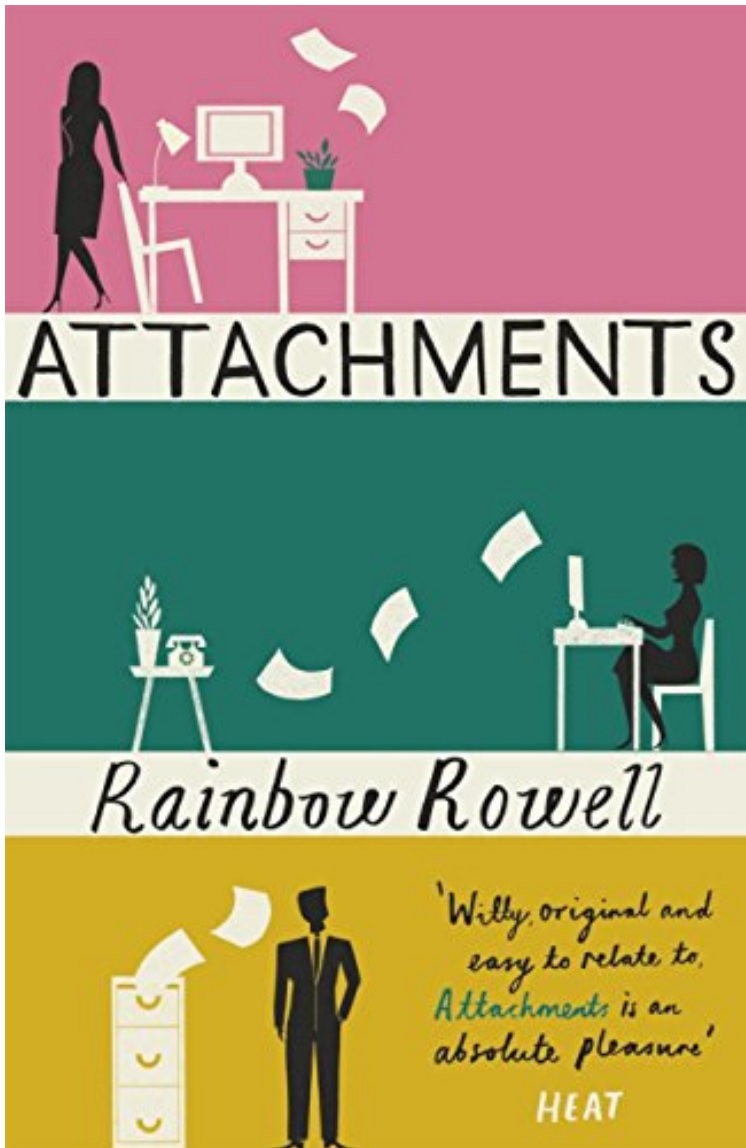


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Attachments (English Edition)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIt's 1999 and for the staff of one newspaper office, the internet is still a novelty. By day, two young women, Beth and Jennifer, spend their hours emailing each other, discussing in hilarious detail every aspect of their lives, from love troubles to family dramas. And by night, Lincoln, a shy, lonely IT guy spends his hours reading every exchange. At first their emails offer a welcome diversion, but as Lincoln unwittingly becomes drawn into their lives, the more he reads, the more he finds himself falling for one of them. By the time Lincoln realizes just how head-over-heels he really is, it's way too late to introduce himself. What would he say to her? 'Hi, I'm the guy who reads your e-mails - and also, I think I love you'. After a series of close encounters, Lincoln decides it's time to muster the courage to follow his

