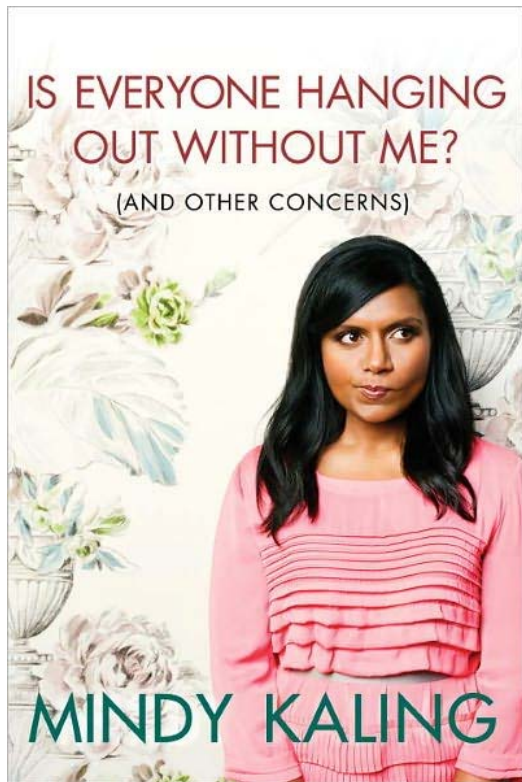


Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns) by Mindy Kaling

Reviewed by Julie Summers



Any fan of *The Office*, picking up Mindy Kaling's new book, *Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns)*, might assume that it's all about fashion and dieting and boys and how to get Ryan to commit. Okay, it does involve fashion, dieting, boys, and B.J. Novak, but this is not Kelly Kapoor's book. Kelly Kapoor's book collection is probably limited to titles like *Kardashian Confidential*, Tyra Banks' *Modelland*, and the latest celebrity-endorsed diet handbook.

Within the first few pages, Kaling puts to rest any concerns that she and Kelly Kapoor are one and the same. She admits some similarities, primarily a love of fashion and bizarre, potentially dangerous diet trends, but Kaling is an intelligent, ambitious, Ivy League-educated woman who recounts her story and shares her opinions with a perfect blend of honesty and humor.

Compulsively readable and continuously entertaining (though only occasionally laugh-out-loud funny), Kaling's book is an interesting glimpse into the life of a comedy writer. The first half of the book is, more or less, a chronological biography. Kaling recounts stories of her mostly nondescript youth – she was an excellent student, always striving to please her hardworking and loving parents, and she stayed out of the kind of trouble I'm sure Kelly Kapoor was getting into in high school.

The remaining chapters are organized by themes, such as Hollywood, romance, and friendship, each including several individual essays. Kaling's structure is informal, often using lists, which makes sense because the book is essentially an extension of her blog (theconcernsofmindykaling.com).

The chapter on Hollywood is particularly refreshing – she criticizes some of Hollywood's less admirable trends, including the celebrity roast and the practice of celebrities being bribed or manipulated into promoting goods and services through their Twitter feeds. And yes, she does dish about her experiences on *The Office*, but if you're hoping for shocking revelations, you'll be disappointed – aside from a couple (clearly joking) digs at Rainn Wilson, she praises her co-writers and co-stars.

Because we see her onscreen, we tend to think of Kaling as an actress, but she clearly thinks of herself first and foremost as a writer, which may be part of how she manages to be so relatable even while writing about working with Steve Carell and receiving gift bags at the Emmys.

If you're looking for a quick, light read, have ever laughed at an episode of *The Office*, and/or would like to regain faith that not every book written by a woman in show business is a vapid, calculated attempt at self-promotion, pick up Kaling's book.

~ Julie Summers