



# I'll Always Miss You

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## **I'll Always Miss You** Raine O'Tierney

Isa Zaman might forgive his parents for taking in a friend's son if only he wasn't the most boring teenager in the universe. Macklin "Mackie" Cormack's only interests are reading and the outdoors. Yeah, right. Isa's convinced Mackie is either a pyro or a klepto. Plus, as a white kid, Mackie looks ridiculous in the Zamans' Arab American household. Forced to share a bedroom, the boys keep butting heads until an absurd fight finally breaks the tension between them.

Isa's just starting to figure life out: this new houseguest, his cultural identity, school, and even girls, when the entire family is uprooted from their home for reasons Isa can't understand. They move from their tiny city apartment to a giant, old house in a small town, hours away from everything he's ever known. Oh, and the new house? It's probably haunted, or so says the blank-faced ten-year-old next door. As if things weren't weird enough, Isa's friendship with Mackie suddenly takes a strange turn down a path Isa's not sure he's ready to follow. It turns out Mackie Cormack isn't nearly as boring as Isa once imagined.

## **I'll Always Miss You Details**

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## From Reader Review *I'll Always Miss You* for online ebook

### Tracey Neithercott says

Look, we all know you're not supposed to judge books by their covers, whether you're talking about actual books or books as a metaphor for people or houses or pretty much anything else in life. But we all do it, which is why I'm starting this review by asking you to forget that cover.

That book you see up there with the two smiling boys who are either participating in a college brochure photo shoot or ad campaign for Crest Whitestrips? They're not Isa and Mackie. That whole after-school special feel? That's not this book.

Here's what you need to know: If you liked *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, you'll like this similar novel. *I'll Always Miss You* has a wonderfully authentic teen boy voice and great character development—and not just for Isa, who's a bit cruel and self-pitying at the beginning. All of the characters are great—Mackie, Thany the librarian, Isa's sisters...

Family was a huge part of the story—Isa is one of four kids in a Moroccan-American household and Mackie struggles with trusting anyone to be his family. I loved seeing Isa's relationship with his three sisters grow and change throughout the story. I loved the ghost mystery, even though I figured it out before the boys did. It's not about the mystery anyway. It's about watching the boys grow and figure out who they are.

It's also a great pick if you're looking for diverse YA lit—and not just for the romance. Isa really struggles with his identity as a Moroccan-American boy whose family is more American than Moroccan. I loved watching him come into his own as he tries to connect with his heritage.

The bottom line: A sweet story with an authentic voice that's perfect for fans of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*.

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### TabbyCat says

#### Pretty good

This was a pretty good book. I liked the characters, the plot, and pretty much everything about it. I really liked the two main characters. I think they were pretty believable and had a realistic relationship. The whole ghost aspect was a really neat touch that I actually really enjoyed. It was a perfectly fine book, not amazing, but not anywhere close to bad. It was a bit short for me, and it didn't have a lot of detail in parts where I think more detail would be important, but I still really liked it. I also feel that the way the book also included a lot of things that weren't really related to the main plot (like the cooking and the dog). It made it more lighthearted and I felt like I got to know the characters a lot better through those experiences. I would definitely recommend to anyone looking for an interesting story with a touch of romance.

I might add more to this review later, if I have the time.

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## **Ptdog says**

Nice story. Isa's a brat. It wasn't hard to figure out who the mysterious antagonist was. I did wonder if the ghost would actually show up, though. I had hoped for some resolution with Thad's condition. Story wasn't clever or particularly creative. It was just a nice story. Sometimes that's just what a reader needs.

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## **Queue says**

This book sat in my TBR pile for some time but I don't know why I waited so long. This was an enjoyable young adult tale with several pleasant differences from other YA stories I've read.

The main characters are Isa Zaman and Macklin "Mackie" Cormack. Isa is one of four children and isn't thrilled when his parents take in Mackie, a boy his age. Isa hates having to share his bed especially since he and Mackie seem to have nothing in common. Things start to look up when Isa and Mackie start to get closer and Isa gets a date to the dance.

