



Mom's Perfect Boyfriend

Crystal Hemmingway

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Crystal Hemmingway's charming romantic comedy and AI fairy tale, *Mom's Perfect Boyfriend*, is about a California mother and her daughters who discover that love can overcome a few secrets—and a lot of meddling—and that it's richest when it's honest.

Crystal is having a quarter-life crisis. Her fiancé called for a time out. She's been laid off. And she's moved in with her divorced mother, Margot, who's at her own crossroads. When Crystal gets Margot a Smart Robot to keep her company, Adam the android turns out to be the best thing that could happen to them, but for different reasons than Crystal expected.

Through text messages, Boople chats, e-mails, excerpts from Crystal's novel-in-progress, and journal entries, the women are revealed to resemble each other more than they know. As they navigate living together, their miscues reveal selfishness, an inability to say no, and the funny results of heartfelt intentions.

Crystal's sister, Lisa, appears in chats that lend perspective to Crystal's problems. Lisa also works at Boople, and through her come glances at the android's makers. That both Crystal and Lisa withhold details to avoid their mother's responses is an authentic depiction of how shared histories color the present.

With its mimicking of modern online habits—including surfing through scenes and succinct dialogue—this is an entertaining and light book. Its absurd situations are ripe for glitches, but Hemmingway pulls the story off with only the mildest of forays into the consequences of AI turning sentient.

There's gentle humor behind the idea of setting Margot up with Adam, whose tailor-made looks and behavior raise flags that she doesn't see. The truth coming out is inevitable, but in the midst of looking for happy endings, Crystal and Margot find that gambling on their dreams is worth the uncertainty.

A story on hope and family relationships, strengthening identities, and setting boundaries, *Mom's Perfect Boyfriend* is a refreshing escape with a futuristic twist.

KAREN RIGBY (July/August 2019)

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