



Alien Taste

Wen Spencer

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Living with wolves as a child gave tracker Ukiah Oregon a heightened sense of smell and taste. Or so he thought-until he crossed paths with a criminal gang known as the Pack. Now, Ukiah is about to discover just how much he has in common with the Pack: a bond of blood, brotherhood...and destiny.

Alien Taste Details

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Chris says

This is a hard book to categorize. It would be urban fantasy, except it's actually urban sci-fi, which isn't a category I've actually heard of. (Not to say there aren't others, just not that I've encountered.) But it's also a murder mystery. Let's just go with: it's complicated.

It's also a hard book to review. I liked the main characters, and it's got an interesting 5 minutes into the future setting. But the story ran just a little grim for my tastes, even though it did manage a happy ending, and, for the most part things worked out well for the good guys. And, unusual for things that run to the grim, the main characters were caring and sometimes succeeded *because* they cared about other people. So, I guess it's more that some grim things happened than that the story was grim. If that makes any sense.

MLE says

The premise behind this story is interesting, and the main character is well developed, and his back story, and powers are different, and well thought out. It read almost like an urban fantasy where the fantasy aspect had been replaced by science fiction. I enjoyed the strong relationships Ukiah had with his family, and with his partner. It's nice to have a main character with such a strong support system, and loving family. It was also nice to see a same sex family treated with the dignity, and respect it deserved.

I enjoyed the secondary characters, and the stand out for me was having so many truly strong female characters. Too often "strong" female characters are just plain bitchy, but these were intelligent women able to make difficult choices while still being capable of maintaining close, loving relationships. It's not to say that they weren't each flawed to some degree, but they were able to stand on their own.

A fun read, and I plan on reading the rest of the series.

Olga Godim says

In this book, #1 in Wen Spencer's first series, the author introduces a unique world so like our own, and a fascinating protagonist, Ukiah Oregon. The genre of this book (and the entire series) would be urban sci-fi, something I haven't encountered often in modern speculative fiction.

Centuries ago, alien invaders landed on Earth, but one of them was a rebel, set on preventing their murderous plans. The war between the two fractions still continues, while ignorant humans go about their lives unaware. The hero of this book, twenty-one-year-old Ukiah, is a private investigator caught in the war. He didn't know about it. He didn't know that he himself is an alien (yes, he really didn't). But he would do anything to protect those he loves: his family, his partner Max, his lover, and any innocents swept by the waves of the struggle.

Ukiah is not your average man. He was raised by wolves until the age of thirteen, and many of our social rules still baffle him. He is honest, kind and, naive, with a body of a stud muffin – an irresistible combination for any female reader. Add to that his willingness to sacrifice himself to save others, and you have a

marvelous modern Mowgli. Yummy!

The plot is fast and engaging, the dialog life-like, and the writing professional, spiced by a pinch of humor. I enjoyed this book tremendously. It was a re-read, but I read this book a long time ago. I liked it then, and the re-read just confirmed my opinion. Wen Spencer is a wonderful writer. I'm going to re-read the entire series. And then there is mice. I won't say more about them to avoid spoiling your reading, but if you ever decide to pick up this series, watch for the mice.

Text Addict says

Alas, the covers for this series are uniformly bad - starting with the fact that the artist(s) didn't have the faintest idea of what a Native American man looks like. No doubt it didn't help that it's "secret" SF - very, very, very few people know that modern North America is infested with two types of aliens who are at war with each other.

It's a pretty good premise, and as the details of how this all started are slowly revealed through the series, I won't spoil it by saying more than that about it.

In this first volume, Ukiah Oregon (named for the town he was found near) learns of the war - and his unique place in it. Why didn't he know about it before? He was found running wild, having been raised, as far as he recalls, by wolves. Then he was raised near Pittsburgh by the lesbian couple that found him. Lately he's been working with a private investigator, using his extraordinary tracking skills to find missing people.

