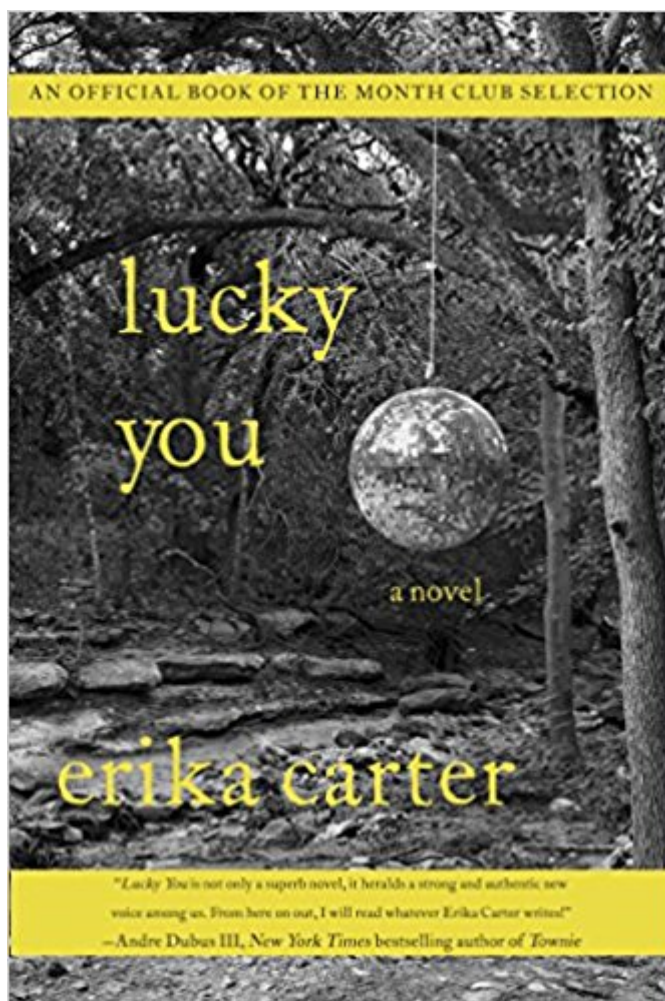


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Lucky You: A Novel



Synopsis

An official Book of the Month Club selection. In Erika Carter's fierce and darkly funny debut novel, *Lucky You*, three women in their early twenties find themselves aimlessly adrift in the Arkansas college town they've stuck around in too long. Ellie, Chloe, and Rachel are friends (sort of), waitresses at the same dive bar. Each is becoming unmoored in her own way: Ellie obliterates all feeling with alcohol and self-destructive acts of sexual promiscuity; Chloe pulls out patches of her hair and struggles to keep incipient mental illness at bay; changeable Rachel has fallen under the sway of a messianic boyfriend with whom she's agreed to live off-grid for a year in order to return to "health", and she asks Ellie and Chloe to join them in "The Project." In a remote, rural house in the Ozarks, nearly undone by boredom and the brewing tension between them, each tries to solve the conundrum of being alive. By turns funny, knowing and hauntingly sad, *Lucky You* is a study in damage and detachment, a fearless portrait of three women at a crucial point in their lives. With startling exactitude and wickedly deadpan humor, it lays bare the emotional core of its characters with surgical precision. The writing is deft and controlled, as natural and unforced as breath--which makes it impossible to look away.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With lean and impressionistic prose, Erika Carter casts a most compelling light on three young women trying to bloom into their very selves. But this blooming is never easy, and Carter renders it gorgeously with street-wise compassion, grit, and a kind of dark, life-loving humor that is absolutely irresistible to read. *Lucky You* is not only a superb novel, it heralds a strong and authentic new voice

