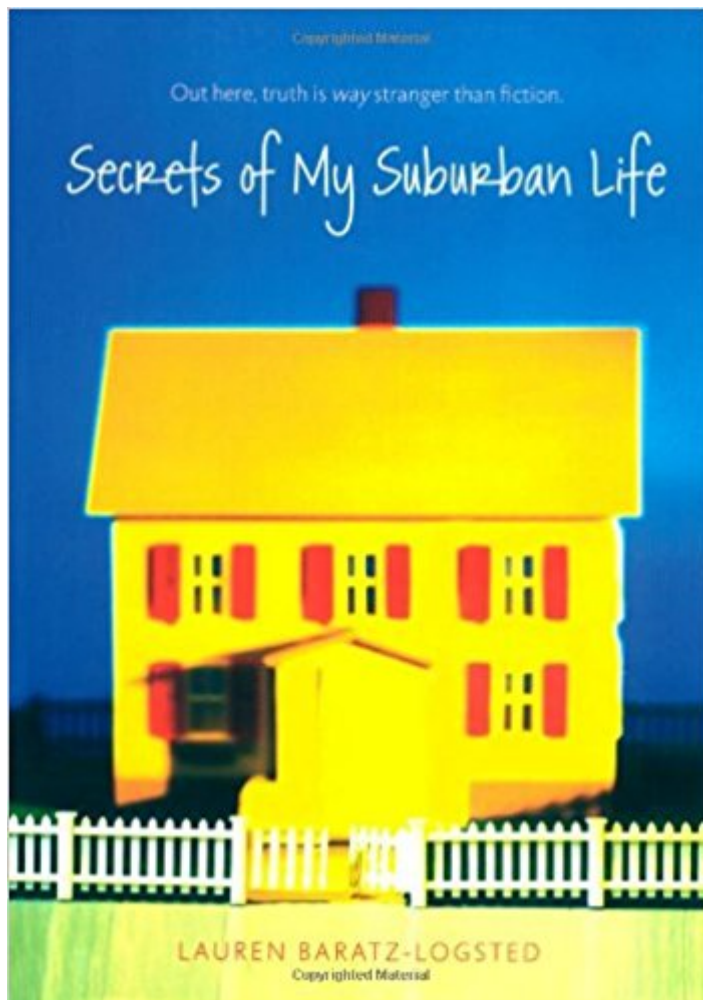


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Secrets Of My Suburban Life



Synopsis

And you thought your life had a dark side.... Everything changed for Lauren ("Ren") after Harry Potter killed her mom. No, it's not what you think--Harry Potter didn't come to life and stab her or anything. A stack of those thick books crushed her. Now Ren is stuck out in the suburbs of Connecticut, dragged out there because her father is too grief stricken to continue living in New York. Ren tries to fit in at her new school, but the most popular girl, Farrin, keeps icing her out. Then Ren discovers that Farrin has a secret: She's been communicating online with an older man, and they are actually planning to meet! Ren can't let Farrin go through with it--she's witnessed enough tragic events as it is. So she comes up with the perfect plan to stop the perv. But then she finds out who he is...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lauren Baratz-Logsted is the author of many adult books, including the international bestseller *The Thin Pink Line*. This is her first book for teens. She lives with her family in Danbury, Connecticut.

Ren D'Arc suffers an Edward Gorey sort of tragedy when her mother is killed by a stack of Harry Potter books. I'm still cackling over that. Then her grieving father uproots her from NYC, fleeing to the suburbs. Adventures ensue. I love Lauren Baratz-Logsted's writing for the same reason that I love John Hughes' brat pack films: fully-realized, quirky, and intriguing secondary characters. Thankfully, Lauren's suburbs aren't so uniformly bland and white as Hughes', so Ren manages to

surround herself with a diverse group of people. How Ren finds her way into a new school, new friends, new challenges, and a new adult support system makes for engaging reading on its own. The fillip of a mystery to solve a la Nancy Drew adds a whiff of danger, and provides momentum to the story. *Secrets of my Suburban Life* is a delightful read.

