



## **This is Shyness**

*Leanne Hall*

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## This is Shyness Leanne Hall

A captivating novel told from the points of view of two unforgettable characters. In the suburb of Shyness, the sun doesn't rise. Wolfboy meets a stranger called Wildgirl, who dares him to be her guide through the endless night. There are things that can only be said in the dark.

*This is Shyness* was shortlisted for a number of major Australian literary awards and named a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book.

**Leanne Hall** won the 2009 Text Prize for Young Adult and Children's Writing for this spellbinding debut for readers fourteen and up.

## This is Shyness Details

Date : Published August 2nd 2010 by Text

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Author : Leanne Hall

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fantasy, Romance, Science Fiction, Dystopia

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## From Reader Review This is Shyness for online ebook

### Emily May says

**2.5** - sadly not for me.

The bizarre goodreads summary of this book combined with numerous (mostly positive) reviews left me feeling intrigued, excited and just a little bit apprehensive about starting This is Shyness. I can deal with a certain type and level of weirdness, Margo Lanagan is one writer of the bizarre that I can appreciate a lot, but in this novel the strangeness just felt a little ridiculous. I couldn't connect with the characters and, after the initial surprise at this very strange world I'd been introduced to, I became bored.

It must be noted that it was only the first half I read properly, the third quarter I skimmed, and the last I never made it to. I felt like the story didn't quite sit right in any world. For example, whilst reviewing Divergent I pointed out that the book would have been more forgivable if it had been a fantasy, because anything goes in a fantasy world and the characters aren't subject to the same constraints and scrutiny we give to "real world" characters. Because they're supposed to be fantastical. But Shyness, though an imaginary town, is still set in the real world and it seemed out of place. Some other GR members have commented that reading This is Shyness is like having a weird and wonderful dream... and yes, I can see that. But like having a dream, this novel didn't feel real, I didn't believe in the characters and the world of Shyness. It felt like a cross between Wonderland and Oz - two other dreamworlds - without being as exciting as either of them.

The entire novel is about the two protagonists - Wolfboy and Wildgirl - and their relationship with one another, as well as their own personal issues that they're trying to overcome. They go on a bizarre journey around Shyness as Wolfboy attempts to introduce Wildgirl to the town where the sun never rises. I like this idea in theory, the town of night reminded me a lot of Ixion in Burn Bright, but that was a novel where I felt a better connection to the characters and story - perhaps because it is set in a world nothing like our own.

In terms of writing, it is a very pretty and lyrical book (this is why I awarded the extra .5 star). I could quote you plenty of lines and, for now, just this one will do:

*"I howl at the roof like a hotted-up bomb doing donuts, full of screeches. I howl like an air-raid siren, my arms stretched out wide. Howls are like songs. They can't be summoned; they just happen. They come from a place that I barely understand. And then something else climbs to the surface, something black and jagged, something from the deep. Imagine all your worse feelings surfacing. Imagine coughing up razor blades. Imagine not being able to stop the pain from coming out, and not knowing when it's going to end."*

Unfortunately for This is Shyness, enjoying a book is about more than a creative writing 101 lesson, it's about more than beautiful metaphors and similes... but still, credit where it's due.

We all love Aussie young adult fiction, nine times out of ten it's brilliant, and some people will love this book. For me, I wanted something more, I guess I'm just not one of those readers who enjoys books that feel like I was constantly high while reading them. I think, for the most part, my love of aussie fiction belongs in the realistic category: Raw Blue, On the Jellicoe Road, Good Oil... all the authors of these books have a talent for emotions and getting inside the protagonist's head, Wolfboy and Wildgirl couldn't live up to my high expectations following this.

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## Carla says

This book is crazy bacon with a side of crazy eggs, covered in crazy sauce. And it tastes AWESOME. Like swallow without chewing, got words lodged in your throat, awesome.

See, one day in Shyness the sun went down and forgot to rise again. Except across the border the sun still has a full time job, what with the rising and setting and stuff. Seems like Shyness sacked the sun and employed the moon on a full time basis. Then there is a guy who howls and a Wildgirl. Sugar crazed kidds and tarsiers. A Diabetic Hotel where they meet. An adventure through Shyness in the strange night.

This book is a total literary acid trip. Everything is the same yet altered yet the same. Wildgirl has a mobile phone, she goes to school, she has a job. And yet across the border is a town where the sun doesn't rise and a boy who likes to howl. It's so surreal yet so normal, and hot damn, does Hall have some talent in her bones.

