



Lips Like Ice

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He calls himself the Prince. He is humanoid but not human--fascinating, sensual, at the cusp of maturity, and accustomed to getting what he wants. And Lydia has awoken in his world to find that she has been given to him--as a pet, a plaything, and, if he so desires, a lover.

As Lydia comes to realize that the Prince is as much a prisoner to his culture's ways as she is, her resentment slowly unfurls into pity, understanding, curiosity, and a deep, unpredictable, consuming lust. She wants him too, on her own terms. But in a world fraught with hidden dangers, her terms are not open for discussion, not when their thirst for one another could doom them both. In a court where monarchs are obeyed and sexual hierarchies are strict, one wrong move could end the Prince for ever... and what would happen to Lydia then?

Lips Like Ice Details

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From Reader Review Lips Like Ice for online ebook

Siavahda says

Let's get this out of the way: I do not read romances. Not only do I not read romances, but until last year I was one of those horrendous snobs who looked down upon Romances, capital R, as being somehow *lesser* than my precious spec-fic.

Obviously this is an incredibly stupid thing to think, and I'm very glad I learned out of it.

But although I no longer deliberately *avoid* romance novels, I still manage to...well, never read any. I'm the girl who likes dragons and epic quests and in those kinds of stories, my darlings, the romances tend to be very poorly written. Women in popular fantasy don't tend to have a lot of agency, and the romantic (or simply sexual) relationships they tend to end up in are usually...less than ideal, shall we say.

I tell you this, because it adds weight to the declaration that *Lips Like Ice* knocked my fool socks off.

Look: it's *kind of* an alien abduction story. And it's *kind of* a faeries-kidnapping-humans-to-Elfland story. But mostly? Mostly it is a very, very self-aware look at agency and consent and personhood and gender, wrapped up in some of the most fascinating world-building I have ever seen. It's tense and exciting and awful and emotional. It broke my heart and made me rage and had me in tears.

It's perfect.

Lydia is a woman of colour who wakes up on another planet. Or maybe in another dimension; it's not perfectly clear. She's surrounded by very tall, *very* inhuman creatures she takes to calling ice elves; creatures who view her as humans view goldfish or dogs. A pet, in other words. She's been snatched from her life, spelled into amnesiac compliance, and bestowed upon a prince in much the same way human parents might give their child a kitten.

Weirdly enough, it doesn't really go well.

I don't want to talk too much about the plot. It's fascinating, though, because even as it slowly transforms into a romance - you know it shouldn't, and *Lydia* knows it shouldn't. Both the main character and the reader knows, every step of the way, that this is messed up and unhealthy and quite possibly not based on real emotion at all. It's bitter even at its sweetest, because how can you trust yourself to love when you know you're being brainwashed? And at the same time, there's a fantastic amount of character growth, for Lydia but particularly for her owner/master, who's simply known as 'the prince' until the final pages. Barnett is a *sorceress* with her words, slowly and skillfully making it clear that the prince is just as much of a victim as Lydia - if in a whole different way. She does this without once ever letting him off for his treatment of Lydia, which is something I've never seen another author accomplish. Abusers can start out as victims, but that doesn't change the fact that they are abusers. They may deserve understanding, but not forgiveness - not until they apologise and do better, at the very least.

Barnett's characters leap off the page - every page. The interactions of Lydia and the prince are multi-faceted and unflinching, even at their most horrific. Barnett does not try to sugar-coat the horror of Lydia's situation, and I think that's what saves the story from what could be a mess of dubious cliches; it's so self-aware, and Lydia herself is so self-aware, that *Lips* never dissolves into an unrealistic fairytale. It's not a fairytale. It's brutal. It's also incredibly *human* for both Lydia and the prince to build the relationship they do - even if the process of getting there will tear your heart out over and over. It's impossible not to feel every drop of

Lydia's horror and frustration, her conflict as she starts to sympathise with her captor - and her fear of what that sympathy will do to her, what it means for her.

