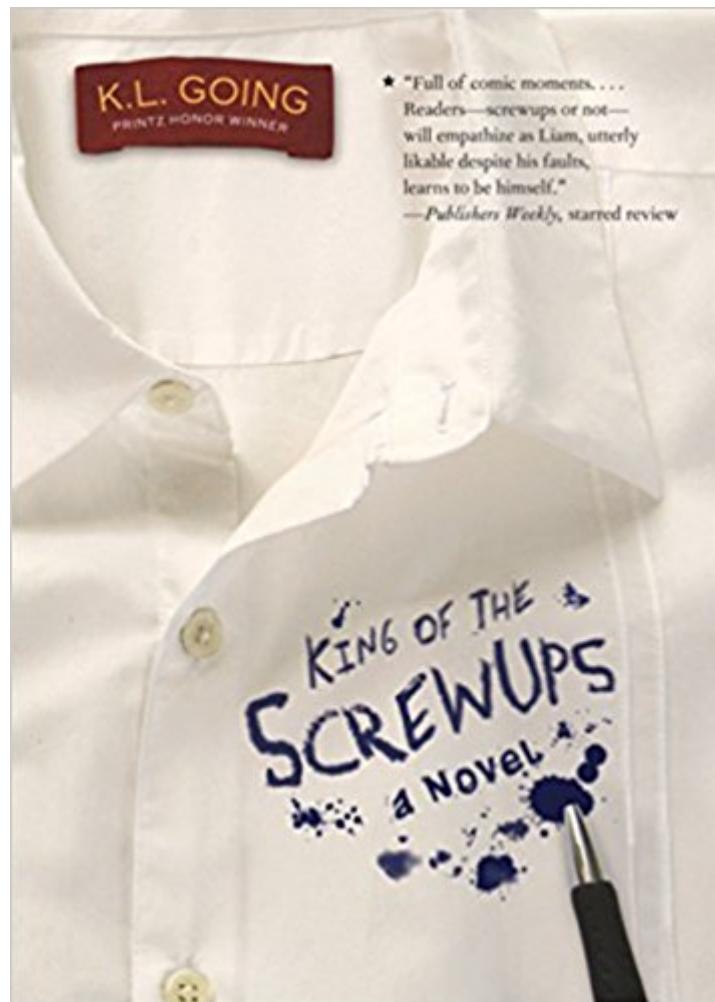


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# King Of The Screwups



## **Synopsis**

Liam Geller is Mr. Popularity. Everybody loves him. He excels at sports; he knows exactly what clothes to wear; he always ends up with the most beautiful girls in school. But he's got an uncanny ability to screw up in the very ways that tick off his father the most. When Liam finally kicked out of the house, his father's brother takes him in. What could a teenage chick magnet possibly have in common with his gay, glam rocker, DJ uncle who lives in a trailer in upstate New York? A lot more than you'd think. And when Liam attempts to make himself over as a nerd in a desperate attempt to impress his father, it's his "aunt" Pete and the guys in his band who convince Liam there's much more to him than his father will ever see.

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 44 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #525,945 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Alternative Family #526 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Boys & Men #549 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Self Esteem & Reliance

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

Like her previous novels, including the Printz Honor Book *Fat Kid Rules the World* (2003), *Going*'s latest is a surprising, memorable story shaped from unlikely character bonds. High-school senior Liam is a talented, straight athlete who is as gorgeous as his mother, a former supermodel, and has inherited her interest in clothes: "I love fashion. And girls." A mediocre student, he constantly disappoints his dad, an angry, sometimes verbally abusive executive who kicks Liam out of the house after one too many perceived

transgressions. Against his homophobic dad's wishes, Liam moves in with his gay, cross-dressing, trailer-dwelling uncle, Aunt Pete. Determined to meet his father's expectations, Liam joins the AV club at his new school and actively tries to fight his natural status as "Mr. Popularity"; but once again, everything goes awry. Liam's parents occasionally feel more like caricatures than fully developed characters, but Liam and Aunt Pete are true originals, and Going balances her strong messages of self-discovery and acceptance with compassionate, bittersweet scenes that highlight the soul-sapping futility of trying to please unappeasable adults. Grades 7-12. --Gillian Engberg --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Going's latest (after *The Garden of Eve*) is full of comic moments featuring "Aunt" Pete's glam-rock band buddies and Liam's relentless blunders, as well as his uncommon fashion expertise ("You're like a fashion Einstein," gushes one of Pete's friends). Readers' screwups or not, will empathize as Liam, utterly likable despite his faults, learns to be himself." -- Publishers Weekly, starred review