So over the course of one night, all this intensely weird stuff happens and it's all weird and crazy and YET reads like any other contemporary novel. yet it doesn't. are you confused yet? Like is Shyness \*actually\* a town, or is it just a projection of Wolfboys emotions? Is it permanently dark because of the sadness he holds inside him, or is this some kind of comic book world of strange mixed with normal? Is Shyness the place where people stay when they're in that state of unknowing? unknowing how to move forward or how to get back to the start or is it just a town where the sun went down and decided to stay there? MY MIND IS BENDING.

Told from both Wildgirl and Wolfboy's perspective, this is another one of those books that nails the dual narrative. It flowed magically from one part to the next, never loosing pace, never loosing that irresistable affect the cool-esque writing has on you. You can say a lot of things about this book, but there is no denying it's authenticity or it's uniqueness. It's unlike anything you have ever read before. You can't compare it to any other book because it is so "other" than any other book. And that's something real special to behold.

You know what this book is like? It's like a freaky dream. A dream you don't want to wake up from and when you do, you cling to the parts you want to remember the most, then think about them when you next need to sleep and hope this dreamworld is waiting for you when you close your eyes. Like that suspended state between dreams and reality where everything is soft and out of focus but it's still there nonetheless. Ah I love it!!

Hall is a master at prose and sentence structure. No word is put in there that doesn't need to be. Everything is stripped to the bare bones and put out to dry. It's sharp and searing, and kind of creepy, but gorge at the same time. Just look -

"In my panic I forget myself and do what I do best: I howl. Every shred of longing and despair in the front bar - and believe me, on a Friday night at the Diabetic there's plenty of it - gets sucked into my lungs. My body shakes as the sound runs through me. The pub stereo shudders to a halt. Every face in the room turns towards me. I finish with a couple of short sharp yelps and then i'm quiet."

"I'm not sure if i'm looking at her too much or too little. My knuckles are white around my beer glass. I've never been much of a talker, but when I feel the space between us, her on her stool, me on mine, I want to fill it"

Le sigh. Wolfboy, ILY.

"I attempt a howl, but it comes out sounding more like a yodel. I compensate with some cock-rock thrusting and a few signs of the horns, before bowing"

Oh Wildgirl, I totally get it! I mean, when I howl I sound like i'm yodelling too and we ALL know, cock-rock thrusting totally makes up for it! You get it girl!

And this is why Aussie YA is the SHIT.

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### **Limonessa says**

Can this review be more of a warning? I'm not sure *This is Shyness* is for everybody.

To be honest, I don't think I've read anything like *This is Shyness* before and it's pretty difficult to give it a label. I'm going to play safe and tell you that, maybe, the only sure label is YA?

But let me give you a brief synopsis to give you an idea.

In an alternate or future world - I'm not sure - similar to ours, a strange dark area has descended on the city (or neighbourhood, still not sure) of Panwood. It's called Shyness and, there, the sun never rises. Just in that area.

It's a place that's been abandoned by regular people and is now populated by weird individuals, renegades, people of the night.

Meet Wildgirl during a night out in a bar in Shyness, called "The Diabetic". She's there with some friends from work to have a few drinks, but it's just an excuse. In reality, she's looking for trouble, or a distraction. Something bad has happened to her at school and she's trying to either forget it ever happened or find a way to run away from everything and never come back. That's where she meets Wolfboy, a guy with "thick air on his arms" (view spoiler). The guy actually howls. Their meeting is a sort of epiphany - for both of them - and they decide to leave the bar together, to go bar-hopping in Shyness, to explore.

What happens next, I can assure you, is a trip into a grotesque world. There's a lost/stolen credit card involved, a ukulele, some gang kids who get high on sugar (literally) and a suicide mission to rescue a **lighter**, for crying out loud. All peppered with a budding romance between Wildgirl and Wolfboy.

If you're looking for something completely OUT OF THE NORM this is your book.

Incredibly, I was slightly bored at the beginning. Not only was I baffled by the odd encounters W/W were making but the pacing was kinda slow. I got dumped into this world without a compass and I felt a bit overwhelmed by the lack of information.

What is Shyness, really? What is Wildgirl's big secret, the one she's running from? (and let me tell you, when I found out, if that is the reason, I had a major eye-rolling moment) What is Wolfboy's secret?

The writing is undeniably awesome and I am awed by the author's imagination and ability to pull together a weird, abnormal, incredible story. The characters are alive and real - as well as complete weirdos.

BUT, it was a tad too much for me. I really wanted to read something different but maybe... not THIS different.

Fortunately, the second part of the book caught my attention much more.

