



King of the Screwups

K.L. Going

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Liam Geller is Mr. Popularity. Everybody loves him. He excels at sports; he knows exactly what clothes to wear; he always ends up with the most beautiful girls in school. But he's got an uncanny ability to screw up in the very ways that tick off his father the most.

When Liam finally kicked out of the house, his father's brother takes him in. What could a teenage chick magnet possibly have in common with his gay, glam rocker, DJ uncle who lives in a trailer in upstate New York? A lot more than you'd think. And when Liam attempts to make himself over as a nerd in a desperate attempt to impress his father, it's his "aunt" Pete and the guys in his band who convince Liam there's much more to him than his father will ever see.

King of the Screwups Details

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From Reader Review King of the Screwups for online ebook

Pam says

This book is a great read for a reluctant high-school reader. Here is a kid who has it all -- money (dad is a CEO), looks (he looks just like his mother a famous runway model), popularity (the girls always love him) and he is a great athlete. However he constantly screws up, especially where his father is concerned. After being caught in flagrante delicto by his father, he is thrown out of his house just as senior year is starting. Sent to live with his gay, glam rocker of an uncle in a small town in upstate NY where home is a double wide in a trailer park, Liam starts discovering who he is and what he wants from life.

The book read easily which isn't surprising since Going is a Printz Honor winner. The confrontation between Liam and his dad wasn't as good as the rest of the book which made the ending peter out a bit. What hooked me was the flashback on page five when nine-year-old Liam tells a interviewer on national TV that he wants to be just like his dad, because "even though I don't look like him and I'm no smart like him, he's still my dad.....I know because they got the paternity test and everything. I heard Mom say it to my nana. She said if we hadn't got the paternity test, she never would have believed it."

Charles Lai says

The book I read was King of the Screwups by K.L. Going. The novel is about a teenage boy named Liam who always screwed up and tries to make his father proud of him. He gets into some trouble, so he heads to his "Aunt" Pete's trailer to live in and go to school in the city. He make a few new friends, but that's not what he truly want, he want's a proud father. This wasn't the best book I've read, but it's a lot better than most. The beginning is kind of boring, but once you get more into it, I believe it'll hook you to read more. I don't really know what genre this novel belongs with, but there's still a really good story filled with odd characters.

Kim says

"Everything popular is wrong" so writes Oscar Wilde, and why wouldn't he? The snarky bastard. He was in a mood, of course. He wanted to be adored, right? Who doesn't really? Isn't that the angst of it all? Who hates me? Will I be the freak du jour today? Oh shit, the head cheerleader is talking to me, what the hell?

High school was not the best time for me... believe it or not. I was shy and therefore considered a bitch because I stared at the ground, hiding behind my 7 inch bangs and never making eye contact. I wore black, spoke softly and read a lot of books. I had a group of friends and we were the outcasts, listening to Joy Division and Minor Threat and The Smiths and The Dead Kennedys...our view was skewed, yes.. but after getting spit on at pep rallies or tripped in hallways we needed to be skewed... whatever.. it's high school.. get over it. (I can say this 25 odd years later but now I have two kids in middle school and my stomach turns every day at the thought of what they have to endure... kids are fucking *mean*).

This book is no different than other coming of age stories. There is a protagonist who has to find out who he truly wants to be. There are peer pressure issues; there are judgments and misconstrued intentions. Except in this story it's not Cinderella getting her slipper on, it's Charming wanting to be Quasimodo.

Liam is the son of Cindy Crawford and Bill Gates... or the fictionalized versions of them. He lives in Westchester... he looks like his mom... he grew up on Paris runways and New York Fashion weeks... We should hate him, right? He's beautiful, he's rich, he's... beautiful and rich. Um... and popular. Yes, he is popular. But, remember...this book is called King of the Screwups... there's some meat in here.

