



## The Man Plan

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## **The Man Plan** Elise K. Ackers

Cora is 'over' being alone. She has no family, and all her friends are couples. Fed up with feeling sorry for herself, Cora hatches a plan to find a good, loving man she can call her own. Her deadline is Christmas – she doesn't want to spend another holiday by herself.

Just as she decides her strategy, she meets Matt, her downstairs neighbor. They become unlikely friends, with Matt an amused bystander as Cora tries various methods in search of a man.

Then something strange happens. Matt, who spends his life avoiding commitment, begins to feel jealous of the men Cora is dating and his resolve to never fall in love begins to crumble. Cora finds herself increasingly attracted to Matt. But is he Good Husband material? She thinks not.

A light-hearted, contemporary romance about a young woman who goes looking for love, only to find it right under her nose.

## **The Man Plan Details**

Date : Published December 10th 2012 by Destiny Romance (Penguin Australia)

ISBN :

Author : Elise K. Ackers

Format : ebook 160 pages

Genre : Romance, Contemporary Romance, Contemporary

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## From Reader Review The Man Plan for online ebook

### Lauren K says

The Man Plan is a short, sweet Christmas read by Australian author, Elise K. Ackers. After enjoying Ackers' romantic suspense novel, Small Town Storm which was one of the debut lines with Destiny Romance I immediately snapped up a copy of The Man Plan which falls into the contemporary romance spectrum.

Cora is nearing thirty and following the death of her father is desperate to find a partner and build a family and future. She's put a lot of thought and research into finding 'the one' and comes up with a master strategy, the Man Plan. She throws herself into "creatable situations" like faking a car breakdown or going to the gym to meet prospective men. She doesn't have much luck. What's more, she's set herself the deadline of finding a man by Christmas- only three months away.

When her neighbour, sarcastic and witty Matt Shelley turns up on her doorstep complaining of noise disruption (Cora is playing songs by Adele very loudly!) he's instantly intrigued by her. He makes himself at home in her apartment and she inadvertently tells him about her plan. He, being a guy who has no intention to marry or settle down is quickly crossed off Cora's list of potential men and they fall into a comfortable friendship quickly. They see each other daily; they go to the movies, cook dinner together and basically mirror a couple without any of the physical benefits!

Against his better judgement, Matt finds he really likes spending time with Cora and the interest she sparks in other men actually makes him jealous! Matt has poor role models for a healthy relationship, his parent's have an abusive marriage and he thinks himself unworthy of Cora's love. He fights his feelings for her, pushing her away and making himself more miserable. Cora is confused by his behaviour, but she's even more confused by the strong feelings she is developing for her friend.

What I liked about the internal conflict that Acker's creates for Cora; it isn't the typical I have to find a husband dilemma which I tend to find a little cringe worthy-a man can make a woman whole. Rather, Cora desperately wanted someone to share her life with, someone to put her first and to think about her and build a future with. It wasn't all about finding a husband, but about building a life with someone. Initially I thought Cora a little desperate, but this conflict added another layer which made me empathise with her. Even though it is a shorter novel, Ackers still manages to create believable character conflict for Matt too and so the romance that develops between them is believable and so is its resolution.

I really recommend this contemporary Christmas read by Australian author, Elise K. Ackers. The Man Plan is a pleasant holiday read which will leave you feeling warm and fuzzy by the end.

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### Paula Phillips says

From the author of the wonderful romantic suspense Small-Town Storm comes a new tale this time an adventure of seeking romance and love. Author Elise K. Ackers has written a new tale in the Destiny Romance line , a tale that every women who reads this book will agree with and most will even think - OMG I've done that or at least tried it , some might even say OMG I did that and it worked. Meet Cora, she has a plan - to meet someone and spend Christmas with them and then hopefully they will

discover that its love and get married and have a family. With the deadline being September and Christmas nearing faster than a speeding train , Cora has to get on with her plan and faster. Thus she creates "The Man Plan" a step by step guide into how to find the perfect man for her companionship. In her adventures, she meets her downstairs neighbour Matt who was awoken by her need to play Adele full-blast - for me it would probably be along the lines of Letters to Cleo or Gwen Stefani. We read in The Man Plan , how Cora enlists the help of her friendly neighbour in the search for her perfect man but alas we readers can only imagine what's going to happen between the lines as the more Cora and Matt spend together, the feelings between the pair start to intensify yet none will admit it. Will Cora discover that her perfect man has been in front of her all along or will she have become so caught up in her "Man Plan" that she will miss all the signs that point to her perfect man - Matt ?

