



## **Kids Like Us**

*Hilary Reyl*

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## Kids Like Us Hilary Reyl

Martin is an American teen on the autism spectrum living in France with his mom and sister for the summer. He falls for a French girl who he thinks is a real-life incarnation of a character in his favorite book. Over time Martin comes to realize she is a real person and not a character in a novel while at the same time learning that love is not out of his reach just because he is autistic.

## Kids Like Us Details

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Author : Hilary Reyl

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## From Reader Review Kids Like Us for online ebook

### Mrs Waring says

This is a refreshing take on a coming-of-age story, told from the perspective of a 16 year old boy, Martin, who is on the autism spectrum. It is about family, friendship, relationships and change. Martin is piercingly observant and deeply analytical, and through his eyes, the author explores some of the many nuances of human interaction and emotion. I really enjoyed reading it.

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### - ?? jess ??- says

I quite liked Kids Like Us. I was interested at first because I'm on the autism spectrum too, and I could really connect with Martin in a lot of ways. For example, I, too, am obsessed with an old French novel and for quite a while I saw my life through the lens of that novel. (The novel in question is Les Miserables, and I genuinely believe that I lifted a significant amount of my personality from Les Amis de l'ABC, especially Grantaire.) There are other books, too. I could identify with the obsessive interests of Martin and Layla; I know for a fact my ALL-CONSUMING INTEREST in the Percy Jackson series was a significant factor in getting diagnosed. I imagined I was Percy, just like Martin imagines he's Marcel. We both live in our own little bubbles of fiction. So Martin's repetitive recounting of In Search of Lost Time was very relatable to me, even if I didn't understand what was going on because I didn't read the novel. God knows I've done that more times than I can count, so I can't exactly fault him.

Martin was so well-written too. He was't a stereotype of autistic kids, and he does call it out that he's expected to be a stereotype. He's a good character and he tries his best to understand the world around him, which is difficult even for neurotypical kids. He's very fleshed out and definitely seemed like a real person, and he had wonderful character development throughout the book. His trouble with pronouns was interesting as a literary device, because the book opens in second person, and occasionally veers back to second person, which puts a whole new light on it in literary terms. It transposes the reader into the book like Martin does with Search.

I wish we had found out more about Simon and the girl Martin calls Gilberte. I feel like their stories were left kind of hanging. I really liked both of them, though, and all of Martin's friends. I liked Layla too - and gosh, I think this is the first time I've ever seen an autistic girl in media, which I appreciated so, so much. I loved the setting in France. It was so idyllic and set a really lovely tone for the story as a whole.

There's a lot of really interesting discourses about neurodiversity and autism brought up and left for the reader to ponder. I can't comment on that too much. I myself would probably be considered "high functioning" (even if I don't particularly like that label, because according to the psychiatrist that diagnosed me, I was hopelessly low-functioning Asperger's, and basically there are a lot of problems with the high/low functioning binary that I'm not going to get into or we'll be here all day) and I wouldn't want anyone to try to cure me. Like, I may not be functioning as well as most young adults my age but I am doing my damndest to live my life how I want to. And Martin is too. But like me, he recognizes that there are things he's missing out on and it's not bad to better yourself if it's making yourself happier. There's a lot more discourses in the book, and Kids Like Us is a book that makes you think, whether you are on or off the spectrum.

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## Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says

DNF @ 8%

I would like to thank the publishers for the free digital copy via NetGalley for read and review! I've marked this as currently reading for a few months now, but sadly, the digital copy I received for my Kindle e-reader was badly formatted. I hadn't experienced this before so decided to put the book on hold for a while. When I came back to it today, I simply decided that the writing style in the end wasn't for me and chose to DNF the book.

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## Elise (TheBookishActress) says

God. Okay. I am so tired of requesting contemporary books and being so bored by them that I DNF.

***New Year's Resolution:** don't request contemporary books unless I'm literally desperate to read them immediately*

The thing about *Kids Like Us* is that none of the events seem to draw a bigger picture. Its arc is obvious. Or maybe, to put it simply: **this book is a bit boring.**

Let's explore this. The problem with this book is that there are a lot of events and sideplots and about 75% have *nothing* to do with the book. That blurb? That romance and exploration of incorrect expectations promised by this book? **Basically nonexistent in the first half.** You know what the focus of the first half is? Well, me neither. Because what the hell was even happening.