Liam considers himself the ultimate fuck up. He can't say the right thing, he barely squeaks by in his classes, he is constantly finding himself in exactly the wrong spot (like lying on your father's desk with the president of the national honor society half naked on top of you and being so drunk that you hurl all over his office). Yes, Liam is to blame.. he doesn't get off that easy... he made these choices... he accepts that he's a screw up and therefore he feels worthless.

I think that this is where we can all relate. Who doesn't ever feel worthless? I mean how many of us are THAT well adjusted to say that they have never had that feeling? If you've listened to The Smiths, that automatically disqualifies you... put your hand down now.

Liam gets shipped off to live with his cross dressing Auncle Pete in a trailer park in buttfuck county. He feels lucky to be here, this or with his militant grandparents, well.. take the plastic flamingos any day, right? Here he decides that he will not screw up... He will be UNpopular. Yeah, that's an insult to all us freaks, right? C'mon... like we haven't already judged this hot, well coiffed rich boy..and now he wants to be LIKE U S? Riiiiight... keep walkin' boy...

I would have thought that, except this kid is so damn SINCERE. I mean... there are times I just want to slap his perfectly sculpted cheekbones and un-tousle his bronze copper colored hair (yeah, that's a 50 shades reference right there).

Liam tries so hard to be uncool... he wants to be considered studious and most of all he wants to impress his dad.. which is what the whole gist of this story is... the nature vs nurture argument... Liam is a product of his mother... he gets fashion, he gets how to get your point across by just looking a certain way. His dad thinks he is useless and doesn't mince words telling him so. As we get to know Liam, we see that everything that drives this poor kid is only to please his bastard of a father.

Been there, tried that. Except, my dad was nowhere near anything that should be impressible. I was a fool and Liam is too. He is scarred by this overwhelming need to be something he's not. Man, that sucks. I feel for the kid.

"You can't create love, you just have to take it where you can find it."

Don't be a fool, Liam

Sarah says

From my YA Book blog:

What makes this book so wonderful is Liam, the main character, and his Aunt Pete, a Glam rocker who dresses in ladies clothes and plays '70s music. He is about as outcast from his family as it is possible for a relative to be and when Liam is sentenced to live with him after his father kicked him out, well, it's a match

of Mr. Popularity versus Mr. Outcast.

Liam is just a heartwrenching character. He just wants to do things right but he has such a skewed vision of what is right and good because of his father, that the things he truly excels at, well, he thinks those things are not important. Unfortunately, I see this as the plight of a lot of teenagers who are not valued for what they excel at. Liam's father is an ass, there is no doubt about it. I don't think he loved Liam at all. It was refreshing to see Liam bonding with Pete, even when he did not want to.

Aunt Pete has no idea what to do with a teenage boy but he wants to try and he wants to do it right. The spirit of this novel is fun and also realistic and sad. You can't help feeling bad for Liam, though at times I also wanted to give him a swift kick in the butt so he could see that there are people out there who do care for him, he just isn't see them because he does not know how to understand true and genuine emotion.

I think the "lesson" of this book, though I hate labeling it with such an after school special term, is what Liam's neighbor and part nemesis tells him: "You can't create love, Liam. You just have to take it wherever you find it. And while it took quite awhile for Liam to see the importance in that statement, he finally came to value something he should have been valuing all along: himself.

But I may be making this book out to be too sappy. It has a lot of funny moments in it, great humor, high school hijinks, and plenty of anger. It was a really good book and I'm going to have to read more of K.L. Going's stories. This was my first experience with this author, but it was a good one.

Daline Sousa says

This book is very funny. It did have some sad moments, but the author overshadows it with some light to make it more upbeat. This book has many different topics that it speaks about, but it overall connects to make a greater message. The message behind the book is what makes me like it so much. I can relate to it and understand it. The story itself wasn't really relatable only because it was so unique and creative.

The story is basically about this boy, named Liam, always messing up. It transitions between his past self to his present self and how he keeps on repeating the same mistakes without intending to. Liam tries to outgrow his mistakes and learn from them, but he just seems to be unlucky. Not only that but Liam is also a senior in high school which is confused on what he wants to do after he graduates. I feel that instead of doing what he wants to do he tries to impress his role models by following their footsteps instead of figuring out what is right for him. Liam knows deep down what he wants to do and what he loves but he doesn't believe it's the right decision.