In a way "The Man Plan" by Elise. K. Ackers reminded me of the movie starring Anna Faris and Chris Evans - What's Your Number ?

Another great Destiny Romance read and I look forward to seeing what else both Destiny Romance and Elise K. Ackers brings forth in 2013

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### **A. Bookzilla. says**

This is a laugh out loud, heartwarming, sweet story about a heroine desperate for love and a hero that thinks he's incapable of loving someone.

Having read and absolutely loved Unforgettable, I already decided that I will read anything this author writes, but this book just promoted her to one of my favorite authors. The two stories couldn't be more different, while Unforgettable is a bit on the serious side, this one is somewhat lighter but just as good.

Cora is lonely after losing her father, all her friends are paired up and living the couple's life, and she doesn't have anyone to share her life with. So she comes up with this ludicrous plan to speed things up when it comes to her HEA and meet the man of her dreams and fall in love by Christmas. I liked Cora. Yeah, she came off as seriously desperate but being lonely is not fun, so I understood her need to just have *someone*. It wasn't that she needed a man to define her, she just wanted someone to share her life with. She is incredibly sweet, has a great sense of humor, she cares about people, and she has an unbreakable spirit.

Matt couldn't be more different, which is why Cora rules him out as a candidate in their very first scene together. He's jaded, and while I thought he actually did believe in love and happy endings, he just didn't think he's capable of loving someone like that.

The pair of them...amazing chemistry. I loved the way they became so comfortable with each other, they're more alike than they seem at first. They tease each other relentlessly and they're both good sports about it. He's so amused with her plan, he can't help but make it his business, too. The whole lake scene was so beautiful.

Elise K. Ackers has a way with dialogue, it's completely natural and it's witty. The book has some seriously funny moments that make you laugh out loud. There aren't many characters to follow, but I even connected with the brief ones. The ending had me all awww-ing because it was just so in character with Cora. Again, a very clean read! This author does it so well, too.

I really liked this. It made me laugh, I connected with the characters, and it has the perfect pace, I was never bored reading it. It's also fairly short, so it can be read in one sitting.

\*\*Free copy of this book provided by the publisher via NetGalley.

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### **Katie\_la\_geek says**

The Man Plan is just one of those books that seemed to get everything right, I liked everything about it and read it in one sitting. This isn't high end literature, it isn't a book that is going to blow your mind and rip your heart out but if you are looking for a light hearted, fun romance then you could do a lot worse than this.

What the author gets right here, where so many other authors fail is the chemistry between the characters. I felt it, I believed it, and I loved it. Cora and Matt are clearly meant to be together, and reading them get to that point was very enjoyable. Both characters are very likeable and I loved not only the growth of the romance, but the personal growth they both go through.

The Man Plan is charming, sweet and funny and is one of the better com roms I have read in the last few years.

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### **The publisher provided me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review**

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### **mich says**

This book is absolutely adorable.

I love reading about relationships that begin with a solid foundation of friendship, and this book had a fantastic one. The story was very sweet, had minimal angst and misunderstandings, and centered on a pair of characters who were equal parts charming and hilarious.

The story is very cute, but also a bit more serious than I anticipated it to be. The synopsis had me expecting something silly and fun but it actually ended up having some really touching moments and delved into some somber issues as well. And despite all of Cora's crazy plans, I never really thought of her as silly. She was a great main character and I was rooting for her the entire time. I'm not sure I totally bought into the obstacles that the two face later on in the book, but whatever. What really made this book for me was the playful, easy banter between Cora and Matt -- I absolutely loved their chemistry. They teased each other relentlessly and I laughed at so many parts -- so awesome.

