



Iceling

Sasha Stephenson

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Lorna's adopted sister, Callie, is part of a mysterious group of non-lingual teens, Icelings, born on a remote Arctic island, who may not be entirely human. Now Callie wants to go home.

Seventeen-year-old Lorna loves her adoptive sister, Callie. But Callie can't say "I love you" back. In fact, Callie can't say anything at all.

Because Callie is an Iceling—one of hundreds of teens who were discovered sixteen years ago on a remote Arctic island, all of them lacking the ability to speak or understand any known human language.

Mysterious and panicked events lead to the two sisters embarking on a journey to the north, and now Lorna starts to see that there's a lot more to Callie's origin story than she'd been led to believe. Little does she know what's in store, and that she's about to uncover the terrifying secret about who—and what—Callie really is.

Iceling Details

Date : Published December 13th 2016 by Razorbill (first published December 10th 2016)

ISBN : 9781595147691

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Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Science Fiction

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From Reader Review Iceling for online ebook

Shannon (It Starts At Midnight) says

You can find the full review and all the fancy and/or randomness that accompanies it at It Starts at Midnight. This was a quirky little book for sure! I didn't know what to expect going in, because I don't like to delve too deeply into synopses before I read. Was it a contemporary? A sci-fi? A dystopian? The answer was... yes. I think. It is the first book in a series, so not all the questions were answered but it definitely has elements of multiple genres.

And it's weird. Not in a bad way, but it is weird. And wholly unique- I can assure you that you absolutely will *not* find this premise... well anywhere else ever. And that is a good thing! It made me want to keep reading, for sure. I found myself wanting to know *all* the things, and that is a good sign, of course. So let us start, as usual, with what I enjoyed!

What I Liked:

The sibling relationships were so great. While Lorna and Callie are the main sister duo in the book, there are others that are lovely, too. Lorna's love for Callie is beautiful, but it's also realistic. Yes, Lorna gets irritated sometimes by the amount of her time that caring for Callie consumes, but at the end of the day, she'd do *anything* for her sister, and that is just so sweet.

I love a road trip! Yes, there is a road trip in this book, and it makes me *so* happy. And, it's an exciting road trip at that, since it isn't exactly like they're just on a casual drive.

Lorna made me chuckle. I liked how she seemed so *real*, even during a series of very surreal events. Yes, she took things seriously, but she also had a witty inner dialogue that I enjoyed. A lot of the book *is* Lorna's thoughts, so I think that is a big key here- I saw some reviews where the reader didn't love her, and I think if you *don't* like her voice, it would make the book difficult to enjoy. Luckily, I did, so that was a win!

The action was great! I liked that while there were absolutely more low key times (I mean, they are riding in a car for a chunk of the book), there was suspense throughout. There was a good balance of fast paced events and some downtime. And, it was a super quick read, I finished in just a few hours.

I really enjoyed Lorna's friendships- with her best friend pre-road trip, the one she formed with Stan during, and the new friends she met along the way. Who doesn't love a good friendship?

What I Didn't So Much:

Some of the things were a little... unbelievable. And I know there will be another book that will explain more, but some of the things that happened were just a bit *too* farfetched. But I will say, there is one thing that happens early on in the story that left me shaking my head, but it *did* end up making sense after the fact. So I have hope that some of the others will, too. But there were quite a few things that required some pretty significant suspension of belief.

Parent-In-YA Syndrome. Lorna and Callie's parents weren't the only crap parents in this book. Some of them had just taken off and abandoned their kids completely, while others just mentally checked out. Minor spoiler alert- (view spoiler)

Lorna's "boyfriend" Dave (Lorna never would fully define what they were) **really needed to not be in the story.** I didn't get any point to his existence, I had no feel of his personality whatsoever, and I kind of wanted him to go away. Like he was supposed to be a nice guy, and I suppose he was, but he was as exciting as watching paint dry, too. Maybe that is how he was supposed to be? Either way, go home, Dave.

There were a few instances where I was able to pretty easily see some things coming. However, there were also some things that caught me off guard, so this isn't a totally bad thing, just something to keep in mind.

Will I Read the Next Book? **Yes.** I definitely need to know what happens with Lorna, Callie, and all the Icelings!

Bottom Line: Fast paced, fun, and wholly unique, *Iceling* does require some belief suspension. But if you are able, it is an action-filled story that explores sibling relationships in a whole new way.

Laura says

Couldn't finish this book. It had started out well and then I just lost interest.

Bridgette says

"My name is Lorna Van Allister. I'm seventeen years old. I was born and raised in Abington, Pennsylvania. My sister's name is Callie. I have a boy I won't call my boyfriend named Dave, a mom named Judy, and a dad named Tom, and they probably work for the government, and this is where I'm going to die."