Michael says

Liam Gellar's father is a successful business man and his mother a world-renowned model. Given that combination of genes, Liam should have the world at his feet. And in some areas, he does. When it comes to being popular and well-liked by his peers, he excels. When it comes to his classes, his grades and pleasing his father, well, let's just say he's coming up a bit short. Liam is hard on himself, constantly seeking his father's approval and never quite succeeded. This leads to Liam thinking of himself as a screw-up. It also leads to Liam driving his father crazy and getting kicked out of the house.

Instead of going to live with his strict grandparents, Liam opts to move in with his Uncle Pete, a local DJ with his own glam rock band who is estranged from his father. The estrangement comes from Uncle Pete's lifestyle and an incident years before when Pete embarrassed Liam's father at an important social event.

Liam moves in with Pete, determined to start over and prove himself to be the son his father wants him to be. However, things don't go exactly as planned.

"King of the Screwups" is the story of Liam and his struggle to find out who he is. It's also the story about Liam accepting who he is and realizing that he may never be able to fully please his father--and that's OK. Told in the first-person perspective, K.L. Boing gives us the unique insight into Liam's current situation and offers flashbacks of some of Liam's more memorable incidents growing up. All of this helps make Liam a rich, fascinating character and the world he inhabits is filled with others, including his Uncle Pete and his friends.

Where the novel struggles is in the relationship between Liam and his next door neighbor. Liam struggles to win the approval of the girl next door, who is exactly the kind of kid his father would want. The story has Liam desperately seeking her attention and approval, but it doesn't really examine the relationship much deeper than that and, in the end, it rings a bit hollow. The ending of the story seems a bit forced as well, with several threads coming to a head in a manner that doesn't feel as natural. It almost feels as if they decided it was time to wrap things up in the story instead of allowing the story to continue to unfold at its own natural pace.

In some ways, it opens up things for a potential sequel. I wouldn't mind spending some time with Liam and the rest of the characters from this story.

Will White says

4 stars in the young adult genre. Fun and fast read that deal with several of today's teenage issues, but they did seem too exaggerated sometimes.

Miriam says

This book had potential to interest - the narrator is a beautiful 17-year-old, aspiring model who, after being kicked out by his disapproving, successful businessman father, ends up living in a trailer in upstate NY with his middle-aged gay, glam-rock uncle. Sounds interesting right? But it isn't. The characters are poorly developed and every situation - the kid's relationship with his father, the parents' relationship, and the tension between the father and uncle - felt clichéd. Worst though is the narrator, Liam. Most of his dialogue sounds like Going lifted it right off the cover of fashion magazines; as if she realized she hadn't a clue what this kid would say and then aha! that blurb about highlighting cheekbones or cardiovascular exercise on the cover of Elle - perfect! Plus Going often describes each component of Liam's outfits, both the cool ones and the dweeby ones he spends hours assembling in order to be taken seriously - and she drops brands like Tommy Hilfiger and Hugo Boss like crazy, but then there are just choice pieces from "this hot new Italian designer" which made me suspect that, like me, but, importantly, unlike her narrator, she hasn't a clue about any hot new Italian designers herself. He's just not an interesting or credible character - would any kid dedicate serious time to making himself look like a dork honestly expecting this to be the way to his father's heart?!

Mama says

Liam Geller is the hilarious hero of this story. He starts out the book as a popular kid who has labled himself a screwup, and he thinks he can't do anything right. He get's kicked out of his house to live with his witty gay uncle. While living with his "aunt" Pete he tries to be everything he's not, and comically screws up at being a geek, a problem that, unfortunately, no teen actually have.

This was a bubbly and a genuinely funny book that had me cackling with joy all through it. Although I found the main character hard to connect to, but the other eccentric characters lit up the story so I wasn't too fed up with the poor hero.

