



Hello, Sunshine

Laura Dave

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From Laura Dave—the author of the “addictive” (*Us Weekly*), “winning” (*Publishers Weekly*) and critically acclaimed bestseller *Eight Hundred Grapes*—comes a new novel about the secrets we keep...even from ourselves.

Sunshine Mackenzie has it all...until her secrets come to light.

Sunshine Mackenzie is living the dream—she’s a culinary star with millions of fans, a line of #1 bestselling cookbooks, and a devoted husband happy to support her every endeavor.

And then she gets hacked.

When Sunshine’s secrets are revealed, her fall from grace is catastrophic. She loses the husband, her show, the fans, and her apartment. She’s forced to return to the childhood home—and the estranged sister—she’s tried hard to forget. But what Sunshine does amid the ashes of her own destruction may well save her life.

In a world where celebrity is a careful construct, *Hello, Sunshine* is a compelling, funny, and evocative novel about what it means to live an authentic life in an inauthentic age.

Hello, Sunshine Details

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Author : Laura Dave

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From Reader Review Hello, Sunshine for online ebook

Kristy says

Sunshine (Sunny) Mackenzie has a great life--a hit YouTube cooking show, several published cookbooks, and the potential for a show on the Food Network. She's also happily married to her husband, Danny. But all it takes is a few Twitter posts from a hacker to destroy Sunny's life. Because, you see, she's been living a life built on lies and subterfuge. Disgraced, alone, and broke, Sunny returns to her childhood home, to a complicated relationship with her sister and a six-year-old niece she barely knows. Sunny has a plan to get her life back, but it involves a new set of lies. Is it worth it--and worth sacrificing a potential relationship with her sister?

This was an interesting novel. I must admit, I was bothered the entire time I was reading it, because it felt like a weirdly familiar story, but I could never place why. You know how something is often in the back of your mind? I don't know if I've just read too many books, have a terrible memory, or if I've truly read a book with a similar plot (disgraced chef returns home): it could be all of the above. But it did affect me sometimes as I was reading.

Sunny was a tough character. It was hard to tell if I liked her. She was terrible to lie about her entire professional life, yet she was backstabbed pretty badly by her hacker. I was willing to let those two equal out, but then after all said events, she still made a chain of pretty awful decisions. Her slow learning--and lack of sense--was a bit frustrating to me, although she did grow on me as the novel progressed. The book falls back on some plot cliches and predictable story turns, though there is one good twist. It's slightly marred by a lame reason for said twist, but still: it did take me by surprise.

The cast of characters in this one is limited, and it was refreshing to read a novel told from just one perspective (Sunny's). Sammy, her niece, is the best. I wanted more Sammy. The funny parts in this novel are just plain funny--there were pieces that made me laugh out loud. I also enjoyed the novel's message related to our society's current trend of living life based on social media. It does a good job of portraying the complicated relationship between sisters as well.

Overall, this one was a little predictable, but still interesting and often fun. A quick, breezy read.

I received a copy of this novel from the publisher and Edelweiss (thank you!); it is available everywhere as of 07/11/2017.

You can read my review of Dave's novel, EIGHT HUNDRED GRAPES, here.

Goodreads ~ Twitter ~ Facebook ~ Google+

Sarah Joint says

Addictive, emotional, refreshing. If you enjoy women's fiction but aren't big on the unrealistic romance (same, guys, same) this may be a great book for you. This one surprised me. It's a great little read, and I flew right through it. You're not always going to like the protagonist, but she doesn't always like herself either. She's made a lot of mistakes she's partially in denial about, and isn't quite sure how to fix them. It really makes you think about how we present ourselves online. This is my first read by author Laura Dave, and I'm very interested in checking out her other work.

Put yourself in these shoes: you wake on your birthday to your favorite song playing. Your loving and successful husband is next to you. Your future is bright. The money is rolling in. You're relatively famous, to the point of having an upcoming show on the Food Network. And then it all comes crashing down around you. **Here's the deal: Sunshine (our main character) is not authentic. She's basically a product, complete with a fabricated past and talent.** That cooking show on YouTube and bestselling cookbooks she's so famous for? They're not really her. She's been carefully crafted to be a success. In fact, she barely even cooks.

Someone knows the truth about dear Sunny and they're eager to spill it. Her social media has been hacked, revealing the truth about her online persona. She's not who she's made herself out to be, and now everyone knows it. Secrets kept for years are now out in the open. **Say goodbye to those cookbooks, new show, and loving husband.** She doesn't have much left.