Missing persons cases, dangerous apparent-biker-gangs, dangerous aliens, and a vivid cast of characters (slightly-obsessive PI, lovely FBI special agent, badass Civil War veteran, and a little sister, among others) make for a worthwhile story.

Margaret Fisk says

I loved this series. Read it too long ago to have specific comments, but remember it fondly.

Joy says

An interesting combination of the werewolf/shape shifter genre and syfy alien invades (i.e. The Thing.) The young man is a hybrid of human and the aliens that are hive minded cells, working their way across the galaxy taking over planets. The alien rebel who has compassion for the earth originally infected a wolf which pulls the whole Pack concept into the plot and produces two camps of aliens. The ones who only want to own the earth and those who still cling to their human origins.

So far the FBI agent who is also his lover, who knows he is an alien, hasn't rounded him up for experiments unlike The Man Who Fell to Earth but then there are several books of the series to go. More relationship oriented; a Super with powers doing good for humanity with hardly any geeky syfy dialogue. Its a decently written adventure.

Janice (Janicu) says

I started reading all of Wen Spencer's books after reading "Tinker" and I think I like this series even better than the Tinker series. Spencer's plots always seem very well thought out and I usually feel satisfied by the time I get to the end of the book. Her characters are very compelling as well - she always has an intriguing backstory, and this is no exception. Ukiah Oregon is a tracker who works with a private investigator, and he is an unusual young man in that he was found in the middle of the forest eating a rabbit - he was raised by wolves (!!) and has uncanny abilities at tracking and a photographic memory. He has a young innocence which contrasts with his superior abilities. This story starts out with Ukiah tracking a possible kidnap victim but soon Ukiah gets tangled up in something much bigger which also involves his past and where he came from. I want to go on about Spencer's original ideas but I think its more fun to read the book and find out for yourself. I really enjoyed this one.

Kati says

You must know one thing: Ukiah Oregon rules! Ask me about Ukiah Oregon and I can rant about him for hours on end. At first, I ordered just the first book in the series. I wasn't even half-way through and I was already ordering the rest.

This book has everything that I love. Great friendship between Ukiah and Max, an amazing female character by the name Indigo Zheng who kicks butt and doesn't whine about how unappreciated she is, a lesbian couple who brought Ukiah up...

But I would be hard pressed to point out one thing that I loved about this book. It just gave me this really fuzzy and content feeling in my belly and that's exactly what I'm looking for in books.

Shannon says

Wow. This book was exactly what I needed. Everything is just about perfect, from the very well-drawn characters to the setting (which I don't normally pay attention to but which I was impressed with) and the themes explored.

First the characters. I loved Ukiah Oregon. In fact, he may have to supplant Miles Vorkosigan as the fictional character I would run off to live in sin with if he were real. He's a sweet, noble guy who loves deeply and purely and with all that he is. And you know that being raised by a lesbian couple has made him into the kind of man any woman would want to be with.

The secondary characters are also very well drawn. I was especially intrigued by Max Bennet, Ukiah's mentor and partner. I loved watching them interact. Max has also had a ton of crap heaped on him, but thanks to Ukiah, he is slowly beginning to heal. And we know this because we are shown, not told, which is one of the book's other strengths.

I mentioned the setting was well-done. The book is set in Pittsburgh, and it's very clear that Spencer knows

about Pittsburgh. In fact, it's sort of amusing that the setting stuck out to me at all, because I kept being reminded of a Mage: the Ascension game I used to play in, which was run by a native of Pittsburgh who mentioned several of the same settings Spencer used in the book, which was cool and added more pleasant associations to my reading.

As for the plot, you'll notice the question mark under the book's genre. I really don't know how to classify this book. It's got a very definite urban fantasy feel for about the first two-thirds, reminding me of a somewhat grittier Charles de Lint (which is, natch, a good thing), but then it takes a left hand turn and goes wandering off into science fiction land.

The sci-fi elements of the plot were definitely not my favorites. They seemed straight out of a cheap B movie, and even though they made sense for the story, some of them seemed beyond preposterous and I had to roll my eyes.