I give this 5 stars because it was the first book to make me outright laugh through whole chapters. This was truly a witty story of love and family and learning who you are, and it had wonderful character development. It was truly a good book.

Sara says

This is a unique story, and because of that, Going may have written herself out of an audience. The protagonist, Liam, is a supermodel in the making. He's drop-dead gorgeous, has inimitable fashion taste, and has a real taste for all things fashionisto. On the other hand, his father is a world-class controlling jerk who sends Liam to live in a trailer park.

The most interesting and well-balanced character in the story is Aunt Pete, a gay, cross-dressing radio DJ who takes Liam in when he's homeless. The least interesting, one-dimensional characters are Liam's parents, who are less characters than walking sketches. Liam and his father pursue their disagreements energetically, but I want the dad to either pull himself together or get a good slap upside the head, and Liam (the one who should provide that slap) doesn't effectively remove himself from the situation. At the end of the story, the family is still in turmoil and Liam's only support system are people he's only known a couple of months. Those people - Aunt Pete's glam-rock band - are the true high point of the story. Not all of them are gay, not all of them are transvestites, and none of them are ridiculous. They are honest and funny and supportive of both each other and Liam. The time they get in the story is relatively small, but I found myself wondering why Going spent real effort on them, but let Liam's parents drift away.

The issue with audience is this: average boys won't read this because of the number of gay characters and average girls won't read it because they don't identify with the shouting matches the dad provides. There's undoubtedly a group of kids who are interested in seeing gay characters treated as real human beings, but there aren't a lot of those kids around...

Andrew Hicks says

This book's got pedigree. A starred review from Publishers Weekly promises comedy and a protagonist you'll feel for. A starred review from School Library Journal praises K.L. Going for "defying stereotypes" and creating "memorable characters."

(Bonus points to each critic for not calling protagonist Liam Gellar "Holden Caulfield if he'd been written by

a woman as a straight guy obsessed with fashion.”)

Four more quoted reviews on the inside cover make this book out to be fresh and innovative, but I felt it primarily tepid, inconsequential and not wholly believable. *King of the Screwups* has its moments, but it made me wish I’d chosen *Fat Kid Rules the World* as my first K.L. Going book.

Liam is a cool enough kid, yeah, but the comic hook of this book (which should have been played more as exaggeration and less matter-of-factly) is that Liam is irresistible, gorgeous and hyper-popular. His looks and likability are the only skills he has, aside from screwing up - and, again, Liam’s screwups are fairly commonplace stuff, not done on a grand comic scale.

That’s kind of the point, though - Liam thinks he sucks so bad because his dad thinks he sucks so bad, and treats him like shit, and Liam buys into it. Crappy Dad is the clear-cut bad guy in the book, with zero redeeming features, and Passive Mom is right there in his shadow.

Passive Mom, incidentally, used to be a runway supermodel, which got Liam started with his intense heterosexual love of fashion, but Crappy Dad made her quit. Because he was jealous of her success. Because he’s crappy.

So anyway, Crappy Dad happens upon a drunk Liam messing around with a girl on his (i.e. Crappy Dad’s) office desk, and he declares Liam will be booted from the house. Shipped off to live with his grandparents. Passive Mom secretly has a better idea, though - Liam can go live with Crappy Dad’s brother (disowned by C.D. like a dozen years ago), “Aunt Pete.”

Aunt Pete is gay, lives in a trailer park, is in a glam-rock cover band, deejays overnights at a classic rock station, and is occasionally bold enough to wear a nice dress. Aunt Pete otherwise has zero fashion sense and is a total slob, because K.L. Going likes to defy stereotypes. Because she’s fresh and innovative.

Aunt Pete has a posse that’s calculated to be rag-tag and underdoggy, and their occupations all serve a purpose in the story, like they’re a YA Village People. There’s the English teacher, the cop, and the fashion boutique owner. And these guys, like Liam, are cool enough, but they’re three-star cool. Because they’re stuck in a three-star book.