As for the ice elves themselves - not many authors can pull off really inhuman characters. The ice elves are not completely alien (although I absolutely adored their physiology and the thought Barnett has put into their culture and biology!), but neither do they *feel* human. It's a fine balancing act, but one that really works; completely alien aliens might be more terrifying in theory, but because the 'elves' are familiar enough to understand, it's all too easy to see comparisons between the elves' view of Lydia and humanity's views of other animals. It's an unnerving, alarming comparison (especially given that Lydia is a WoC) one that really drives home the fear and screaming frustration Lydia is forced to go through. We can understand how and why the elves think the way they do... And we, no more than Lydia, cannot convince them that they're wrong.

All of this makes it sound like a terrible book. It's not. It's one of the best written novels I've seen in a long time; one of the very best I've read so far this year. And it's not all horror and depression. There's a lot of beauty in it, and there *is* a happy ending. I think you need to know that, going in, or sensitive readers might not make it the whole way through...

I loved *Lips Like Ice* so much I had to track down Barnett's other pen-name. I won't say it here - although you can find it if you look - but I wasn't surprised to find that I already know and love her other books. I definitely recommend tracking them down. Google is your friend! In the meantime - you definitely have to read this one. If you like unique romances, if gender issues are dear to your heart, if you want an emotional roller-coaster that you can't put down - this is definitely the book for you.

Just make sure you have chocolate and tissues nearby.

CharlieB says

Right....well...that was certainly interesting! :)

This is a story that deals with the issue of gender identity in a unique and different way. Very thoughtful and refreshing read.

Ashley says

I received a copy of this novel from the Goodreads: First Reads giveaway.
Actual Rating is a 4.5

I am going to be completely honest... this was actually really good. Please, pardon the shock as it is just the fact that I entered more as a joke without the thought that I could actually win. The book **SOUNDED** good and I felt bad that not many people were entered, so I entered it. I simply did not think that the book would come with a real story line to fill the pages between the naughty bits. Truth be told, even best selling smut lacks in terms of real writing skills.

Forget the porny parts for a moment... Ms. Barnett can write. **REALLY** write. She creates a story to flesh out the book so that you aren't skipping sections just to get back to the good stuff. There is a moral to it all without being preachy or in your face about it. Her characters, while not always lovable or even likable and some, very **ALIEN**, are quite real and understandable. There is not an overload of characters in the book but

more than just our two horny-toads wrapped up in each other the whole time. Each person plays a part, no more, no less as they serve to further the story arc, not there just to fill the pages. She gives needed details, to enhance the story, not bog it down in needless extras that end up having no true impact on the overall story. For example, the story starts with Lydia being in the Prince's home, not when she was 5 years old. Barnett tells as much as you need, not wasting your time on back-stories that are useless. She cuts to the core of her tale and you never really even think about Lydia's life before she became a pet.

I truly enjoyed this book. I have won books that were a chore to finish so that I could properly review them but not "Lips Like Ice". I was pleasantly surprised at how good it was and how much I liked it. Books rarely take me by surprise so this is a very good thing in my opinion. I like being caught off guard.

Ok, ok, ok.... YES there was sex. Hot, detailed sex. Yet another thing that Ms. Barnett writes well. Other than the fact that it was science fiction-y sex, it was not at all "out there sex", like um.... who actually does this... who can ACTUALLY PHYSICALLY DO THIS?!?!" sex. Her balance of raw sexual adventures and romance was impressive as it was not all lovely-dovey, fireworks and perfection sex nor was it a wham-bam, thank you ma'am, get out either.

I liked the whole alien twist that Ms. Barnett brought to her story. I like sci-fi so to have a different take on the erotica romance genre is a nice thing. I normally don't even reach for E.R as it seems that after you read a couple of them, they all blend into the same book and nothing is original or even that good about them. This book stands out.

I get that this isn't everyone's cup of tea but for those that enjoy a touch of dirty with your "will they or won't they have a happily ever after?" with a dash of good science fiction... then this is definitely one that you won't want to miss.

Celestine says

What to say about this most unusual novel? I found this book very provocative in light of current national events regarding gender identity. At turns this book will intrigue, horrify, soothe and excite. In all ways it is an emotional and physical roller coaster. I've never linked to another review before, but the one listed by Bending the Bookshelf has such clarity without revealing key spoilers that I will simply direct you there: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Carla Smith says

Ms. Barnett has given us an amazing story where I felt every ounce of Lydia's terror, frustration and anger at being regarded as nothing more than a pet by her keeper, a blue-skinned, pointy-eared, alien elf prince. However, I also empathized with her when she accepts her very real survival is completely dependent on him. Alien or not, he becomes her world. But when the Prince goes against tradition, Lydia is horrified at the violent physical abuse he is subjected to at the hands of his own family, and she realizes her prince is as much a prisoner as she is.

