



They Call Me Alexandra Gastone

T.A. MacLagan

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"An intricate, debut spy thriller...readers will keep turning pages, and the surprise ending will have them anxiously awaiting a sequel." ?Booklist

"...the intersection of action, espionage, and drama makes for solid...entertainment: readers will gladly sit back and watch Alexandra navigate the obstacle course that comes with playing her role too well. It's a strong debut for New Zealand author Maclagan." --*Publisher's Weekly*

"Death-threats, global takeover, double-agents, hidden files and a blown cover?by the time you get to the shocking conclusion of this cliff-hanger, you won't know who to trust..." ?*Girls' Life*

"A solid debut that has both heart and smarts. Clever, solidly paced, and power-packed with a killer voice. *They Call Me Alexandra Gastone* is a blast to read. A perfect balance of mystery, romance, and betrayal. Bring on the sequel!" ? *Lindsay Cummings, #1 New York Times bestselling author of Zenith*

When your life is a lie, how do you know what's real?

Alexandra Gastone has a simple plan: graduate high school, get into Princeton, work for the CIA, and serve her great nation. She was told the plan back when her name was Milena Rokva, back before the real Alexandra and her family were killed in a car crash.

Milena was trained to be a sleeper agent by Perun, a clandestine organization from her true homeland of Olissa. There, Milena learned everything she needed to infiltrate the life of CIA analyst Albert Gastone, Alexandra's grandfather, and the ranks of America's top intelligence agency.

For seven years, "Alexandra" has been on standby and life's been good. Grandpa Albert loves her, and her strategically chosen boyfriend, Grant, is amazing. But things are about to change. Perun no longer needs her at the CIA in five years' time. They need her active now.

Between her cover as a high school girl?juggling a homecoming dance, history reports, and an increasingly suspicious boyfriend?and her mission in this high-stakes spy game, the boundaries of her two lives are beginning to blur. Will she stay true to the country she barely remembers, or has her loyalty shattered along with her identity?

They Call Me Alexandra Gastone Details

Date : Published May 20th 2015 by Full Fathom Five Digital

ISBN :

Author : T.A. Maclagan

Format : Kindle Edition 242 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Mystery, Thriller, Contemporary

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From Reader Review They Call Me Alexandra Gastone for online ebook

The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?Misericordia? ?????? ✨❤️ says

It has been quite some time since I really enjoyed YA. And this one did it, somehow. Or maybe I'm such a sucker for wonderful grandparents story.

Another thing going for it is the subtle antipropaganda indoctrination which one can see around the text. Q: No longer a child, I now knew why I'd been shown the images, and I also knew they weren't all true. (c) Warnings should go with this!

1. The political background here is abismal. America is a bodyguard to some invented Olissa country. It's bodyguarding its citizens quite a lot, in some cases supposedly straight to death. But in death they are allowed to keep their cultural diversity. Which is totally generous.

Q: They were just a bodyguard of sorts. It wasn't the US government's fault American companies were behaving badly. Companies behaved badly all the time, all over the world. (c) Yeah, right.

2. The US guards Olissa against Iraq and Russia. And I won't even go into the geography of this. Obviously it's difficult to invent a country and place it somewhere not laughable.

Q:

Albert grinned ear-to-ear. "I got a call today."

"Yeah?"

"It was from my friend at Princeton. You got in! You'll get the formal offer of admission in a week or two. Lex, I'm so proud of you," said Albert, reaching across to pat my hand. "You're going to make a wonderful addition to the school, and I know you'll love it there as much as I did."

I threw a hasty smile onto my face and somehow found some enthusiasm for a response. "That's awesome, Grandpa. I can't believe it." My stomach was knotted. I should have started with Albert's bad news. With only a few days left of being Alexandra, good news about the life I could have had felt like being kicked in the gut. I would never go to Princeton. I wasn't even going to finish high school.

"Princeton's playing football against Harvard in a couple weeks. The Ivy matchups are always fun, and I was thinking we might do a little road trip and catch the game? I know you probably don't think it's super cool to hang out with your grandpa, but I can treat you to some Princeton sweatshirts and show you the best place to grab pizza. What do you say?"