Again, like with Wildgirl's reasons for running away, I found the purpose of the rescue mission in

Orphanville, the place where the gang kids live, really futile. Wildgirl wasn't making much sense in her stubbornness, I really couldn't get why she was so adamant about putting herself into trouble.

Nevertheless, now that I finished the book, I am left with a thousand questions that still need to be answered. I need to see more of Wildgirl and Wolfboy together. Their story was well developed and absolutely believable (maybe the only believable thing?).

Unfortunately, who knows when I will be able to get my hands on a copy of Queen of the Night? Pick this up if you're bored out of your mind with paranormal YA today.

Also appears on The Nocturnal Library.

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## Nic says

**Favourite Quote:** *'There are changes that creep up on you slowly, and then there are sudden changes that rip you apart, so that you don't know who you are anymore.'*

This Is Shyness is delightfully different. I have been thinking for days now, how I am going to review this totally unexpected, completely original but brilliant book.

First of all the world of Shyness is so unique. It is like the rest of world is normal and this one little suburb is covered in constant darkness and full of unexplainable things and not really anyone knows about it. At first I question the world a little bit but then I got pulled into the story thanks to Hall's remarkable writing and just went with it and focused on the adventure these two characters, named Wolfboy and Wildgril, where having.

Leanne Hall writing is simple but beautiful. It is not overly descriptive but you can imagine the world, the adventure and the characters emotions perfectly. The book is written from both Wolfboy and Wildgirl's points of views and flows from one to another effortless.

Wildgirl and Wolfboy are both edgy, charming and real characters. Both have issues that are avoiding. You can't help be drawn to these two and wish you were surrounded in darkness and there on the adventure with them. The romance in this book is very subtle, just the way I like it.

*'I can't believe how funny she is. I've hit the jackpot here. If I was different person, if my life was less complicated, if I had more to offer her than just sadness, if I didn't feel so tired from the weight of the entire world pressing down on me, then this would be the moment I would try to kiss her.'*

There is one little thing that may bother some readers about this book. At the end I was with left with a couple of little questions. It left me wondering if Hall going to write more on this world. If she did I would be lining up for it on release day. However just a warning if you like your books wrapped up perfectly with a bow on top this may annoy you.

Overall, This Is Shyness is refreshing read and outstanding debut. I can't wait to see what Hall has install for us next.

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## Nomes says

whoah - this was stunning and different and unexpected and just - wow.

I had no idea what to expect from this book and now it's hard to tell you all what to expect. In some ways, it's perfect going into it with no idea, but here's a small taste...

This is Shyness reads like a contemporary novel but there are fantastical elements.

Such as: the suburb of Shyness itself. It is a place where one day, the sun went down, and it hasn't ever risen again. It's in permanent night-time, but right next door (over the border) - the sun's still doing it's usual thing.

It's still set in our world, with mobile phones and school and India and everywhere else. But it feels different.

The novel takes place over one night.

There's are sugar-crazed kidds and tarsier's (wild monkey-type creatures)

It alternates between the POV of wolfboy (enigmatic, charming in an off-beat way, and hot ) and Wildgirl (fiesty, whimsical, a Girl You Will Absolutely Love) . Wolfboy and Wildgirl meet in a bar at night and end up wandering through the streets of Shyness and you never quite know just who they are going to bump into next.

Really these points still don't give any indication what to expect - but you should expect that you have never read anything like this book before.

It felt like a dream, reading this

One of those gorgeous dreams where everything is slightly different but you believe your dream world to be the truth.

One of those dreams that when you wake up you hold onto it hard, not wanting to leave the magical dream behind, wanting to savour the taste and sound and feel and essence of it.

Like some dreams, it's occasionally a little bit dark and creepy and some parts don't make absolute sense as it's all unfolding.

This is a dream you want to be a part of. And it's the kind of dream you won't ever forget.

I couldn't put this book down - it's a classic example of a book transporting you to another place and time.

It's also a writer's dream: prose that slips and slides over you in the most evocative of ways.

Descriptions and feelings nailed in a few well-chosen words.

Even the nondescript characters and locations are given their own distinct vibe.

Recommended: This is Shyness is a brilliant novel unlike any I have ever read before. Charming and fantastical, in some places, even cute - yet also gritty and scarily-feral in parts. It's a book for dreamers: imaginative and haunting and completely unexpected. Yay for novels that blow my mind while still making me grin.

