



Alice & Jean

Lily Hammond

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Every lover has her story, and every town has its secrets.

It's 1946 in New Zealand, and Alice Holden has fallen for the woman delivering her milk every morning. Jean has a way about her, a swagger, honey-sweet and low voice, and a wink with an easy smile that lights up Alice's world, stirring her in ways she's never known before, and Alice with blinders on, wants to choose this feeling over all else.

Jean has been head over heels in love with the sparky and adorable single mother since the first time she saw her. She's even drawn to Alice's two fatherless children, and family life has never looked so good. Jean's deep desire to have more than a life spent looking in from the outside seems more than she should hope for, and now Alice has her tossing the dice for it against all odds.

But there are two people in town who believe they have the prior claim to Alice, in duty and affection, and they'll do almost anything to get what they want.

Alice and Jean have discovered that each is what the other has always longed for, each other's missing link. Now they need to find a way to be together, despite the obstacles.

Alice & Jean Details

Date : Published October 19th 2016 by Sapphica Books

ISBN :

Author : Lily Hammond

Format : Kindle Edition 294 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Romance, Lgbt, Glbt, Lesbian

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From Reader Review Alice & Jean for online ebook

Dreaming says

Finally a book that I could hardly put away until I finished it.

I really loved Lily Hammond's (Kate Genet's pen name for historical romance) story in which the characters fall in love without ever questioning it and even most of their surroundings accept them. (The rest of those surroundings are responsible for the trouble.) Throughout the whole story there are no doubts about each other, but they seem to have quite a few unexpected supporting friends. The children are wonderful and realistic and it's a very satisfying reading. It kept me happy for two days.

Eve says

Whoa, lesbians in New Zealand! Alice, a young widow with two children, falls in love with the woman who delivers her milk every day. It's just after World War II and things aren't so great for woman-love, and Alice must deal with her controlling mother's machinations and other issues. Filled with voluptuous descriptions of Alice and Jean's feelings, the book is pretty engrossing.

Weezie says

Disclaimer: I received a free ebook from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

Alice & Jean tells the story of Alice Holden, a war widow with two small children, who has fallen in love with Jean Reardon, the woman who delivers her milk every morning. The story starts off very fast with Alice already being head over heels for Jean (and vice-versa) so the reader doesn't get a very good sense of why Alice has fallen for Jean until near the end of the story when both women confess when/how they fell in love with the other. The pair face a lot of obstacles together- from Alice's overbearing and downright evil mother, to the whispers of the neighbors about Alice being seen with *that woman*, to the stereotypical man who feels jilted and can't stand women being together.

Which brings me to things I didn't like about this book: I feel like Big Jim was overdone. I do realize that there are plenty of men like him the world, but I really feel we could have done without his macho homophobia. And I understand that his actions were the means to the happy end of the story but just once I would like to read a f/f love story that didn't include alpha males or rape.

I also wasn't that impressed with Jean. The story definitely fell into that stereotypical "one is very femme and the other is very masculine" trope that I'm very, very burnt out on in f/f fiction. And maybe it wasn't the character herself as much as it was the way people treated her (Alice saying she wishes Jean were a man so they could get married, Tilly saying she wishes Jean could be her father, the men treating Jean like a man, etc..) I think gender expression and fluidity is great and amazing (I myself am nonbinary) but I feel like Jean was only a stand-in for a man in the story. We don't get a sense of how she feels about her gender, only that she likes to wear trousers and enjoys jobs that are traditional more masculine. I would have felt more comfortable with her if there had been more discussion on how she identified or how she felt about having people continuously treat her like a man.

I did like the story, though. I loved the way the group of women came together to protect Alice from Big Jim because we have a severe lack of solid, powerful, and protective female friendships in LGBTQAI+ literature. I also loved the fact that Alice does not forgive her mother in the end but does reach a compromise with herself that makes her happy.

I would recommend this book to anyone who wants a quick f/f read with minimal sex scenes, strong female friends, and a HEA ending.