I could feel my face burn as I fought back tears. It hurt to see Albert so excited. He was going to be devastated when I simply vanished. "Of course I'll go to the game with you. And Grandpa, you know I love hanging out with you. You don't need to bribe me. I'm going to miss you so much when I'm gone. I lo—" "Good, I was hoping you'd say that," said Albert, reaching into the front pocket of his blazer. "Because that brings me to my second bit of good news." Albert reached across the table and handed me an envelope. "I know you've wanted this for a long time, and I've been putting you off, but with the news about Princeton, I thought it was time you got your way."

Without even opening the envelope, my heart caught. I knew what was inside. Since coming to live with Albert, we'd taken two trips a year, one over Christmas break and the other during summer. Although Albert was democratic about book club night, he hadn't been regarding our trip destinations. He always asked for my opinion, but then chose to ignore it in favor of trips that were educational and thought provoking. For the last three years, I'd been begging for an adventure vacation in New Zealand, full of hiking, white water rafting, horse trekking, and bungee jumping. I'd campaigned hard, but Albert had always put me off. Given his age, I never really blamed him.

Despite my best efforts, a few stray tears escaped. "You didn't," I said, opening the envelope.

Albert laughed. "I most certainly did. We're going this Christmas. Two weeks in Godzone. That's what the Kiwi's call New Zealand. It'll be summer so the weather is going to be great, and we'll do all those activities

you've wanted to do, although I'm absolutely not bungee jumping. You can do it, but don't try to pressure me into it with one of your bribes or bets."

I laughed, wiping away a few more tears.

"I hope those are tears of joy and excitement," said Albert.

I smiled and nodded. Although I had to leave him, I knew I'd made the right decision in choosing to save Albert. I was lucky to have as many years with him as I did. "You need to bring me down off the high I'm on. What was your bad news?" I asked, grabbing my can of ginger ale.

Having just deposited a forkful of food into his mouth, Albert held up a finger as he quickly chewed and then swallowed. He wiped a napkin across his mouth as he cleared his throat. Albert's expression was pained.

"I'm afraid I have to rescind my invitation to the gala. I know you were excited to go, but I learned today the threat level surrounding Kasarian's visit was increased. There's chatter a group called Perun will strike. All plus-ones for lower-tiered guests have been elim—"

I choked on my ginger ale at Albert's mention of Perun and had to pound my chest to clear it. My mind immediately swam with questions. How did Albert know of Perun? Made up of sleeper agents, Perun's public profile was almost non-existent. There shouldn't have been any chatter unless... I stared at Albert dumbfounded, my thoughts spinning out of control. Was I wrong about Varos? Had he actually been caught? Had he caved under torture and given me up? Did the man sitting across from me know who I was? Was he testing me?

"Oh," I said, not really knowing how to respond. Although I kept my face impassive, my muscles coiled, ready for flight. I had a "go" box buried near the dog park. If I ran at top speed, I could grab it and be gone in less than ten minutes.

Albert patted my hand again. "I'm sorry."

I trembled at his touch and slid my hand away, hiding it in my lap. Needing to run from Perun, I'd been in an impossible situation, and Albert had just handed me an out. His news about the gala was good, if true. But that kind of luck didn't just happen in the spy world.

"Per-en?" I asked, purposefully stumbling over the pronunciation. "Never heard of them."

Albert nodded solemnly, "Pear-une. A group of radical Olissan rebels. They've been silent for years, but with Aroyan narrowly losing the election... Well, I guess they see an opening."

"Hmmm," I said, shaking my head in understanding. Albert looked calm and collected and not at all like someone who was about to jump across the table and slap on some handcuffs. "Well, that's disappointing about the gala, but I understand."

I smiled at Albert hesitantly. Had I really just won the spy world's version of the lotto? Was I really that lucky? Could I allow myself to get excited about Princeton? About New Zealand? My heart quickened at the thought of keeping my life as Alexandra. And what if Grant got into Penn? He'd only be an hour away.

I picked up the tickets to New Zealand and tapped them on the table. Surely, Albert wouldn't have shown them to me if he knew. Or told me about Princeton. I knew Albert. He wouldn't bait me—he wasn't that cruel.

I smiled again, this time with measured excitement. "You know how you could make the gala up to me," I said, grabbing my fork, a sense of relieved giddiness taking hold.