If only *Iceling* had begun like that! Instead that quote is stuck somewhere in the middle of the novel. I think it would have made an amazing first line. I feel like that quote is a pretty accurate representation of Lorna, the main character. She loves her family, is lukewarm about Dave, and has a penchant for run-on sentences. She's especially close to her adopted non-lingual sister, Callie.

Lorna's dad, a research scientist, discovered Callie and a bunch of other babies on an abandoned boat in the Arctic 16 years ago. Each Arctic Recovery Orphan, or *Iceling* as Lorna dubs them, was adopted by a separate family with a biological child near the *Iceling*'s age. The weird thing is that all of the *Icelings* grew up to be non-lingual and strangely drawn to plants.

One fateful night, Callie manages to communicate her very strong desire to take a road trip to her point of origin in the Arctic. Thinking this is the first opportunity she has had to really connect with Callie and do something for her, Lorna jumps in the car with Callie and heads out.

Callie and Lorna meet some interesting characters on the way, not all of whom are trustworthy. What they discover along the way is shocking. On this journey, Lorna discovers truths about herself, Callie, and her parents, forcing her to reevaluate her worldview.

What did I like about *Iceling*? It was a quick read at less than 300 pages. Perfect for a lazy weekend. I also liked Lorna. Her thought process was a bit scattered, but completely believable. I also love the premise. Non-lingual orphans with eerily similar physical features. Pretty unique. That is actually what first caught my eye, the whole non-lingual teenagers aspect.

What did I not like about *Iceling*? It wasn't as compelling as I had hoped. That may have something to do with the fact that there was a lot of recapping and rehashing throughout the novel. It got tedious at times

because of the repetitiveness. I hope the subsequent novels in the series cut out a lot of the recapping.

All in all, Iceling is a quick read with a unique, intriguing premise. I have high hopes for this new series!

****I received an ARC in exchange for an honest review through the publisher's First to Read program.****

Suzanne (The Bookish Libra) says

I thought the overall premise for this book was very unique and intriguing, but the long, rambling internal monologues from the teenage narrator coupled with some pretty big plot holes ultimately made this book just not for me. I received it from First To Read in exchange for an honest review.

Kim says

Iceling was provided to me by the publisher via Edelweiss, in exchange for an honest review.

Seventeen-year-old Lorna loves her adoptive sister, Callie. But Callie can't say "I love you" back. In fact, Callie can't say anything at all.

Because Callie is an Iceling--one of hundreds of teens who were discovered sixteen years ago on a remote Arctic island, all of them lacking the ability to speak or understand any known human language.

Mysterious and panicked events lead to the two sisters embarking on a journey to the north, and now Lorna starts to see that there's a lot more to Callie's origin story than she'd been led to believe. Little does she know what's in store, and that she's about to uncover the terrifying secret about who--and what--Callie really is."

In the beginning I struggled with the dichotomy that is Lorna; one moment she speaks in typical teen fashion, and the next she whips out the word "portmanteau", which, if you ask me, is an impressive vocabularic addition for anyone, much less a teenager. I'm still not sure what to think of her, because by the end of the book, the only thing I could say for sure is that she loves her sister. There just wasn't a lot of character development. The road trip is interminable. There are things happening, but nothing that justifies dedicating 30% of the book to the drive. Trying to avoid spoilers, but there is a random scene of violence in the middle of the road trip that is never really explained in the book. Unless it's addressed in one of the sequels, the scene is just jarring, random, and unnecessary.

Also, I understand that the Icelings being non-verbal is an important part of the story, but, not only do they not speak, but their body language is jilted at best, and mostly the result of copying the actions of others. As a result, not much is understood about the orphans, either personally or as a group, by the end of the first book.

I could have forgiven all of this and called it an okay book, but the author chose to end with a 60s sitcom type cliffhanger. It's a cheap device, and completely un-needed. If the author has done their job, the reader is going to come back for the sequel. The cliffhanger felt like a lack of confidence in both the story and the reader. I don't feel compelled to read the next book.

Jo says

What a fantastic book!! I am a big fan of YA but so many recently have been trying to be the next Hunger Games or the next Divergent. Iceling isn't trying to be any of these and is all the stronger for that. The characters are well written and interesting, especially the main character, Lorna. She is so likeable and relatable.

Please read this book!

Cecily Kyle says

The first half of this book was good, it had me intrigued and totally into the story. However, the latter half left me a bit disappointed. Also me and my sister have nothing like this in terms of relationship so maybe that was where it didn't quite work for me.

Okay Read.