Miriam Joy says

I'm clearly having a very gay day when it comes to ARCs today. Although I'm not sure if you can call it day, since I read this while pulling an all-nighter to try and reset my ridiculous body clock. But anyway. This is the second queer book I read in the last few hours, but this one is a historical f/f romance, making it quite a different kettle of fish.

I do like historical lesbian romances. There's something about them that you don't get from other historical fiction, not least the way they place so much emphasis on female characters even outside the immediate main characters. This one is no exception to that rule, with plenty of women being either supportive or vindictive according to circumstance.

That said, history has rarely been kind of queer people, and the characters of this book face their fair share of negative feelings and behaviour, which can be uncomfortable to read. Thankfully, this has a wonderfully happy ending, refusing to give in to unhappy tropes, so although there is bad stuff to get through, it all works out in the end.

Although I would argue that this is more of a romance than an erotic novel, there are some sex scenes that are reasonably explicit. I've probably read more explicit ones, but these might still be a little detailed for more sensitive readers, though it's of the poetic lovey-dovey variety rather than anything kinky like the book I reviewed earlier! (Like I said, having a gay day.) In many ways it's less risqué than a lot of the classics of the genre (*cough*tippingthevelvet*cough*), and the relationship portrayed is somewhat domestic, since Alice has children. It added a layer of sweetness that seemed in many ways to give the relationship more depth.

Alice & Jean is set in New Zealand after WW2, which was interesting to me because in many ways it didn't seem that different to Britain, but for aspirations (e.g. the jobs available and the nature of the rural landscape) and setting. That said, it was also a setting I hadn't come across before, and it gave the book a fresh feeling because it was a little bit unusual.

I'm a little lost for other ways to review this book, probably because it's 6am and I haven't been to bed yet (though to be fair, I slept a lot of yesterday). However, if you're looking for historical lesbian fiction with a happy ending, this might be one for you.

Alissa Haley says

I'd like to thank NetGalley and the publisher for providing me with a digital copy of this book! Review is

now up on Diva Reads!

Samantha Luce says

Historical F/F romance set in post WW II New Zealand. What a story! It's a perfect mix of characters, setting and time. I rooted for Alice & Jean. I hated the bad guys/women. I fell in love with the leads as they fell in love with each other. The dialogue seemed natural and the story flowed very well. There's tension, love, and all the other bits of life needed to make a realistic and enjoyable read.

Netgalley ARC received for an honest review.

Loek Krancher says

Touching love story!

After the tragic death of her husband, Alice managed, without any help, to hold her little family together. Alice didn't expect much of life but she was happy in her own way. She certainly did not expect falling in love with a charming attractive woman. Her life turns upside-down, it complicated her life and is irrevocably changed by this woman. Their path to love does not go easily. Alice must escape the clutches of Geraldine, a horrible miserable bitter woman. And as if this was not enough, she has to deal with another danger, someone from her past. With great bravery, Alice and Jean were able to stay true to themselves but will they also find the gateway to paradise? I love to watch the sparks fly between these two and I was rooting for them right to the end. I love Tilly and Jack. They are two shining stars. This is a deeply engaging story about the struggle to live and love with characters that are real and vibrantly drawn. It brings the past alive with a vivid sense of place and time and a storyline that never lost momentum. This is one of those stories you want to pick up and reread immediately. It's that good. I wish I could award it more than 5 stars.

Kathryn says

[How long was 'Big Jim' in jail? Did he ever come back to bother them again? And the big question for me: What happened to poor Mrs. Boone. She was left with nothing while our two protagonists drove off to their 'Happily Ever After'. (hide spoiler)]

Teddie says

The characters are either very likeable or very unlikeable

This is a love story between two women in 1946 New Zealand. Alice is a 25 year old war widow with two young children. She is surprised and confused to find herself attracted to Jean, who delivers milk to the residents in the town. The two begin a secret love affair, but nothing can remain secret for long in this small community.

