



Kiss Number 8

Colleen A.F. Venable , Ellen T. Crenshaw (Illustrator)

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Graphic Novel. "Amanda can't figure out what's so exciting about kissing. It's just a lot of teeth clanking, germ swapping, closing of eyes so you can't see that godzilla-sized zit just inches from your own hormonal monstrosity. All of her seven kisses had been horrible in different ways, but nothing compared to the awfulness that followed Kiss Number Eight. An exploration of sexuality, family, and faith, Kiss Number Eight is a coming-of-age tale filled with humor and hope." [First Second Books]

Kiss Number 8 Details

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Author : Colleen A.F. Venable , Ellen T. Crenshaw (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Kiss Number 8 for online ebook

Rachel Sperber says

Not sure what to think of this one. I was frustrated upon reaching the middle point of the novel at the poor portrayal of a transgender man who just wanted to love his family and live his life and the hatred and shame his family displayed and felt.

This family's 'dark secret of the past' is mirrored in Amanda's journey through adolescence as she explores different aspects of growing up, from partying to kissing a few people and feeling peer pressure.

The story does turn as she discovers she's bisexual. Within her small Catholic school, she is cast out by her friends, peers, and her father, and she struggles to find her way back to happiness and in doing so, reconnects to her mother and step-Grandma in the process. It was a lovely and happy ending.

The art of this graphic novel is good, and the lesson of family's making progress over time was ultimately heartwarming. I don't know how desirable reading the hate speech spewing out of the father's and grandparent's mouths is to anyone actually discovering a non-heteronormative sexuality within a religious community, even if it is relatable to someone's lived experiences. I find it curious that the transgender reveal isn't mentioned in the summary of the book in terms of initially showing more representation.

The last tidbit that bothered me was how some of the art panels didn't quite fit for me. I couldn't figure out exactly what was going on because they didn't connect easily to the other context of the page and it definitely took me out of the story trying to figure out what was going on.

Overall, somewhat heartwarming end, but the journey is filled with ignorant people spewing hatred. Not sure how relatable this story is, even to its target audience. I'm all for diversity, but maybe this isn't the delivery needed.

Teresa says

The only complaint I have about this book was that I didn't have a physical copy; I was blessed with a digital ARC and while I loved reading this so early I am really sad that I didn't have the actual book in my hands to appreciate the gorgeous art!! (First world problems I know, I will not complain anymore!)

That being said, I fell in love with Amanda's voice; she was honest, tough, vulnerable but most of all she stayed true to herself. Thus far in life Amanda has been unimpressed with all the hubbub that surrounds kissing; what's the big deal...spit, tongue, dry lips...you name it not much to be excited about. Then kiss number 8 happens and life as Amanda knows it will be forever changed; in the best way possible but that doesn't mean the ride to get there is going to be easy or perfect.

Venable has written a wonderful, touching coming of age story that will resonate with readers of all ages...can't wait to see what else this author has out there!

Thanks to Netgalley and Macmillan for the ARC!

Siina says

Kiss Number 8 is a melancholic and beautiful comic about being different and finding you're not alone with it. At its center we have Amanda, who tries to fit in with her friends and kisses enough times to learn that she's more into girls than boys. Being a teenager at a Catholic school doesn't make it easy though and rumors spread and people are hurt, even when it's really not about them. I felt so much for Amanda and the whole

grandmother thing was something made with so much care and understanding. How being different can go through generations and how you're still so alone before you find what you are looking for. It all depends how you accept yourself and be who you are - then perhaps others see and appreciate it too. I was slightly let down with the ending though, since Kiss Number 8 surely deserved a grand final. Now it kind of fell flat and felt rushed, but otherwise I have nothing to complain about. Venable surely catches the beauty of it all in this one.

The art looks great and works well with the theme. The font isn't the greatest though, but is still OK. Somehow I would've loved to see this in color, since the blueish cover style would look perfect inside the pages too. The flow is great! The comic looks good and lively, but is still round and soft at the edges, which takes away the saddest vibe and it surely works. Kiss Number 8 is a wonderful LGBTQ comic and it's touching, there's so much emotion in it that you cry with the characters and feel joy when they do. That's surely something.