However, Isa's life turns upside down when, without notice, his parents decide they're moving from a big city to a small town. Isa doesn't even have a chance to say good-bye to his friends and the house they move into could be haunted.

I absolutely loved how Isa and Mackie's relationship progressed quite naturally, complete with several bumps in the road. There is romance in the story, but Isa and Zaman's romance is not the main focus. It's more about the two of them growing up and their feelings for each other is just a single aspect of them coming of age.

There were a couple mysteries in the story and they blended together in the end. The resolutions of both were realistic and enjoyable.

One of the best aspects of I'll Always Miss You is that Isa and Zaman acted and behaved as typical teenagers. They were totally realistic and not like adults in teen bodies as is often seen in YA.

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## **Amy says**

I want more...

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## **Andrew says**

Isa and his family welcome Mackie, a foster kid with a dark past. Suddenly the family moves to 'middle of nowhere' Missouri. The change changes Mackie, Isa, and the whole family's outlook...Even if their house is Haunted!

The book features great moments of issues teens face all the time: racial prejudices (Isa's family is Moroccan), social prejudices (Mackie's backstory), abuse, violence, sex, sexual identity, relationships,

alcohol, outgrowing ones' friends, getting your driver's permit or license, getting your own room, moving, new school, siblings, obnoxious parents, growing away from your parents, futures in terms of careers...all things that teens deal with, it's in here.

This book is part teen drama, part romance, part ghost story, but I remember, VERY clearly being in BOTH Isa and Mackie's shoes at some point in my life. It was very honestly put to paper in this.

The plot does get a bit predictable in terms of resolution. You don't know how it's going to go...if you read a lot of YA or J, I figured it out kind of fast. I just didn't know all of the details, which is what kept me reading...that and I'll admit...it gets a bit steamy. Just saying...

Overall its a good book

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### **Marbea E. Logan says**

Such a delight!! Mackie and Isa had a chance to find out more about one another and themselves in a safe environment. Not every household is so welcoming rather you're fostering or adopting. The boys were able to explore their wants and desires and not be shunned in the process. I'm glad Isa got to explore a culture he's ethnically connected, but not culturally connected to. I wanted to read more details of their adult years after graduation. Did they pursue their admirations of being a chef and a librarian? What happened with the ornery Thaddeus? We know four years passed since Faiza is four years old, and there probably on their way to Morocco like they promised one another. I loved the family dynamic and the trust and loyalty of the Zaman's.

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### **Pablito says**

An American Moroccan family welcomes a foster boy into their hearts, but the oldest son resents having to share his bedroom with his new foster brother . . . until he doesn't! The transformations are gradual and the support network of the extended family make this an endearing enemies-to-best friends- to lovers story, with a ghost story interwoven. The lovers never get beyond kissing (at least on the page), which is understandable as one is 16 and the other 14, but the slow-burn adds to their sweetness. Raine O'Tierney I will read again.

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### **Yue says**

A cute story about an Arab boy coming of age. At the beginning I found Isa kind of annoying. Immature, selfish, very teenager. He lives with his family (mother, father, 2 little sisters), has 2 friends and likes a red-head girl. One day his parents bring Mackie to live with them. Mackie is the son of a friend who has lived between foster families due the instability of his mother.

Isa behaves very jerkily towards poor Mackie. I know he was a teenager, but still. I hate it when the MC knows he is a douchebag and still is. Isa does not want to share his room, nor his friends, nor his family. Inevitably, they start to be friendly since they share a room.

Only once they move out is when Isa realizes Mackie is his BFF. But then, Mackie gets a GF that makes Isa very jealous. It is in this new home when Isa grows up. I like his relationship with his family because it all felt very real. Quiet dad, a mum with a strong personality, a brat teenager sister, and a cute little sister.

Besides, his older sister, married to a Moroccan chef.

I also like the little mystery with the ghost. It was unexpected, and it gave a little twist to the story. Not completely "contemporary". I like how this mystery made Isa and Mackie closer. But not only the mystery; books also were part of it. Mackie is a bookworm, and there is a little ghost book that he loves to read over and over again: *I'll Always Miss You*. Isa is very curious about this book, and once he reads it, he is very much surprised what it is all about.

