone.

meredith ann says

well, i liked this book. i certainly didn't love it. i felt equally engrossed in both oscar & alba's stories and the letters from the library. when those began intertwining, the story dropped off a bit for me. the ending felt rushed, like "here's the conclusion, yay, the end!" don't get me wrong, i appreciated the direction the characters took at the novel's end but it felt a bit too perfect. all in all, a good read.

Stephanie says

I loved this book. At the time that I read I was working with mentally ill patients and so I created images for all the characters in the book from my clients.
The book totally captivated me, it was so visual and real. Every night when I went to read it was like I was going back to a real place and time.

Aiyana says

I really enjoyed this novel, which has aspects of mystery and romance, but is ultimately simply a story about human experience.

Alba-- a young woman with severe bipolar disorder-- befriends Oscar, a drug addict, during their stay at a mental health clinic. Despite their initial suspicion of one another, they also experience a strong mutual attraction that draws them together. Alba also becomes immersed in the story of a woman who was at the clinic many years before, whose unsent letters she finds hidden in the clinic's library.

This book speaks to both the practical and spiritual aspects of the experiences that we consider "mental illness," as well as different cultural interpretations of those experiences. Rather than prioritizing one

viewpoint over the other, Carey addresses the fact that both the soul and body may need different kinds of treatments in order for a person to reach a state of "mental health." The book includes a disturbing look at the history of "treatments" imposed on the mentally ill and makes a strong argument for respecting the human dignity and subjective experiences of patients, no matter how much they have lost touch with reality.

Quotes:

"For all my life, sleeping has been a simple joy. I lay my head down-- where does not seem to matter, strange beds do not affect me-- and I fall, slowly but firmly, away from the world. When I was a child, I believed that I left my body when I slept. I could feel it, the sensation of separating from my heavy limbs on the mattress. I seemed to fall out of myself, through the bed and into the land of my dreams, which, though sometimes frightening, were always spectacular, and seemed to make more sense to me than the world I stumbled through while awake." - From one of Mary's letters, p 67

"Her libido (Dr. Miller's word; to Alba it sounds suggestively reptilian) for years now has been, at best, unreliable. Depression renders sex unimaginable, mania leaves it unsatisfying, medication makes it impossible. Alba has come to think of her sex drive as a visitor who knocks so infrequently, she often doesn't think to open the door.

"Attraction, for Alba, has become something that occurs only in her mind... Men have been known to say things to Alba that cause small, savory explosions in her thoughts-- a mental version of an orgasm." p 76

Christine Fay says

Alba meets Oscar in the confines of the Abenaki (formerly known as St. Dymphna's) Hospital for patients with mental illness (Alba Elliot) and addiction (Oscar Jameson). This unlikely pair finds themselves drawn to each other for a poignant, oftentimes tumultuous yet profound relationship. Alba discovers some old letters that were written by a former patient of the asylum who was committed there by her husband; she wrote them to her son and she never got to see any of her children so she wrote to them in the backs of books in the hospital's library (she was not allowed to have paper). Was she a gifted healer, or was she just plain crazy? Was she both? The reader ends up becoming equally involved in the story of Mary Doherty whose letters Alba finds, as well as the story of Alba herself. A very interesting novel, and an engaging and quick read.

Ayelet Waldman says

Lisa is still one of my favorites, and I haven't met her, we've just exchanged emails, so I get to keep my unbiased status.

Madeline says

I really think I love this book. A lot. It has that past mystery aspect that always grabs me, the story was so captivating and the characters incredibly likable. Their afflictions were really backseat to the strength of their

personalities and the story, only serving as vehicles for the plots advancement. A sad and beautiful narrative, exactly what I was in the mood for.

Catherine says

I found this book to be both a sad and an interesting read. There is so much sadness in this story, sexual abuse, mental health, mothers displaced from their children, addiction, to name the most compelling. While at the same time there is love, the human desire to help others, the healing act of writing, and the ever present feeling of hopefulness. The story reads like a story within a story, peeling back layers from both simultaneously until the two are joined. The author describes the ravages of mental health and addiction battles accurately and compassionately.

I really enjoyed the connection to the past and also the Native American portion of the storyline. The story gave credence to the cultural identity of native Americans and the healers in their society.

I gave this 5 stars as it was an artfully told story of the human experience and I really enjoyed it

shalla says

I was really shocked with this book, I usually go to the library with a list, Ive done the research, Ive read the first chapter on google books..Ive read all the ratings and reviews here at good reads, because I dont do well picking up a book randomly like that, Ive read to many baaad books that way..but I was unable to go to the library prepared, but I thought, thats ok...grabbing a Jodi Picoult is usually good...plus my book club book, and Im finishing a few series..but I walked by this one and just decided to try it out, and it was GREAT! great story, great characers...I really enjoyed it.

Caroline says

This is the 3rd time I've read this book. Obviously, I like it. I enjoy the characterization and dialogue, as well as the storytelling. I agree with others that the end felt rushed. so much happened very quickly and Carey didn't take the same time with exploring the character experience amidst all the action. Perhaps she did this so as not to slow the pacing, but I missed the depth of character that was revealed with a slower and more detailed pace.

Susan says

I just happened upon one of this author's books, then I read all I could find. I can't wait until she writes more!

Ana says

I actually really liked this book. If you're into addictions or psychology at all you'll enjoy it.

Love in the Asylum would have received 5 stars from me if only for one element were removed, even modified. I was completely uninterested with the storyline about the woman writing the letters in the backs of books, and her whole story. It was interesting at the beginning, but quickly became boring. If her storyline had been tied in a little better, or cut down a little, it would have worked much better with the rest of the book. I found Oscar completely intriguing and Alba interesting, and if the book had focused solely on them it would have been phenomenal.

Sarah says

Alba is crazy. She's been institutionalized off and on since she was fifteen. Oscar is an addict. He doesn't believe he's hit rock bottom or think that his using of drugs is a problem. These two people meet when both are committed to Abenaki Hospital in rural Maine. From their first meeting, a spark of something that could take them both beyond their troubles appears. Is it possible to find love in the asylum?

This book was not quite what I expected as I got further into it. Alba and Oscar are both very real and interesting characters, but I found the story's strength in the intertwining narrative of Mary X. At first, I was put off by what I saw as an intrusion in the story of Alba and Oscar but soon, I changed my tune. The Mary X story was incredibly unique and interesting and, I think, ended up a stronger story than that of Alba and Oscar. I was happy that Alba stumbled upon Mary X's story and used it to propel her own story further. Well done, but lacks some polish. Will probably read other Lisa Carey in the future.

Ashley Fitzpatrick says

This review is a few months late but talk about starting my year off with a bang ? This was the first time in a long time that I was unable to put a book down- I fell in love with the two dual stories that were being told. There is something so addictive about the hopelessness of these characters. Maybe that says more about me than it does the book....
