



Far from Xanadu

By Julie Anne Peters

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Every day in Coalton is pretty much the same. Mike pumps iron in the morning, drives her truck to school, plays softball in the afternoon, and fixes the neighbors' plumbing at night. But when an exotic new girl, Xanadu, arrives in the small Kansas town, Mike's world is turned upside down. Xanadu is everything Mike is not--cool, complicated, sexy, and...straight. This heartbreaking yet ultimately hopeful novel will speak to anyone who has ever fallen in love with someone just out of reach.

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Far from Xanadu By Julie Anne Peters Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Many of the themes that Peters mined in *Luna* appear in this novel, but are more smoothly integrated, making this a more accessible read. For one thing, Mike (born Mary-Elizabeth), who narrates the novel, does not lead a double life, as Luna did. When Xanadu transfers to Mike's small Kansas school, she initially mistakes the narrator for a guy; Mike works out obsessively and dresses in her father's clothes (he killed himself two years ago). Mike, who "acknowledged" she was gay but doesn't embrace it like her male best friend, Jamie, falls hard for the troubled newcomer. The author creates a vivid backdrop in rural Coalton, and it's refreshing that residents accept and even embrace Mike, donating money to send the star softball player to an exclusive camp ("I never, for one day, felt judged or excluded or persecuted in Coalton"). Mike is a unique and realistically complex character, and while she wants to go to camp, she initially resists the town's charity. Her fallout with her morbidly obese mother doesn't seem quite severe enough given the two years of silent treatment she's received, and her own confused feelings towards her father at times seem forced. While Xanadu never becomes as real or as likable as Mike, the author convincingly paints Mike's physical attraction to Xanadu, as well as the heroine's descent into drinking as her obsession with the straight girl grows. Ultimately, readers will root for Mike and will come to understand her pain and need for love. Ages 12-up. (May)

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From School Library Journal

Grade 10 Up—Mike Szabo must deal with more than her share of problems in this engaging, angsty novel. Her alcoholic father committed suicide, her obese mother has given up on life, and her no-good brother has driven the family plumbing business into the ground. To make matters worse, Mike falls deeply in love with a new girl in their small Kansas town. Bad-girl Xanadu has been sent to live with her aunt and uncle after getting into serious trouble dealing drugs. She befriends Mike instantly, though she's undeniably straight, and Mike suffers when Xanadu starts dating. Mike copes by working out at the gym, fixing her neighbors' plumbing, leading her softball team to a winning season, and occasionally binge drinking with her friends. Throughout the novel, she struggles to come to terms with her sexuality—while she is attracted to girls, she doesn't want to label herself, and objects when her gay best friend, Jamie, tries to do so. The people of Coalton are accepting of Mike and Jamie, but eventually Mike realizes that she will need to leave her small town in search of a first relationship, and that her athletic talent might give her a way out. Despite the multitude of difficulties the protagonist faces, the story never slips into melodrama, and all of the issues are handled with sensitivity and compassion. Xanadu sometimes threatens to become a stereotype as the exotic, sophisticated outsider who is also manipulative and selfish. Overall, though, readers will root for Mike in this heartfelt coming-of-age story.—*Miranda Doyle, San Francisco Public Library*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 8-11. Ah, the ambiguities of sexual identity. Most readers, on first encountering Mike, will presume Peters' first-person protagonist is a boy. They will be wrong. Mike is an iron-pumping, softball-playing girl who has way too much ugliness in her life. Her alcoholic father has committed suicide; her mother, who can't cope with life, is morbidly obese, and her brother is a surly slacker who has let the family plumbing business go down the drain. But then Mike meets Xanadu, a new girl in town with a sordid past, and falls head over muscle tee in love. Only problem? Xanadu is straight and no amount of wishful thinking or self-delusion on Mike's part will change that—which is why her endless pining for Xanadu grows a bit tiresome. That said, gay-straight attraction is seldom treated in GLBTQ fiction, and there's no arguing with the honest intensity of

Mike's emotions. Readers will wish her heartsease. *Michael Cart*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donald Campbell:

As people who live in the modest era should be up-date about what going on or info even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era and that is always change and progress. Some of you maybe can update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know which one you should start with. This Far from Xanadu is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and need in this era.

Shaun Richards:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the time or they will get lot of stress from both day to day life and work. So , if we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not only a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the particular book you have read will be Far from Xanadu.

Carol Ramirez:

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Roland Collins:

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