heart...and find out whether there really is such a thing as love before first-
sight.ExtraitATTACHMENTSATTACHMENTSATTACHMENTSCHAPTER 1CHAPTER 2CHAPTER
3CHAPTER 4CHAPTER 5CHAPTER 6CHAPTER 7CHAPTER 8CHAPTER 9CHAPTER 10CHAPTER
11CHAPTER 12CHAPTER 13CHAPTER 14CHAPTER 15CHAPTER 16CHAPTER 17CHAPTER
18CHAPTER 19CHAPTER 20CHAPTER 21CHAPTER 22CHAPTER 23CHAPTER 24CHAPTER
25CHAPTER 26CHAPTER 27CHAPTER 28CHAPTER 29CHAPTER 30CHAPTER 31CHAPTER
32CHAPTER 33CHAPTER 34CHAPTER 35CHAPTER 36CHAPTER 37CHAPTER 38CHAPTER
39CHAPTER 40CHAPTER 41CHAPTER 42CHAPTER 43CHAPTER 44CHAPTER 45CHAPTER
46CHAPTER 47CHAPTER 48CHAPTER 49CHAPTER 50CHAPTER 51CHAPTER 52CHAPTER
53CHAPTER 54CHAPTER 55CHAPTER 56CHAPTER 57CHAPTER 58CHAPTER 59CHAPTER
60CHAPTER 61CHAPTER 62CHAPTER 63CHAPTER 64CHAPTER 65CHAPTER 66CHAPTER
67CHAPTER 68CHAPTER 69CHAPTER 70CHAPTER 71CHAPTER 72CHAPTER 73CHAPTER
74CHAPTER 75CHAPTER 76CHAPTER 77CHAPTER 78CHAPTER 79CHAPTER 80CHAPTER
81CHAPTER 82CHAPTER 83CHAPTER 84CHAPTER 85CHAPTER 86CHAPTER 87CHAPTER
88CHAPTER 89ACKNOWLEDGMENTSABOUT THE AUTHORCHAPTER 1

From: Jennifer Scribner-Snyder To: Beth Fremont Sent: Wed, 08/18/1999 9:06 AM Subject: Where are you?Would it kill you to get here before noon? Im sitting here among the shards of my life as I know it, and youif I know you, you just woke up. Youre probably eating oatmeal and watching Sally Jessy Raphael. E-mail me when you get in, before you do anything else. Dont even read the comics. Okay, Im putting you before the comics, but make it quick. Ive got an ongoing argument with Derek about whether For Better or For Worse is set in Canada, and today might be the day they prove me right. I think Im pregnant. What? Why do you think youre pregnant? I had three drinks last Saturday. I think we need to have a little talk about the birds and the bees.

Thats not exactly how it happens. Whenever I have too much to drink, I start to feel pregnant. I think its because I never drink, and it would just figure that the one time I decide to loosen up, I get pregnant. Three hours of weakness, and now Im going to spend the rest of my life wrestling with the special needs of a fetal alcoholic. I dont think they call them that. Its little eyes will be too far apart, and everyone will look at me in the grocery store and whisper, Look at that horrible lush. She couldnt part with her Zima for nine months. Its tragic. You drink Zima? Its really quite refreshing. Youre not pregnant. I am. Normally, two days before my period, my face is broken out, and I get pre-cramps cramping. But my skin is as clear as a babys bottom.

And instead of cramps, I feel this strangeness in my womb region. Almost a presence. I dare you to call Ask-A-Nurse and tell them that youve got a presence in your womb region. Given: This is not my first pregnancy scare. I will acknowledge that thinking Im pregnant is practically a part of my monthly premenstrual regimen. But Im telling you, this is different. I feel different. Its like my body is telling me, It has Begun.I cant stop worrying about what happens next. First I get sick. And then I get fat. And then I die of an aneurysm in the delivery room. ORand then you give birth to a beautiful child. (See how youve tricked me into playing along with your pregnancy fiction?) ORand then I give birth to a beautiful child, whom I never see because he spends all his waking hours at the day-care center with some minimum-wage slave he thinks is his mother. Mitch and I try to eat dinner together after the babys in bed, but were both so tired all the time.

I start to doze off while he tells me about his day; hes relieved because he wasnt up to talking anyway. He eats his sloppy joe in silence and thinks about the shapely new consumer-science teacher at the high school. She wears black pumps and nude panty hose and rayon skirts that shimmy up her thighs whenever she sits down. What does Mitch think? (About the Presence in your womb. Not the new consumer-science teacher.)