Liam is a multifaceted and resilient character who ultimately learns how to be comfortable in his own skin with the help of his new, makeshift family. Going's knack for defying stereotypes and creating memorable characters will not disappoint fans of *Fat Kid Rules the World* (Putnam, 2003) and *Saint Iggy* (Harcourt, 2006).--School Library Journal, starred review

"Going's latest flows easily with smooth, realistic dialogue and reads like a coming-out story for straight guys. This innovative, out-of-the-box approach juxtaposes stereotypes, received values, parental roles and masculinity in a jarringly fun and approachable manner that marks a triumphant left-turn for the genre. Cloaked as a story of tough love, this is actually a psychological exploration of the impact of parental expectations versus the dreams of their children."--Kirkus

"Liam and Aunt Pete are true originals, and Going balances her strong messages of selfdiscovery and acceptance with compassionate, bittersweet scenes that highlight the soul-sapping futility of trying to please unappeasable adults."--Booklist

"Going creates an engaging cast of characters . . . Liam is a complex character whose development into a sympathetic, real person is compelling."--VOYAA (4Q4P)

"After her darker, more enigmatic turn with *Saint Iggy* . . . Going delivers an involving coming-of-age character study likely to please fans of her *Fat Kid Rules the World*.--The Bulletin

"Going's writing is smooth and simple."--New York Times Book Review

A great read for young adults. Almost every teen, including reluctant readers, will be able to relate to

Liam and his well-intentioned (usually), often amusing attempts to win the approval of his impossible to please father. K. L. Going creates characters who are real human beings - sometimes flawed, always sincere, frequently funny and not a single stereotype in the bunch. King of the Screwups shows that sometimes growing up means facing painful truths about yourself, friends and family.

Favorite book by K.L Going!! It is one of her light books, which makes it the right kind of read! Funny, touching, fun, and the characters are the best!LOVED IT!!!

This YA book is about a teenage boy who can't get along with his very strict father, and so he is sent away to live with his mother's brother. It reminded me a little bit of Holden Caulfield in Catcher in the Rye. Happily, all's well that ends well in both books.

great writing compelling story

Really great book following the story of a teenage boy named Liam as he struggles to find an identity that will agree with his father's picky temper. Provides an interesting commentary on issues such as fitting in, homosexuality, and popularity.

This is a good book that anyone who has family that won't let them be themselves needs to read. Enlightening.

With some juvenile delinquents you feel sorry for the parents, with others you feel sorry for the kid. Liam Geller falls into the latter category. We don't get to hear about all the bad things Liam did before the book opens, but I don't think any of it was too hardcore. When we meet Liam he's drunk and cavorting on his father's desk with a half-naked teen girl he doesn't even like that much. That's the straw that breaks his father's back and causes him to kick Liam out of the house. Liam's mother defies her husband and sends Liam to live with his estranged gay uncle instead of his strict grandparents like his father wanted. This is one of the few times she grows a backbone and stands up for Liam, although not enough to let him stay at home. Liam and his mother have a special relationship. During his early childhood she was a runway model and would take Liam with her to shows and photo shoots. They get along great. She gave up her career while still in her prime and opened a boutique. Liam works at her shop and helps her choose clothes and set up displays, something he has a natural talent for. We find out later that his mother was pressured to quit

