



# Kepler's Dream

*Juliet Bell*

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## **Kepler's Dream** Juliet Bell

A young girl makes her fractured family whole again with the help of a very special book

When eleven-year-old Ella's mother has to be hospitalized to undergo a dangerous cancer treatment, Ella spends the summer at "Broken Family Camp" with her eccentric grandmother, whom she's never met. The situation is hardly ideal for either of them. Ella is scared her mother may die, but her grandmother seems to care more about her library full of books than she does about her very own granddaughter.

But when a rare and beloved book, *Kepler's Dream of the Moon*, is stolen from her grandmother's amazing library, Ella and her new friend Rosie make up their minds to find it. Finding the beautiful book her grandmother loves so much could even be the key to healing Ella's broken family.

An affecting and beautifully written story of family, forgiveness and the wonder of the stars, *Kepler's Dream* is a sparkling and memorable debut.

## **Kepler's Dream Details**

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# From Reader Review Kepler's Dream for online ebook

## Aleta says

Ugh. This book was pure meh for me. I'm so disappointed. I mean I was expecting great things from this book. It was described as a moving, heart warming story, plus there was a mystery about a stolen book! It should have been good, but it was only okay. The characters were okay, the writing was okay, the plot was okay, but put together it just gave off this overwhelming sense of blandness. I just didn't feel a connection to any of the characters. This book was not memorable. I found myself having to reread passages, because I kept forgetting what I had read. And while I hate saying this about books, this. Book. Was. Boring. In the end I was forcing myself to finish it, which hardly ever happens. I was not impressed, and I wouldn't really recommend it.

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## Areeba says

Things I liked:

1. Her grandmother's house, the way it was laid out, the stuff it had, and all the peacocks. It was a really cool setting but it wasn't utilized in the way I would've like to read about.
2. The rare book, Kepler's Dream, sounds like it would be a fun book to read.
3. Getting introduced to the characters in the beginning was interesting because there seemed so much potential to them (at first) and (at first) I really liked the grandmother's quirks.
4. Ella's mom. Even though she wasn't a main character, she seemed like a cool mom.

Things I didn't like:

1. The characters: Besides her mom, Ella & the rest of the cast were forgettable 2D characters. But I especially disliked her grandmother and her father. Not only is the grandmother cold, she is overly obsessed with her husband's death (view spoiler). By the end, the reader is supposed to sympathize with her but I couldn't. And the whole cold-character-with-hidden-depths trope is overdone. I hated the father because he was a deadbeat, irresponsible and selfish dad, who chose to have no significant part in Ella's life, yet we're supposed to empathize with him in the end, which I just couldn't do.
2. The writing was average. There was one scene where a few different characters were trying to explain a past event and the way it was written was horribly confusing.
3. The way Ella & Rosie referred to teenagers, calling them Teens with a capital T. Only an adult would write that, preteens definitely don't think like that. It was so cringy.
4. The "expletives" were super annoying. Either use the curse words or don't. As with before, preteens don't think like that.
5. The ending. It was stretched on forever and I literally just skimmed through the last few chapters because it was getting so frustrating.
6. A lot of the scenes at the end were trying too hard to be beautiful and emotional. Since the writing isn't supreme, they just came off as forced and cringy.
7. The mystery was terrible.
8. The focus of this story was more on the family rather than the mystery. And the family bits were boring and silly. It may as well have been an adult book with the dad or grandmother as the main character, perhaps it would've worked better.
9. Because of the book's focus, nothing really seemed to happen. I'm surprised I finished it.
10. The symbolism with the stars and the book.

11. I hate children's books that feature more adult characters than they do kid characters. Again, just write an adult book if that's the age-group you're more interested in.

Overall, this book seemed like it was written more with adults in mind than with kids. The plot was slow and boring. I wouldn't recommend this book.

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### **Dallas Nateweyes says**

good....olo

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### **Brandy Painter says**

So I read the first chapter of this and had to put it aside. It's funny the things that can make or break a book. In this case? The story takes place in Albuquerque and the MC described the June night as "freezing" and "icy". I thought maybe it was 11 year old exaggeration. But then the other 11 year old concurred. Huh I thought. Maybe they don't actually live IN Albuquerque but in the mountains outside. I still wouldn't use the word icy but it would be more understandable. But nope. She mentions the Cottonwood trees so they're near the river. Then a fire was lit. Something the adults do regularly around the place in summer. Because of the cold. And I lost all faith in and trust in the author. June is the hottest month of the year in Albuquerque. And yes, visitors are sometimes amazed by how much cooler it is at night than during the day. Occasionally we would open our windows at night during June to let in a cool breeze. Most nights they were shut because the air was on. It was June. And hot.