The writing is smooth and easy to read. This author does some magic too, because that ending was pretty cheesy and yet, while I was reading it, I could only focus on how incredibly sweet it all was. I really liked this one.

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### **Lindsay says**

This book...had a little bit of everything I was looking for. It was a nice, fluffy, fun romance. No extreme angst, no drama that rips your heart out...just a fun romance.

I loved the relationship between Cora and Matt. And not just the romantic relationship, the friendship too. From their first meeting, I was captivated. I loved the banter and overall interaction between them.

Cora, who was trying to adjust to life after the death of her father, decided that she wanted to find someone special, settle down and have kids. So, she developed a plan... *The Man Plan*. Matt...was not part of the plan. He barged into her apartment and her life after she kept him awake with loud music. Their first interaction left me with "I'm going to love this couple!"

**Looking tired and irritable, he touched his fingers to his eyes and sighed. "I don't know how to tell you this, but here goes: you do not live in the country."**

**Cora arched a brow and considered slamming the door. "Come again?"**

**"You don't live on a farm. You live in an apartment building. So when you play Adele on full volume – for what I'm sure is the tenth time but I've lost count – most of us can hear you. Especially the poor bastard living below you, who is just trying to get some sleep."**

**Her eyes rounded. Cursing, she hurried from the doorway and silenced the offending music.**

**When she returned to the front door she was feeling sheepish and embarrassed. "I'm sorry," she said.**

**"Uh huh. Try to suffer in silence next time."**

**"Suffer?"**

**"You just get your heart broken or something? What are you listening to that crap for over and over again?"**

**"It's not crap. It's empowering."**

**"Well, I just got my heart broken and I say differently. If I hear that album again I'm going to buy a drum kit, understand?"**

**The corner of Cora's mouth curved. "You'd lose more sleep just to teach me a lesson?"**

Matt pulled Cora's plan out of her and his parting shot had me cracking up,

**"I want a husband." She started ticking the list off on her fingers. "I want kids. I want the big family barbeques in the park. The crazy weekends because this kid has sport in one place, and this kid has recital in another. I want to wake up beside someone every day, and pine for them when we've spent too long apart. In short," she shrugged and dropped her hands to her sides, "I want it all."**

**"Just a heads up," he said, "you sound terrifying. When you fall for a guy, don't tell him all of that."**

**She laughed. "I won't. I'll pretend to be really grounded. He'll think I'm living in the now when really I'll be trying out how my name sounds alongside his surname."**

**"Atta girl."**

And with that, their friendship was born. I loved each and every interaction between them. He was able to tease her about her plan and even called her “Crazy” as a nickname. Not many women would be ok with that nickname, and not many guys could get away with it. But it worked between them. And seeing him call her that always made me smile.

Now, this wouldn’t be a friends-to-lovers story if they didn’t start to fall for each other...and fall they did. Neither of them were expecting it, but it happened anyway. I loved all the little scenes where Matt got jealous of the attention Cora paid to other guys, or the dates she went on. And when he finally realized that he was in love with her...my heart seized for him. He was so terrified of it. He was pretty much blindsided by it.

Cora on the other hand...had a more gradual realization that she was in love with Matt. She was so set on finding her “perfect guy” that she didn’t even realize that she was falling for him.

My only complaint about the book was the ending. There was a HEA, and it was a nice ending but it was so sweet that it was a little cheesy. It didn’t fit the rest of the book. The rest of the book was full of snark and spunk but the end was nothing but sweetness. There wasn’t anything really wrong with it but....it didn’t feel like it fit.

*\*\*Free copy of this book provided by the publisher via NetGalley\*\**

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### **Jenny Schwartz says**

The light fun style had me laughing and loving the characters, but there was also an emotional depth that made me care what happened to them. Definitely a story about people on a journey -- from what they thought they wanted to what they truly desire. Love.

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### **Nikki says**

This was a super cute, fun and somewhat emotional read!

We start out with a most awesome meet-cute between Cora, a lonely 29 year old who just recently lost her dad, and Matt, a super sexy, funny but emotionally broken man. They live in the same building and one night Cora is playing her music too loud so Matt, who lives below her, comes banging on her door then barging into her life! They have an instant rapport and become friends.