I'll admit I was kind of expecting this to be some sort of human-kidnapped-by-aliens-for-mind-blowing-sex type of book, but was I ever wrong (and not just because with aliens you run the risk of mind-blowing being more literal than figurative!) But I will tell you there is sex, and it is mind blowing, but mainly because of the physical differences between an alien and human, which is well written by the author and made for a nice change.

Imani Chestnut says

Lips Like Ice more like TIME TO EAT YOUR HEART OUT.

It's gonna take me a minute for the tears to stop flowing, because this book was so beautiful, and has earned a spot as one my new favorite stand alone novels, and just kanslssdlsoxjdmnd ?Ω?Ω?!!!

I went into this book with high expectations and this book DID NOT DISSAPOINT! It is very psychological, and dark, and many a times heart wrenching to the point I would have to take breaks because I couldn't stop sobbing.

I loved Lydia's character the whole way through, and I felt like I was really with her the whole time. She was smart, compassionate, but didn't put up with anybodies shit if she could get away with it.

And speaking of anybody that leads me to the Prince. Although, I had my misgivings about him in the beginning, he really does grow as a person - as a man - and this is really propelled the more and more he would interact with Lydia.

Suffice to say, at some point it became a downward spiral, because I adore him to my soul's teeth now, and my heart bled for him so so so may times. (/?)~?? #protecttheprince2k16

10/10 would recommend, along with a box of Kleenex.

Lucy says

Easily my favorite sci-fantasy book of 2016, this book is so rich with themes that it is difficult to do justice to it with a review.

Lydia wakes up after a mysterious debilitating fever that nearly kills her to find her memories gone and her emotions somehow blunted. Why can she not feel strong emotions anymore? Then she is told by a mysterious elf-like queen that she has been given as a pet to her adolescent son and Prince, in order to teach him how to love and care for another creature. Uh, yeah, you read that right.

Things don't go to well in the beginning. The Prince doesn't see Lydia as a person--she is more like a talking dog. He speaks about Lydia in the third person, doesn't feed her and nearly kills her when he leaves the window open and she almost freezes to death. When he realizes that he has hurt her after kicking her while enraged over something, he slowly starts to see her differently. He begins to talk to her in the 2nd person for the first time. During a near confrontation with his parents, the king and queen, he calls her Lydia for the first time. I really loved how Ms. Barnett oh so subtly reveals to the reader the growing feelings of the young Prince for his "pet" by these changes in how he addresses her.

A major theme in this book is gender identity. The bluish-skinned ice elves, as Lydia calls them, pick their sex for adulthood and the young Prince is trying to figure out whether he wants to remain male or not. The Prince's growing feelings for Lydia (it cannot yet be called love) are definitely a factor when he chooses to remain male. He desires her and wishes to have sex with her. But in a society where younger children almost always pick to become females, his decision sets off a firestorm of controversy. His older brother had counted on "inheriting" Lydia, once the Prince became female; and Lydia soon begins to see the Prince in a new light when she learns that the bruises and injuries the Prince often sports when returning to his rooms are due to his protection of her.

The relationship between Lydia and the Prince builds very slowly, much more slowly for Lydia than the Prince. As both Lydia and the Prince learn to see each other as individuals in their own right, they slowly develop feelings for each other; and as Lydia endeavors to understand the almost insectoid society of the ice elves, she realizes that the Prince is as much a victim as she is.

The author has done a marvelous job at generating a feeling of horror in the reader over Lydia's situation. The world building is fascinating and slowly it is revealed that the ice-elves live in another dimension. There are spells and magic and highly complicated social structures.

As the book progresses, the author yet again changes the reader's feelings towards the Prince from initial dislike and disgust to pity and finally an admirable character, whom you want Lydia to fall in love with. It's rare that I take time to admire the author's skill as a writer when I read a romance--I mean it's a romance! But Ms. Barnett skillfully forces the reader to step back from the romance and look at the themes she is exploring and feel the emotions she wants you to feel. And finally in the end, she rewards the reader with a HFN.