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### **Tripp says**

Begins *in medias res* as a commotion at night outside the adobe house of main character Ella Mackenzie's grandmother awakens everyone. They discover that grandmother Violet Von Stern's copy of Kepler's *Somnium*, or *Dream*, has been stolen from her detached library, a chapel-like structure twenty-some feet from her house in New Mexico. After this cliff hanger to end chapter one, Bell, moves back in time to fill in the vents leading up to the theft, an exposition that occupies the next 100 pages. Included among the exposition are her mother's blood transfusion treatment, a last-ditch effort to eliminate her leukemia and part of the reason why Ella has to go live with her long-estranged grandmother, and her father Walter's failure to take her in, the other part of the reason for Ella's "exile" to New Mexico. Her mother, Amy, and Walter, are acrimoniously divorced, and, though there is a healing of their relationship by the story's end, divorced they remain.

Another element of the story involves the Aguilar family; Miguel works for Violet, as his father once worked for Violet and her husband, Edward Mackenzie, until a fishing accident on the Colorado River caused the deaths of both Edward and Miguel's father. Walter, Miguel, and Miguel's brothers were along on that trip, and Violet has always blamed Walter, and to some extent Miguel's older brother, Ignacio, for Edward's death, which caused an expected rift between mother and son.

A third strand involves the bookseller, Christopher Abercrombie, who is also staying at the house that summer to help Violet catalog her book collection. Ella immediately sees that he's shady, and sets out with

Rosie, Miguel's daughter, to prove it was Christopher who stole the book. He was pilfering books, but turns out to not directly have taken the *Dream*: that was Walter, making a surprise visit after many years away, who lost it the night of the theft, allowing it to be found and hidden by one of two teen boys--one of them Christopher's nephew, equally unsavory, but not the prankster--hired by Violet to help catalog the collection.

This boy, Jackson, leaves enigmatic clues for Ella in their last conversation, which she eventually recognizes as a clue, and solves, leading to the book's recovery. In a final scene, Violet gives the book to Ella, who takes it to her mother when the operation has proven successful and visitors are again allowed at the end of July.

The prose is crisp, the pace varied, and there is even a hand-drawn map--worked on by Ella during her weeks'-long stay--of the "House of Mud" and immediate environs.

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### **Shirley says**

Kepler's Dream is a 5th. through 8th. grade novel with some excellent characterizations. Abercrombie was the character that I loved to hate. He was as despicable as a villain in a silent movie.

Yes, you could call Ella's family dysfunctional, but there was still an undercurrent of love and caring despite their issues. The numerous instances of (expletive deleted) brought humor as Ella and her friends and family sought to solve the mystery of the disappearance of an extremely valuable book called Kepler's Dream of the Moon.

I looked up Kepler's Laws on the Internet while reading because I couldn't remember what they were. Kepler discovered that the planets rotate in an elliptical pattern around the sun instead of in a circular orbit. His other discoveries made me a little cross-eyed. Thankfully, the characters in the story didn't understand his laws either.

If you enjoy mysteries and have a fascination with the wonder of the stars, you should add Kepler's Dream to your list of books to read.

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### **BAYA Librarian says**

Eleven year old Ella is shipped off to stay with her rigid grandmother on a remote ranch in Albuquerque, New Mexico while her mother is undergoing cancer treatments and her distant father is off leading fishing trips. Ella hardly knows her grandmother, having seen her last when she was a baby, just as her parents were splitting up. So we've got a child of divorced parents, a catastrophically ill mother, an estranged father who is unreliable and rarely available, a cold, formal grandmother, still grieving over the death of her husband, and: the mysterious disappearance of a rare book, Kepler's Dream. Solve the mystery, repair the broken family bonds, and find solace in the wonders of the austere New Mexico landscape.

Reviewers in Booklist, Publisher's Weekly and School Library Journal all liked this book, recommending this "affecting story" for readers 10 and up (PW) and writing that: "Despite her circumstances, Ella translates the world with a candid, sassy voice and a surprising amount of wisdom."

Booklist adds: Ella's narration is fresh, distinctive, and full of dry humor. After she discovers that her

grandmother is a stickler for correct word usage, Ella privately refers to the GM's home as the GGCF (Good Grammar Correctional Facility).

Plus, the endorsements on the back cover are all favorable and from respected authors: Michael Chabon, Zilpha Keatley Snyder, Blue Balliett and Kathryn Erskine.

However, this reviewer must disagree with all of the above, finding the first half of the book a tedious slog. Ella's voice does not ring true and when a book is written in the first person, the voice has to grab the reader as authentic and engaging, otherwise, why bother? I found Ella's voice neither "candid" nor "sassy" but a poor approximation of an 11 year old. Her "wisdom" is unbelievable; seeming like a method of conveying the author's narrative through Ella's words.