Albert eyed me. "And how would that be?"

I held my fork high in the air and then swooped it down to my plate. "You could go skydiving with me in New Zealand," I said with a laugh.

Albert rolled his eyes. "I love you, but I'm not doing that either. Not in a million years."

I studied Albert for a moment; studied his look of loving yet annoyed affection. My giddiness dissipated, replaced by feelings of warmth and peace. I reached across and put a hand on Albert's arm, "I love you, too, Grandpa."

(c)

Q:

"Your grandpa is awesome. He told everyone it was not the time or place for an argument. An eighteenth birthday only rolls around once, so we needed to spank our inner moppets." Martine paused. She looked like she wanted to ask something, but wasn't sure if she should. Finally she spoke. "What the hell is an inner moppet? I mean I get the gist, but still..."

(c)

Q:

...I like my job. It has its perks.”

“What are those? Distrust, fear, isolation, an early death?”

(c)

Angel Hatfield says

I received an ARC of this story in exchange for an honest review

Melina was being transformed into Alexandra through learning her mannerisms and plastic surgery. She was to be a spy for her country. She was also beaten so it was believed that she had been in a car accident. She was to be Albert Gastone's granddaughter. He was a member of the CIA, although he could retire. Alexandra, who was really Melina, now had a really great boyfriend and was popular.

Melina was a caring person. Even though she was not supposed to, she formed ties. She also had kept her patriotism for her country until she found out that who had trained her wasn't who they portrayed to be. She also couldn't see Albert hurt. She grew through this story from the twists and turns. She even learned how to love again.

I loved this story, but hope another book will be written to find out about her further adventures. I highly recommend it.

Lindsay Cummings says

A solid debut that has both heart and smarts. Clever, solidly paced, and with a killer voice, **THEY CALL ME ALEXANDRA GASTONE** is a blast to read. Bring on the sequel!

Gabs {My Full Bookshelf Reviews} says

3.5 stars

I started out really not liking this book, because as far as the spy things go, there was **NOTHING** aside from the very first couple of pages. When I read spy novels, I expect at the very least a couple things that make me think "James Bond" or "Gallagher Girls" or...something. But Alexandra(?...I mean, according to the title, they **DO** call her that, even if she really...isn't.) doesn't really do a whole lot of that at first, and when she does, it's rather subdued in comparison to many different spy novels.

That's the point, I guess. Alexandra doesn't **WANT** to be a spy. She wants to be Alexandra, the granddaughter of a nice old man with a normal-ish life. But she doesn't have that, because she works for a terrorist organization in a country called Olissa.

I have to be honest, I don't think Alexandra is *that* good of a spy. She makes a few royal screwups here and there, which doesn't make that much sense considering the rigorous training she was put through. I was thinking, when I first started, that her character would be more like Natasha Romanov, who can seemingly do no wrong. But it's okay, I guess. My fault for assuming things.

Her character does get better as the book goes along. Her conflicting feelings are a major part of the story,

and it really is a bit of a Catch 22, which is super interesting to read about. Should she serve Perun, which wants her to do terrible things to people she loves, or should she betray them and face grave consequences? It only got worse when I found out exactly *how* she came to be an agent for Perun. The poor kid really got the short end of the stick.

But, like I said, the plot does take a while to get to the point where I was really into the story. I feel like the beginning was really dragging. Alexandra's normal life was exentuated, with only little bits of "spy things" sprinkled in, and that really annoyed me. I WANT ACTION AND HEARTBREAK AND SECRET MISSIONS AND I WANT THEM NOW.

I think someone else with less previous expectations would enjoy this book more than I did, because everything I was expecting really hindered my enjoyment of what the story ended up *being*.

Diane says

Amazing read! for a 1st book and having incerted SPIES/CIAs around both main and other centralize characters,this was brilliantly and well written. Enjoyable and interesting take on the mean-spirited 'lady' supporting character,the added plot twist at the end leaves an opening to continue this awesome series..highly recommend

Julie says

Check out more reviews at Little Miss Bookmark!

Alexandra is a high school cheerleader, a great student, a doting girlfriend and a loving granddaughter. Only she isn't Alexandra. And she isn't any of those other things either. She is a spy ... a sleeper agent and she's just biding her time until she is activated by her home country. The time is coming soon and Alexandra is determined to avenge the death of a loved one and serve her country.

