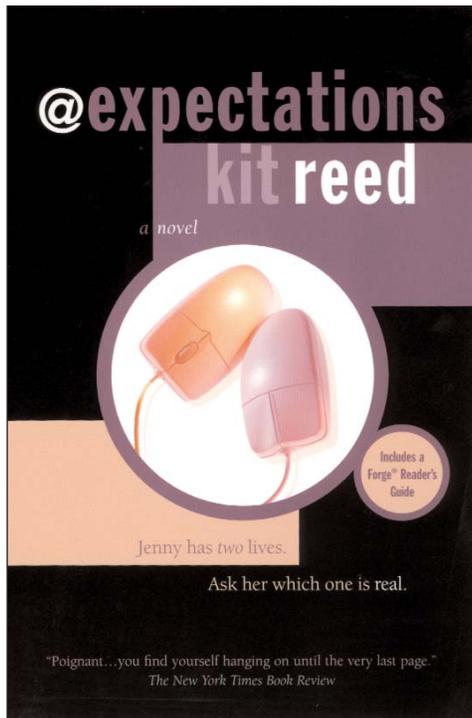




Kit Reed

@expectations



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOHN HALPERN

Kit Reed's new novel, *@expectations*, is about a woman who falls in love with a man she's never met. When her lover disappears from the big, wild virtual community where they've been so happy, she follows him out of the computer and into real life. Reed's novels include

Captain Grownup, *Catholic Girls* and *J. Eden*. A Guggenheim fellow, she is the first American recipient of an international literary grant from the Abraham Worsell Foundation. Her dozens of short stories have appeared in, among others, *The Yale Review*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and *The Norton Anthology of Contemporary Literature*. Both "Weird Women, Wired Women" and "Little Sisters of the Apocalypse" were finalists for the Tiptree Prize for gender-bending fiction.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Jenny Wilder thinks she's happy with her new husband, Charlie, but she isn't. Rushed into marriage at breakneck speed, she finds herself home alone most nights with Charlie's hostile, motherless kids. Her only life in the unfamiliar town of Brevert, South Carolina, is with her colleague Martha and a group of new patients she can't seem to help.

Alone and lonely at her computer, Jenny finds the island of StElene, where people come and go at will and there's a party every night. On StElene, Jenny becomes the glamorous Zan, who can do and say anything she wants. Captivated by the democracy of the un-seen, Zan meets and falls in love with the mysterious, saturnine Reverdy, who knows how to say what she most wants to hear. In love with two men at once, Jenny thinks she can love Reverdy and still be faithful to Charlie because...well, because she and Reverdy meet in a world created by thousands of unseen typists on computers linked in cyberspace. The GrandHotel StElene and all its residents—including Reverdy—sit inside Jenny's computer and even their most passionate moments take place inside their heads.

“Two worlds, both fraught with anger, lust, and longing, collide in this techno-romantic page-turner.”

—BOOKLIST

On StElene Zan has friends—the bright, needy teenager who calls himself Lark—and enemies—Azeath and Mireya, who is Reverdy’s bitter ex-lover. Between them, Azeath and Mireya pledge to meet in real life and hunt down and destroy Reverdy. Meanwhile, Zan is desperate to meet and be with Reverdy in life outside StElene.

When Reverdy disappears from the scene, his lover, his best friend and his worst enemies all go looking for him in real life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The media is full of stories about people who meet in cyberspace and fall in love before they ever meet in real life, the way Reverdy and Zan do in the book. How does this happen?
2. Reverdy and Zan love each other with a passion that would probably be diffused somewhat if they had to cope face-to-face with mundane things like stubble and morning breath. Why are lovers who can’t see each other bound to be more romantic than people you encounter in everyday circumstances?
3. How do two people who’ve never met get to know each other in the first place? How do they get to know each other well enough to fall in love? What makes them trust each other? What makes Zan fall in love with Reverdy, and why does she trust him sight unseen, enough to leave her husband for him?
4. Have you ever formed an impression of somebody before you met them, for instance, through a correspondence or telephone calls? Through conversation in cyberspace? What contributed to the impression you got?
5. If you have, did you meet this person later? Were they what you expected or completely different? Is it possible to know what a person is *like* even though you don’t know what they look like?
6. What kind of morality exists in cyberspace? Should moral and ethical stances be applied to a world that is, essentially, made out of words?
7. In love with two men at once, Jenny has convinced herself that she isn’t hurting anybody. Do you think she’s right, or wrong? If you have an affair in cyberspace, is it only an intellectual affair or are you in fact being unfaithful to your mate in real life?
8. Of the world she creates in *@expectations*, Kit Reed says, “It’s clear to me that everything we do, even in a virtual space, has repercussions.” What do you think this means?

PRAISE FOR KIT REED AND @EXPECTATIONS

“Love-starved Internet trawlers beware, warns this provocative and amusing cautionary tale about chat-room romances by versatile fiction writer Reed.... Jenny Wilder becomes obsessed with life online.... Reed makes Jenny’s slide into an online world seem nearly plausible in this up-to-the-minute alternative love story.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“The always original Reed perceptively probes that point where reality and the virtual converge as a young, married, professional woman finds herself more alive and in love when she meets her anonymous lover online each night.” —KIRKUS REVIEWS

“As Reed amply demonstrates, emotions in the virtual world can be just as genuine as any others. You find yourself hanging on until the very last page.”

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“Reed has kept current with contemporary issues and trends...she remains sharp and incisive. She makes the most of the virtual life’s paradoxical potential for deception and truth-telling, despair and exhilaration, betrayal and trust. In *@expectations*, she insightfully portrays the contradictory demands of meatspace and cyberspace, and picks at the ghostly stitches where the two are joined.”

—ARTYBTE MAGAZINE

“Kit Reed premonishes all you chat-room-addicted iMac humpers with her cautionary tale of Internet-romance meltdown in *@expectations*.” —VANITY FAIR

“Love, sex, and relationships go virtual in this cutting-edge novel. The liberating power of the Internet can be both exciting and dangerous, as characters in this tale graphically demonstrate.”

—ROMANTIC TIMES BOOKCLUB MAGAZINE

“Fiercely intelligent and relentlessly inventive, *@expectations* is the book our times virtually demand. Kit Reed points and clicks on the shadowy intersections of the real and the unreal worlds, and the results are tantalizing, mesmerizing, and addictive as hell.”

—DANIEL HANDLER, AUTHOR OF *THE BASIC EIGHT*

“Reed, a prolific author in many genres, makes wonderful use of her talent for fantasy. StElene, the imaginative byworld of the novel’s action, is irresistible.”

—THE SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS