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## The Born Again Virgin

*Stephanie Zia*

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## **The Born Again Virgin** Stephanie Zia

When widow Sally Lightfoot hits 50 she joins the Land of the Invisible where even street charity chuggers avoid her. So her crazy, rock chick friend's challenge to get back out there and lose her wididity, her born-again virginity, falls on deaf ears. Why would she want to go through the dating hell her daughter Ami was going through? With added flabby bits? The chances of a stray suddenly-single Daniel Craig type passing her way were next to zero anyway. Let alone one who'd be interested in a short, mixed-up 50 year old who had not only misplaced her waistline but was still madly in love with her dead husband.

But when Sally braves a solo holiday to the traffic-free Greek isle of Hydra, 60s home of Leonard Cohen and island of choice for affluent old hippies, a chance encounter with a man of her own age, singing Leonard Cohen songs to the tourists, awakens parts of Sally that she'd forgotten she ever possessed. If she could, she most definitely would. But why would he? When beautiful, moody Ami turns up, he pays Sally more attention. For all the wrong reasons.

A tender, moving Truly Madly meets Shirley Valentine story of a widow's journey from grief to acceptance to moving forwards in her life in a world where sex is everywhere but death is still the great taboo.

## **The Born Again Virgin Details**

Date : Published February 14th 2013 by CreateSpace (first published January 21st 2011)

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Author : Stephanie Zia

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## **From Reader Review The Born Again Virgin for online ebook**

### **Al says**

Most definitions of the “coming of age” story involve a youth’s transformation into adulthood. Although not as dramatic, there are other changes later in life that are equally , and often more, traumatic. For some, retirement is like this. I could tell you some horror stories about former significant others and empty nest syndrome. For Sally Lightfoot it is primarily widowhood at a relatively young age.

The struggles Sally goes through are not unlike those of a young person in the typical coming of age story. There are issues of sex and romance. Is she ready? Will she ever be ready? There are concerns with finances and what she’ll do for a job.

"Ten Good Reasons to Lie About Your Age" got off to a slow start for me. As the story progressed and Sally started interacting more with people beyond her children and a small number of others, the story picked up steam. As this happened, her story also became more humorous, rather than just sad, and I began rooting for her to find her new equilibrium and, hopefully, happiness. As with a coming of age story, those who are going through a similar situation can take comfort in the fact that the difficulties are universal. Those who have already been there (and those convinced they never will) can laugh at Sally’s foibles.

\*\*Originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. May have received a free review copy. \*\*

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### **Karen Pimblett says**

This was an amazingly well thought out story. I was drawn in from the opening chapter and I did not want to put it down.

I just wish it had been proof read a little better.

The story itself deserves five stars & believe me I truly want to give it that.

But the small errors do insist that it be marked down.

This is the first time I have read Stephanie's work and I shall certainly do so again.

All in all - a good 4 stars from me.

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### **Angie Peoples says**

As a recent widow myself, I didn't have a clue what to expect out of this book; however, the more I read the harder it was to put down. There are some great tips in this book for widows believe it or not along with a great story about a widow's path to rediscovering herself after the lose of her spouse. Great book and wonderful writing.

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### **Dee-Ann says**

Wavering between 3 and 4 stars. This was a Kindle freebie. I think it was probably a bit too realistic for the

first half, in that the main character got too bogged down in her grief and could not move on. It was funny in bits and inciteful but it was not until the end of the holiday that there was any light at the end of the tunnel ... and it was at that point I wanted more.

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### **Tahlia Newland says**

I figure that the low starred reviews here are probably by people disappointed because this is not a romantic comedy though it has been advertised as such. It's often not easy for a book that crosses genres to find its correct place. Does one very funny scene make it a comedy? No. Does half the book dealing with a possible romance make it a romance? No. This is most correctly women's fiction or contemporary fiction because that's where it will find readers that will appreciate it. Only when we remove our expectations can we read what is actually before us and evaluate it for what it is, not for what we think it should be.

'The Widows To Do List' is a moving, thought-provoking and occasionally funny story about a recently widowed woman in her fifties as she tries to come to terms with her new status. Sally comes across as very real, which makes her easy to relate to. She mothered two children--now grown and left home--and loved her husband, but an accident took him away and left her grief stricken.

The majority of the story takes place one year after Dom's death. Sally is managing by making a list of things to achieve, as suggested by a book on being a widow, and slowly working towards achieving each thing on the list. But Sally's old friend Ramone, thinks the list is ridiculous and suggests some alternatives, one is to have sex as soon as possible, because a widow, having been with one man for so long, is somewhat like a virgin. It's so long since she dated anyone that it's like starting at the beginning again.

Sally doesn't like being alone, but she doesn't want to date anyone either until someone comes along who interests her, then her insecurities come out in force.

The author has referred to the book as a romantic comedy, but I think it's more than that. There is some romance and some comedy, but the book is not about the romance, it's about a woman finding herself. There are funny parts--the scene where she goes into a sex shop and sees rows of willys had tears rolling down my cheeks--but overall the subject matter is reflective, at least for a woman like myself who has been married as long as Sally had. I empathised with Sally from the beginning and found myself wondering how it would feel to be alone after so long as a couple. Sally is also very much a mother and her concern for her children is something that all mothers will be able to relate to.

Ms Zia writes excellent prose with keen insight. I felt as if I was right there in the scenes, and the plot was such that, though the action was very low-key, I couldn't wait to get back to the book to see how Sally was getting on. The success of the book largely hangs on the excellent characterisation, not just of Sally, but of the supporting cast as well, and also the sensitive portrayal of the challenges facing a widow. It lead me to wonder how much our sense of self and social standing are related to our partner.