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### **Maggie says**

A few years ago, I watched a delightfully odd Japanese movie that followed a normal young couple until the girl turned into a chair. (A quick Google search of "Japanese movie where a girl turned into a chair" tells me the movie was *Tokyo!* Their exclamation.)

There is no human-to-chair transformation in *This is Shyness*, but it reminded me of *Tokyo!* in that it starts off like a typical YA story, with an underage girl trying to sneak into a bar with some friends who then spots a broody, hot guy at the end of the bar. And then he howls. This begins a madcap, all night adventure involving tarsiers and kids hopped up on sugar. Oh, and it takes place in a town where the sun doesn't rise.

*This is Shyness* felt like *Graffiti Moon* + *Before Sunrise* after Miyazaki has run it through whatever magic machines they have at Studio Ghibli. It is delightfully odd and surreal, yet grounded in the very real emotions of *Wolfboy* and *Wildgirl*. I loved *Wolfboy*, by the way. I expected the brooding, howling hot guy in black to be a stereotypical alpha male who pulls the tabs off his Foster's with his teeth. Instead, he's the guy who thinks "I'm not sure if I'm looking at her too much or too little" while grasping his beer glass. I cannot wait to read *Queen of the (Before Sunset) Night!*

Leanne Hall's got the stuff that you want!

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### **Keertana says**

Rating: 4.5 Stars

The human race is constantly trying to describe love and attraction, summing it up to be an un-explainable draw to a certain person or thing. I like to think simpler and call it love at first sight. Maybe it can only happen with people, maybe it can't happen with books, but that's what happened with me. The moment I laid my eyes on the cover of *This is Shyness*, I felt it - that draw. Since then, I've been trying like crazy to get my hands on this book. You have no idea how difficult it is sometimes to get hold of Australian books in America, but somehow, against all odds, I did it! I found myself trembling with excitement, holding *This is Shyness* in my extraordinarily ordinary hands, my mind reeling from everything I was about to read and discover. Yet, nothing could prepare me for the amazing adventure that awaited me between the pages of Leanne Hall's debut novel.

*This is Shyness* felt like a lucid dream and finishing the novel left me spellbound and ever so slightly dazed, as if I truly had dropped into a reverie. In some ways, I think I had. *This is Shyness* is the type of book that will take you into another realm entirely - one I'm not so sure I want to leave.

Perhaps I should start out by saying that *This is Shyness* is not for everyone. In many ways, this makes me sad since I wish so desperately that everyone could see the beauty within these pages. I have never read anything quite like *This is Shyness* before and I can almost certainly guarantee you that I'm unlikely to either, simply because this book is so utterly unique.

*This is Shyness* is told in alternating view points between *Wildgirl* and *Wolfboy*. They meet in "The

Diabetic," a bar in Shyness, a suburb where the sun has ceased to rise and is now suspended in what seems to be an eternal darkness. Wildgirl, who has never been to Shyness before, convinces Wolfboy to become her tour guide for the night. What ensues is a bizarre, strange, and crazy whirlwind adventure involving a stolen credit card, a ukulele, sugar-addicted gang Kidds, hairy monkeys, and a mission to retrieve a stolen lighter.

Wildgirl and Wolfboy are compelling characters. They both carry the burden of heavy secrets and unresolved issues in their pasts, yet they make a formidable pair. Their voices are clever and distinct, their personalities jumping out vibrantly from the pages. Their interactions are wrought with shyness, hope, and insecurities; yet, you can feel the undeniable attraction between the two.

Their love story is truly one of a kind. In fact, I can't even say that they are in love with each other - because they're not. There's still so much more that both of them don't know or understand about each other; however, they manage to make a distinct impression upon each other, altering their lives for the better. Their budding romance comes off as bittersweet and heartwarming, switching between their two perspectives and providing the reader with unimaginable insight.

This is Shyness was a character driven novel like no other. Wolfboy and Wildgirl are so deep, so thought-provoking, and so REAL that I feel as if even a million re-reads will not enable me to understand them any better. They are both truly three-dimensional characters and are written so realistically that I really have to applaud Leanne Hall. She has managed to capture the human essences of loneliness, escape, fear, hope, love, and the drive to move forward in a way that no other author has truly been able to. I feel like I could gush on forever about Hall's writing and still not begin to cover everything I love about it. It is lyrical, languid, and flows beautifully. It renders me breathless sometimes and laughing others. It leaves me feeling as if I am caught up in a wonderful dream. It is clear and understandable, yet there are qualities about the story I feel as if I may never understand. It is simply gorgeous.