Cora is on a mission: The Man Plan. She refuses to be lonely anymore and is determined to meet ‘The One’. She’s tired of being the only ‘single’ in her group of ‘coupled’ friends. Lets just say... hilarity ensues! :)

Matt is content in his bachelor ways and finds Cora to be an oddity that he is fast becoming addicted to. This is not good since he feels he’s incapable of love due to his crappy upbringing by his horrible parents! So goes Cora on her mission while becoming closer to Matt. He finds her attempts to be a bit ridiculous and

hilarious all in one. He's determined to keep it platonic as she is forming feelings for him which she believes are not able to be reciprocated.

I really liked this book! I thought the writing was good, even though I had to Google a few Australian terms I wasn't familiar with! ;) The characters had depth and I really felt for the heartache they were each going through. The ending was super sweet and just how I like em! :) I will say it surprised me a little at one point when I concocted a theory and *just knew* the story was gonna head in one direction but then didn't! I guess that's why I'm the reader and not the writer! I would definitely recommend this to my fellow sweet romance lovers!

\*\*Free copy of this book provided by the publisher via NetGalley\*\*

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### **Shelleyræ at Book'd Out says**

The Man Plan is a warm, lighthearted, contemporary romance by Australian author Elise K Ackers. Having spent her birthday alone, grieving the recent death of her father, Cora vows to change her life and meet her soul mate by Christmas. Guided by advice from a library of romance books and chick flicks she tries a ploy involving a flat tire, exchanging phone numbers in moving traffic and internet dating, but what if finding true love was as simple as meeting the downstairs neighbour?

I really enjoyed this delightful romance, with Cora's self imposed Christmas Day deadline The Man Plan is a lovely seasonal read.

While Cora is a sympathetic figure, I love that Ackers has been careful to prevent her character from becoming an object of pity. I had to admire Cora's decision to be proactive in her search for the 'One', and the unique manner in which she went about it. I actually would have liked to see a few more instances of her failures, given her planning and determination. Still, I can easily understand her distraction given Matt's presence in her life.

In his own way Matt is as lonely as Cora, finding it difficult to connect with anyone, scarred by his emotionally abusive upbringing. As such his aversion to commitment is understandable so it's lovely to watch him slowly fall for Cora.

I enjoyed the light hearted humour, especially the witty banter between Cora and Matt. The story flows well and the dialogue rings true.

Of course this is a romance so there is never any doubt there will be a happy ending for Cora and Matt. The Man Plan is a charming, feel good read about finding love where you least expect it.

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## Mirjana \*\*DTR - Down to Read\*\* says

### \*\*\*4.5 Stars\*\*\*

Well, well, well...this little gem was hiding way too long on my kindle and never-ending tbr. Why...seriously, why did it take me so long to read this!?! This was such a fantastically witty, funny and sweet contemporary romance with lots of heart!

Cora is twenty-nine years old and has hit a rough patch in her life with a deafening thud. Having recently lost her father (who was the only remaining family she had), Cora realizes that she really hasn't built much of a life for herself. She enjoyed her job, loved and took care of her dad and let life pass her by. Now she finds herself all alone. A handful of acquaintances, all of which come in a pair, her dog and her career are the only things that keep her from being a complete recluse. She's decided that enough is enough! She will no longer sit back and wait for things to "happen" to her...no longer wait for someone to ring her doorbell and introduce himself as her soulmate.

"She couldn't keep on this way. Every morning wishing that someone would see her. Every night lying in bed, turned from the second pillow because it mocked her...Cora had a life worth sharing, and a full, giving heart that was tired of twiddling its proverbial thumbs."

So it's time to set her life straight. The biggest thing she wants is someone to share her life with. To belong to someone. To be a "we" instead of a "me." She decides she needs to put together a plan to get a man...A Man Plan. She gathers all the romance novels she has, compiles an extensive batch of romantic movies and uses every opportunity to study ways to meet men. During one night of ferocious studying (which includes depressing, yet empowering Adele music), she meets her downstairs neighbor, Matt. Turns out Matt's fed up with a noisy ceiling. He comes to set Cora straight, barges into her apartment and by the end of the night he's barged into her life.