Sunny flees to her childhood home... the real one. Her sister is less than welcoming, and she finds her six year old niece (love her!) hard to understand. **She intends to somehow turn things around and redeem herself, pushing herself right back into the limelight. But is that even possible?**

I received an ARC of this book from Net Galley and Simon & Schuster, thank you! My review is honest and unbiased.

Amy says

All of my reviews can be found on www.novलगossip.com

I have another book to add to your vacation reading list, this would be absolutely perfect as it's light, but has plenty of drama, a juicy scandal and a heroine who is perfectly flawed and wholly relatable.

Sunshine has the type of life people only dream of, she has a huge following across social media, a best selling series of cookbooks, an amazing husband and a dream apartment in NYC. It's a total dream, especially as she can't cook, like at all and the whole empire she's crafted? Faker than a three dollar bill. The premise for this hooked me as the whole idea of the social media age we're currently living in just fascinates me. We all follow people who seem to have the perfect life, but how can we really know that their lives are so fantastic based on some pictures and heavily edited videos? Sunshine herself probably shouldn't have been very likable, but I really did enjoy her. She's finally at a point in her career where she's forced to be honest and I found her candidness refreshing.

This was a timely read as the entire world has never been more obsessed with social media and the stars born from it than it is today. We are a culture consumed by it and the social commentary Dave makes on this subject through Sunshine's downfall was surprisingly insightful for such a lighthearted read. It wasn't in your face or obnoxious, just gives you something to ponder. It was also really witty and endearing and a total one sitting type of read as it comes in at under 250 pages. Ultimately it is a story of redemption but not in a contrived, cheesy way, nothing is wrapped up neatly in the end and doing this felt very genuine, I appreciated that.

Jen Ryland says

Pretty mixed feelings on this and am curious to see what others thought.

On the positive: I loved the idea of the book, which looks at the "curated" online presence and what happens when something spoils that carefully created sense of perfection. **Hello Sunshine** is about a woman with a wildly successful YouTube cooking show, just poised to start her own network show and publish a cookbook, when someone hacks her social media and exposes her some not-too flattering things about her.

Hello Sunshine makes an interesting point about how, in this day and age, to be successful in certain fields you are expected to create an engaging and marketable online persona. And I can see how someone might feel pressure to present him/herself in ways that require a little fibbing. The book did a good job of showing the slippery slope of deceit and how one lie leads to another.

I also love a good redemption story, and I appreciated the fact that the book really had Sunshine hit rock bottom and fight her way back. Although one might argue that having to live in Montauk hardly seems like rock bottom.

On the negative: (huge spoiler) The ending. As a mystery of sorts, this worked well, because there were so many suspects: (view spoiler)

So yeah, that ending was a huuuuuge stumbling block for me. But I really loved what I thought the book was trying to do.

Read more of my reviews on JenRyland.com or check out my Bookstagram!

Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says

"Hello Sunshine" normally meant someone was leaving a compliment on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

The day of Sunshine Stephens' 35th birthday didn't bode well for the "hello sunshine" greeting.

Everything she had made up about herself was being made public by a hacker, and no one knew who the hacker was.

Sunshine's life was turned upside down personally and professionally. Not telling the truth from the start backfired on her.

When Sunshine started her career as a TV chef, she should have been truthful and said she was from the Hamptons and not from a Georgia farm town.

Telling the truth was something she hadn't done for years, and telling the truth now had no credence. No one believed anything she said.

Where could the real Sunny Stephens go except back home? When she got home she had a big surprise too.

The characters in HELLO SUNSHINE were for the most part likable, but they also were on the side of deceitful.

HELLO SUNSHINE was an easy, breezy read for me. I loved the cooking theme, and I loved the glimpse into the life in the Hamptons even though it was on the wrong side of town.

If you enjoy people watching, family situations, and food, HELLO SUNSHINE fits the bill.

I enjoyed HELLO SUNSHINE and the wisdom of life decisions which was a major theme. 5/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation by the publisher in return for an honest review.

DeB MaRtEnS says

I found this breezy little novel surprisingly thought provoking, in its consideration of the fabrication that social media allows under the banner of a "brand". In this case, Sunshine has a cooking show which has been developed using her amenable personality and not too pretty good looks - and the recipes of another person. A vengeful staff member "outs" the program's deception and Sunshine's life falls apart.