modeling by her husband who was insecure and jealous. When Liam goes to live with his "Aunt" Pete in a trailer park in small-town New York, Pete, his boyfriend and his two friends become Liam's surrogate family. One's a cop, one is Liam's English teacher, and one is Eddie, the owner of a local clothing store. Liam enrolls in the local high school and makes a plan to show his dad how good he can be so he can move back home. Liam has bad self-esteem and thinks that no matter how hard he tries, he always screws up. Even when he tries to become unpopular at his new school, he can't manage it because he's just too cool. But Liam is really a pretty good kid. He's been told that he's a screw up for so long from his father that it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. With encouragement from Pete and his friends, Liam finds his own path and it looks like he might have a bright future after all. This was my first book by K.L. Going and I'll probably read her other ones. The writing style is easy and there are no slow parts to trudge through. That's not to say it's a big action book, it's not. But it has nice characters and a good story.

Meet Liam Geller, 17-year-old who has it all, starting with popularity. His mother Sarah was a celebrated fashion model for many years, and his father Allan Geller is a highly respected financial guru. But Liam is a screwup, and sometimes in colossal ways. Liam is the King of the Screwups in his father's eyes, a teen that just can't get it together. There's nothing that he can do right; his grades at school are awful, he parties all night long even and gets plastered, knowing the whole time that it will irritate his father. But with a half-naked girl on his father's desk frantically begging his father not to call her parents, Liam has gone too far. This is the latest in a saga of Liam's "future risking behavior by Mr. Popularity," as his father term it. So his father tells him to get out, just before the beginning of his senior year in high school. Rather than move in with his stern grandparents, which is his dad's idea, he follows his mom's guidance and moves in with his cross-dressing, trailer-dwelling, gay disk jockey Uncle Pete. Pete is someone of whom Liam's Dad doesn't even speak to, much less approve of. But "Aunt Pete" agrees to take Liam in, and advises him he needs to figure out what he's going to do with his life. Not overjoyed to have Liam invading his personal life, Pete makes a deal: if Liam refrains from commenting on Pete's collection of animal print garments and neon-colored spandex pants, he'll make room for Liam's carefully selected conservative wardrobe. Liam is convinced that detaching himself from his "Mr. Popularity" identity is the key to becoming the studious individual that his father would approve of, but this consistently backfires. He finds unexpected father figures in Pete and his four friends. Though he's a so-called fish out of water in his uncle's small town in upstate New York, Liam has a real attraction to drama, fashion and modeling. Liam remains straight, and is attracted in a friendly way with to Darleen, the

girl next door, and thinks that his Dad would approve of the friendship. His new school offers Liam a good opportunity to prove himself to his dad. Determined to drop his "Mr. Popularity" persona, he dresses like he pictures a stereotypical nerd to be, joins the AV club, and tries not to be popular. But try as much as he might, no matter how much Liam tries to be unpopular, the more popular he becomes. And with the help of Pete's friends, an English teacher, police officer and others, Liam comes into his own and surprises even himself. Though this is a book for young adults, this reader thought that author K.L. Going did a good job of explaining the trials and tribulations of teens with quite a bit of empathy. The dialogues are quite good, and this is just one example: "Doesn't it bother you that people don't get it?" Pete starts to shake his head then he catches himself and holds still. 'Nope,' he says. 'If you know what you love, it doesn't matter what other people think. Besides, people are challenged when they're uncomfortable.' The book has its lulls here and there, but for the most it's a fairly fast and good read, offering more insight than many such offerings today that either portray teens as negative and brooding "emo" types, or gushing and frivolous characters. Her 2005 book — *The Liberation of Gabriel King* — gave us an understanding of a young man with fears of spiders, corpses, loose cows, and the fifth grade, all against the backdrop living in a small town in Georgia with an active Ku Klux Klan in the summer of 1976. Author K. L. Going is adept at exploring teenage self-esteem, yet making it not too heavy-handed and keeping it all quite upbeat, with parts that can be quite humorous as well. Recommended for teens who want a break from the required reading lists, and for adults who really care about what teenagers might go through in their lives without being beat to boredom with heavy psychological undertones. It's a good book.

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