**It just felt like a lot of buildup and not enough development.** That is all.

I was... unsure how to feel on the autism rep. See, I love that there's an autistic protagonist who gets to be the focus. And I'm hoping this book will improve on this front later. But Martin's mother is... really clearly anti autistic people, and the narrative is very unclear on calling her out. It made me feel a bit uncomfortable. Okay, a lot uncomfortable, but I'm trying to stave it off because I DNFed this and I can't form full opinions on narrative agency in books I DNFed.

I don't know, guys. I'd read Cait @PaperFury's review of this if you want more info on autism rep, because she's honestly smarter than me on this topic. And also I literally second 90% of what she's saying here.

One more thing: **not enough France.** This is set in France and I wanted at least one pretty setting description. That is all.

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## Eryn says

2.25 Stars

I received a copy of this book from my friend, Ashley, who *loved* this. Naturally, I was quite excited to read it after listening to her talk about it, so I dove in that same day! I was ready to experience just how "wonderful" this novel was. Truthfully, I was quite excited.

That feeling didn't last long.

Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent to me that this sort of writing style wasn't really my "taste." Everything moved slowly and tiresomely, and I never felt a connection to any of the characters. It was just a dry and mediocre story.

I'm also going to be blunt and say: I didn't like any of the characters - but it's purely because none of them were memorable. They all morphed into one individual - and it seemed like everyone's voice was the same. However, what I *did* enjoy was the way Martin viewed everything going on in his life. It was an new/original perspective, and I always give stars for originality. Which is pretty much the only reason this novel didn't get 1 star from me.

Something that really took away from this story was how everyone/everything seemed so unimportant. I'm not sure how else I'm supposed to phrase that. I just felt disconnected from the entire book. None of the characters left lasting impressions on me, and neither did any of the events. I felt like I was reading one *giant* eventless book, and this book isn't even that long! It's just that nothing was grabbing my attention. I was reading words and failing to get into the story.

Honestly, it's interesting to me how two people can read the same book - but one can give it 2 stars, and the other 5 stars. It's all about perspective and how you connect with the story/characters. Sadly, with this novel, I didn't experience anything that Ashley did. But that doesn't mean you won't like it! It's a great idea and includes a new perspective on life. I think everyone should at least give it a try.

**Overall**, I'm disappointed I couldn't at least give this 3 stars. But I would've been lying if I'd given it anything but 2 stars. 'Cause usually 3-star books are stories that I can connect to on some sort of level. This one didn't fit that bill.

\*\*Anyways, thank you again, Ashley, for lending me this book (especially since it's not out yet!). I'm sorry I couldn't rate it any higher. Regardless, you rock.

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## **Text Publishing says**

*'You'll smile, you'll gasp, you'll root for main character Martin throughout...An exquisitely insightful, charming tale.'*

**LoveReading UK**

*'Martin is one of the most relatable characters I have ever read...Unique and refreshing.'*

**Autistic & Unapologetic**

*'A heartwarming read. The characterisation is strong and the setting idyllic...This book not only transports you emotionally but geographically as well.'*

**Reading Time**

*'Whether tender and familiar or brilliant and disorienting, Kids Like Us weaves together a truly atypical love story—from pound cake and Proust, from autism and family dysfunction—but always with the rare,*

*luminous humanity that makes a true teen anthem, another Fault in our Stars.'*

**Melissa De La Cruz, NYT bestselling author of Blue Bloods and Witches of East End**

*'A heartfelt celebration of young life with all its strange and endearing awkwardness, obsessions and first eruptions of love.'*

**Martine Murray**

*'For a teenager on the spectrum, a simple human connection can be an epic challenge. In her wonderfully touching YA debut, Hilary Reyl tells the story of one boy's effort to connect his imaginary world to the real one. There is love, humor and compassion on every page. You'll be blown away by this boy and by this book.'*