I'm also not sure how well the romance worked for me. I can't decide if I thought it was rushed or if it made sense that Ukiah would fall for the person he falls for so quickly because he just seems to love people so intensely anyway. I think I'm leaning toward the latter, because it is one of the sweetest romances I've read in a while, but I'm not normally a fan of the characters meeting and professing their love mere days later.

Overall, despite its flaws, this was a great book which I highly recommend. I definitely intend to read the sequel as soon as possible.

Emily G says

I decided it was high time I reread the Ukiah Oregon series because I enjoyed them so much this first time, after KatiKat's recommendation.

Ukiah Oregon is a boy brought up by wolves before being taken in by a married lesbian couple, mom Jo and mom Lara. With his photographic memory and heightened senses, he is an amazing tracker and is taken on as a PI by Max. However, one job that Max and Ukiah are taken on to consult on leads Ukiah to find out that, if he thought he lead an unusual life up till now, he was very much mistaken!

I love these books, they are easy reading and you get drawn into the characters and you find yourself rooting for them, wanting them to win against the bad guys, hoping they will prevail. The only thing I find a bit hard to swallow is Ukiah and Indigo's relationship, it happens too fast and she is too accepting of everything, but hey, stranger things have happened and I love a good romance with a happy ending ;-)!

Drew Doll says

[Indigo especially I felt was under-developed. Not just the insta-love, but the insta-love and acceptance of having non-human babies. The automatic "sure, lets have lots of alien babies" was a little unbelievable.

Julie says

Would not have thought this book something I'd like if I'd read a description of it. Detective with a strange past. Amnesia - raised by wolves - special powers - yadda yadda. But surprisingly, I did like it pretty well. The character reminds me in some ways of the man character in A Brother's Price. Not a hard-boiled detective by any means. A sweet guy, pretty young, who could use a cuddle. And wouldn't mind one at all.

After the wolf-raising, he is raised by two moms. So there's a bonus there.

Some aspects show it to be a book written early in her career. There were a couple things I had to read two or three times to figure out what it meant. Just a matter of phrasing and clarity. And some relationships seem to change and grow rather more quickly than I quite found realistic.

Other than that, pretty good. And part of a series, so I will probably get around to the others eventually, if not immediately.

Anna Marie Wright says

Fairly well-written with some interesting plot developments along with a few wonderful quirks (the main character has two moms!) made for this a mostly fun read. The pages go by quickly and the first half of the book was set at a wonderful pace with the sort of thorough detail that involves you in the story.

The thing that irks me about this book is that it seems to be edited by two entirely different people. The second half of the book seems rushed with several WTF moments and a few simply unbelievable reactions by various characters that left me a bit annoyed and a bit disappointed.

Two motorcycling gaffs also glare if you're a biker.

It's not a book I would have ever picked up to read on my own (thank you, my darling husband) but I am glad that I read it and would like to give Ms. Spencer's other titles a read. (And, I also had to be told that Wen is a she.)

The title, while not actually misleading, is not as relevant to the story as one might think since the main character's primary physical sense of the world comes through touch, not taste. Minor stuff, but it left me wondering.

Janet says

I am not going to try to describe the plot of this book. It sounds stupid when you describe it, although it works very well. It works because the characters and their relationships are great and the writing is very good. My son, who does NOT like science fiction, like these books when I forced him to read them.

The main character is name Ukiah Oregon. He was named this because he was found running with wolves in the forest outside of Ukiah, Oregon (a town close to my town).

There are four books in this series. I don't really understand the status of the books. Books 1 and 4 are in print and easy to buy new. Book 2 is out of print, but there are still a lot of them around so you can get a new one pretty easily. Book 3 is out of print and very difficult to find. I recently bought this set for my grandson and I think I got the last reasonably priced copy available.

Chris says

2.5 stars for the awkward writing, but this tale of a private investigator who was raised by wolves did finally pull me in.