Liam starts his senior year at this new school with one mission - be uncool, impress the uncool people, and let their superior brain juice drip all over his face so he’ll get good grades via osmosis, and then his dad’ll let him move back home. This strategy includes avoiding all the popular kids, sucking up to the seriously uncool girl who lives in the trailer next door, joining the AV club and wearing Aunt Pete’s horrendous (boy) clothing to school. None of this succeeds in making Liam unpopular, though. Because this book is so damn funny.

In the final paragraph of each review, I often repeat things I already said toward the front of the same review, things like - this book didn’t grab me too well, because its premise and approach had the unsound air of mediocrity, but overall it really wasn’t that bad. Still, I’m now reluctant to read anything else by the same author for a minimum of four months. Setting the timer now.

Victoria Jimenez says

The book *The King of the Screw Ups* by KL Going is about a boy named Liam Geller who is an athletic, nicely dressed popular guy at school. Everyone at school likes him and he can basically get any girl he wants, but his life at school differs from his personal life at home. When Liam is at home, he tends to screw up many things for his parents and himself. His dad starts to get irritated of Liam and decides to do something very harsh, but you'll have to read the book to find out.

I think the author did a great job on describing how Liam feels throughout the story and with the dialogue because it feels like a real-life conversation. I enjoyed reading this book because I found it interesting and I probably would recommend it to a friend.

Aaron says

Liam Geller would seem to have everything. His mom used to be a supermodel, but after retiring she now owns a super-successful clothing boutique. His dad is an uber-businessman, raking in millions of dollars. Having what he wants is never a problem ... or so it would seem.

Liam, entering his senior year in high school, has a bit of a reputation of being a party-boy. When his father comes home and catches him with a girl on his father's desk, everything seems to come to a head. Liam's father is done with Liam's messing up and threatens to send his son to live with his grandparents.

Things don't quite work out that way, when Liam's mother helps to arrange for Liam to go live with his Aunt Peter. Yes, that is right Aunt Peter. Peter is Liam's father's brother who is a bit of a black sheep. He is gay and a member of a glam, punk rock band. As a result, Peter has basically been disowned.

Liam finds himself living in a rundown trailer in the countryside. Next door, lives Darleen, a girl who is extremely smart, but not so popular. Liam decides that he really needs her help if he is going to learn not to be a screwup. She can help him get smart and be more like the son his father wants him to be.

Unfortunately, Liam is a bit of a natural when it comes to being popular. Because of his mother's history, everyone, particularly the in-crowd, wants to be his friend. No matter what he does, he seems to just screwup. Sometimes that means doing exactly the right thing to be popular. This leads to Darleen being less than enthused since he seems to annoy and sometimes even mock her.

This book is really about being yourself, and the fact that you are better off if you just do that. Liam doesn't seem able to see his natural skills for various reasons, but when he gets the opportunity to use those talents, he is a success. Unfortunately, he doesn't see it as that way. Darleen, Aunt Pete and his dad, and even Liam's mother are all there for him in important ways.

Pete and his band in particular are a new type of character in teen literature. They are all gay, but they are not glamorous, despite being in a glam band. They are average middle-aged guys, dealing with weight issues and other everyday problems rather than being the cliched fashionistas that made *Gay Eye* for the Straight Guy so popular.

Liam is a surprisingly likable guy. Like Darleen, the reader could easily dismiss him as the spoiled kid of two rich and famous people, but the story and his actions prove that he is much more than that. The problem

is that Liam can't seem to see that himself. He really is more than the King of the Screwups.