What else can I possibly rant about in this novel you may ask? Plenty. The world of Shyness is original yet its originality stems from a simple idea. I am constantly left wondering how no other author has thought of it in the past. The plot is not one you can question or analyze in any way, you simply have to follow it. This is Shyness is a book that you have to feel your way through. It is a journey like no other and it is one you will never forget.

I fell in love with This is Shyness. It is a book that will linger on in my mind for days to come and although it is a brilliant stand-alone novel, I am yearning to get my hands on the sequel and return to the world that Leanne Hall has created. I can only hope that this book is one for you and even if it isn't, that the sheer beauty of it can still be appreciated by everyone.

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## Reynje says

*"How could I not love a book about a secret suburb somewhere near Collingwood and Fitzroy, where the sun never comes up, and sugar-addicted kids and creepy monkeys roam around abandoned housing commission flats?"* – That's how Lili Wilkinson sums up *This is Shyness* on her blog. I could not agree more with that quote.

The experience of reading *This is Shyness* is much like having a lucid dream, like delving into some part of your consciousness that exists between waking and sleeping, where the lines between reality and fantasy are smudged and vague.

The novel takes the “real world” (for want of a better term), and twists it delicately into something else, as if Leanne Hall had placed Melbourne in front of a funhouse mirror. The landscape is familiar, yet distorted, and we see things we don’t expect to; catch sidelong glimpses of a secret world tucked into shadows and around corners.

The story follows Wildgirl and Wolfboy, alternating between their viewpoints. They meet at the Diabetic Hotel, where Wildgirl persuades Wolfboy to be her guide through a night in the suburb of Shyness, a place where the sun set one day and never came up again.

The characters make a compelling duo. Both are carrying the weight of some unresolved issues from their respective lives, but there is an undeniable chemical reaction when they come together on the page. Their interactions are rich with possibility and tinges of hope amid their doubts and insecurities. As the narrative switches between perspectives, you can feel the bittersweet uncertainty and attraction as the two flawed and endearing characters connect.

Wolfboy (who is a local) and Wildgirl’s journey through the slice of surrealism that is Shyness is an eventful one, as they encounter a range of curious characters, from the subtly sinister to the amusing and the outright crazy. Peopled with rampant gangs of hopped-up, sugar-addicted Kidds, dreamers, creepy little tarsiers and one evil, evil man, Shyness is a wonderfully dark and strange place, brought to life by Leanne Hall’s sharp, evocative writing.

It has been said before, but I will say it again, *This is Shyness* is completely original and genre-blurring – a book that defies categorisation. It is a page-turner, it’s touching, it’s deliciously weird and it’s probably best to dive right into the prose with as few expectations as possible, and allow the story to sweep you up. Don’t expect pure realism or pure fantasy, and you will find yourself lost in a fractured world that exists somewhere in between the two.

Alongside it’s fantastical elements and quest-type plot, *This is Shyness* also clearly distills the emotions tied up in the teenage experience. From Wolfboy’s deep-seated and difficult issues connected to past events, to Wildgirl’s all-consuming grapple with an incident involving some vengeful high school girls, Hall’s book explores the desire for escape and release. She writes insightfully about what it’s like to want to forget, to seek relief from the tangles of everyday life.

Winner of the 2009 Text Prize, *This is Shyness* is engrossing, unique and definitely a book to be experienced. It has stayed with me, and I will read Leanne Hall’s further work without hesitation.

Now I just need to stop looking over my shoulder for tarsiers..

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### **oliviasbooks says**

This is Shyness has everything the fitting book description offers and probably more: Seventeen-years-old Nia has left her usual habitat, a trailer-park-area of a large city, to spend the night partying and drinking with her co-workers in nearby Shyness. Her mom’s driver’s licence and a too tight shirt with a boldly-lettered “Wildgirl” on it shove her past the bouncer of the “Diabetic Hotel”, where she drowns her drink too quickly, has to fend off slimy Nick’s advances, and lets her eyes be drawn towards a gorgeous, hairy boy with translucent skin who literally howls, when she finally loses her balance and crashes off her barstool:

Wildgirl has met Wolfboy and leaves the club with him. After a breathless chase of a place to pee Jethro agrees to be Nia's guide through Shyness - hence the title. A few years ago the sun stopped to rise in Shyness. There are defined, electrically charged borders around Shyness where the endless night stops and normality begins. Most inhabitants left the town after whatever happened there. Now only gangs of homeless, sugar-addicted children, the fortunate who make money in every kind of situation and people who had various personal reasons to stay live in the neglected, crumbling houses. Equipped with a found/stolen credit card and two sets of problematic pasts Nia and Jethro set out on their ultra-bizarre night-long road-trip, get familiar with each other, help each other and maybe uncover the reason for the sun's partial reluctance to do her daily job.