Can I just say that the witty and hilarious banter between these two was FANTASTIC!! I was cracking up from their first meeting.

"I want a husband. I want kids. I want the big family BBQ in the park. The crazy weekends because this kid has sport in one place, and this kid has recital in another. I want to wake up beside someone every day, and pine for them when we've spent too long apart. In short, I want it all."

"Does sex factor into that crazy life plan of yours?"

"Of course! My husband and I are going to have sex every morning."

"Just a heads up, when you fall for a guy, DON'T tell him all that."

“I won’t. I’ll pretend to be really grounded. He’ll think I’m living in the now when really I’ll be trying out how my name sounds alongside his surname.”

“Atta girl...Don’t be desperate. You’re not entirely unfortunate-looking and some people find madness endearing.”

Matt grew up with parents who basically hate each other, but remain married to this day. He doesn’t understand why? They take every opportunity to tell each other, him and anyone who will listen how much they despise each other. Who wants to grow into that? Certainly not Matt. He’ll help Cora with her plan, offer his support, but he wants nothing to do with a long-term relationship and especially not marriage. He spends his time poking fun of her and her wild antics for meeting men...at one point she takes the tire off her car so she can play the “damsel in distress” bit...he even nicely offers to help her write her online dating profile.

“I’m only twenty-nine, but life’s not moving fast enough. Bring your engagement ring because this is going to be a whirlwind courtship. I’ll supply the bassinet. Sanity not included.”

Come on...that’s some great support!! What started as a friendship built on wacky circumstances and a desperate man plan, turns into genuine companionship. Matt and Cora find themselves spending a lot of time together...going out to dinner, drinks, shopping, basketball games, etc...They have the same quirky sense of humor, find it easy to be around each other, the conversation flows effortlessly and they just genuinely like being together. Cora has to keep reminding herself that Matt sets expiration dates on the women in his life, otherwise she’d start to think he was perfect for her.

Things aren’t so easy in Matt’s mind. He’s starting to get confused. He finds himself looking forward to seeing Cora, hearing from her, constantly seeing things that remind him of her or having something happen and thinking that he can’t wait to tell her about it. He doesn’t like where this is going...not one bit!

”...his mind was busier since meeting her; full of memories and wants that felt to his heart like licks of fire. A life of keeping people at arm’s length and Cora had swanned in as if his walls were an unlocked gate. He wasn’t quite sure how she’d done it and he wasn’t quite sure how he could undo it.”

And then Matt’s worst nightmare happens. The inevitable, earth-shattering, soul-crushing, how the fuck did this happen moment where he realizes he’s fallen in love with Cora.

”All in all, she was life-long happiness in one distracting package. All you could ask for in a single person. More than you could imagine in your most far-reaching of dreams.

Christ. He was in love with her."

Well don't we find ourselves in a pickle now? You have one person who has fallen but won't acknowledge it, and one person who has acknowledged it but won't act on it.

"But how did you tell your heart "Thanks, but no thanks" to the smartest decision it had made in its lifetime?"

If real life wasn't kicking my ass, I could have easily read this book in a single sitting. It was engaging, hilarious, witty, relatable and pretty much everything you want in a light-hearted contemporary romance. The book was balanced beautifully. Cora could have come off as desperate and cartoonish, but the author painted such a perfectly touching picture of why Cora had this deep rooted NEED to make her plan work that you couldn't help but root for her and love her. Matt was a fantastically flawed leading man. He had his issues, and after seeing his parents they were even further reinforced, but at the end of the day he perfectly represented the best friend that every girl wants to fall in love with.

So all this gushing and why not 5 stars? Well, it's the one thing that seems to rain on most of my parades...a rushed and abrupt ending. The author zoomed through that finish line at an alarming speed. Everything up to that point was paced nicely and then BAM...perfectly wrapped bow...The End. An epilogue, an additional chapter, a few more pages...hell, even a few more paragraphs could have helped the saccharine ending we are given.