Kat says

Well, "Fat Kid Rules the World" still remains my favorite K.L. Going book thus far, but this one was pretty good. Liam wasn't particularly likable to me, but the premise of his character is pretty amusing: a guy who screws everything up because he's too "perfect." Well, in the social context of high school, at least. He's the heartbreaker, the athlete, the fashionista, the rich boy, the teenage Adonis... Mr. Popularity. But he screws up one time too many for his CEO father and is shipped off to live in a dingy trailer with Aunt Pete, his outcast gay glam-rock DJ uncle. The fact that Liam has to try to be unpopular and studious in his new school (and screws that up miserably, too) in order to please his disappointed father is so laughably ridiculous. He tries wearing crappy clothes, making friends with the nerds, joining AV, etc, and yet the cheerleaders are still fawning over him and the jocks are still saving a space for him at the lunch table.

With a supermodel for a mother, you start thinking that maybe this poor guy is genetically predisposed for this grueling chore of hot babes, friends, parties, etc etc. Oh, the humanity. But surprise! Liam is a decent guy inside who just once wants to do something right in the eyes of his father. He also has a profound love/talent for fashion and style, leading one to believe that there is more in store for him (and not what you'd expect for a straight popular guy) after the glories of high school. Aunt Pete and his motley band of friends are there along the way to help Liam realize that he is not defined by how others define him.

I read a lot of YA fiction, and while I often delight in deserved comeuppance against the Normies and Jocks as a former (present?) nerd, it gets old. And Liam doesn't necessarily deserve it. He's naturally handsome and has great social skills, so he's popular. No mystery there. But we get to see beyond the stereotypes, and we get to see him take the messy, unconventional steps of putting together the pieces of who he really wants to be.

Mckeda Knight says

Liam Geller was a teenage boy who thought that the only thing he was ever good at ,was screwing things up perfectly. He was never able to accomplish a task without making a complete fool of himself. Liam had quite influential parents and thus he was able to be ranked as one of the most popular kids in his school. He always had the trendiest style and fashion. Liam at a young age sought to impresses his father with his academic performance however his father would tell him that his work was nothing to be proud of. He was quite disappointed at first however his mother consoled him by telling him to stop trying so hard to please his father.

Liam took those words and as he grew, he blew them out of proportion by being completely lackadaisical, carefree and unconcerned about anything that was uplifting. He would drink and party excessively, and this infuriated his father as he exploited the privileges he had. Liam's father was a very hard worker and he was quite discouraged that his only son refuses to take life more seriously. He has finally had enough of Liam's nonsense after he comes home to find him drunk and half dressed with a girl in his office. He wanted him out of his house immediately; he made arrangements for him to go live with his grandparents until he finally woke up from his world of fantasy.

Sarah, Liam's mother knows how much Liam's grandparents despise her and her son, and makes arrangements for him to stay with his gay uncle Aunt Pete. Peter is the brother of Liam's father who is condemned by his parents and brother for his lifestyle. After moving in with his uncle, Liam recognizes that as good as he is at screwing up there was something he was even better at. He had brilliant ideas when it

came to fashion, he spoke French fluently, he was great at doing makeup and where ever he went people could tell Liam Geller was not an ordinary kid. As much as Peter was ridiculed by his family Liam made him feel accepted. Liam who was most of the time ridiculed by his father who he held in high esteem, was made to feel special by his uncle and his friends. While staying with his uncle he met a young lady who was terrified of popular people, and many of the events they would participate in. Liam really wants to win her over and tried to change his style of dressing and his complete attitude to impress her, and gain her favor. This whole experience made him feel like impressing his father after his multiple screw-ups.

This story was aimed towards young people who feel that there is nothing good that they can accomplish, or they are only good enough for being ignorant and stupid. I have learnt that everyone has a place in society where they belong; that everyone has a specific group they feel comfortable in and we should let anyone make us feel uncomfortable or allow us to change what we believe just to make them happy. As young people we are easily swayed, but once we stand firm in what we believe nothing can move us. Another important lesson brought out in this story is that good opportunities which you are afforded should not be taken for granted and everything which happens in your life should teach us a lesson.

I recommend this book to teenagers who feel trapped in their own selves, so that they may realize that whatever they experience, there are others like themselves and that if they surround themselves with the right people they will recognize their true potential.