Does it not sound wonderful? Refreshingly different? On the dreamlike verge of Urban Fantasy and Realistic Young Adult Fiction? I thought so, too, and still do. But after 80 to 85 pages I grew restless, fidgety and finally bored. And I can not really say why.

Part of the missing pull has to be rooted - like in most similar cases - in my inability to connect to the main characters. For instance, I do understand Nia's obsession with money. If you lacked it all your life the opportunity to handle an abundance of it has to look unbelievably tempting. But still, her decision to keep the found credit card and use it randomly just for the fun of it shoved the first wall between me and her. With Jethro my almost-dislike was still in the making when I decided to back out of the story. But it already began with his utter hairiness. I believe I would have been persuaded to root for him had I read the whole book and consequently the story of his parents', grandma's and brother's death or disappearance.

I guess another big chunk of my willingness to let go resulted from the slowly built-up too high expectations: This was the unobtainable book from down-under I managed to preorder as a ridiculously cheap bargain, received a unapologetic cancellation from the bookseller, contacted the author for to get advice on how to successfully order it, hovered many times over on Fishpondworld's into-the-shopping-cart button, but shied away from buying because of the price, and finally got the opportunity to take part in an international book tour of - with Europe on the end of its tail. Balloons that have been filled to the max with air go with a louder pop, I guess. And the book goes to the next participant.

Thank you, Nic, for sharing!

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### **Jo says**

Think of every single cliché in young adult fiction you can.

Go on.

Just do it.

Write them down if you want.

It's OK, I'll wait.

\*twiddles thumbs\*

Done?

**This book defies all of them.**

I understand in saying that this book defies all clichés is in itself also a cliché because it's what reviewers tend to say when they can't really be bothered writing a real review but they want to make it sound like they

loved it and keep everyone happy but in reality they wanted to fling it out of the window and then go outside and spit on it... while scowling at random, inanimate objects.

Actually, as I'm skimming through my notes I've realised that every single one of my points and examples on how this book *isn't* like all the other books and how it is as far away from cliché as something really far away from something else, all I've used is cliché things that reviewers tend to say when they can't actually be bothered writing a real review but what to make it sound like they loved it....you get the gist.

So I'm just going to go with it. In the immortal words of Tim Gunn, I'm going to make it work. I'm going to reclaim those clichés.

### **Jo Explains How THIS IS SHYNESS Defies All Cliches By Using Lots Of Them.**

#### **This book is like nothing that has ever been written before.**

Whimsical. Magical. Mental. Mysterious. Fantastical. Intriguing. Surreal. ALL THE ADJECTIVES. I've read strange books and sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. For me, this one definitely worked. I devoured it like I imagine a Kidd would devour a bag of Tangfastic Haribo. And when I say 'a Kidd' I mean me. \*jitters\*

#### **This book isn't the typical 'When girl meets boy'.**

It's when *Wildgirl* meets *Wolfboy*. The difference is subtle but it's there...and it's sexy.

#### **This book will take you to places you've never been before.**

I would like to build a duvet fort in Ms Hall's imagination and stay there forever and ever and only allow people I like to join me. I loved Shyness because it was incredible. And the best thing about it was that it felt *real*. You may be thinking "Um, how did it feel real? Where have you ever been where there is no sun and plagues of delinquent kids roam the street?" And to that, I answer: Manchester.

I know a few people are suggesting that this book is Urban Fantasy, but I've never really read any UF so I can't add anything to that. All I know is that this book smudges the boundaries of genre. The best way I can describe the setting of the world that Ms Hall created with Shyness is that it's contemporary...with a bolt of electricity running through its heart.

*"There's a rhythm to Shyness, but it takes a while to feel it."*

There were times when I felt like I could've done with a map of Shyness but, to be honest, I was more than happy to get lost.

#### **The heroine is different, kooky and feisty.**

Wildgirl, I think I love you. You snort when you laugh. You go bright red when you're embarrassed. You like to go on adventures. You're fearless. You're hilarious. You steal hearts. You have messy handwriting. You fancy boys who look like wolves.

Woman, if you get out of my mind long enough we should be best friends.

#### **The hero is strong, tortured and has a past.**

Now normally, this is the cliché is the one that makes me the most angry. I hate it when heroes are lumbered with a *past* because usually it means that they are boring and have no personality and the author needed

something to hide that fact.  
Wolfboy is the exception to this rule.