Scarlett Sims says

3.5

Lorna's sister Callie isn't like most sisters. She can't talk, she can't understand anything Lorna says, and when she goes to the doctor, none of her family members are allowed to go in with her. Callie is an Arctic Rescue Orphan, one of about a hundred babies found abandoned on a boat and adopted by families. Lorna has never been able to communicate with Callie, but when she senses that Callie wants to go somewhere, maybe to the place where she was found, Lorna has to help.

Stephenson does a good job of capturing the YA voice: Lorna uses some text-speak with her boyfriend (full disclosure: I have no idea what teens texts look like) and I felt like her emotions relating to her adopted sister were really authentic. However, authenticity in YA can also mean the characters are sometimes kind of annoying. What Stephenson does really well is the entire point of what science fiction is supposed to do: she takes something from our world and blows it up to extreme proportions. The orphans could be analogized to a few different aspects of society, but it does force the reader to look at how they view people who are "other," specifically people who communicate or behave differently.

I was disappointed to realize this was the beginning of a series. While there were some ambiguities at the end, I felt like it stood on its own and I just can't keep track of series anymore.

I received this book from Penguin's First to Read program.

Hannah says

Loved this! 4.5/5 stars, only losing that .5 stars because it was not MIND BLOWING, you know? But this was really good!

Laura L says

Actual Rating: 4.5

Sissy Lu {Book Savvy Reviews} says

Curiosity fueled this read entirely and even then I constantly felt as if I were about to drop this book.

Why do you ask? Well, the narrative is written in the view of Lorna who is a very flat and generally unlikeable seventeen-year-old who, when she speaks - speaks like a seventeen-year-old on like, a very, really, actually, tantric diary entry.

I became so lost in the story because of the rambling, the tangent way it was written that I also wound up skipping 2-3 pages at a time because it was necessary, only for the rambling session to end where it began. So, I never really missed a thing which makes the entire rambling rant superfluous.

Lorna is seventeen, her mother and father are scientists who travel to remote places where anomalies occur and sixteen years ago they stumbled on one in the arctic, what they witness is seared into their minds. Pods upon pods of infants, pale and fragile and so they take them home which they are then promptly called ARO. There are guidelines to those who adopt these orphans - above all else they must have a child no more than a year older than said ARO.

They are all speechless, each has varying degrees to their personality but they do not speak and some try to communicate with their eyes, but they're fairly flat aside from their conniptions, as they call them. Episodes of violence or tantric behaviors for an extended period of time, that without medical intervention can continue on.

This all sounds really interesting and could have been, too, if the narrative was different. It was all over the place and so disconnected, I guess it didn't help that Lorna had no personality either and I really found no explanation in the book as to why that may have been or why she had so many issues to begin with, outside of having Callie as her "Iceling" sister.

The idea was there, the execution was not...

Website - Facebook - Instagram

Marla says

I found Iceling an interesting concept of how siblings bond and love each other even if one is "adopted" and from a very different place making it hard for them to communicate. I felt all along that the Iceling children were alien from a very docile community. There were a few things that were not explained, which makes me wonder if there will be more revelations in book two. I did wonder where all the parents were. I was surprised Lorna's parents left her and Callie alone for weeks at a time. Lorna is 17, that is a minor, when my

parents went on vacation, we always had someone stay with us even though I had sisters that probably could have taken care of the younger ones. And why were the siblings taking the Icelings north and not the parents? Unlike other people, I didn't have a problem with the writing except there was a lot of repetition on things that we didn't need reminding over and over. Other than that I really enjoyed it and look forward to see what happens next.

I received this book from the Penguin Random House First To Read Program.

Jeff Raymond says

On one hand, the whole idea of a pod people-style science fiction story is very well-tread ground. It's going to take a lot to impress me in regards to a story like that. *Iceling*, surprisingly, delivers in this area in a YA field sorely lacking in non-dystopian science fiction.

Lorna has a sister, and her sister is a little strange. Rescued from an arctic expedition, she doesn't talk and sometimes has minor episodes, but, unexpectedly, she begins demonstrating a massive desire to go back north, toward where she was found. Callie decides to go along with this idea and leads to a significant uncovering of a massive conspiracy at best and something that could change the world.

For a book that's literally 50% travel, it's something that hooked me in really quickly and wouldn't let go. As more and more was revealed, and in a really deft way at that, I was just hooked further and further in until the book just ended with me wondering when I can get my hands on the sequel. It's that good, folks. One of the best of the year, and one I'm glad got written. A great introduction to a classic science fiction trope, and a great read even if you're familiar. A must read if you like YA.

Maggie Haberman says

Though I found the writing at times repetitive and pretentious, overall this book is very entertaining with an engaging central concept and an excellent dynamic between the sisters. I recommend it.

Helen says

Although this read a little too young for me at times, I enjoyed it a lot.

Imagine having a mute adopted sister who was found in the arctic as a new-born with a hundred or so others.
