

The Altered History of Willow Sparks

Tara O'Connor

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Tara O'Connor delivers a cautionary tale for the high school set in her graphic novel, *The Altered History of Willow Sparks*.

Willow Sparks, known to her friends as Willy, is a teenager who grapples with popularity, gym class, and other typical adolescent troubles. Her life changes dramatically when, at her after-school job at the local library, she discovers a secret collection of “life books”—one for every person in town—that can be rewritten to affect real events. Willow takes her book and experiments by altering her life in ways that seem harmless, but she soon finds that even the smallest changes have serious unintended consequences.

The Altered History of Willow Sparks reads as a kind of teenaged cousin to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but while Willow is intoxicated by her ability to easily change things, she's also anchored by her friends and family. They, and her own conscience, help Willow realize the error of her ways before it's too late.

While the “be careful what you wish for” story line may not be startlingly original, O'Connor's execution is strong enough to overcome any objections to the plot. Her artwork bears a clean, simple style that allows for details as needed—the unfashionable clothing choices of Willow's best friend Georgia, for example—but doesn't get bogged down in them, allowing the eye to move smoothly from one panel to the next. O'Connor makes it look easy, but rest assured, her tale has teeth.

PETER DABBENE (January/February 2018)

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