*“In my panic I forget myself and do what I do best: I howl.”*

Aoooooooooooooooooooooo.

But then again, Wolfboy is the exception to any rule.  
He was the perfect mix of the messed-up kid (who gets nervous around girls, awww) on a mission to find answers to questions he's been avoiding for a long time that you just want to protect and cuddle and the sexy guy with a quiff and tight trousers who you would be willing to follow wherever he led.  
Is there a better combination?  
Nah.

*“I’ve got no idea whether the air of danger around Wolfboy is just part of a fashion statement or the real thing.”*

It's the real thing, baby.

### **The love story is fresh and compelling.**

Roll up, roll up... but don't come too close for what you're about to hear may shock you, so people with heart defects please approach with caution.  
Because within the pages of This is Shyness we have the most strangest and freakiest things you will ever have experienced in literature:

Love interests who actually *talk* to each other and have a genuine connection with each other based on their personalities, fears, thoughts and desires.

\*faints\*

And, that's not all! It's not forced, cringey, annoying, simpering, dangerous *orrrrrr* illegal either!  
I KNOW.

### **This book won't be for everyone.**

I know this book won't be for everyone because it's weird and hardly anything is explained. So if you like every single thing explained and get angry if it's not, then I couldn't recommend this book to you.  
This is a book where you should definitely leave your disbelief at the door because if you start thinking about it too much, your head will implode. *Literally*.  
It's best to approach this book with an open mind and... well, just go with it and experience Shyness.

The fantastic Noelle made her own playlist for This is Shyness and Queen of the Night (the sequel) and I felt left out, so I got involved too.

We Still Got the Taste Dancin' on Our Tongues by Wild Beasts.

*“Darling, the spirit is kicking.  
Don’t be fooled by the moonshine, it’s tricking.”*

For me, this song perfectly captures the “smash and grab” feel of Wolfboy and Wildgirl’s story. All about

being reckless but having no regrets, just unforgettable memories.

However, there was one part of this book that I wasn't sure about. It's right at the end when Wildgirl says that Wolfboys are the best kissers.

Now, I'm not entirely convinced *but* as I am a girl who likes to have all the facts, I will conduct a *highly* scientific experiment and kiss him until I am able to confirm that this is a true fact.

Taking one for the team.

Speaking of Wolfboy, I read this book with wonderful Maree and she suggested that we should each share pictures of how we pictured Wolfboy.

I wish there was a song that perfectly matched with my feelings for Wolfboy so you could listen to it while you look at my suggestions.

Oh wait, there is.

### **Potential Wolfboy Fitties [PWFs]**

#### **Alex Turner.**

My Ultimate Wolfboy (UW) is Alex Turner.

Look at his Urban Cowboy Quiff (UCQ)!  
But if he's busy, I have Wolfboy Back-Ups (WBUs).

#### **Darren Criss.**

#### **Gaspard Ulliel.**

[image error]

#### **Ed Westwick.**

So, if anyone needs me I will be conducting my highly scientific science experiment.... For science.

*Science.*

Seriously though, this book makes me want to have the adventure of a life time and howl at the dark sky above me.

You can read this review and lots of other exciting things on my blog, Wear the Old Coat.

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## **Arlene says**

### **Rating Clarification**

Overall writing style: 4 stars  
Storyline – first half: 2 stars  
Storyline – second half: 3 stars

Well, this story was definitely a head trip. I'm not quite sure how I would categorize it. I guess it's a hybrid between dystopic and fantasy??? Maybe a bit of a freakish dream??? I'm still reeling in my mental spin, but I do have to say I was entertained.

Overall, I have to admit Aussie writers have a flawless ability to capture you and take you on a journey that feels vivid and engaging. There's no doubt about that. However, there were times I didn't quite want to be part of this story because it was actually a bit weird and freaky.

See, you have Wildgirl and Wolfboy that meet one night at the Diabetic club and there begins a long night in a place called Shyness that never sees the light of day. During their nocturnal adventure, they get mugged by sugar high, sherbert snorting, lollipop-sucking Kidds that are scary weird; and also get attacked by Tarsiers that are wild monkeys that roam the night and pretty much give me the creeps. There's cities call Little Death and Orphanville, which they roam in search of a silver lighter the Kidds took from Wolfboy.

Overall, I have to say Leanne Hall has a vivid imagination that requires a serious reality suspension. Possibly a bit too vivid and out there for my taste, but I'd be remiss if I didn't give her props for her ambitious attempt to take the reader into a time a place that seems dream-scapey and overall quite bizarre.