All in all, a wonderfully endearing and funny read from a new to me author that has tons of potential. I have no idea why more people haven't read this book? Maybe they, like me, have it buried somewhere at the bottom of their tbr pile? Well folks, grab your shovels and discover this little gem. It's the perfect treat to give you the warm and fuzzies during the cold winter months!

**p.s.** I will give a small heads up regarding two things...(1) the author is an Aussie, as is the setting and characters. Be prepared to learn new terminology and adjust your vocabulary. It took me approximately 60 seconds to adjust...and (2) there's no steam. I know that may be a deal breaker for some, but please don't let it deter you. As a self-professed smut slut, I didn't even notice it was missing until I finished the book. Now, shhhh don't go repeating that to anyone. I have a reputation to uphold.

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### **Shannon (Giraffe Days) says**

Cora has had enough of being alone. Now that her father is dead, she has no family left, no boyfriend, and no one to spend Christmas with, and she's never felt so lonely. It's September now, and she comes to a decision: she will take matters into her own hands, meet a man, and have someone to spend Christmas with. And, hopefully, the rest of her life, too.

The night she stays up doing "research" - poring over romance books and movies - her loud music brings her downstairs neighbour, Matt, up to complain. They've never met before, but soon Matt is hearing all about

"the man plan" - a safe person to talk to, since Cora quickly learns he doesn't commit and has no interest in finding a woman to love and stay with.

Their friendship takes off from there. Cora finds it easy to talk to Matt and share her ideas for meeting men, and doesn't mind when he laughs at her - like when she pretends she can't change a tyre while wearing skimpy shorts, waiting for a man to offer assistance. And Matt enjoys spending time with Cora, hanging out on the weekends, making her dinner - she's a low maintenance friend, a woman who's not trying to get into his pants. Their feelings for each other creep up unnoticed, and, they each think, unreciprocated. Worse, they both think there's no point. Cora understands that Matt could never offer her what she wants, what she needs. And Matt, an only child, still suffers from the emotional and verbal abuse of his parents, who hate each other and drag their son into their conflicts. With role models like that, he doesn't even think he's capable of having a real relationship.

It will take a leap of faith from both of them to not let this chance go, to take a risk and leap together.

Quite simply, I LOVED this book. It had everything I liked and plenty I didn't even know I liked. Maybe I don't read enough contemporary romance, but it was fresh and, while staying true to the genre, deviated from many typical cliches. Matt was no billionaire, for a start. He's a hard-working middle class man, a project manager for a construction company. His parents are middle class too, though they way they speak to each other, and to him, makes them sound incredibly vulgar and lower class. Cora, likewise, is middle class, working as an editor at a publishing house. This puts them on equal footing from the beginning. Money isn't an obstacle or a sticking point. An abundance of it doesn't give Matt a position of authority over Cora. No, they're just two adults who live in a low-rise apartment building in Port Melbourne, the kind of people that Melbourne is full of (especially in the suburbs around the bay), and this is the fun and lively story of two of them meeting.

One of the things I loved about this book was its tone. Ackers writes with a light, friendly, bantering kind of tone, setting an atmosphere that is so welcoming, warm and, why not: cuddly. The kind of story you can snuggle with, a real comfort read. It connects with your emotions without being at all melodramatic or manipulative, and is realistic and familiar in setting, plot and characters which makes it easy to simply enjoy it for its own sake. It's well grounded in the familiar, with popular culture references and a running Superman joke. There's also humour here, with light banter between Matt and Cora, and some of the characters are funny in the way they're described. Matt continuously makes fun of Cora, calling her crazy because of her man plan, and in true Aussie style, she goes along with it, giving as good as she gets.

She watched him, too surprised to comment. He dumped the pan int he sink, ran the water for a moment then helped himself to the cutlery drawer. Seconds later, he was pressing the bowl into her hands, a fork poking out of the top. She gazed down at the spaghetti bolognese.

"Are we sharing?"

He laughed. "No. That's just for you."

"Where's yours?"