The pacing and plot are tedious as well. The first half of the book, really the entire first half, is the set up for the "mystery"—the disappearance of a rare book entitled, Kepler's Dream, which is just dripping with symbolic overtones. The second half is devoted to solving the mystery, discovering the culprit—and yes it is just who you are lead to believe it was the whole time--and healing family wounds. The second half reads better than the first, but I wonder how many readers will make it that far. The one fourteen year old reader I gave it to, for a youth perspective on the book, didn't.

This is not a teen book. The content is geared for a younger reader and the cover art is dreamy and childlike. The girl pictured on it looks to be about 10 years old and I think that would be the best audience for this title, assuming there is much of an audience for it.

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### **Mailee Xiong says**

So far, this book is going good. I think it shows a lot about Ellie's emotions. Like a lot, at some point, this book makes me wonder how sad it'll be like to have a mother like hers. This Book isn't that bad, I actually kind of like it.

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### **Liesel says**

Fair. Simple story easy enough to follow but I really wanted more details on the characters which never came. I was surprised at how in depth and repetitive certain things were but then we never got closure on main themes such as the family dynamic, grandmother's relationship with Walter, etc. Fair. nothing special.

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### **Donalyn says**

This may seem like a heretical idea (especially on goodreads), but some people think that book collectors and those of us who spend a lot of time reading are disconnected from the real world. It is hard to explain that we read and adore books so much because we love life and see books as a way of capturing all of life's moments and the people who shape us.

Ella's Grandmother feels this way about books, too. Her attachment to Kepler's Dream expresses her love for her husband, who died in an accident. When the book is stolen, one more thread that connects her to him is lost. Looking for the book helps Ella bond with her grandmother and look at her father differently. Books have bindings made of glue and thread and they bind us to each other, too. This quiet book about family, loss, and books touched me. It isn't perfect, but it's beautiful. Just like life.

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## **Jennifer says**

Ella's mother has to undergo cancer treatment and her father is out leading fishing trips, so she ends up at her grandmother's house for the summer. Ella's grandmother is not your typical grandma though - Violet Von Stern is a cold, particular, and fussy lady who lives in New Mexico surrounded by her beloved books and pet peacocks. Ella has no memory of ever meeting her grandmother and is not happy about being stuck with her for several weeks. A very treasured book of her grandmother's goes missing and she and her friend Rosie decide to solve the mystery. In the midst of all this, Ella learns a lot about life and love and even begins to appreciate the strengths of her quirky grandmother.

Read if you like:

- Good, unique story narration - Ella narrates with a lot of wit and snark.

Don't read if you dislike:

- Slow moving novels that require getting to the halfway point for any action to happen.
- An overabundance of snark and sarcasm - this book is stuffed with it!

Personal thoughts:

I really did not enjoy this book. I did not enjoy Ella's super sarcastic and at times disrespectful tone. The book also seemed to be packed out with a lot of filler and took forever to go anywhere. Some of its main and memorable features (peacocks, for example) don't have any significance or meaningful role in the story. I absolutely detested how the author used the words "expletive deleted" to fill in for bad language. It wasn't hard to fill in the blanks and it was completely unnecessary and not appropriate for a children's novel. I had to force myself to finish this one.

Possibly objectionable content:

Language - crappy, "expletive deleted" (24), idiot (1), suck (2), good lord (3), geez, butt (4), heck (3), hells bells (1), my G- (1)

Disrespect of authorities - Ella hides a teen magazine from her parents

Occult - Mention of horoscope, one character communicates with her dead grandfather (multiple references to this)

Dishonesty - Ella lies (but she does regret it later and there are consequences)

Other: Ella's parents are divorced, mention of "sneaking around on the internet," mocking descriptions of Christians, super sarcastic tone throughout the book, parents fighting, mentions of drinking beer

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**Hillary says**

This book was a really quiet book as many would say. A certain book which holds many ties to family goes missing and our main character is out to find it. I really liked how the book examples how a single object can hold so many memories. This book does deserve 4 stars because the plot does have more potential but that's good enough.

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**Amy says**

A strong story about family. A young girl goes to stay for the summer with a grandmother she's never met and in the process learns more about her family and herself and solves a mystery. Plenty of funny moments as well. Good mix of humor, mystery, and heart.

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**melissa1lbr says**

I picked this up for the astronomy aspect, which turned out to be the best part for me. I had a hard time getting into it, I felt disconnected from the characters. I did like the family history stuff and the house where all this crazy stuff happens sounds awesome. Anyway, cute but not exactly memorable or a favorite.

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**Diane McKenzie says**

Albuquerque is a perfect setting for this story about dreams that can come true with growth from a broken up family and an antique treasured book about the skies above.

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