**Holly Goldberg Sloan, NYT bestselling author of Counting by 7s**

*'The most original voice since The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime tells the most radiantly human love story since Eleanor and Park. Reyl's extraordinary YA debut isn't just a book you read; this is one of those rare books that reaches in deep and writes you back.'*

**Margaret Stohl, co-author of #1 NYT and international bestseller Beautiful Creatures**

*'Kids Like Us is a song in which, like life, both harmony and dissonance play their part. The writing is beautiful; the setting lush and evocative. I didn't want to leave Martin's world.'*

**Ally Condie, #1 NYT bestselling author of Matched and Summerlost**

*'Kids Like Us was a really beautiful story...I loved the writing and the sparse but well placed details. I thought this was a thoroughly accurate and interesting exploration of the autistic mind, feelings and experiences.'*

**Paper Fury**

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## **Jennifer (JenIsNotaBookSnob) says**

I will be pretty surprised if this doesn't end up being a popular YA fiction title.

This story is primarily about Martin, a fairly high functioning 16 year old boy with autism. Initially, the story feels a little stilted spoken inside Martin's head, but, gains more fluidity as you continue through the story. The teens are smart and cultured, a bit like John Green's teens.

Martin has a bit of an obsession going on with Proust and thus there are tons of references to Proust. Thankfully though, Martin is primarily reading "Swann's Way", not the entire "In Search of Lost Time". If you feel like reading the 2 books concurrently, it should actually be achievable. There's even several references to madeleines and Cesar Franck's Violin Sonata in A Major.

This is one of those books where you can choose to focus on the relationships theme or the 'book within a book' theme.

I liked this enough to read it all in one day, that's saying something. It does warm up quickly in just a few chapters, so if you are lukewarm on chapter one, continue until at least chapter three to give it a chance to grow on you.

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## Cat says

Good story, just not for me. It was interesting to read a book narrated by an Autism spectrum boy. I guess I expected a...lighter, teen romance? Hmph, mistaken, but I am sure teens will get into the story in varying degrees. The Paris setting and a actress mom were interesting. And I guess Martin confusing a character in a 100 year old book with a contemporary girl in his class at school was kind of tragicomic.

I received an Advance Kindle copy from Netgalley in exchange for a fair review.

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## Vivi Chatzikiriakou says

**"How it feels like seeing the life through the eyes of an autistic sixteen years old boy? Quite an epiphany! Kids Like Us is an eye opening journey into the unknown world of autism and how its diversity collides with our well-known world. "**

*"I received a complimentary copy of this book and have volunteered to leave a review."*

First of all I want to be honest with you. I have never been into books which captures social issues. However, this year I promised to give it a try. **Hilary Reyl's** book cover was what firstly attracted my attention; secondly came its synopsis. While, I haven't any relation with the autism spectrum is an issue I am familiar with it through conversations with other mothers. I was in the dark! **Kids Like Us** helped me understand this unknown world and I'm very happy for taking the chance to read it.

There are so many levels and differences between the autistic people; I have never imagined that. **Martin Dubois**, a sixteen year old boy helped me learn some of these differences while narrating his own personal story. **It is a revelation to me seeing through his eyes how daily life unfolds before him; The way Martin sees (understand) himself so clearly, how easily rationalize the behavior of the people around him shows me a person who, while he lives into his own personal bubble most of the time, he's also trying to live into his loveones personal bubbles too.**

**Martin's understanding with the world around him is intoxicating.** While he is constantly compares his real life with his favorite book, always keen on finding connections between the two, in the end he earns the recognition of how the world around him works. For me, Martin's mind works the way I wish all the other peoples minds work. I might sound naive but my explanation for this wish is that is not bad to think once in a while or always, about who you really are to yourself and to others; how you might treat better yourself and the others.

Martin's trip to France with his mother and sister, opened him a new door to what the real world is about. For the first time he is out of his comfort zone. He isn't forced to do anything but he has the opportunity to go to school there and interact with "normal" kids. So he goes and that's how his journey begins. Martin's experiencing a lot of unwelcome behaviors whereas he is acting much more mature than all the others. He experiencing love with different individuals, in various ways. His mother, his sister, his best friend Layla, his France friends, his book heroine that he found out she is totally real and unique. Each type of love gives him the knowledge to separate them and go along with them. It's unnerving and remarkable at the same time.