He thinks I should take a pregnancy test. Good man. Perhaps a common-sensical kind of guy like Mitch would have been better off with that home ec teacher. (Shed never make sloppy joes for dinner.) But I guess hes stuck with you, especially now that theres a special-needs child on the way.CHAPTER 2LINCOLN, YOU LOOK terrible.Thanks, Mom. Hed have to take her word for it. He hadnt looked in a mirror today. Or yesterday. Lincoln rubbed his eyes and ran his fingers through his hair, trying to smooth it downor maybe just over. Maybe he should have combed it when he got out of the shower last night.Seriously, look at you. And look at the clock. Its noon. Did you just wake up?Mom, I dont get off work until one a.m.She frowned, then handed him a spoon. Here, she said, stir these beans. She turned on the mixer and half shouted over it. I still dont understand what you do in that place that cant be done in daylight. No, honey, not like that, youre just petting them. Really stir.Lincoln stirred harder. The whole kitchen smelled like ham and onions and something else, something sweet. His stomach was growling. I told you, he said, trying to be heard, somebody has to be there. In case theres a computer problem, andI dont knowWhat dont you know? She

turned off the mixer and looked at him. I think maybe they want me to work at night so that I don't get close to anyone else. What? Well, if I got to know people, he said, I might stir. Talk and stir. If I got to know people he stirred I might not feel so impartial when I'm enforcing the rules. I still don't like that you read other people's mail. Especially at night, in an empty building. That shouldn't be someone's job. She tasted whatever she was mixing with her finger, then held the bowl out to him. Here, taste this. What kind of world do we live in, where that's a career? He ran his finger around the edge of the bowl and tasted it. Icing. Can you taste the maple syrup? He nodded. The building isn't really empty, he said. There are people working up in the newsroom. Do you talk to them? No. But I read their e-mail. It's not right. How can people express themselves in a place like that? Knowing someone's lurking in their thoughts. I'm not in their thoughts. I'm in their computers, in the company's computers. Everyone knows it's happening. It was hopeless trying to explain it to her. She'd never even seen e-mail. Give me that spoon, she sighed. You'll ruin the whole batch. He gave her the spoon and sat down at the kitchen table, next to a plate of steaming corn bread. We had a mailman once, she said. Remember? He'd read our postcards? And he'd always make these knowing comments. Your friend is having a good time in South Carolina, I see. Or, I've never been to Mount Rushmore myself. They must all read postcards, all those mailmen. Mail people. It's a repetitive job. But this one was almost proud of it. I only read enough to see if they're breaking a rule. It's not like I'm reading their diaries or something. His mother wasn't listening. Are you hungry? You look hungry. You look deficient, if you want to know the truth. Here, honey, hand me that plate. He got up and handed her a plate, and she caught him by the wrist. Lincoln. What's wrong with your hands? Nothing's wrong. Look at your fingers. They're gray. It's ink. What? Ink. WHEN LINCOLN WORKED at McDonald's in high school, the cooking oil got into everything. When he came home at night, he felt all over the way your hands feel when you get done eating French fries. The oil would get into his skin and his hair. The next day, he would sweat it out into his school clothes. At The Courier, it was ink. A gray film over everything, no matter how much anyone cleaned. A gray stain on the textured walls and the acoustic ceiling tiles. The night copy editors actually handled the papers, every edition, hot off the presses. They left gray fingerprints on their keyboards and desks. They reminded Lincoln of moles. Serious people with thick glasses and gray skin. That might just be the lighting, he thought. Maybe he wouldn't recognize them in the sunshine. In full color. They surely wouldn't recognize him. Lincoln spent most of his time at work in the information technology office downstairs. It had been a dark room about five years and two dozen fluorescent lights ago, and with all of the lights and the computer servers, it was like sitting inside a headache. Lincoln liked getting called up to the newsroom, to reboot a machine or sort out a printer. The newsroom was wide and open, with a long wall of windows, and it was never completely empty. The night side editors worked as late as he did. They sat in a clump at one end of the room, under a bank of televisions. There were two, who sat together, right next to the printer, who were young and pretty. (Yes, Lincoln had decided, you could be both pretty and mole-like.) He wondered if people who worked nights went on dates during the day. CHAPTER 3 From: Beth Fremont To: Jennifer Scribner-Snyder Sent: Fri, 08/20/1999 10:38 AM Subject: I sort of hate to ask, but Are we done pretending that you're pregnant? Not for 40 weeks. Maybe 38 by now. Does that mean we can't talk about other things? No, it means we should talk about other things. I'm trying not to dwell on it. Good plan. Okay. So. Last night, I got a call from my little sister. She's getting married. Doesn't her husband mind? My other little sister. Kiley. You met her boyfriend/fianc, Brian, at my parents house on Memorial Day. Remember? We were making fun of the Sigma Chi tattoo on his ankle. Right, Brian. I remember. We like him, right? We love him. He's great. He's just the kind of guy you hope your daughter will meet someday at an upside-down-margarita party. Is that a fetal-alcoholic joke? This wedding is your parents fault. They named her Kiley. She was doomed from birth to marry a hunky, fratty pre-med major. Pre-law. But Kiley thinks he'll end up running his dad's plumbing supply company. Could be worse. It could hardly be better. Oh. I'm sorry. I just now got that this wasn't good news. What did Chris say? The usual. That Brian's a tool. That Kiley listens to too much Dave Matthews. Also, he said, I've got practice tonight, so don't wait up, hey, hand me those Zig-Zags, would you, are you in the wedding? Cool, at least I'll get to see you in another one of those Scarlett O'Hara dresses. You're a hot bridesmaid, come here. Did you listen to that tape I left for you? Danny says I'm playing all over his bass line, but Jesus, I'm doing him a favor. And then he proposed. In Bizarro World. In the real world, Chris is never going to propose. And I can't decide if that makes him a jerk or if maybe I'm the jerk for wanting it so bad. And I can't even talk to him about it, about marriage, because he would say that he does want it. Soon. When he's got some momentum going. When the band is back on track. That he doesn't want to be a drag on