"Are you kidding? I don't want to have dinner with you. You're as nuts as they come; you'd probably think it meant something and then go ahead and fall in love with me."

"You're safe there," she muttered, stung yet amused. "I'd never fall in love with someone like you."

"Someone like me?"

"A hopeless case. What's the point of falling in love on your own?"

"I couldn't agree more. And on that note, I'm out of here."

It was so much fun, watching their friendship grow, seeing Matt become increasingly jealous of the men Cora does meet, yet in such good-natured denial about his own feelings. He doesn't agonise over it, his turmoil isn't belaboured, there's just enough self-reflection to flesh him out and get the reader on the same page, without boring you. Certainly there are men out there who are like Matt without having any kind of reason for it, it's just their lifestyle of choice and I don't know, maybe they're just inherently selfish. While there are other romance books where the male lead is reluctant to commit because of his parents' example (like Jennifer Probst's *The Marriage Bargain*, as a recent example), but the fact that Matt's parents are just so ordinary in every other way, and whose horribleness is so believable without the artificial gloss of wealth - everyday people are much more relatable, rather than alienating, and this was, overall, one of the things I loved the most about this book.

It didn't hurt that I loved Cora and Matt. Cora is grieving over the loss of her father, but turns her loneliness into a positive plan for action, rather than wallowing. She's frank and open about it, and her motivations are believable, understandable, and make her very human.

"... I want someone for me. Just for me. Who gives a damn if they don't hear from me during the day, who calls *me* with their news. I want to be someone's top priority." She pressed her thumb and forefinger to her closed eyes and sighed. "I know it sounds like a lot to ask, but it's really not. I just want to be the one for someone. I want to be a part of something bigger than me."

He was quiet for so long that she lifted her head and opened her eyes.

"This Man Plan..." he said, trailing off.

"Feminists might hate me for saying it, but I need a man. If a man loves me, he might marry me. If he marries me, we might have kids."

"You want to build a family for yourself."

She nodded. "Exactly. My parents met when they were toddlers. My mother once pushed mud into my dad's mouth. They went through school together and became a couple at my mum's fourteenth birthday party. They completed each other, you know? They were all either of them ever needed and they took on the world together. I want that. Even to be a fraction as happy as they were would be a dream come true."

And that is, of course, the point of romance fiction, why it's the biggest selling genre of all genres: the fantasy - if it even is a fantasy - lives strongly within us. Because very few people actually like being alone. Matt thinks he does, he likes his life, but after spending so much time with Cora - on outings and hanging out that, to anyone but those two, looks clearly like they're a couple - his life starts to feel increasingly empty without her. There was good solid chemistry between them, a slow-burning sexual tension, one that isn't satisfied until the very end - and no graphic content (if you like romance but don't like the sex scenes, you might be interested to hear that).

And finally, I loved the conversation between Will and Cora at the end, that made her take that risk, to take a chance on Matt.

"Tell me this: do you think he is *incapable* of love?"

"No."

"Then do you believe that when - yes, when he falls in love with you - that he'll do it to whatever capacity he can?"

Something light and ticklish fluttered in her stomach. She pressed a hand there to stop it. "Yes." He nodded. "Isn't that enough? Isn't that all we can ask of anyone - to love us with all that they are?"

Her hand found her mouth. "I'm being an idiot, aren't I?"

"No, Cora. You're just taking a breath before you take the biggest chance of your life. [...] Don't do this if you're hoping to change him."

She blinked up at her old friend, aghast. But then she considered this more deeply. Will waited in silence, understanding the gravity of the moment, then he smiled when he saw something new in her eyes.

"He's perfect as he is."

"Right answer."

Yep. I completely adored this book.

*My thanks to the publisher for a copy of this book via Netgalley.*

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## **Nakeesha says**

### Well-Planned Love Arc

There are four elements to every love story that make up the love arc. First, we must start out with a man and woman (or any variation or number thereof in 21st century Earth) who have internal and/or external needs. Second, a problem arises that creates conflict between the two. Then as our hero and heroine try to solve this conflict their internal and external baggage gets in the way, creating wonderful tension down the path towards love. And finally, as they realize their love is once in a lifetime stuff, they find a way to claim their baggage and start their journey towards happily-ever-after together.