I recommend this for married and recently widowed women. If you still have a husband, it should remind you not to take him for granted. If your husband is dead, you will find reassurance that you're not the only one that feels the way you do.

I received this book free from the author in return for an honest review. Reviewed on behalf of the Awesome Indies. This book reaches the standards for inclusion in the Awesome Indies list of quality independent

fiction.

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### **mari says**

A newly widowed former back up singer must now figure out what to do with her life. With two grown up children with their own lives and problems, Sally must go about it on her own with a little help from old friends and new acquaintances.

Fun adventure in the islands of Greece and in the new sex toy shop in her hometown. English sensibility and humour abounds. The characters are engaging and the plot entertaining, I just don't know where the title came in to it besides the chapter intros. Doesn't matter, though. It didn't lessen my late night readings and enjoyment.

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### **Holly says**

This was a fresh take on all the novels I've read on growing older, romance, loss, finding your place in the world and finding meaning in your life, again.

It has its sad (but not many), melancholy, funny and even what the ? moments (even at the funeral). I found myself in the novel and wondering what I would do in her situation. Would I date? Would I move? Would I have to move? Would I find a new friend and stability? What do you do when your children have grown and your husband is gone?

I recommend this for a book club read.

I received this book from Goodreads giveaway.

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### **Harmony Kent says**

Sad, Sexy, Raucous Laugh Out Loud Funny

This is the first book I've read in a while that's been for pleasure, rather than for review. And oh my goodness what a pleasure. I connected with the main character (Sally) in a way I haven't done in a while. I felt her pain, her grief, her loss. I also understood fully her reactions, her decisions, her blunders – but most of all her courage and her humour. I didn't read this book, I lived it. I loved it. It's just so real, so gritty, so funny. Ms Zia, I will definitely be buying and reading more of your books! I downloaded this one a while ago, when it was on free promotion, and it's been sitting on my To Read list for what seems like an age – I really really really regret now not having opened this book sooner. It's one I'll be returning to, again and again. And again. This is a book that lends itself to being revisited, like an old friend. A friend that gets into places you might prefer to keep in the dark, but also a friend that comforts you, yet makes you cry with laughter. This isn't a book to be read in public, if you do you're likely to receive some funny looks – because you will erupt into sudden, inexplicable belly laughter. Loud, perhaps inappropriate, guffaws. I did. So will you.

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## L.A. says

Article first published as Book Review:Ten Good Reasons to Lie About Your Age by Stephanie Zia on Blogcritics.

Living the dream and having a life that others only wish for is an amazing existence. Spending your life with the man you love, watching your children grow together is only what happens to other people. But what if that other person happens to be you? And what if instead of growing old together, he dies in a tragic accident?

Sally Lightfoot is now living this life. Growing up in the time of free love and music, she found the man of her dreams, a music producer who loved life and fun, as well as Sally. Bereft at his death she does the best she can, coming to terms with the changes. Age is a factor, she is no longer young and her children have grown, money too is a new issue she has to deal with. Her only option is to sell the home that they so lovingly put together. Dissociative behavior seems to rule her life, she struggles just doing the simple things, and yet she must. The house is barely on the market when she finds a buyer, yet she is still not sure where she will go or where she will live. As she decides to take a vacation to a remote Greek island, a chance to regroup her life and to reconnect with her children, she realizes that her life no longer has meaning. She is no longer sure who she is.

In *Ten Good Reasons to Lie About your age*, Stephanie Zia has developed a story of life and hope. Sally is a woman who buried herself in her marriage and her children. She lost her footing when her husband died, and struggles through her new life. Interrupted in the most devastating of ways, life has changed and she is unsure of herself. Their friends slowly slip away into their own lives, but she makes friends with a neighbor that she barely tolerated before Dominic's death. This neighbor gives her a stability she needs.

Being on her own on the island brings a new set of problems, but as each day moves into the next and as she makes her rental habitable she finds a beauty she did not expect. Even those she was most awkward with have become her friends. When she meets Loro, all bets are off. Handsome, close to her own age he has the voice and the charisma to carry it off. Life takes on more meaning as Sally's life takes another turn.

Stephanie Zia makes you feel the pressure and hopelessness that is Sally's life, from the funeral right through her grieving process. As life begins to bloom again, you feel the veil lifted along with her, and when she finally makes decisions based off her own feelings, you cheer her on. Through it all, she feels as though Dom (her dead husband) continues to try to take care of her from the other side. As love and longing bloom, she finds she no longer needs that crutch and is able to get back to real living.

I would recommend this book for reading and book clubs. It is insightful and delightful, full of thoughtful dialogue and exceptional clarity. Sally feels real, like a neighbor or a friend and that makes the story take on a presence of its own. It is a story of hope and learning to love yourself, to find that inner you that sometimes is lost when we make other's lives more important than our own. This is a book about life and it is a romance as well, you will get lost in the story and not want to put it down until it is finished.

This book was received as a free e-book from the author. All opinions are my own based off my reading and understanding of the material.

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### **Lorraine Sears says**

I really tried to like this book and gave it a good go, reading up to near the halfway mark. But it just didn't get off the ground. A widow of a rock star left in financial difficulty and putting on a brave face for those around her while she tries to find her way in the world. There were some funny moments and it's very tender and moving in places, but it just moved so slowly. Had I not been tempted by other reads, I probably would have finished it, but it just got bypassed.

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