Spy books are some of my favorites to read. Years ago, I decided I was done with reading only James Patterson and Nicholas Sparks and I decided to pick up something TOTALLY out of my reading comfort zone. I saw a book by this new author named Vince Flynn. It was a spy book and I was totally hooked. I devoured all of the Vince Flynn books that I could find. Unfortunately, this amazing author passed away in 2013 and I've not picked up a spy book since. Until this one. I figured that it was time to give this sub-genre another try (even though it feels a bit like I'm cheating on Vince Flynn).

I won't lie, I expected to not like this book. I know, I know ... why pick it up then, right? I just had such high expectations that I figured that I was wasting my time but you know what? I was wrong. Don't tell my husband I said that because I've convinced him that I'm NEVER wrong. But in this case, I was. I really enjoyed this book. I enjoyed it a lot. And it was so close to being a 5-star book for me that it's crazy.

I found the characters ... interesting. I didn't really know what to make of Alexandra at first. I loved the way that the author really delved into Alexandra's history and let you know why she was the way that she was. The character development was just as amazing for everyone else in the book as well. I was left with no questions about why they were the way that they were or what their motivations were. Everything was pretty clear.

The storyline itself was very intricate and the author was able to weave this amazing story out of quite a few different strands of the story and you end up with this amazingly interesting plot that keeps you guessing right up until the very last page. There were quite a few surprises that I wasn't expecting that really kept me on my toes. I'm very excited for the next installment in this series and I'll be one of the first in line to get my hands on it. I think I've found a new author to follow and I've found that there isn't just one spy writer for me.

** I received this novel in exchange for an honest review **

Tracy Banghart says

While this book didn't have quite as much action as I was expecting, I found it totally fascinating. Milena/Alexandra made for a very compelling main character, and watching her try to navigate her role as a sleeper agent and a high school student was really interesting. There were a lot of twists and turns, great tension, and a good setup for a sequel. Can't wait to read more about these characters!

Kelly Gunderman says

Check out this and other reviews on my blog, Here's to Happy Endings!

Alexandra Gastone has a seemingly great life to all those on the outside. She has a boyfriend, she does well in school, and she lives with and is close to her grandfather, who works in the CIA. She is on track for college (Princeton is the plan), and she herself wants to work for the CIA.

However, everything is not quite what it seems.

Who is Alexandra, really?

It turns out, "Alexandra Gastone" is really a spy from Olissa, where she was born and raised. Her true name isn't Alexandra Gastone at all, but Milena Rokva, who is a sleeper agent and has been sent to America to infiltrate the CIA within five years. Only that plan doesn't seem to hold anymore, because she is told that she will need to begin now, not in five years.

So how does this go for "Alexandra"? Does she betray the "grandfather" she has come to love as her own family? What about the amazing relationship she has with her boyfriend? Will she allow the people she cares about most to get hurt, or does she decide to take matters into her own hands and come up with a different solution?

This book is truly unlike anything I've read. While I don't particularly read a lot of thrillers or "spy" books, I found *They Call Me Alexandra Gastone* to be a real treat. It is full of action, suspense, and yes, even a little romance (the relationship between "Alexandra" and her boyfriend, Grant, is adorable and I loved them as a couple). I had grown to care about the characters in the book a lot, especially Grandpa Albert, who was such a sweet, caring man who would do anything to make his granddaughter happy. You could tell they had a great relationship, even though Alexandra wasn't who he thought she was.

The entire plot of this book was so well written, and you could tell that the author T.A. Maclagen definitely

put a lot of time and research into the subject matter of the book. While the book does end on a cliffhanger, it seemed fitting for it to end that way, because it leaves room for a sequel and for the storyline to continue. It was definitely a surprising book, and one that I have to recommend to anyone who loves YA fiction, even if the genre itself isn't something you'd normally reach for!

Note: I received a copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Angela Street says

Alexandra is a sleeper agent into a CIA agent's home. She has been posing as the man's (Albert's) granddaughter for seven years and is deeply ingrained in her new life to the point that she is starting to develop real feelings for Albert and her boyfriend, Grant. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to juggle both lives. When Perun decides to activate her to kill a man and bring her grandfather down w Alexandra has to make a difficult decision that could change everything.