Theresa says

I read an ARC from First Second via NetGalley. Amanda is in high school and her dad is her best friend, until she realizes he is keeping a big secret from her and she doesn't like being lied to by her family. Amanda's best friend, Cat, is surrounded by drama going out to clubs, drinking, and dating older guys. Cat can be a problem because they all go to catholic school and church on a regular basis, but she's Amanda's best friend so she is constantly being pulled back in by Cat's allure. Amanda has kissed 8 people but none of them have been anything fantastic, maybe she's just picky. This realistic graphic novel covers dating, friendship, high school drama, religion, and family.

It took awhile to get into the flow of the story, but eventually it caught me and brought me in. The approach to LGBTQ seemed realistic given the religious family members and the chauvinist grandpa. Acceptance from others isn't always easy and sometimes never comes. I liked how the immediate family story worked out in Amanda's life, but if you want neat and tidy endings for all the characters (like in the Prince and the Dressmaker), that's not going to be the case in this story. The art is nice and the characters well sketched out. Recommended for teens.

Caroline says

I was so lucky to get an arc of this from work and GOSH I loved it so much. If you like graphic novels, especially graphic novels about disaster teenagers dealing with family mysteries and learning how to love themselves, I think you should *definitely* pick this up when it comes out next year! The art was so great, and the story really moving. I loved it.

Summer says

Plenty of angsty drama that most teen readers can relate to. One transgender adult and several queer and gender nonconforming youth provide diversity within the LGBTQ community, several are POC. Main characters have mostly positive experiences with religion and church communities, which seems a rarity these days. 3.5 stars for this reader.

Jay G says

Want to see more bookish things from me? Check out my youtube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfer...>

Thank you to First:Second and Raincoast books for sending me a copy of this in exchange for my honest review

4.5/5 Stars

Amanda's best friend Cat is surrounded by drama and loves kissing boys. Trying to fit in, Amanda has had 7 kisses in her 16 years of life which have been...unremarkable at best. But nothing compares to how awful Kiss number 8 was and what follows afterwards. Not to mention that her family seems to be hiding a big secret from her. Now, with a secret of her own, Amanda tries to navigate between falling for her best friend and trying to figure out what her parents are hiding.

I loved this so much. I loved Amanda, she was such a great character who dealt with so much in such a short period of time. I think the themes and topics explored were so well done and thought out. I loved watching her figure out who she was and come to terms with what that meant for her, her family and those around her. I also loved how the family secret was dealt with and explored as well! The character development of ALL the characters, not just Amanda was so nice to see. I also love how the ending isn't completely neat and perfect. Not everything works out, but that's how life is. I also cried at the ending, so there is that.

I really loved the artwork in this! My one complaint is that there was no colour at all... I think it would have been nice to use the blues from the cover with little pops of colour here and there, but the black and white still worked for this story. Usually I am not a fan of just black and white panels, but that's just me!

Highly recommend this one!

Ashley says

Thank you to Teens' Top Ten Project for providing me with an advanced copy of Kiss Number 8!

I absolutely adored this story. The plot took so many twists and turns, and the ending completely shocked me! The LGBTQ+ themes were so powerful and motivating, and this is a book that I would recommend to everyone. The ending was very realistic and didn't shy away from the difficult aspects of being an LGBTQ+ person in our society.

Jenni Frencham says

Venable, Colleen AF. Kiss Number 8. First Second, 2019.

Amanda's first seven experiences with kissing haven't sold her on it being a wonderful idea, but her friends seem obsessed with it, and she is determined to find out what's so exciting about it. Her eighth kiss involves another girl and sets in motion the possibility that maybe she likes girls and not boys and maybe that's why kissing hasn't worked for her so far. Her family is holding back some secrets as well, and Amanda is determined to get to the bottom of that just as she is set on hiding her newfound crush from her family.

This is a fairly typical coming-out style story, with appropriate characterization for Amanda's teenage friends. LGBTQ+ representation is very important in all aspects of literature, including graphic novels, so I would readily purchase this book for my library's shelves, although I am not certain that it would circulate well.

Recommended for: teens

Red Flags: language, underage drug and alcohol use

Overall Rating: 3/5 stars

I received a complimentary copy of this book through Netgalley for the purpose of review.

Lisa says

Amanda and her best friend Cat like to have fun and get in trouble. Cat is wild and boy crazy. Amanda is laid-back, but goes along with Cat's adventures.

In their junior year, everything starts to change for Amanda when she overhears her dad on the phone with someone named Dina. At first, she thinks he is having an affair, but it turns out to be something completely different.