We have become a world of digital consumers, and our "entertainers" theoretically are supposed to be a match to their performance art. The question is posed, asking at which point do exaggerations or overlooking illusions become "fakery"? Does the digital ever reflect the real person? Thoughts of Kardashians danced before my eyes... Facebook photos, cropped and "enhanced" Instagram... our perceptions are shaped from sources other than face to face encounters. Do these "adjustments" reflect a kind of creeping immorality, a concealing of self, a charlatanism?

Sunshine undergoes a life makeover and regains her confidence and sass. I liked this short and sweet story a lot.

Four stars for well done Chick Lit.

Jason Pettus says

DECLINED TO REVIEW. As part of my mission as a full-time book critic, I regularly take on books that are most aptly described (for better or for worse) as "chick lit;" and that's because I think middle-class suburban women have a right to be entertained by smart novels that appeal specifically to them, just like everyone else, and I love having the opportunity to present the best of these kinds of books to that specific audience, just like I love recommending the often overlooked best of science-fiction or MFA lit or crime thrillers to those respective readers. Unfortunately, though, I have to wade through a whole lot more dreck within chick-lit to find the good stuff than I do with any other genre I cover; and *Hello, Sunshine* turned out to be part of this dreck, a novel I didn't even make to the 15-percent mark of before giving up on with an angry shrug and exasperated eye-roll.

The entire concept itself of the story offended me from page one, which is never a good sign -- already annoying by being about a sorority girl now living in a gentrified Brooklyn, who falls ass-backwards into basic-cable celebrity because of producing a series of YouTube videos about "homey" cooking that turn into a viral sensation, it became even more annoying when learning that she in fact made the whole thing up, in collusion with a producer from the cable channel who wanted an "organically grown hit" and decided to just manufacture one from scratch, essentially two of the worst aspects about late-2010s "Trump America" rolled into one uber-mess of a storyline, which made me not want to even stick around for the redemptive "everything turns out great" ending that was undoubtedly coming.

Now add the abysmal writing style, one which like a lot of chick-lit books substitutes lists of consumer items for actual storytelling skills (attention chick-lit authors: **mentioning the stores where your hero bought her furniture is not the same thing as character-building**), done with all the nuance and sophistication of a 14-year-old girl writing *Twilight* fan-fiction; and you can see why I gave up on this book quickly, one of those titles that helps give a bad reputation to the entire genre of novels for middle-class suburban women, a demographic that deserves better than shlock like this. I no longer assign scores to books I didn't finish; but needless to say, I recommend staying far away from this highly unsatisfying novel.

Stacey says

I was immediately attracted to this novel because of the title and the cover art. Right away I have high expectations and then I start reading. YouTube, food, and drama? I'm in.

Sunshine Mackenzie has it all. Her own cooking show, numerous cookbooks, a successful architect for a husband, and adoring fans. When she becomes a public figure, she became a target like any celebrity and all those secrets she was tucking away were exposed with a stroke of a key. When faced with dire circumstances we see Sunshine rise to the occasion, but it's an uphill battle. As she searches for a game plan to move forward she must go backward and make amends with the past. That means going back home, the place she vowed to never return.

I like strong, independent women as main characters and Sunshine is just that. Her transformation through the novel is sensitive, forgiving, and triumphant. Take this on vacation, take it to the beach, take it on the bus, but wherever you take it, enjoy the sunshine.

Laura Dave is a new author to me. I thank NetGalley and Simon Schuster for the opportunity to read this novel.

Theresa Alan says

I was excited to read HELLO, SUNSHINE after reading author Laura Dave's book, EIGHT HUNDRED GRAPES, and I was not disappointed.

The protagonist of HELLO, SUNSHINE, Sunny Mackenzie, tells the reader right away that she's not a good person, but I liked her from the start because of the intimate way she told her story about how she lost her husband, home, and job in the same day—her thirty-fifth birthday.

Her job is the CEO of the number cooking show on YouTube—with a staff of 250 people, multiple cookbooks, and a soon-to-be show on the Food Network. Then, the social media that helped her become who she is abruptly conspires to destroy her burgeoning empire.

What follows is a story about Sunshine discovering herself by coming to terms with a family past she ran away from. Though the story is about Sunshine in particular, it's also about how all of us can get swept up in the versions of ourselves we present by only showing certain aspects of our lives on social media. For most of us, it's just a few hundred/thousand "friends," but for even minor celebrities, the reach can be much greater.

I really enjoyed this book. Dave really knows her stuff when it comes to food and wine—and people—marriage, family, and our relationship to ourselves. Highly recommend.

Thanks to NetGalley for the opportunity to review this book.