me, he doesnt want me to have to support himPlease dont point out that I already support himbecause thats only mostly true. Mostly? You pay his rent. I pay the rent. I would have to pay rent anywayI would have to pay the gas bill and the cable bill and everything else if I lived alone. I wouldnt save a nickel if he moved out.Besides, I dont mind paying most of the bills now, and I wont mind doing it after were married. (My dad has always paid my moms bills, and no one calls her a parasite.)It isnt the who-pays-the-bills issue thats a problem. Its the acting-like-an-adult issue. Its acceptable in Chriss world for a guy to live with his girlfriend while he works on a demo. Its not as coolto chase your guitar fantasy while your wifes at work.If you have a wife, youre an adult. Thats not who Chris wants to be. Maybe thats not who I want him to be. Who do you want him to be? Most days? I think I want the wild-haired music man. The guy who wakes you up at 2 a.m. to read you the poem he just wrote on your stomach. I want the boy with kaleidoscope eyes. There would very likely be no more 2 a.m. tummy poems if Chris got a real job. Thats true. So youre okay? No. Im about to get fitted for another bridesmaid dress. Strapless. Kileys already picked it out. Im dog years away being from okay. But I dont think I can complain, can I? I want him. And he wants to wait. And I still want him. So I cant complain. Of course you can complain. Thats unalienable. On the bright side, at least youre not pregnant. Neither are you. Take a pregnancy test.CHAPTER 4JUST FOR THE recordhis own internal recordLincoln never would have applied for this job if the classified ad had said, Wanted: someone to read other peoples e-mail. Swing shift.The Courier ad had said, Full-time opportunity for Internet security officer. \$40K+ Health, dental.Internet security officer. Lincoln had pictured himself building firewalls and protecting the newspaper from dangerous hackersnot sending out memos every time somebody in Accounting forwarded an off-color joke to the person in the next cubicle.The Courier was probably the last newspaper in America to give its reporters Internet access. At least thats what Greg said. Greg was Lincolns boss, the head of the IT office. Greg could still remember when the reporters used electric typewriters. And I can remember, he said, because it wasnt that long ago1992. We switched to computers because we couldnt order the ribbon anymore, I shit you not.This whole online thing was happening against managements will, Greg said. As far as the publisher was concerned, giving employees Internet access was like giving them the option to work if they felt like it, look at porn if they didnt.But not having the Internet was getting ridiculous.When the newspaper launched its Web site last year, the reporters couldnt even go online to read their stories. And most readers wanted to e-mail in their letters to the editor these days, even third-graders and World War II veterans.By the time Lincoln started working at The Courier, the Internet experiment was in its third month. All employees had internal e-mail now. Key employees, and pretty much everyone in the news division, had some access to the World Wide Web.If you asked Greg, it was all going pretty well.If you asked anyone in upper management, it was chaos.People were shopping and gossiping; they were joining online forums and fantasy football leagues. There was some gambling going on. And some dirty stuff. But that isnt such a bad thing, Greg argued. It helps us weed out the sickos.The worst thing about the Internet, as far as Gregs bosses were concerned, was that it was now impossible to distinguish a roomful of people working diligently from a roomful of people taking the What-Kind-of-Dog-Am-I? online personality quiz.And thusLincoln.On his very first night, Lincoln helped Greg load a new program called WebFence on to the network. WebFence would monitor everything everyone was doing on the Internet and the Intranet. Every e-mail. Every Web site. Every word.And Lincoln would monitor WebFence.An especially filthy-minded person (maybe Greg) had defined the programs mail filters. There was a whole list of red flags: nasty words, racial slurs, supervisors names, words like secret and classified.That last one, classified, beached the entire network during WebFences first hour by flagging and storing each and every e-mail sent to or from the Classified Advertising department.The software also flagged large attachments, suspiciously long messages, suspiciously frequent messages. Every day, hundreds of possibly illicit e-mails were sent to a secure mailbox, and it was Lincolns job to follow up on every one. That meant reading them, so he read them. But he didnt enjoy it.He couldnt admit this to his mother, but it did feel wrong, what he was doing, like eavesdropping. Maybe if he were the sort of person who liked that sort of thingHis girlfriend Samhis ex-girlfriendalways used to peek in other peoples medicine cabinets. Robitussin, shed report in the car on the way home. And generic Band-Aids. And something that looked like a garlic press.Lincoln didnt even like using other peoples bathrooms.There was a whole complicated process he was supposed to follow if he caught someone actually breaking The Couriers rules. But most offenses called for just a written warning, and most offenders got the message after that.In fact, the first round of warnings worked so well, Lincoln started to run out of things to do. WebFence kept flagging e-mails, a few dozen a day, but they were almost all false alarms. Greg didnt seem to care. Dont worry, he said to Lincoln on the first day that WebFence