While the first part of the book was not entirely engaging, it is when they move out that the story has a better rhythm. I guess it is all part of the growing up, but did his friends have to be jerks (in Isa's opinion) when they come to visit?

In many ways, it reminded me of one of my favorite books, Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe. **\*\*spoiler-ish\*\*** Isa was a immature teenager with douche behavior (yeah, ok, Aristotle is an angry boy, but never a douchebag), while Mackie was a poor, nice boy. Mackie is the first one to come out, and he is the one who kisses Isa first. Isa rejects him at first, because he is sure he is straight, although he likes Mackie very much and has confusing thoughts and dreams about him. There is also an accident involved. This is also a interracial love story (Isa is American-Arab, while Mackie is American). And pretty much most of the members of his family know Isa likes Mackie before he has the chance to come out.

It was a very cute story, the kind I love to read. I love the end since it was a HEA instead of a HFN. And I love that Mackie is happy at last, with his new family, whom he adores, and Isa, whom he loves dearly.

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### **Debbie McGowan says**

In case you read no further than this, I will start by saying this is an excellent YA story - it's romance-plus and a great read for anyone who is a young adult at heart. It's intelligent too - don't expect this to follow a rigid formula. It's a uniquely brilliant story.

I haven't read YA romance since I was a young adult myself, back in the 1980s, and I read about two or three before I realised they were just not my thing. Even in the best stories (and one of those teen reads has stayed with through the years) the characters lacked authenticity and depth. The plots were one-dimensional, as if the only thing that mattered to the main character was getting the boy of her dreams. OK, so teenagers are like that. They do obsess about getting the boy/girl of their dreams, but what happens once they've got them? Well, that's usually where the story ends.

Not so with *I'll Always Miss You*. The romance plays out beautifully, with many hilarious moments. As someone with previous experience of caring for / teaching teenagers, I really appreciated the authenticity of Isa's characterisation. So often his mouth ran ahead of him, or ceased to deliver the words his brain was trying to send its way. He gets confused, enraged, makes silly mistakes. He's a typical 14/15 year old, and Mackie, with his complex and mysterious upbringing, is the perfect complement to this. He is written a little darker, but when he shines, he's as bright as the sun, and his life experiences give him a little less emotional security, but a whole heap more maturity than Isa.

And then there are the supporting characters - Isa's older sister is one of my favourites, along with Bethany the librarian, but all of the characters are so rich and evocative. To me that is the vital element of a gripping story.

So great characters, a blossoming romance between two boys and their 'coming out' (which is so beautifully moving), and as if that wasn't enough there's something a smidge spooky going on. The build-up in the last twenty percent of the story is excellent, and there are some heart-thumping moments of suspense. The final reveal, even if you figure it out earlier, plays out quite unexpectedly but realistically, and the epilogue is beautiful.

Admission: I am a huge fan of Raine O'Tierney's work. She is an incredibly talented author who writes from the heart. Whether it's adult 'MM' or YA romance, her stories are intelligent and emotional with so many beautiful moments. A fantastic read, as always.

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### **wesley says**

This has a great cover so I was totally not expecting the direction that the story took. Huh. It's not unpredictable because it is very predictable; I just wasn't expecting it to focus more on the paranormal stuff. Again, huh.

I can't also connect this hot guy on the cover with the one in the book. Isa, the main character, was childish, selfish, and kind of douchey, if you ask me. Whiny teenage brats who also double as jerks are so not for me. And there were too many loose ends left dangling. Mackie's past, Mackie's father, Talia and that neighbor kid, Isa's friends, Isa's dream, and *\*drum roll\**, Isa and Mackie's relationship. What happened?

I don't know. Maybe I'm getting old for this teenage shit.

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### **Leandra says**

This was such a sweet story, with a little mystery thrown in. It was a coming of age, first love, type of story. Ugh Isa's mouth sometimes, he wasn't the nicest person to Mackie at the beginning but he was a teen and having someone new come in his space I could understand it a little bit but still...I wasn't sure where the story was going at times but I ended up really enjoying it.