Do I recommend this book? OMG, do you even need to ask?!

Colleen Vanderlinden says

Not at all what I was expecting, even after reading the opinions of several friends. This was a deep, dark read, and I don't think anything could have really prepared me for it. Having finished it, I still feel unsettled. This isn't a bad thing, at all. If you're looking for a light alien romance, this definitely isn't it. For the most part, I couldn't even call it a romance, because it wasn't. What it was, really, was a story of two beings who developed together and individually. It was a story of self-discovery, and self-acceptance, and looking into the darkest, most unexplainable parts of who these characters were. Trigger warnings for rape and violence. Like I said, it's not a light read, or an especially happy one.

Michelle says

WOW. Okay... I'm not sure what to make of this book. I admit. I bought it because it was described by someone as "alien abduction erotica", so I thought it would be the corny romance novel cliché... I was sooooo wrong. First, I read this in a marathon session, staying up until 3:00 am trying to get it done. Second, I told as many people as could about it, because it's just so unique.

Will some people be shocked or offended? Definitely. But if you can get past all the potential triggers, then underneath is a beautiful love story. It is so much deeper than what it appears to be.

It deals, painfully sometimes, with gender identity, sexuality, humanity, basic human needs, basic needs period, fear and courage and pain and suffering. It doesn't get crazy heavy, but just enough to be effective and poignant.

I could not put it down. I suspect if you give it a try, you too will gobble it up.

For fans of Radiance, Golden Dynasty, Brides of the Kindred, and readers who like an unusual, but beautiful, love story with a weird, wicked sci-fi slant.

LaShon says

Good and emotional read

This book took me on a rollercoaster of emotions. So painful throughout but it was a great read nonetheless, I mean that's why we read right? To travel to new worlds and experience a great deal of pain and love and pure satisfaction. One less star because at times it seemed to be a bit preachy. Read it!

ZARIA (Sheldon Cooper lover) says

4.5 stars

I loved this book... !!! Right from the blurb till the last line... I loved the way the characters were framed. I hate the usual big horny aliens with bad dialogue . This hero is definitely unique. He's an alien - elf, and the King's second child. In this alien - elf world, the second child must choose to become female. A sex/gender can be chosen at will with this race, and with there being already a firstborn male, it's expected this second child will choose to develop as female.

However, Lydia is a captured heroine, regarded as an animal for the hero to care for because that might inspire maternal feelings in the hero, but the longer they spend with each other sexual feelings develop instead, he wants to be male and that causes big problems....

If you liked Radiance and The Last Hour of Gann then you'll probably like this.

One of those rare cups of tea on rainy days that taste just right.

He calls himself the Prince.

He is humanoid but not human--fascinating, sensual, at the cusp of maturity, and accustomed to getting what he wants.

Lydia has awoken in his world to find that she has been given to him

as a pet, a plaything, and, if he so desires, a LOVER....

Heather *Awkward Queen and Unicorn Twin* says

This wasn't the book I was expecting. I expected some sort of weird sci-fi erotica, I think, but this ended up being a fully fleshed sci-fi romance with a captivity angle.

In theory, I like captivity romances. However, every time I read one I'm left less than impressed. There's never a good balance between desire and psychological issues, and the captive always capitulates way too easily because the captor is hot and/or disgustingly rich.

In LIPS LIKE ICE, the psychological aspect is quite well done—almost to the point of it being too much, oddly enough. Lydia awakes in the room of an "ice-elf-alien" known only as the Prince. He's very tall, and dark purple, with silver eyes, and at first he's genderless. Lydia is his literal pet, and she's not having any of that. But in this world she's at a major disadvantage.

I have to admit, although I appreciated how Lydia's captivity was handled for the most part, I didn't understand why the Prince went from viewing her as a somewhat interesting pet to viewing her as something to have sex with. Why? Everyone else in the world was disgusted by Lydia, and the Prince cares for her like an actual pet, but after he chooses his gender and begins to change suddenly he's all "I can't wait to be in you." WHAT? And her lust for him was equally problematic for me at first. Just... why? I did like how he went from viewing her as a thing to an actual person, due to how his culture viewed hers, but I found that the transition from this to the sex parts wasn't quite smooth enough.