didn't snag a single legitimate violator. You won't get fired. The men upstairs love what you're doing. I'm not doing anything, Lincoln said. Sure, you are. You're the guy who reads their e-mail. They're all scared of you. Who's scared? Who's they? Everybody. Are you kidding? This whole building is talking about you. They're not scared of me. They're scared of getting caught. Getting caught by you. Just knowing that you're snooping around their Sent folders every night is enough to keep them following the rules. But I'm not snooping around. You could, Greg said. I could? Greg went back to what he was doing, some sort of laptop autopsy. Look, Lincoln, I've told you. Somebody has to be here at night anyway. Somebody has to answer the phone and say, Help desk. You're just sitting around, I know. You don't have enough work, I know. I don't care. Do the crossword. Learn a foreign language. We had a gal who used to crochet Lincoln didn't crochet. He read the newspaper. He brought in comic books and magazines and paperback novels. He called his sister sometimes, if it wasn't too late and if he felt lonely. Mostly, he surfed the Net.

CHAPTER 5
From: Jennifer Scribner-Snyder
To: Beth Fremont
Sent: Wed, 08/25/1999 10:33 AM
Subject: This is only a test.

In the case of an actual emergency it's here. Return to your usual programming. It? You know it, the thing that tells you you're not pregnant. It? Do you mean your period? Your monthly? Did your aunt Ruby arrive for a five-to seven-day visit? Is it that time? Why are you talking like you're in a feminine napkin commercial? I'm trying to be more careful. I don't want to trigger one of those red flags and send some company watchdog computer into a frenzy, just because I sent an e-mail about it. I can't imagine that any of the company's red-flag words involve menstruation. So you're not worried about it? About your period? No, about that note we got. The one that warned us not to send personal e-mails. The one that said we could be fired for improper use of our computers. Am I worried that the bad guys from Tron are reading our e-mail? Uh, no. All this security stuff isn't aimed at people like us. They're trying to catch the pervs. The online porn addicts, the Internet blackjack players, the corporate spies. Those are probably all red-flag words. Pervs. Porn. Spies. I bet red flag is a red flag. I don't care if they are reading our mail. Bring it on, Tron! I dare you. Try to take away my freedom of expression. I'm a journalist. A free-speech warrior. I serve in the Army of the First Amendment. I didn't take this job for the bad money and the regressive health care coverage. I'm here for the truth, the sunshine, the casting open of closed doors! Free-speech warrior. I see. What are you fighting for? The right to give Billy Madison five stars? Hey now. I wasn't always a spoiled movie reviewer. Don't forget my two years covering North Havenbrook. Two years in the trenches. I bled ink all over that suburb. I went Bob Woodward on its ass. Furthermore, I would have given Billy Madison six stars if they were mine to give. You know how I feel about Adam Sandler and that I give bonus stars for Styx songs. (Two stars if it's Renegade.) Fine. I surrender. Company Internet policy be damned: I started my period last night. Say it loud, say it proud. Congratulations. Yeah, that's the thing. What's the thing? When it started, I didn't feel my usual hurricane of relief and Zima cravings. I mean, I was relieved because, on top of the Zima drinking, I don't think I've eaten anything with folic acid in the last six months. I may even be eating things that leach folic acid from your system, so I was definitely relieved but I wasn't ecstatic. I went downstairs to tell Mitch. He was working on marching band diagrams, which, normally, I wouldn't interrupt, but this was important.

