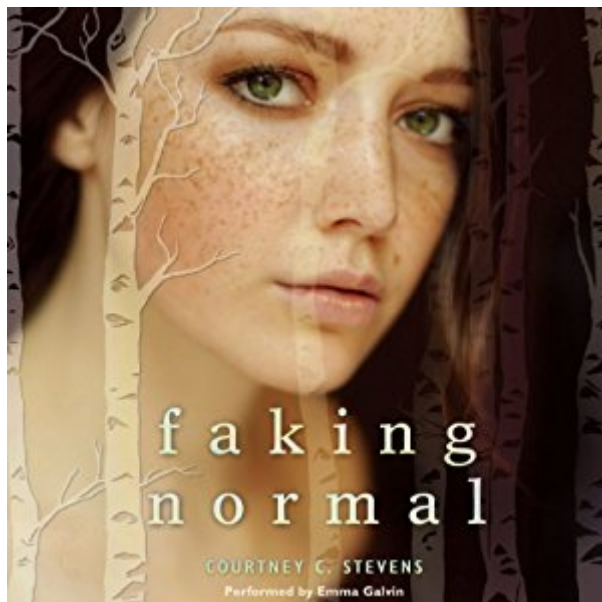


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Faking Normal



Synopsis

Alexi Littrell hasn't told anyone what happened to her over the summer. Ashamed and embarrassed, she hides in her closet and compulsively scratches the back of her neck, trying to make the outside hurt more than the inside does. At school, nobody sees the scratches or her pain. The only person she connects with is the mysterious Captain Lyric, who writes song lyrics on her fourth-period desk for her to complete. With pencil marks and music, Alexi carves out a comfortable space for herself as she and the Captain finish each other's songs - words on a desk feel safer than words spoken aloud. But when Bodee Lennox, the quiet and awkward boy next door, comes to live with the Littrells, Alexi discovers an unlikely friend who understands her better than anyone. He has secrets of his own and knows all about suffering in silence. As they lean on each other for support, Alexi gives him the strength to deal with his past, and Bodee helps her find the courage to finally speak up. With her powerful, moving debut novel, author Courtney C. Stevens emerges as an extraordinary new talent to watch.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really connected to this book. It's a beautiful debut novel that unfolds at just the right pace. The relationships and characters are realistic and the writing is fresh and insightful. Both Alexi and Bodee were relatable and flawed in a way that I loved; they were human. I do not share the same experiences as either Alexi or Bodee, but I share their pain, their frustration, their need to hide. Why are words so hard sometimes? The subject matter is tough, but I felt it was described demurely and

not graphically depicted. The focus is more on the aftermath and Lex's journey to recovery. I would wholeheartedly recommend this novel to mid-teens through adults.

This was a great book. It combined a very serious subject all while having the ability to leave you with all the feels! Despite the heavy context it is still an uplifting novel about life's journeys, the ups and downs of our traumatic experience and the true meaning of friendship. This book is amazing in the sense that it makes you laugh, cry, love, hate and it just is truly one of a kind in the way that it touches on so many emotions. It is a slow start but worth the development.