among us. From here on out, I will read whatever Erika Carter writes!" • Andre Dubus III, New York Times bestselling author of *Townie* "The most beautiful novels read like fevered whispers, a shared secret, and Carter's prose lingers like that. For a book that features haikus, the novel has some of that style, desperately distilling life down to our dreams and desires." • Joshua Mohr • "With *Lucky You*, Erika Carter has written a magnificent novel that pitches and swirls forward as love stories pivot toward heartbreak, power poisons sex, drunkenness turns to sobriety and back to drunkenness again, and misguided people search for things that aren't to be found, from dark basement bars to the rolling wooded landscape of the Arkansas Ozarks. *Lucky You* is an utterly captivating novel, written in precise, surprising sentences with a charge so electric they snap across the page like lightning." • Benjamin Hale, author of *The Evolution of Bruno Littlemore* and *The Fat Artist* "Lucky You is a wry and unflinching portrait of three young women navigating dark and complicated issues of love and sex and loneliness, depicted with a sharply observant eye, precision prose, wicked humor and courageous insights into the hearts of these characters. This is a powerful and touching book written with the wisdom and control of a seasoned novelist, and Erika Carter has announced herself with a bold, honest, and emotionally scorching debut." • Nic Pizzolatto, author of *Galveston*, creator and writer of *True Detective* "By turns dark and funny, *Lucky You* is a stunningly honest novel about the inner lives of three women. Sexy, risky, with a pleasurable dangerous tension. Erika Carter's writing is effortlessly remarkable." • Janis Cooke Newman, author of *A Master Plan for Rescue* "Erika Carter has that rare combination of tough intelligence--almost, as it were, the rough straightforward shrewdness of old-style city-beat newspaper writers--and the musical sensual subtle touch of the poet. Her story of these three young women will keep you reading, and you won't soon forget them. What a marvelously talented young writer." • Richard Bausch, author of *Before During After* "Throughout the novel, Carter's language is surprising, even tactile" | A melancholy, elliptical tale of friendship and alienation in the South." • Kirkus "Lucky You is electrifying and atmospheric, hilarious and wrenching, surprising and somehow deeply familiar. Erika Carter is a true talent." • Jennifer DuBois, author of *Cartwheel* and *A Partial History of Lost Causes* "The 'you' in this novel's title might refer to the reader, who's lucky to have discovered this book. Sexy, wise, wryly funny, it covers two years in the lives of three young women searching for--what?--love, health, happiness, or any combination of the three. It's brilliantly observed and masterfully paced, and its voice will resonate long after the last page. You lucky, lucky reader." • Tom Franklin, author of *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter* "Erika Carter's debut novel is sparse, beautiful, and often very funny. Her darkness and concision bring to mind the kind of writers who excel at making the tragic just comic enough that you forget to cry."

This is a novel for anyone who has dreamed about leaving her life behind to live in an Eden “ but who also knows that real change comes from looking within. No cabin in the woods is a magic bullet. Lucky You reminds us that the only way out is through.” — Rachel Syme, judge, Book of the Month Club “Carter’s ambitious debut novel delves into the ennui that comes with being young and unsure...Carter’s no-nonsense prose is darkly witty, lacking the self-indulgence or mean-spiritedness often seen in stories about modern youth... a clever and honest look at the consequences of youthful malaise.” —Publishers Weekly “Carter’s sharp debut novel reads like a long-remembered nightmare, eerily realistic and subtly horrifying” | Off-grid-living stories have become quite popular as of late and Lucky You is a nice addition to the canon | Readers will be hard-pressed to put the book down as the girls make their breaks back to civilization.”

--Booklist “Being a 20-something isn’t easy. Just ask the three listless Arkansas waitresses in Lucky You. When one decides to go off the grid, the other two go, too. Alone, they are forced to deal with their various demons-- in this rich and observant debut-- for better or worse.” --Marie Claire “If your fever dream of going off-grid remains unfulfilled, sublimate with Erika Carter’s chillingly adroit debut novel, Lucky You, about three twentysomethings who, bored with life in a college town, move to the no-paced Ozarks--- where life lessons in sexual tension, isolation, and personal foibles shift into fast-forward.” --Elle “In Erika Carter’s coolly enigmatic debut, Lucky You, three 20-something waitresses desperately need to get their lives together. Ellie has taken to numbing her angst with booze and hookups. During fits of anxiety, Chloe literally pulls out her hair. And Rachel’s feeble stabs at happiness entail bending to the will of a seductive amateur guru. Their solution? Bolt the college town where things have veered off course and take up residence together in a remote mountain cabin. Suffice it to say, problem not solved.” --O, The Oprah Winfrey Magazine “Lucky You is a marvel of a book, partly because Carter does a perfect job balancing humor and tragedy. The funny moments bring to mind the fiction of Mary Robison and Ann Beattie; the darker ones are reminiscent of Joan Didion’s Play It As It Lays. Her humor is dry, and never at the expense of her characters...She is deft at describing how it feels to be young and at loose ends, living in a college town and entertaining half-hearted thoughts about someday moving out. Carter has written a wonderful novel, intelligent but unpretentious. As an author, she’s both unsparing and compassionate, and among her greatest gifts is an ability to find a savage kind of beauty in the unlikeliest of places.” --NPR