Just FYI, I said, I started my period. And he set down his pencil and said, Oh. (Just like that. Oh.) When I asked him why he said it that way, he said he thought that maybe I really was pregnant this time and that that would have been nice. You know I want kids, he said. Right, I said. Someday. Someday soon, he said. Someday eventually. When we're ready. And then he turned back to his diagrams. Not mad or impatient. Just sorrowful, which is much, much worse. So I said, When we're ready, right? And he said I'm ready now. I'm ready last year, Jenny, and I'm starting to think that maybe you never will be. You don't even want to be ready. You act like getting pregnant is a disease you can catch from public toilets. What did you say? What could I say? I'm not ready. And maybe I misled him every time I used the words someday and eventually. I can't picture myself with kids but I couldn't picture myself married, either, until I met Mitch. I always thought the kid idea would grow on me, that all Mitch's healthy desires would infect me, and one morning I'd wake up thinking, What a beautiful world in which to bring a child. What if that never happens? What if he decides to cut his losses and find some perfectly normal woman who on top of being naturally thin and never having turned to prescription antidepressants also wants to have his babies ASAP? Like Barbie in a state of perpetual ovulation. Yes. Like the fictional new consumer-science teacher. Yes! It won't happen. Why not? For the same reason Mitch tries to grow giant pumpkins every summer even though your yard is too small, is infested with beetles and doesn't get enough sun. Mitch doesn't want the easy thing. He wants to work a little harder to get the thing he really wants. So he's a fool. A fool whose seeds find no purchase. That's not the point. The point is, he's a fool who won't give up on you. I'm not sure that you're right, but I think I might feel

better now. So, good work. Anytime.(You know that I mean anytime after 10:30 a.m. or so, right?) (I do.)CHAPTER 6JENNIFER SCRIBNER-SNYDER, ACCORDING to the company directory, was a Features copy editor.Beth Fremont, Lincoln knew. He knew of, anyway. Hed read her movie reviews. She was funny, and he usually agreed with her. She was the reason hed gone to see Dark City and Flirting With Disaster and Babe.By the time Lincoln realized that he hadnt sent a warning to Beth Fremont and Jennifer Scribner-Snyderafter who knew how many offenses, three? half a dozen?he couldnt remember why not. Maybe because he couldnt always figure out what rule they were breaking. Maybe because they seemed completely harmless. And nice.And now he couldnt send them a warning, not tonight. Not when they were actually worried about getting a warning. That would be weird, wouldnt it? Knowing someone had read an e-mail youd written about whether someone was reading your e-mail? If you were an excessively paranoid person, it could make you wonder whether all the other things you were worried about were also true. It might make you think, Maybe they are all out to get me.Lincoln didnt want to be the bad guy from Tron.And alsoAlso, he kind of liked Beth and Jennifer, as much as you can like people from reading their e-mail, only some of their e-mail.He read through the exchange again. Ass was definitely a red-flagged word. So was blackjack and porn. He wasnt sure about perv or menstruation.He trashed the files and went home.Revue de presseAn original, quirky but enjoyable book with many likeable characters and a plot that keeps you guessing all the way through. (Carl Difford South Wales Argus)Attachments is such a fantastic book! It's funny and heart-warming, and just a beautiful, beautiful read (ONCE UPON A BOOKCASE)