A couple observations about this book: First, the characters are either really good, or really evil. For example, Alice's mother is cold, controlling, and not a mother I would wish on anybody. And the character named Big Jim is reprehensible. On the other hand, the people in the town seem amazingly non-judgmental and charitable, considering the era. I don't know how realistic that is, but it was nice to read. Also, I found it refreshing that the book wasn't filled with misunderstandings and/or miscommunication, a common plot device to add drama. For example, when Jean sees Alice with Big Jim, she doesn't jump to the conclusion that Alice is carrying on with him. Also, if someone asks what's wrong, or "What can I do to help?", a straightforward answer is given.

It was pretty clear where this story was going, but there were a couple surprising turn of events that kept it from being mediocre. I think it deserves 3.5 stars.

Meh says

Quite the enjoyable reading. Good story, good main characters, well fleshed out supporting characters (to the point where I was kinda more interested in Martha then the two main...). Also good plot structure and a believable and interesting dialogue flow.

It's quite the sweet love story. Okay, at times maybe just **waaaaay** too sweet. But that's alright too. Besides, there is one truly horrific aspect in this book that really seems to need to be compensated by all the sweetness it can amass.

Sweetness that's actually created by Alice and Jean dynamic as a couple. These two ladies truly love and care for each other. Their love is as intense as it is tender. And the delicate, attentive way which they seem to care for each other well-being and feelings is quite touching to witness.

I also think this book works well when depicting various types of relationship dynamics. Aside from her loving relationship with Jean, there is Alice own extremely protective and loving relationship with her own children. Alice own repulsed and fearful relationship with Big Jim. Alice strained, dysfunctional, emotionally disconnected relationship with her mother and also Miss B affectionate and watchful motherly relationship with Jean.

There are actually many layers to what, at first seemed almost like just another uncomplicated "Feel-Good" read.

Yeah, yeah... in the end there is still a bit of a fairy tale vibe to it where everything seems to go way too well for the protagonists. However, there is this almost sorrowful undertone that creates a bit of a twist to *this* specific fairy tale. As if someone where to do a retelling of Disney's version of The Little Mermaid but added back that part Christian Andersen wrote where the Sea Witch takes a knife and cuts the Mermaid's tongue out as price to make her wish come true. It's still Disney-*ish*. It's still a fairy tale. It still has a happy ending.

But it's just not exactly a clean-cut journey to get to that happy ending. Meaning that, even if all's well that ends well, there is this constant reminder that there was quite a bit of a price to pay and scars to heal before finally getting there.

Anyways, it was an interesting reading. Definitely recommended it.

Agirlcandream says

Nice. A woman living independant of husband or family in the forties was challenging enough. Hammond/Genet adds obstacles to the love Alice finds with Jean thanks to a couple of despicable characters who go out of their way to keep both women from finding their HEA. The whole story has an old fashioned polite feel to it with some unlikely allies and a couple of realistic kids with concerns of their own. A book which kept me turning pages wanting to know what would happen next to stand in the way of these two love birds. A sweet and gentle read.

Dee says

4.5 stars

Let me count the ways I enjoyed this story. In no particular order...

1. - The setting, Mount Egmont, NZ
2. - The era it was set in. While I'm not a fan of historical settings, I'd hardly call 1946 historical. The year made me feel nostalgic, and brought up fond memories of the stories my grandparents regaled me with as a child.
3. - The characters. Good and Bad. Alice and Jean were two wonderfully drawn women. While vastly different in some aspects, those differences complimented each other.
4. - The emotion. Good and Bad. Big Jim needed to be castrated! Alice's mother needed, f*%k knows what she needed. But wow who needs enemies with a mother like that?
5. - The conflict. Thank goodness this story didn't follow the familiar troupes. The characters, although young in years, were mature in their actions and didn't enter into the convoluted miscommunication trap. For a time, I thought they might.
6. - The children, Jack and Tilly, two cuties who saw and knew too much for their tender ages. However, that was fitting of the era.