“Lucky You” is a stunningly honest novel about the inner lives of three women. Sexy, risky, with a pleasurable dangerous tension. Erika Carter’s writing is effortlessly remarkable.” —Janis

Cooke Newman, author of A Master Plan for Rescue

I went to UofA in Fayetteville and expected, like other writers who write from what/where they know, to get a flavor of NW Arkansas. Nope, just a typical poor me, navel gazing, aimless novel. I kept waiting for something interesting - especially with the whole sort of cult business. I said "dark" as the mood, but I mean b o r i n g. I give very few bad reviews but this one irritated me. It could have been set anywhere with its cardboard characters and nowhere plot.

I couldn't get involved with any of the characters in this story. I thought it was well written but not a book I'd recommend. I thought it was very depressing and sad and I was glad when I finished it.

I'm from the Northwest Arkansas area and I have to say the setting was what initially attracted me to this book. The cover art is appealing and I'm always open to supporting new authors. All in all I really wanted to like this book. I completely hated it. Every moment of reading it. Each of the characters were awful people who made poor decisions time and time again. I kept reading because I thought it HAD to get better. But it certainly did not. Nobody learned anything, everyone stayed awful, and I wasted my time by persisting through this mess.

A lot of immaturity and low self esteem. 3 women with no clue nor direction just being blown about by Life.

I highly recommend this novel! Erika's writing is witty, refreshing, unique and well thought out. I can honestly say that I enjoyed this book from the second I picked it up. The way the author adds humor to trying situations throughout the book makes for an enjoyable read that is hard to put down. Along with her admirable and quite seductive writing skills, the book is highly relatable and leaves you thinking. This lasting effect can benefit anyone who reads. I am excited for Erika's next novel and will continue to follow her exceptional work.

hauntingly relatable and beautifully written - i absolutely loved this book

Dark, sexy, funny, and compelling from start to finish.

What I LikedThe premise. It was the premise of the novel that led me to decide to pick it as one of

my Book Of The Month options. I'm intrigued by subsistence lifestyles and am a big fan of watching TV shows like Alaska: The Last Frontier where people farm and raise cattle to support themselves, or Tiny House Nation, where people try to diminish their ecological footprint as much as possible. I wanted the book to be much more focused on this "Project" which is described in the plot Plot Teaser, but unfortunately that was not the case, and this made the book a lot less appealing to me than I thought it would be. Read below for more details on this.

What I Didn't Like Highly unlikable characters. Essentially this book was like a novel version of the TV series Girls, if the characters in the TV series decided to go live in the woods together for a while. If you've never watched Girls, all the young women and men portrayed in the series are in their early 20s and making one horrible life decision after the other. They drink, they do drugs, they can't hold steady jobs, they make dangerous or inappropriate decisions regarding their sex lives and they are often terrible people to their own friends. Ellie, Chloe and Rachel were depicted in the same way "as selfish, self-centered young women who were incapable of making good long term choices. It's not that I'm not aware that such people actually exist, but that it was really hard for me to relate to them. The character's relatability was not helped by the fact that aside from their actions, the character's thoughts were not depicted by the author in a complex or relatable way, so the characters ended up seeming one-dimensional.

Deceiving premise. There is very little to absolutely nothing about legitimate subsistence living in this book. After reading it, I actually felt like subsistence living was mentioned in the premise as a hook to lure more readers in, because it's a trendy topic right now. I don't want to spoil the plot of the second half of the book too much (though I don't recommend you read it), but basically the four main characters end up living in a house in the woods together purportedly to escape modern consumer culture, decrease their ecological footprint on the world, and live off of food they grow in their garden. Now if you've read the previous paragraph you know that these are people woefully unprepared for this kind of large-scale, long term life change, which necessitates a high degree of organization and also personal motivation. What ensues is basically akin to a Manson family cult situation in which there are a lot of drugs, some pretend attempts at transcendental meditation, and primarily lots of fighting. Not really what I had signed up for and SO much less interesting than an actual book about responsible, motivated but complex 20-somethings trying to make it as a unit out in the woods.

Final Verdict This is a debut novel and it feels like one. One-dimensional, unlikable characters that seem to have been made unlikable specifically to seem complex. Shallow plot line. I would skip this one.

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