This was a fast-paced novel that I could literally not stop reading. Alexandra is very impressive in her skills and dedication to the Perun cause. However, when she begins to doubt the group's intentions she makes way for lots of problems. I fell in love with Alexandra from the first page and I was able to connect with her struggle to maintain her mission while also keeping those she loved safe. I also loved Albert. The thing that I loved about this book is it seemed realistic when showing the struggles that the main character went through. Usually these books start with the main character having been indoctrinated to the point that she or she has turned into a cold killer but Alexander's struggles seemed to me a more realistic picture of what it would be like to be in that situation. The book had twists and unexpected turns, the author did a great job of making you connect with the main characters and the ending was a cliff hanger that obviously makes way for a second book. I highly recommend this book and think this is a wonderful debut from an author that will produce more great books in the future.

I received this book from NetGalley as an ARC for an honest review.

Samantha says

4.5*

After having the book blast on 'They call me Alexandra Gastone' a couple of months back, I was immensely intrigued by the synopsis. In this day and age, the story line is anything but far fetched and it definitely drew a cord watching the unrest in the Middle East that has been brewing for such a long time.

Of course the book is not referring to this conflict specifically (though it may have draw inspiration from it in part). Rather, It sets a very strong portrait of the thoughts and feelings a young woman has, being raised with ideals and saddled with a mission that may not have her (or a much wider populace's) best interests at heart. A reminder, if you will, of the heart ache that vengeance and misguided ideals can bring and that we cant see both sides of the same coin at once.

They call me Alexandra Gastone starts with Milena 'aka' Alexandra (or Lex for short). Lex has been placed as an undercover sleeper op in a important position at only 7 years old. Her goal is to grow into a prime position within the countries intel and gather it for her own. Though doing something for your home country is not as simple as it is cracked up to be when motives are unclear and you suddenly get faces with hurting the people who have played a role in your life for as long as your own blood family has.

Lex is a very interesting character. I adore the fact that she is smart enough to question, yet loyal enough to hold on to her ideals. She is not reckless or stupid but she is damaged, giving her some definite flaws. Overall, she is a great persona to read through and I find myself drawn to the realism that comes with her thought patterns and actions.

“Family is what could motivate a man to knowingly house a spy. it could give him the fortitude to look her in the eye and pretend he cared.”

The little bit of politics and world building surrounding the countries unrest is cleverly done and there is a good diversion of other characters to keep the story from becoming bogged down or too dark. I could really find myself feeling for Grant and got quite attached to Albert.

The story is told in First Person, all from Lex's perspective. It's a contemporary YA though probably better suited to the more mature YA reader due to violence and the more subtle emotional undertones. There is romance too, though it does not overshadow the other aspects and weaves in with the main story well.

I'd played a part for so long, who was I? A spy? A granddaughter? A high school student? A friend? A liar? A traitor? I was all of these people, and the contradictions were starting to rip me apart.

There were quite a few plot twists and revelations, shifting the story toward completely different outcomes in total contrast to what I had expected. It's also one of the reasons I have given it a high mark. It's incredibly well done. The storyline flows nicely and keeps you engaged throughout to find out what will happen next.

On that note, a word of warning. Even though this book ends at a good spot, it also does on a major cliffhanger. I am very curious what is to come still and can only imagine what T. A. Maclagan will conjure up next. I believe the series will have 2 parts and there are quite a few directions it can take...

Would I recommend it?

Absolutely. It's a refreshing story with loads of plot twists, espionage a good dash of romance and action!

Maiké says

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley.

While enjoyable, this book sadly didn't meet my expectations.

You can read my full review on my blog.

Elena says

I got this book through NetGalley.

When I requested this book, I knew that I was going to enjoy it, because I love espionage thrillers. What I didn't know is that I was going to enjoy it so much. I definitely recommend this book to all the people who like YA espionage books.

While not an adult book, it's more mature than I expected. I don't mean it in the sense of graphic, because while death and murder are mentioned, they're not very detailed in their description.

