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# BOOK WORMS

**"Killing Me Softly"**  
by Nicci French  
Warner Vision

Author Nicci French weaves the tale of an ordinary woman blindsided by a feverish romance that quickly becomes an obsession in her novel, "Killing Me Softly." French engrosses readers from page one, leading Alice Loudon through a desperate quest for meaning and an escape from mediocrity, a theme to which most can easily relate.

Alice is blessedly normal with a good job as a research scientist, albeit unchallenging and a bit monotonous. She and her boyfriend, Jake, have reached a level of familiarity that allows their daily routines to run fluently: He cooks her breakfast, irons her clothes and rouses her from sleep each morning; she changes the bed sheets, empties the trash and vacuums the floor. They share the same friends, the same apartment and ultimately, the same life. But as she waits for the train one day, Alice has an epiphany: She realizes she resents her subconscious decisions that seem to choose safety over adventure time and again. She resents the protection afforded her by Jake's simple, yet unchanging love, the safety of her job's security and the refuge provided by her stable group of friends. She feels imprisoned by her normalcy and ponders whether her life will ever serve a higher purpose.

Alice's increasing restlessness sets the stage for Adam's entrance, the blessed winds of change for which Alice has been waiting. Adam is a free spirit, to say the least. He is a mountaineer, a nomad and something of a philosopher. Alice and Adam lock eyes on the street one day and the whirlwind romance begins. As their romance escalates, Alice feels increasingly torn between the security of her old world and the intoxicating freedom of the new. Forced to choose between the security which protects but confines her and the promise of all the adventure and grandeur of a storybook romance, Alice unsurprisingly chooses the latter.

Adam and Alice seem to have an idyllic romance marked by unbridled passion and delirium. They make love the first day they see each other in the street, move in together in less than a month and marry shortly thereafter. So far, Adam and Alice's romance has the markings of any "happily ever after" fairytale ending.

However, from the start of their relationship, French hints to the reader that nothing is as it seems. Subtle details allude to a dark undercurrent that taints seeming perfection. Small oddities pile up

until the reader cannot help but intuit that Alice headed for trouble in paradise.

Alice slowly realizes something is serious wrong with her Prince Charming. The deeper she digs into Adam's past, the more deeply she becomes entangled in the web of lies and deception that seem to be at Adam's core. Finally, married to a man she suspects of committing multiple murders, Alice must quell conflicting feelings within herself as well as solve the puzzle that is Adam in order to stay alive.

"Killing Me Softly" masterfully draws the reader into the turbulent sea of Alice's ever-changing emotions. After reading "Killing Me Softly," one is left with the distinct feeling that only French has told the true ending to "Cinderella" and stories of ilk. If the two can be said to be distinct, passion and obsession are separated only by a very thin line, and obsession is the mortal flaw that marks Adam as Alice. Alice's experiences urge one to consider which is more of a prison: normalcy and a seemingly mundane existence or a life marked by frenzied passion and the craving for an ever-present high?

Called a "compulsive read" by *People* magazine, this novel is characterized by obsession in plot, use of language, tone and word choice. And while obsession may spell doom for a relationship, it makes for a thoroughly good read.



—Lindsye Forsen

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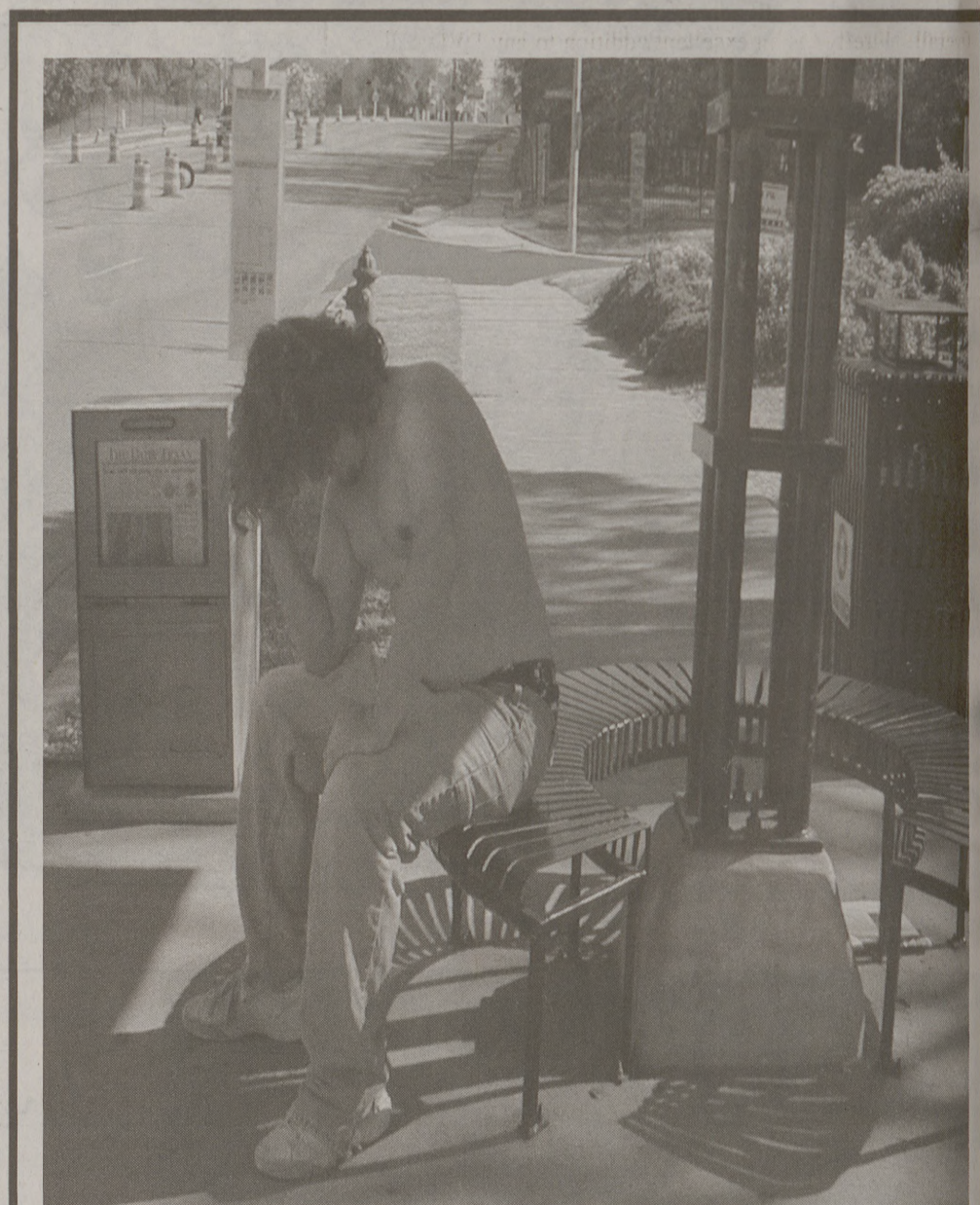
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