Rather than go on and on, I'll suffice to say this was a page turner for me which invoked all kinds of thoughts and emotions. Its also extremely well edited which is always a bonus for me, a reader who tends to see every typo.

I'll be sure to check out more by this, no longer new to me, author.

lov2laf says

I really enjoyed this.

"Alice and Jean" is an f/f romance story that takes place in New Zealand in the late 1940s following the Pacific War (WWII).

Jean is the "milkman" who delivers Alice's milk everyday and the two fall in love over a year's time through their daily interactions. The book begins after that year has already taken place so we pick up the story right

before the two acknowledge their attraction and take their relationship further.

I found the story to be character driven and, as the reader, I couldn't help having great affection for both Alice and Jean. They're lovely people and good to each other. All of the side characters were just as developed and I couldn't help fall for the community, as well.

Besides the historical element the story is also unique in a number of ways.

Many of the tired tropes we see in lesfic are not hit upon here. The couple communicates, plot lines aren't around misunderstandings, there are no breakups, there is no hemming and hawing of will she/won't she, there's no insta-love, self-hatred or confusion, and the like. It's a pretty refreshing story, plot wise.

Alice is a twenty-five year old widow and mother of two children. Her situation is presented realistically and the kids are depicted well and actually add to the story. I also got the impression that Alice had some curves on her which was a nice change.

Neither Alice nor Jean are rich, either.

Though the year is in the late 1940s and puts us in a more conservative time period, many of the townspeople are affirming of Alice and Jean's relationship. There's also a lot of support that crosses class boundaries and shows women supporting women in an empowering way. The author counterbalanced this with plenty of realism, though, so it's not all sunshine and roses.

One thing I really liked, too, is that the author presents two villains in the story that are highly accurate in their depictions. It's easy to shy away from those types of characters or push them into caricatures but Hammond did neither, making them very real.

At times, the book has dark or ominous elements that may be triggers to some readers but overall the tone of the read is very sweet.

Also, an interesting item I didn't learn until *after* I read the story is that Lily Hammond is another pen name for Kate Genet.

Recommend. 4.25 stars

Jess says

I received this book free from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Before I even get to the actual *content* of the book, I have to say--the cover drew me right into this story. The colors, the picture--absolutely gorgeous.

This book sent me on a roller coaster of mixed feelings. I started it with a huge smile on my face as Alice Holden, a WWII widow, changes into her prettiest apron before greeting Jean Reardon, the handsome (butch) woman who delivers their morning milk. I knew right away it was going to be a story rich in sweetness and drama alike. Jean eases seamlessly into Holden family, earning the love of both Alice's son Jack and her daughter Tilly, but the eyes of their small New Zealand town are always watching, including

those of Alice's domineering mother.

I think I was a little harsh on this book as a whole, even though there were a lot of things I really enjoyed about it. I liked how the stakes felt appropriate to the time period. Alice really is in a vulnerable position in society--she lives off her widow's pension and the small amount of money her rich mother sends her, making her beholden to both her dead husband and an emotionally abusive parent. She's also keeping the secret that her youngest child, Tilly, (view spoiler).

At the same time, I felt like the tension kept ratcheting up, and then fizzled out before a satisfying climax. I don't want to spoil large parts of the plot, but I'll say that we're on the edge of our seats wondering what the antagonist will do for a few chapters, then it all sort of falls flat.

I also hated that the ending involved (view spoiler). I just wish the ending was a little more comforting.

The romance itself was sweet, but I wish we got to see the earlier days of Alice's growing attraction to Jean and what that means to her as a mother and widow. The book starts out with their mutual attraction already in place with a few awkward "what am I feeling?!" interludes, but I wouldn't liked a little more warm-up. I wanted to get inside the characters' head a little more.

All in all, this was an enjoyable read but not one of my favorite historical romances.

Kent says

I loved this story. I just got it last weekend and I have already read it twice.