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### **Sara says**

This book turned out to be less of a romance and much more of a traditional young adult, family geared story, but despite my initial expectations being wrong I liked the book very much.

First, it's Raine O'Tierney, and as with the other novels by her that I have read - Most Beautiful Words and Bowl Full of Cherries - "I'll Always Miss You" is beautifully written. O'Tierney has a way with words that has me immediately hooked whenever I start a chapter. I can't quite put my finger to what it is that makes it like that but so far it is working. The words run smoothly, the paragraphs like ways and I just have to read a little bit more. It helps that chapters in this novel are short, so what's another couple of minutes?! I'll still have time to make dinner ...

Second, it's a sweet story. These boys are good boys although they make a few mistakes along the way. The supporting characters are good people too, and the environment is very safe and loving. In fact when I think about it the O'Tierney characters usually are good people. She also has a good way of writing children, and families. Oh, the families. So many fictional characters come from hideous families and they stay on living under hideous conditions, struggling with horrendous mental and physical scarring, and I don't say this is not real life for many children, and many adults. But let's not forget that not all families are awful, and not all children grow up without hope. Isa, the novel's main character, has two very sensible and mature parents and at times I feel a relief reading about this sort of family, where I can maintain a belief that all will work out to the best for everyone. And I believe that young readers may need this even more, to truly believe that most adults are there to help and they can be trusted.

Third, this novel has sort of a mystery in it. Even though I knew early on what was causing the "mystery" it didn't bother me, because Isa and Mackie hadn't figured it out. The two of them staying oblivious still felt believable because of their young age, they are only fourteen and fifteen - of course they chose the paranormal solution and kept it from the adults in their family, because that's what kids would do - and because Isa's parents weren't open up front with Isa (of course if they had there hadn't been much of a story to tell).

Finally, books, libraries and story-telling has an important part in the novel, and I have special place in my heart for novels like this. The novel title "I'll Always Miss You" refers to a book that Mackie is obsessed with, so much that Isa, who is definitely not a reader, finally caves and reads it himself.

If I have one complaint it is that I would have wanted to have a deeper explanation about Mackie's mother. As it is the hows and the whys hang pretty much in the air unanswered even as the story came to its end. Then again this is Isa's story, told from his first person point of view, which limits us from taking part of information only known to Mackie or Isa's parents.

So if in the mood for a young adult story where love and romance is just a tiny bit of sub-plot and the major focus is on growing up and family and identity then this story may be for you.

Recommended!

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## **Grammar\*Kitten says**

I won a copy of this in a Q&A on the internet with Ms. O'Tierney herself, and I am in no way obligated to leave a favourable review - just an honest one.

Luckily, I can do both here.

I'll Always Miss You is an amazing foray into a mire of adolescent feeling; there is genuine tenderness and I am amazed at the skill with which Raine O'Tierney harnesses her inner teenager (because apparently her inner teenager is a gay boy; go figure) and articulates it onto the page. Isa and Mackey's story is told with truthfulness and tenderness; there's anger, jealousy and downright confusion, and a lot of obstacles forced into their way. But there is also a lot of love and friendship - which is always the best way to start out. I love how the polar opposites attract, and the healthy dose of the creepy/spooky really helped for me too!

This is an excellent documentation (because HOW CAN THIS BE FICTION?!) of those crucial and



confusing formative years, which can be enjoyed by young and old alike. A superb read, and a big thumbs up to Raine O'Tierney, yet again.

READ IT.

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### **Ash Rocketship says**

I hadn't seen any of O'Tierney's talk about "The Sweetness" prior to reading this, but that's very much what the book is: sweet. This isn't necessarily groundbreaking, but the idea that every queer book has to be is ridiculous. Queer kids deserve sweet, easy romances too. The writing felt pretty young, but definitely appropriate to the narrating character. I really loved all of the characters in this and the wonderful family dynamics. Isa's complicated relationship with his heritage was really nice to see, especially because I heard such similar stories from many of my friends growing up. This book just felt good, like there was room for all the pieces and all the characters, and everyone got to have a nice time.

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