I read *The Lies About Truth* a while back for review, and I enjoyed it much more than I expected to. It wasn't a perfect book, but when I got to the end of my review copy and found the first chapter to *Faking Normal* I was hooked already. The description above is kind of weird to me. It seems very backwards. Within the first chapter and really the majority of the book, Bodee's story is much more transparent than Alexi's is. Bodee's story is really revealed within that first chapter and Alexi's story is dragged out throughout the majority of the book. The description hints at it and the book drops some pretty big clues but what I can say without feeling like I'm giving too much away is that Alexi was sexually assaulted over the summer and has been holding that inside of her. Alexi was a character that I connected with very quickly. Her experience has changed her. And one of the ways she demonstrates that is by reaching out to the kid that no one is friends with. When Bodee finds himself in an extremely painful situation, Alexi can't just do nothing. Granted she doesn't really say or do much of anything, but that one small act creates a bond between these two. They begin speaking in the hallways at school. And even though Bodee doesn't have a clue what happened to Alexi over the summer, he's able to see that she's in pain very similar to pain he's witnessed himself. Bodee was great. I loved him so much. Despite being a loner, Bodee sees beyond himself. He's perceptive and deep even though he's quiet and sullen. Bodee's ability to help Alexi even when he's own life and experiences have been so difficult is admirable. He could easily see himself as a victim and think only of himself during this time, but he's so much more than that. Alexi stands up for and helps Bodee, but he does just as much and more for her as well. Their friendship was so slow building and realistic. I loved it. While the two did seem to have an instant connection and an ability to be utterly honest with each other when they both lie so well to everyone else, I never really felt like they rushed into anything. Courtney C. Steven's writing was even better in *Faking Normal* than I remember it being in *The Truth About Lies*. I highlighted a ton, and so here are my favorite quotes: -I'm more like Heather than she knows. Scared ... and hoping a boy will love me someday

even though I'm a mess.-"It happens in my sleep," I say. "Mine too," he says. "I wake up and it's a different color."-Sometimes the lies I tell Heather aren't little and white. They're a dab of honey-beige foundation applied to the blemishes of my life.-We're already more than the sum of my lies. So I just breathe and look away, trying not to lie with my face, but to stand in the presence of the truth. It hurts.-Faking normal is a skill I learned seventy-seven days ago, but tonight it's going to require everything I have.-The power of Bodee is in the way he reads me, see through me, and then understands the truth behind the facade. He's the guy who can walk straight through the House of Mirrors on the first try.-"A man is partially made up of his words."-It's funny how the things you don't like are the things you miss when they're gone.-"He matters more than you planned?" "No." I swipe the tears away. "It just sucks not to matter more than that."-I've lived all but two weeks of my life without Bodee. But now, sitting with him in my fort, I know these two weeks have been God walking right into my life like he has flesh and Kool-Aid colored hair.-Evidently, the gestation period for a bad idea is about ten seconds.Faking Normal will easily fit into my top ten favorite books I've read this year (2015 when I wrote this post). It was so much more than I expected. This is a deep book full of painful events and the light that finding a friend within the darkness can bring to someone's life. I highly recommend this book. Heavy topics, little language, but deeply emotional. Faking Normal gets 5 Stars from me. Have you read Faking Normal? What did you think? Let me know!

Grade: A-Something happened to Alexi in July and she hasn't been the same since. Bodee aka The Kool-Aid kid (because he dyes his blond hair with gelatin), is living now at Alexi's since his abusive father killed his mother. He's the only one who notices the pain in her eyes, or that she scratches her skin raw from anxiety. He encourages Alexi to talk about Something, but she won't disclose which Someone is to blame. Two wounded souls try to help each other through their pain, encouraging each other to tell the secrets they aren't meant to keep.FAKING NORMAL is how Alexi describes her attempts to pretend the Something in July didn't happen. Her voice is authentic, and raw. While she's unassertive and passive, going along to get along, she's also easy to root for, because a lot of teens have yet to learn they have a right to say NO and to speak up when they don't want something. Her parents are passive, a little too religious caring more about "turning the other cheek" than protecting themselves and their daughters. The word "simple" comes to mind, a failure to think outside the box or the perfect family they think they have. The dynamics between Alexi and her sister were at best dysfunctional. I wanted to throw the whole family into therapy. At times I wanted to grab Alexi by the shoulders, give her a big hug and tell her that she matters, what she wants matters, and to never, ever date someone to be "nice."I figured out who Someone was

70% into the the story, only because I finally took the time to think about the potential suspects. I hope that debut writer Courtney C Stevens writes a sequel to FAKING NORMAL, because I'd love to see the fallout play out legally, emotionally and how Bodee and each member of the Littrell family heal moving forward. Stevens did a great job creating a character and story I cared about. I'm a rape and abuse survivor, and I appreciate a novel that captures the essence of the experience realistically. THEMES: Family, siblings, dating, rape, friendship, murder, abuse

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