So it's safe to say, despite the several graphic sex scenes, I didn't find any part of this book sexy in the least. No. Especially since (view spoiler) *runs and hides*

The plot was so-so for me, and I wish there had been a touch more worldbuilding, but overall this was quite well-written (aside from the overuse of random italics in the middle of the book). It was interesting, but like I said not at all sexy to me. The romance was rather sweet in parts, and in the end there was cheese overload. I'd recommend this to people who like more than the usual bit of weirdness in their romances (there's a 9-foot tall purple alien with a (view spoiler), after all). For me, though, the weirdness was just the wrong side of too weird.

Maddy Barone says

A very innovative and unique voice. An equally innovative and unique story. I wasn't sure I always enjoyed it, but it certainly kept my attention. I wasn't even sure that there would be a happy-ever-after, but there was. I'm adding that so prospective readers that require happy endings won't skip this fresh voice.

Deljah says

3.5 stars. Would've been an easy 4 with better editing and then a 5 with less heavy-handedness. I read it for the human-alien pairing.

Sally says

Well now, this certainly wasn't the book that I was expecting. When Peggy Barnett pitched it to me, I thought it would just be a fun bit of erotic gender-bending fluff. Of course, knowing Peggy, and knowing what else she writes, I really should have expected more. Yes, there is a lot of eroticism here, and it definitely breaks the gender binary, but none of it is fluff. In fact, *Lips Like Ice* is a very deep, very thoughtful story that goes to some very dark places, both physically and psychologically.

Before I get into its themes, let me set the stage for you. Lydia awakens from a surreal sort of illness, bereft of both her memories and emotions, to find herself in an alien land. All she knows is that she has been brought there by the Queen, to serve as a pet for an adolescent royal. Not a friend, not a companion, not a lover, but a pet that will help its owner to learn compassion and caring. As for her owner, the Prince is an elf-like being – perhaps a god or an alien – from a civilization that looks down on humanity as a lesser, animalistic race.

That brings me to the first theme here, which is one of dominance and submission. Human pets are a common aspect of BDSM erotica, usually with a collared slave who happily submits to the role. There's a servile, submissive element, but it's clearly role-play. Here, Peggy strips away the safety and sanity of the role-play framework and explores what it really means to be a pet, not a person. Lydia is ignored, her comforts disregarded, and often completely dismissed – not out of cruelty, but simple neglect. She nearly dies because the Prince doesn't give any thought to her needs, and more than once is kicked like a puppy when he's in a bad mood. It's a relationship that evolves throughout the tale, but that role of pet, that question of ownership, is always there.

Not surprisingly, the theme that excited me the most is the one that Peggy uses to take the story outside the gender binary. The Prince, when we meet him, is a smooth, hairless, genderless being, on the cusp of maturity . . . at which time he will choose a gender. The very idea of being able to choose a gender is an attractive one, but Peggy doesn't play it safe or easy. The Prince comes from a culture where only firstborns are expected to choose male, and younger siblings female. The fact that he has chosen male is a great scandal, putting both Lydia and himself in grave danger. There's some fascinating exploration, particularly in the latter part of the book, into why he chose male, what prompted it, and what it all means. Anybody who has ever stepped outside the gender binary will immediately appreciate the dilemma he faces.

Actually, the Prince's world is one in which sex is just as bent as gender, but I will restrain myself (as much as I'd love to gush over the imagination there), and not spoil the surprises!

The final theme here is one of consent. Lydia is very aware of her circumstances, and painfully aware of the ways (both deliberate and unconscious) in which the Prince tries to domesticate her and win her affection. She knows all about feeling like a victim. She's aware of the perils of Stockholm syndrome, and she constantly questions her own actions towards the Prince. The question of rape looms large over the entire story, and if it gets uncomfortable at times . . . well, it should. To easily dismiss it or resolve it would be to neuter the whole story, and some role/gender reversal in the final act of the story really brings this theme home.

There are so many things I'd love to say about the story itself, but you really need to let it develop for yourself. Peggy took it in places I so did not expect, challenging me, delighting me, and ultimately rewarding me with an absolutely perfect ending. *Lips Like Ice* is often deeply thoughtful, to the point of being philosophical, but just as often tender, erotic, and exciting. OMG, is it ever worth a read!

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