**Hilary Reyl introduced me to the world of autism spectrum disorder in the best possible way. The**

storyline she chose to feature is intelligent and clearly very helpful to understand that subject. Hilary Reyl using a first person narration gives me the opportunity to see and feel through Martin's eyes and emotions of how people and their behavior around him affect him. Also, she tangled up Martin's thoughts and attitude using an old book which Martin is so attached to. For me it wasn't always easy to follow up with his book's scenes but in the end it is clear that Martin life is nothing but this book. I could write unstoppable about what where the things I like in this book. The fact that it is very well written and not at all scientific, is important to be mentioned. All the others are waiting to be unfold to be known.

I hope I intrigue your a little and make you grab the book, finding out what's really happening in the end because there is no way to tell you myself.

Until next time, enjoy your free time reading great books with the most unforgettable stories.

Vivi

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### **Samantha (WLABB) says**

This review originally appeared on We Live and Breathe Books

- Pro: The author takes us to France, delights our senses with delicious food, and even interacts with locals.
- Pro: Martin just touched my heart. He was so genuine, and being in his head was pretty interesting.
- Pro: I learned so many things about neurodiversity that I did not know. It wasn't done in an info dump way, it was told through Martin's self reflections.
- Pro: Martin's sister, Elisabeth was pretty special, and so was their sibling bond. She loved Martin for Martin, and they shared some really beautiful moments in this story.
- Pro: I really loved the Skype session with Martin's friends from the center, but my favorite was Layla. The way she expressed herself with Martin, how she did not feel the need to adopt neurotypical ways, and the fact that she kept asking, "Do you think our phones are instruments of communication or torture?"
- Pro: This book's tagline hints at romance being the focus of this story, but that short changes this story. The romance is so secondary to Martin's summer of coming into his own, his journey, and it's a wonderful one.
- Pro: This one gave me a lot to think about. There is this awesome scene between Martin and his mother, where he is trying to express his autism is a part of who he is, not a disease to be cured, and I think neurotypical people lost sight of that.

Overall: A beautiful and touching coming of age story, which filled me with warm-fuzzies and made me look at autism in a different light.

\*\*Thank you to the publisher for the ARC I won through a Goodreads giveaway!

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## Becca says

*I received this ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. A big thank you to Hilary Reyl and Text Publishing!*

There is something truly raw and genuine-feeling about this book, that I don't feel like I come across often in YA contemporary.

*"I'm finding out that there are a lot of us who hate that the world is trying to cure us. I think the point is that we don't need to be cured"*

*Kids Like Us* is a very character driven story. **The storyline is fairly slow moving**, but in a way that lets you delve into the mind of Martin. The story focuses a lot on how Martin perceives the world through his understanding of *Search*, through the tools that he's been developing with the help of his family and The Centre, and through his own intuition of how the world and others work.

**I adored how much I felt I learned from this book.** Reyl dives into so many little nuances that I haven't come across before in autism-related lit. For example, a lot of Martin's responses involve echolalia - repeating back what he's heard before instead of using 'original language' - and mixing up his pronouns, **both things that have featured very little, if at all, in other books featuring characters on the spectrum.**

Of course, ASD, like so many other neurodiversities, develops and presents differently in one person to the next. But so often I feel as though the same things are presented over and over in a stereotypical way. In this way, *Kids Like Us* breaks free of this narrow-minded way of presenting autism.

*"Missing out on subtleties is one of my specialties."*

I also loved the examination of identity in this book. Martin's best friend, Layla, who is also on the spectrum begins a conversation about the **neurodiversity movement - a movement that society should accept people on the autistic spectrum for who they are instead of trying to cure them.**

The discussion of where the line is between equipping someone on the spectrum with tools to navigate the world and giving them therapy to develop them closer to being neurotypical/general-ed is, of course, a tough one that requires a lot of discussion and understanding on the topic.

But I truly admired it's inclusion to the story. It is presented in a way that will fuel readers to ponder on the idea and how they view people on the spectrum.