I don't want to give anything away, but Kiss Number 8 is a beautifully illustrated story about finding your identity, sexuality, and real friends. Amanda's story is one many teens will relate to and you cheer for her the entire time.

A great LGBTQ+ graphic novel.

****I received an eARC from Netgalley****

Bethany says

Kiss Number 8 is a graphic novel set in 2004. It's the story of Amanda, a junior at a Catholic high school. She has two really good friends, Kat and Laura, but her best friend is her dad. Every week, they go to the local minor league baseball game and watch a soap-y teen drama. Her mom, Amanda's not so close to. But that starts to change after Amanda finds a mysterious check for \$30,000 and a picture of a man. Who is the man and why did he give Amanda \$30,000. With Laura's Nancy Drew skills, Amanda learns who he is, but everything is going to change, namely that 8th kiss with not-a-boy. How will Amanda deal? How will her family deal? How will her FRIENDS deal?!

SPOILERS BELOW:

It turns out that the man is actually Amanda's biological grandmother. He transitioned after Amanda's grandfather kicked him out for being trans. With that revelation and some conversations with some of Kat's friends, Amanda comes to terms with the fact that's she's a lesbian. She is horrendously bullied at school to such an extent that her mom has her transferred to the public school. Things turn out better there because she forms a friendship with Nate and Darren, who are pan and trans respectively. With their friendship supporting her, Amanda continues to explore her sexuality-- she's probably pan or bi, if a label were attributed. But the best part is that her (Catholic) faith never wavers. She doesn't feel ostracized at mass or by the church, but by people-- namely Kat, Laura, and Adam. As such, the church isn't the "bad guy," which Venable defines as being her goal in the afterword/Q&A.

Jessica says

I wanted to like this more than I did. I liked the plot and the artwork as well. However, the story seemed up and down in pacing, and ultimately I didn't find Amanda that likeable. That doesn't mean teens won't identify with her, and that could be due to the fact that she is fairly realistic for a teenager. That said, the story didn't flow well for me and I felt confused about which direction it was going on several occasions. Recommended, but not a standout.

Alicia says

What a deeply personal, but lovingly moving story about a girl coming into her own with family, friendships, relationships, and who she is-- making mistakes, holding grudges, and having fun all the while. It's reminds me of Tilly Walden's *Spinning* with it's mood and while there were segments of the story that I felt like I was missing something or they were asking readers to fill in some of the blanks, I kept on and things unfolded.

The main character Amanda aka Mads leads a full life with a love of baseball and music, attending Catholic school and attending church, watching a ridiculous show and gaming with her father while simultaneously hating her "ice queen" mother until everyone comes together after much arguing, fighting, and secrecy to learn what Mads' father hasn't wanted her to know about her "real" grandmother.

But it's the usual high school hijinks as well with an added element of Catholic versus public school education, what it means to be a girl (especially the feedback she gets from family), and how experimentation is part of the package-- Amanda's "kiss number".

I'm not sold on whether the flash forward to an adult Amanda compliments the ending or not-- more of undecided because we don't often see that. But absolutely lovely in general with it's black and white illustrations, emotive characters of all shapes, sizes, and temperaments that show well throughout the story.

McKinlay Dennis says

I received an ARC of this book from netgalley and the publisher. This does not affect my review.

TW: transphobia

I'm genuinely baffled why this has such good reviews that call it "light hearted." I was annoyed basically from the start. Mads is incredibly disrespectful toward her parents, ESPECIALLY her mom, who she repeatedly calls a bitch AND doesn't tell her friend to NOT talk about her mom. I get not liking your mom, but there's a line, okay? You don't let your friends call your mom a bitch. You just don't!

That wasn't the worst offense though. There are some seriously transphobic comments made by the MC's dad. Like, i think it could be really harmful to trans teens, and children of trans parents. Because I quit, I don't know if he came around but after Mads' "best friend" outted the trans character I was done.

I think if this book wasn't marketed as like a cute coming of age queer graphic novel, I would maybe have been less frustrated. But the back of this book makes it seem like it's just a girl kind of realizing she might like girls. That is definitely NOT what I took from it.

0/10 do not recommend.

Mary says

I really enjoyed this book. I liked the story and the artwork. Recommended for 14+. It is a great story about figuring out who you are and being true to yourself. Amanda had to deal with family secrets, crushes, and accepting who sh is. It ends on a good note but not everything works out perfectly.