That's every romance novel in a nutshell.

The Man Plan followed this arc perfectly with a simple, yet quirky, plot; likeable, well-thought out characters; and well-written prose. Cora, our heroine, has recently lost her father and she's having trouble dealing with that loss (her internal baggage). She meets Matt, our hero, who has commitment issues because his family is seriously dysfunctional (his internal baggage). Christmas is fast approaching and Cora is determined to be in a pair-bond by that family-themed Holiday. So, she devises a Man Plan to achieve this goal.

Her Man Plan is truly inspired and all single gals should take note. From the flat tire in Daisy Dukes to her attempts at giving out her number at red lights using hand signals, Cora is on a mission to eradicate her single status. Matt, who's at first amused, comes to detest the plan (conflict), but his banged up, grinchy heart keeps his mouth shut and his hands to himself. Matt begins to monopolize all of Cora's time and throw wrenches into her Man Plan. But still, he can't man up even though he's coming to realize what he's feeling is indeed love. And for her part, Cora is terrified to trust Matt with her heart when she knows he has no clue what to do with it.

Ackers takes this simple, predictable plot and tells a sweet story. Cora and Matt's chemistry is a slow burn.

There's no heavy loaded exposition where we learn each characters' entire life story in chapter one before the word "go." All backstory is woven in and appears when appropriate to the storyline -thank you Ms Ackers! Other than an intense, uncomfortable emotional in-burst at the top of the story; and an intense, uncomfortable emotional out-burst at the tail of the story, I thought this was a perfectly paced romance. But I have to say that I was quite taken aback at the Breakfast at Tiffany's style love scene. You know the scene: Holly Golightly and Paul hang up their masks and start kissing. Then fade to black and its the next morning. I think that must be Destiny Romance's style. I wanted something with a few more jalapenos!

ARC courtesy of Net Galley and Penguin Books Australia/Destiny Romance.

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### **Assenette says**

What a sweet story. I wish we could have been given an epilogue, but I still felt butterflies as they were realizing they loved each other but we're too afraid to voice their feelings. I even got misty-eyed when she pour her little heart out to him. Thank you Mirjana for the recommendation !!!

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### **Heather Book Savvy Babe says**

I received this book for review at Book Savvy Babe Blog\*

The Man Plan is a sweet romance story, with a touch of Holiday Spirit. This is a book about finding love in unexpected places, and I enjoyed the story.

Cora is a woman alone. Her father recently passed away, her friends had coupled off, and she determines to find her own happy ending. She embarks on a mission to find her mate, and her antics are entertaining and inventive. Matt is Cora's neighbor, who befriends Cora as she begins her mission. The pair fall into an easy friendship, but soon, that friendship starts to blossom into something more. The problem is that Matt doesn't want a happy ending, the full commitment.

The Man Plan really is a light-hearted story, but there are plenty of emotions to sympathize with. Cora struggles with feeling alone and she is still grieving her father. Matt's parents are horribly cruel to each other and affect his view on relationships. I really like that Matt and Cora develop a strong friendship, they don't just fall in love. Their relationship is based on their true natures, making the romance more believable.

There is a touch of Holiday Spirit in this book. Cora's plan is to be in a relationship by Christmas, so the resolution of the story centers around the Holidays. With the holiday element, I found The Man Plan to be a wonderful book for this time of year.

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### **Lisa says**

A charming and funny heroine, a hero who oozes masculinity and self-confidence, and witty dialogue. These elements make Elise K. Ackers's The Man Plan a delight to read. It's also a moving love story with a surprising amount of depth. I almost cheered when the two main characters got together!

The story involves Cora, a pretty, blonde girl who is heart-broken when her beloved father dies. She decides to refuse to be alone for another Christmas, so she develops a 'man plan'. She then finds that true love is close at hand.

I did wonder why the hero of this book was so incredibly tall! That's the only thing that annoyed me about it, although I was pretty jealous of Cora's youth and blonde curls.

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