*"I'm finding out that there are a lot of us who hate that the world is trying to cure us. I think the point is that we don't need to be cured"*

### **There are a lot of other things that the book does well**

- + this book will make you hungry and it will possibly make you want to draw moths on your shoes
- + you will fall in love with Elisabeth - she is everything that should be an older sibling
- + you will root for the friends, as they navigate the difference between friend and moth, and develop their own views and understanding of interacting with someone on the spectrum.

**I will finish up by being completely transparent** and saying that I can not comment accurately on the authenticity of the spectrum rep in this book, however, there are plenty of ownvoices reviews out there - including the one featured on my full review.

**Full review | More reviews | Twitter | Pinterest | Go, my book, and help destroy the world as it is. (R. Banks)**

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### **Khouloud says**

Actual rating is 3.5 ?

Let me start by saying that as a person who deals with mental illness the decision to read this book was inevitable.

This book was a slow enjoyable read ,

but it wasn't really for me , TBh i care about the characters more than anything else and frankly none of them was memorable maybe because the writer didn't give them any importance.

i really liked how the writer focused more on Martin's mental illness .

I loved how Martin kept referring to the book that helped him.

Unfortunately I didn't like the romance that much maybe I was really interested in Martin's family and social circle! The writing style wasn't really my type but like i said i enjoy this book and i would recommend it . I

do intend to re-read it maybe the rating will change by that time .

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### **C.G. Drews says**

**WELL I LIKED THIS ONE.** It had such an epic combination of things to love: it's set in France, there is *so much food*, there's a boy who's obsessed with a book (#relatable) and it features autism with an actually *good* and accurate representation of it! I did get a bit confused at times, like especially with the ASD (autism spectrum disorder) discussions...sometimes I honestly don't know if I was for or against? Like heckin' heck, peoples, pls speak clearly. **But I think this is a really lovely book.** AND THAT COVER, RIGHT!

I want to sit in a flower.

+ **So first of all: FRANCE!**

I can't even with how much I love France...probably completely irrationally because I've never been buuuut ok there are croissants and coffee and it's a place of magic. I know. I have read the books. **What I really loved about this was how authentic the setting was!** Like it really dived into talking about language and unpacking French abbreviations and slang too...like this teenage boy is going to France and even though he's spoken French forever with his dad, it's VERY different to suddenly being around teens speaking it. I just loved all the details!

+ **DID WE TALK ABOUT THE COVER.**

Can I pls have it on my wall.

+ **I absolutely adored Martin!**

He's adorable and winning and extremely thoughtful and intelligent. I loved that he was into cooking! Even if half of what he cooked sort of scared me but...like the dude is all into baking cakes and i am here for that. Where might I sign up to be friends with Martin forever. **He's also REALLY in love with this old French book.** Books are 98% of my life (I save room for snacks tho) so he was automatically relatable and winning and super sweet!

+ **The romance...**

Hahaha. No. I love how the tag line is "Martin never thought falling in love was for kids like him." Because NEWS FLASH: the book is not really JUST about falling in love. It didn't even seem the focus to me?? Martin gets obsessed with a girl he thinks is straight out of his book: but then she's not. And I loved his process and journey of discovery (and also his accidental hypocrisy of wishing her to be someone she's not...when he hates when people do that to him. VERY WELL WOVEN INTO THE STORY). But seriously...it's not like a wild love affair. **And I didn't like the girl.** I feel like we don't *really* know her well enough so it seemed shallow.

+ **OK SO LET'S TALK ABOUT THE AUTISM REP!**

I, myself, am on the spectrum, so I can sort of speak with some solid shouts and hand waving passion on the topic. **I honestly LOVED how Martin was written.** He isn't a stereotype!! Can we like take a moment!?!? This is so freaking refreshing. See, stereotypes are hard because lots of ASD people fit them. But the problem *with* stereotypes is that media will just latch onto one or two things and erase SO MUCH of what it is to be an individual on the spectrum. So this book actually delved into things I hadn't even seen in autism-related books before.