Ren D'Arc has an unusual name, and an even more unusual story: Her mom was killed when a set of Harry Potter books and her writer dad decides to uproot her from cushy New York City to cushy Danbury, Connecticut. Like any new kid, she struggles to fit in, while also missing her mom, dealing with a distant best friend back home, and befriending her new town's taxi drivers, who she uses exclusively for transportation. She becomes more and more distant from her father, especially when she starts to expect he may be up to no good. Ren is quirky and witty, sometimes seeming far older than her peers, but when she exults in the friendship that takes her a while to earn, or is forced to join the cheerleading team headed up by popular mean girl Farrin Faraway, it's also clear that she's a normal 16-year-old dealing with all the social problems a 16-year-old regularly deals with. But Ren's spunky and shows herself to excel at problem-solving, and her wry observations of her rich friend's parents, the sex predator she's trying to catch online, and the other adults in her life give her a sense of being wiser than her years. Lauren Baratz-Logsted has created a highly memorable character in Ren, and not just because of her unique circumstances. One gets the sense that even if Ren lived in a house with a white picket fence and mom and dad at home, she'd still be more than a little offbeat. She wants to fit in, but thankfully she doesn't go to outrageous lengths to do so, and instead finds herself and eccentric group of new friends who help her when she truly needs it. This humorous YA novel also has a message - well, actually more than one, and Ren had me rooting for her even as she walked right into situations that were clearly not going to go her way. She learns that being smart will get you lots of places, but having people you can rely on will get you even further.

SECRETS OF MY SUBURBAN LIFE by Lauren Baratz-Logsted Rating **** (4 Stars) February 23, 2008 This reviewer rarely ventures into the world of YA books and Teen Fiction, and was not aware that **SECRETS OF MY SUBURBAN LIFE** was just that - teen fiction. But there was no doubt about it, that this book was very funny and enjoyable and regardless of being Teen Fiction or not, it was very good. The story is narrated by Ren (Lauren), who is learning to deal with life with a single (widowed) Dad, moving to a new city, going to a new school, and trying to fit in with new friends. Ren's mother was a writer who happened to be killed by Harry Potter - a stack of Harry Potter books

fell on top of Ren's mother and killed her. So, instead of continuing life in New York, Ren and her father, who also happened to be a writer, are now in the suburbs of Connecticut, which is very boring in comparison to New York. Farrin is the most popular girl in school. Ren and Farrin "connect" when Ren is forced to join the cheerleading squad (since Ren was a failure at all other sports, and every student was expected to participate on at least one sports team). They are also in some of the same classes, and it's during one of these classes that Ren learns an awful secret that Farrin has been keeping. It's so bad that Ren's life will change because of it. Farrin has been secretly communicating with an older man via the Internet, and Ren is afraid that Farrin is about to make a big mistake. Ren figures out a way to impersonate Farrin online to intercept the pervert, but the "joke" is on Ren when she finds out who this pervert is that Farrin is about to meet! The book is told from Ren's point of view, along with email communications between a girl (Sexgurl) and an older man (FDA), and Ren's letters to her mother, who she confides with and misses terribly. At times Ren appeared to be a lot older than her teen years, possibly because she's had to grow up that much faster after her mother died. SECRETS OF MY SUBURBAN LIFE is populated by all sorts of characters typical to the average teenager's life. Ren's got a best friend, Shannon, who she left behind in New York and misses a lot. Shannon, however, has moved on with her life, and has some secrets of her own. Ren's got a crush on Jack, the most popular guy in school, who unfortunately is dating Farrin. Jack and Ren do strike up a friendship, to the astonishment of Ren, and she is secretly hoping Jack may start to have feelings for her. But the competition is pretty fierce. What guy wouldn't want Farrin for a girlfriend? Luckily for Ren, she manages to get involved with Jack's family by mentoring his little sister Amanda, a girl who is as obnoxious as they can get. Ren can't believe that the two are even related. Through Amanda, Ren is able to hang out with Jack's family, and comes closer to him than she ever imagined. Ren is also making new friends at school, in particular T'Keyah who's related to a famous basketball player, but the two don't hit it off right away. It's a lot of work being the new girl in school, and Ren wishes that her mother never died. While a good part of the story is funny and light, there are moments that are much more serious, as Ren deals with the death of her mother, being at a stage in her life when having her mother there was most important. Young readers will connect with Ren, who is the best part of the story and the reason to read it. A very likeable character, Ren is definitely the perfect protagonist. This reviewer is recommending SECRETS OF MY SUBURBAN LIFE because it was such a delightful surprise. Filled with teens that many young readers will relate to, this book is fun to read. It was a very refreshing change for this reviewer, mainly because of the main character, Ren, and for the first time, this reviewer actually enjoyed a book that was aimed at a younger audience. - courtesy of Love Romances and More - M.

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