

Float

Kate Marchant

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In Kate Marchant's wry and charming young adult novel *Float*, an Alaskan teenager learns how to swim, flirt, and be herself.

Waverly flies to Florida to spend the summer with her Aunt Rachel, hoping to escape the looming expectations of her academic parents and reinvent herself along the way. Confronted with a grumpy though cute neighbor, Blake, and his on-again-off-again catty girlfriend, Alissa, Waverly despairs of making friends and enjoying her time in the sun. She knows she overthinks things and talks too much. To make matters worse, once she begins making friends, everybody wants to go surfing, and Waverly can't even swim.

As Waverly bumbles through her new life, Alissa and Blake (now broken up) begin to thaw towards her, and the rest of their friend group, twins Jesse and Lena, accept Waverly as one of their own. Blake, a certified lifeguard, offers to teach Waverly how to swim in secret, and he drops his chilly exterior, revealing a warm heart that entices Waverly into a summer fling. As her deadline to depart approaches, and as family arguments threaten to explode, Waverly has to decide what is most important to her: looking cool or being true to herself.

While Waverly's voice comes across as being far more mature than her seventeen years of age, the rest of the tone is appropriate for conveying teenage angst and first-time encounters like parties and make-out sessions, sparkling with wit and the occasional obscenity. Surrounded by a cast of teenagers and adults with their own fears and lives, Waverly's development and newfound love for her friends is authentic and heartwarming.

Float delights and enchants with its frank window into teenage anxieties and family dramas, delivering the warming message that being yourself is the bravest act of all.

JEANA JORGENSEN (January / February 2022)

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