**For instance:**

- **Martin does a lot of echolalia** -- meaning he repeats back what he's heard instead of saying his OWN words. I loved how they unpacked this topic, with Martin struggling with the idea that he isn't original. But like...nobody is original?? All words and phrases have been said. And while he repeats things a lot, his THOUGHTS are original.
- **He mixes up his pronouns!** I loved seeing this on page because it's an overlooked part of ASD that isn't obviously true for all people on the spectrum, but it should be talked about more! My autistic nephew took years to put his pronouns in the right places (although I personally didn't struggle with that, although I grew up quoting as a huge part of my speech, like Martin).
- **Martin stims with voice tics and music.** So pleased to see these represented here. <3
- **His anxiety was represented SO SO WELL.** Just A+ fren.
- **He also diverged from a few other ASD stereotypes.** Aka, he loved lots of different food and he's good at sports/swimming and he detects sarcasm even if he doesn't like it.

+ **It also discusses how OTHER people see autism.**

And this is where I get a bit tangled...because the people around Martin were very problematic. His mother

is definitely after a "cure" although she's not meaning to be awful??? (Still lowkey didn't like her.) But when he flat-out asks her if she wishes he was cured, she starts to say yes and then covers it up. #Pissed #Off **And while I liked how it talked about balancing being drawn out of your autistic world and yet not being ashamed of it...I also felt a bit that Martin was convinced he needed to "pop his bubble" to have a good life.** Like it was a bit this *and* that? So not bad. It's a perspective. And while they unpacked discussions about "cure culture" no one made any DEFINITE opinions. I felt this was a cop-out. When it was thrown around that Martin couldn't talk about cure-culture because he wasn't "really that autistic" (since he's high functioning) I KNEW he was in disagreement. But he didn't give an opinion and the discussion sort of fell apart without anyone saying much?!! **So I GET IT. The book is talking about things! It's a discussion.** But it left me feeling frustrated that you'd start something SO HUGE and then slink out of it.

OK SO WOW, WHEREIN CAIT JUST GOES ON AND ON ABOUT THINGS. BLESS YOU FOR READING THIS REVIEW IF YOU SURVIVED TILL NOW.

+ **OK so my only downside with the actual storytelling is...Martin quotes a lot of his old French book and it's super boring.**

haha, excuse me. My eyes just glazed over those bits because what the heck was he talking about. Not having read the book, I just felt uninvested when he described something about it.

+ **AND NOW I WANT TO GO TO FRANCE AND EAT RHUBARB JAM AND CROISSANTS.**

I loved the writing and the sparse but well placed details. I thought this was a thoroughly accurate and interesting exploration of the autistic mind and feelings and experiences. I didn't always agree and I HATED how people treated Martin...but that's the point. **Books are about uncomfortable and real things.** It's actually quite dense, even though it's short, and gives you a lot to think about.

(...like thinking about croissants....)

(...dammit cait we are not thinking about french food right now focus...)

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## **Lorryn Woodward says**

\*I received a copy through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review."

I was really looking forward to this book but sadly it's not for me. I got really excited when I started the book since it starts off on my birthday but I was quickly bored and just not liking the writing style. I hate to give bad reviews but this just didn't work for me.

I do hope that if you decide to read it that you enjoy it.

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## **Rebekah says**

Normally I do not read young adult novels, but due to the subject matter, I felt inclined to do so having two Autistic Nephews and one Autistic Niece. Martin is a teen who is on the Autism Spectrum, and he associates people he meets with his favorite book, In Search of Lost Time by Marcel Proust. He moves to France with his mother and sister. His mother is working on a movie project and his sister, Elisabeth helps with Martin. Martin's father is not around, but each time Martin cooks, the memories of his father are revealed and why

he cannot participate in Martin's life. Martin has friends that are all on the Spectrum as well, living in America. He converses with them through the internet and gets advice from them and his teacher from the center back home.

While living in France Martin attends a public French school and falls for a girl, he keeps referring to her as Gilberte. Over time he realizes she is not Gilberte, but Alice and falls in love with her. Martin navigates through the tricky waters of learning to trust others, the value of friendship and love, all while whipping up amazing French cuisine. The author did a great job of telling the story through Martin's viewpoint. At times the storyline did get a little cheesy and drawn out, but it was a quick read and a feel good book that was fun to read.

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