I didn't know that this book was likely to be a first book in a series until I reached the end, because it's not as slow as first books usually are. It helps that the premise is very straightforward and simple for an espionage story, until things get more complicated. Alexandra is not actually Alexandra but Milena, a girl who takes Alexandra's place after her parents and her are killed in a car crash. As the real Alexandra didn't have a close relationship with her grandfather and children change so fast, nobody is supposed to notice anything odd. Milena is part of a secret organisation of Olissa, an imaginary ex-Soviet country.

What I didn't like was the ending. When I say that I didn't like it, I mean it in a good way, because that cliffhanger is evil. Ever since a certain piece of information was revealed (saying what would be a huge spoiler though), I was looking forward to seeing a certain character's reaction to it. However, the book ends right after this character is told that bit of information. I don't know whether there's going to be a second book or not, but this book ends in a way that made me think that there's going to be at least one more.

The one thing that I found a bit odd, considering that the girl has been trained and is not someone who suddenly finds herself in the middle of an international espionage situation, is that she gets a tattoo. Sure, the place is usually covered by average clothes, but it's very visible with certain kind of dresses and t-shirts. I would have thought that she would be more careful with anything that might make identification easier, especially as it's not something that she does to make her cover more believable.

Paula M. of Her Book Thoughts! says

"For the blood of the fallen. For the blood of the living. For Olissa we fight."

Heck yeah!! What a badass book. Have you ever read a book that while reading it, you just have that strong feeling... that feeling that says 'YESS THIS BOOK SHOULD BE A MOVIE' **It was like I was watching a film throughout the book, and I can't take my eyes off the screen.**

Whether she's Milena or being Alexandra Gastone, its clear that I love this character, I remember this love towards a character before, it was when I was reading Vampire Academy and I was obsessed with Rose and I don't want anything in life but to be friends with her. Yep, that's what I feel towards Alexandra or 'Lex'. **Her thoughts and emotions is very genuine and I don't think there was a time in the novel when I was**

frustrated or annoyed by her. Nope, all I have is pure admiration. I can't even put myself in her shoes because, well, I don't want to. **She is battling with the question LOVE OR DUTY?**

The plot was so intricately done. It all seems so real that even a hint of doubt didn't creep in. It was so obvious that T.A. MacLagan researched this concept thoroughly. Her characters are all well written. There were turns and twists that I didn't see coming. There was a right amount of drama balanced with action and romance that affected me a lot. **They Call Me Alexandra Gastone is such a smart book. Its definitely a new series to watch out for!!!**

Shelley says

Source Amazon

Genre Young Adult, Mystery, Thriller

Rating 3.5-4

My Thoughts

“For the blood of the fallen. For the blood of the living. For Olissa we fight.”

They Call Me Alexandra Gastone is the first installment in author T.A. MacLagan's Alexandra Gastone duology. 17-year old Milena Rokva was given away by her father when she was only 7 years old. She was given to an organization called Perun who may be called freedom fighters in some circles. They claim to be fighting for Olissa independence from the US, who stood in while other countries tried to take over the country. Milena was trained to become a sleeper agent, and took the place of the real Alexandra Gastone when her family was killed..

Full Review @ Gizmos Reviews

<http://gizmosreviews.blogspot.com/201...>

Published May 20th 2015 by Full Fathom Five Digital

Rachana Hegde says

***This review has also been posted on Addicted to YA Fiction so check it out for more reviews! :)

Disclaimer: This book was provided by Full Fathom Five Digital via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

**This is a DNF review of They Call Me Alexandra Gastone

So I was kind-of excited about this book and when I initially started reading, I thought I would probably end up finishing this ARC and giving it at-least 4 stars. But my excitement slowly petered out and I realized that I didn't want to finish this book.

The main character annoyed me. Milena, the MC who is pretending to be a girl named Alexandra Gastone, tells us everything. Now, don't get me wrong, I like getting a peek inside the MC's head and seeing how they function. But this was literally inner monologues every five minutes. She questions her decisions, her plans

for the future, feelings toward a friend...and it was too much. I thought this was a thriller so I expected a lot more action.

Overall, it just didn't feel that interesting to me. The premise swept me off my feet but there wasn't enough action to hold my attention. I feel like a bit of a black sheep actually because there are so many positive reviews about this book but this book just wasn't for me. (I'm not even sure exactly where I stopped reading but I think I got through about half of the book before deciding to ditch.)
