

Operation Tiger

G.L. Eaves

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Aaron Wesley Haberman is a boy with a problem. The girl of his sixth-grade dreams doesn't seem to know he's alive, and when he tries to talk to her his brain short-circuits. While watching a nature film in class, he sees how cool tigers play it around their prey, and he decides to launch "Operation Tiger," a plan to win Kristin's affection. He attempts to adopt her interests in an effort to impress her, but his plan is less than perfect. Along the way, Aaron learns a valuable lesson about being himself (and also why one should not wear oversized cowboy boots to school).

Operation Tiger is very funny, and Aaron is a likable and realistic kid. Every day is either the best or worst day of his life; there's no in-between. He fights with his little sister, ignores his parents when it suits him, and goes to ridiculous lengths to impress Kristin, falling on his face (or head) and getting back up time and again. He tells her he's listening to "golden moldies," a classic country CD he bought despite not liking country music (as it turns out, neither does Kristin! It's kismet after all). When he finds out that Kristin's friend Jessica has been feeding him false information about the object of his affection to sabotage his plans, he confronts her, asking, "Why did you have to be this big game player?" She throws the question back in his face, and he has to admit it's valid, likening himself to a "tiger in a chicken suit." When he faces his fears and does the impossible—has a simple conversation with the girl he likes—the victory is worth the wait.

Author G.L. Eaves worked as a school librarian for many years, and she knows the mechanics of chapter books; her pacing is smooth, and slapstick moments flow logically, with very funny payoffs. With a few minor adjustments, including a crisper cover design and editing for consistency of tone, *Operation Tiger* could easily be the beginning of an enjoyable series. Aaron seems ripe for more adventures, and kids who read his story will likely want more. Eaves' book is a fresh, funny, thoughtful look at the perils of being a secret admirer.

HEATHER SEGCEL (March 27, 2012)

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