For more of my reviews, please visit: <http://theresaalan.net/blog>

Jennifer says

“I'd been wrong about the ways we move past the versions of ourselves that no longer fit. I'd thought it involved running, as far and as fast as your feet could carry you, from your former selves. I didn't understand that was the surest way to wind up exactly where you started.”

There's a lot of truth to this quote. It's true of how we try to leave our pasts behind and start again. It's true of how we never really can leave parts of us for good. Every minute of our lives stay with us, every person we meet stays with us, everything combined shapes us into who we are at any given moment.

Hello, Sunshine offers a main character: Sunshine who takes a surprising opportunity to become someone different...someone she's not. A small-town girl who can't cook is transformed into a YouTube cooking sensation with a made up past and a bright future, but secrets never stay hidden and the backlash is harsh. Unfortunately, this isn't a story that elicits pity for cheating, lying Sunshine though. Her behavior makes her pretty unlikable in my opinion. She's selfish and she stays selfish throughout the bulk of this book.

Some authors develop their characters a little more flawed than others. That's what Laura Dave has done. In my perspective, Emily Giffin does this too and you're either going to love it or hate it. I don't read Giffin anymore which tells you which way on the pendulum I swing. Overall, I liked the message Ms. Dave was sending with Hello, Sunshine but I didn't care for the characters or their problems if that makes sense. However, if you enjoy this author (or Giffin for that matter) then check it out for yourself and see what you think!

My favorite quote:

“We are and we aren't. We try and we fail. We tell the truth and then we lie. We want to be a part of things so badly that we'll pretend to be anyone to get into the room. And pretend to be someone else just to stay there. We want to be seen and we want people to guess. We want them to understand. We want to be forgiven. We forgive ourselves. We start again.”

Jennifer says

After enjoying Eight Hundred Grapes two summers ago, I was excited to see this new release from author Laura Dave. While both books could be categorized as "chick-lit", I felt that "Grapes" was a notch above others in the genre -- offering more character and plot development than is typically found in this category of books. Unfortunately I can't say the same for "Hello, Sunshine."

In Dave's latest book, YouTube star Sunshine MacKenzie has sold tens of thousands of fans on the notion that that she's a fish-out-of-water farmer's daughter now living in NYC. Her ruse has landed her a cookbook deal and a contract for a show on the Food Network. All is well and good until someone who knows the truth hacks her Twitter account and spills the beans -- and then some.

Aside from the thin plot, my biggest issue with the book is that none of the adult characters in this novel are particularly likeable (there's a young niece who is charming). Sunshine's modus operandi throughout the whole book is to continue to lie to get herself out of the lie that got her in trouble in the first place. The side characters are vapid, shallow, and rude. The "redemption" just doesn't seem that redeeming.

This book would be fine for a beach read, but there are others that would probably be more satisfying.

Thank you to NetGalley and Simon & Schuster for a galley of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Brandie says

3.5 stars. Not my favorite of her books, but I still love her writing style and will keep reading anything she writes.

Cindy Burnett says

Hello, Sunshine is a highly relevant and thought-provoking book for our digital age. Sunshine MacKenzie has it all – a wonderful husband, a YouTube cooking show with millions of followers, and a line of cookbooks. There is one catch: her entire life is built on lies, and when her Twitter account is hacked her entire life crumbles. Left alone and with no money, she is forced to return home and rely on her estranged sister while she tries to recover from her fall from grace. For a while, Sunshine is very focused on the identity of the hacker and trying to get her old life back. As the book progresses and Sunshine spends time with her sister, her niece and some new friends, she begins to see that there is more to life than maintaining her carefully scripted online life. While the novel is a quick, light read, Dave does raise some thought-provoking ideas about the lives people attempt to portray on social media versus the lives they are actually living. Hello, Sunshine has a powerful message that will remain with me for weeks to come. Thanks to Simon & Schuster for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

L.P. Logan says

True rating is somewhere at like 4.4.

I inhaled this book. The pacing, the plot, the writing style, the setting. It sucked me in and wouldn't let me go. For sure I thought this was going to be a 5 star read. I just couldn't put it down.

But then the ending happened. And there is no way to say this but it just kind of ended. I know, endings are supposed to be that way, but not so that they just fizzle out and there is the last word on the page and as the reader I'm left scratching my head and feeling very unfulfilled. I wanted MORE! I wanted to see what happened and if the MC was happy. Come on, after all that drama, you can't do this to me!

Which is why I'm taking it down to a 4ish star review. It was awesome. But that ending . . . sucks. Thats it. There is no other word for it.

Kathryn says

“Because no one becomes terrible all at once. It happens in very small increments.”

Celebrity-chef Sunshine Mackenzie’s perfect life is shattered when one day a hacker hijacks her twitter account and reveals the sordid truth behind her picture-perfect image. Suddenly everything Sunny’s worked for-- her career, marriage, finances--is in tatters. With nowhere left to turn, **Sunshine is forced to slink back to her hometown of Montauk and confront past demons,** including an estranged sister and niece. From there, the **typical hijinks and melodrama ensue.**

Laura Dave’s *Hello, Sunshine* is a difficult book to pin-down. **Ostensibly it’s the much-recycled “fall from grace” tale in which the heroine returns home, tail between her legs, only to discover small-town living is where it’s at.** *Hello, Sunshine* feebly tries to subvert this plot’s inherent rom-com tropes, but these **weak attempts don’t read as fresh or original.** Instead the story translates into a sad (and confusing) mish-mash. Like an **Ingmar Bergman-directed version of Reese Witherspoon’s 2002 film “Sweet Home Alabama.”**

Part of the confusion derives from the fact that *Hello, Sunshine* **can’t decide what book it wants to be. It prides itself on avoiding stereotypical rom-com endings, yet engages in every trope defining that label.** It’s inappropriate to dub a work “fresh,” when it’s **entirely comprised of derivative ideas.** You need to pick a lane. **If satirical is your goal, then your end-product has to effectively mock the elements its borrowing.** That doesn’t happen in *Hello, Sunshine*. It’s all rom-com trope with bleak, unsatisfying conclusions.

This problem may be partially the result of **bad pacing.** *Hello, Sunshine* is a short 256 pages. With a plot-heavy tale, that **wasn’t a sufficient page length to proficiently develop new ideas.** Clearly Laura Dave wanted to explore themes of privacy, reality, and authenticity, but those points were lost and/or superficially developed due to the book’s brevity. As a result, **Sunshine’s life unravels at an unrealistic pace and her “redemption” and “a-ha” moments are similarly rushed.**

Sunshine is clearly meant to be portrayed as **flawed, but sympathetic.** However her **character arc is so hastily composed that she only comes across as vapid and unreliable.** Sunshine is supposed to realize that her priorities had been previously askew, but when considering her torn marriage she displays a distinct lack of concern.

“I thought of Danny and then I thought of my gutted career: my cancelled contracts, my lack of liquidity.”

Danny, and her 14-year marriage, still play second fiddle to the superficial concerns the narrative is allegedly *saying* are wrong.

Similarly, we’re meant to believe that **Sunshine ultimately recognizes that a genuine existence is superior to living a fraudulent lifestyle. But even after her downfall, Sunshine continues operating with dishonest principles.**

“I didn’t even know Peter, let alone had ever worked for him--it was a risky move to use his name. But it added legitimacy. I knew she cared about Per Se.”

How is Sunshine “evolved” when lying remains her preferred modus operandi? It’s the **same Sunny, just a different setting.** Yes, there are minor character improvements made by book’s end, but they’re too rushed to be considered permanent growth. It reads as **Sunshine intellectually understands lying=bad, but when**

push comes to shove, that remains her default operating system.

In the story, the most likable and relatable characters are Ethan, Sunshine's niece Sammy, and Chef Z. None of these individuals, however, are effectively used. **The bulk of the narrative is focused on ciphers, while the book's gems are unmined.** Ethan is a wonderful counterpoint to Sunshine. He challenges her flawed priorities and their verbal battles are one of the book's highlights. But Ethan and the Ethan/Sunshine relationship are never given priority. **Far too much time is utilized on Sunshine's broken marriage and husband, Danny, while Danny's character is frankly boring.** If the narrative wanted Danny to be considered a viable option than more time should've been spent on creating and polishing his character. To return to the earlier "Sweet Home Alabama" comparison, it would've been like Reese Witherspoon's Melanie remaining with Patrick Dempsey's kind, but one-dimensional, Andrew. **It may be realistic, but in the book's context, it's inconsistent and unrewarding.**

Despite its faults, *Hello, Sunshine* is **well-written. The prose is familiar, inviting, and warm.** But, sadly, the **writing can't overcome the story's essential flaws. It's not light enough to be a beach read or developed enough to be considered literature.** The novel simply remains in a nebulous, uninspired state.

Thank you to netgalley and the publisher for providing an advanced, complimentary copy in exchange for an honest review.