Lastly, I would like to have known what caused the Darkness rather than been given a couple of theories and it would have been nice to be clued into what Wolfboy really was, but that's all part of the mystery I guess. Definitely different than what I've ever read, but I enjoyed venturing outside my comfort zone.

Thank you so much to my Aussie Booker Nic for sharing this book with me. It's always a treat to read a story from down under. HUGS!

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## **Clare Cannon says**

This is not a shocking book, but it is extremely confused. Maybe it's 'only a story', but it's not a very helpful one, particularly for the age group it is aimed at. It's based on the inconstancy and weakness of teens who try to appear tough but are really just hiding their own weakness, who want what's bad because it will help them to block out their problems, but who then regret the consequences – which are unrealistically small – and who somehow come out ok at the end because this is a story, so they can.

'Wildgirl' Nia and 'Wolfboy' Jethro are both running away from legitimate problems that weren't their fault – his brother committed suicide (after his girlfriend got pregnant, it's not said with whose child), and her school 'friends' publicised a picture of her head on someone else's body in a compromising situation.

But instead of facing their problems for what they are, they are both trying to forget by doing something tough and memorable, having a ‘wild night’: drinking too much (in spite of the fact that she’s underage and has to use fake id to get into the club), acting tough, spending someone else’s money (after she finds a credit card in the bathroom she doesn’t think of handing it in but immediately tries to spend on it), bravely getting even with the crazed ‘kidds’ who have stolen something from Wolfboy, charming some kid ‘pirates’ in order to get their way (Wildgirl kisses their girl leader on the mouth after the leader ‘jokingly’ said that was the toll they had to pay in order to pass). Blotting them out with worse things is not really a great way to handle problems.

But through it all there is the semblance that they are doing what’s right, when in reality they’re just making all the selfish choices, and even their ‘good actions’ are contradicted by their bad ones: they let the animals go free, but then they refused to help a kid who was getting hurt. They sometimes realise how badly they’ve acted, but it all comes good again when ‘he doesn’t blame me’... if he doesn’t blame her, there must be nothing to blame. She doesn’t even help him when he’s caught by the baddies. She justifies it because ‘she’ll be no good in a fight anyway’, so she just waits. Miraculously he turns up a few minutes later, having successfully beaten them up and got away. Slightly unrealistic?

Particularly unrealistic was their physical reserve in each other’s company when everything around them is so rough. She’s dressed provocatively - to say the least - wearing a “wild girl” t-shirt that’s three sizes too small so that it “shows off her assets”, and hot pants. Yet he’s so polite, not even looking when she’s bending down in front of him, and so cautious about ‘reading the signals wrong’.

The whole tune of the book is that they get to do all these bad things, make wrong choices, but it all turns out ok in the end because they are ‘good people’. They can toy with bad stuff (using someone else’s credit card, dressing like a slut, buying on the black market, drinking too much, kissing the tough girl stranger) and nothing bad happens to them. This is unrealistic, unhelpful, confused.

There’s an abundance of swearing, drinking (underage too), and a whole lot of ‘but you’re a good person’... right after she spends someone else’s money. I imagine the sequels will only get messier.

And to end we have a piece of Wildgirl’s wisdom: “All we have is this feeling, right here, right now. Nothing else exists. Nothing really matters.”  
Yes, it really does.

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### **Anna says**

Loved it.

Nick Cave came on the radio just as I was finishing. Felt rather apt....

When I was about halfway through this book, I decided that I wasn’t going to review it. Not because it was bad or boring or anything. Very much the opposite, in fact. I don’t review every book I read, mainly because if I write a review, I want to make sure I have something interesting to say about the book. And with This is Shyness, I just felt that it was so unusual and interesting that there wasn’t anything I could say that could do it justice. It would be impossible to explain so I should just say READ IT and let it be brilliant and interesting for new people to discover and appreciate its brilliance and interesting-ness.

But then I finished it and I thought what the heck, I might as well attempt to write an interesting review

because, like I said, it is a brilliant book and brilliant books deserve to be shouted about. So, how do I explain this *This is Shyness* - a (possibly) paranormal book in contemporary clothing? That's about as close as I can get I'm afraid. Although, then again, if you're going into it looking for a paranormal read, I don't think you'll find what you went out looking for. BUT you might be pleasantly surprised...

On the face of it, this book contains more than a few YA cliches - slightly gobby girl who doesn't quite fit in, a moody and mysterious fellow with a PAST, an on-foot miniature road trip...yet, it is so much more than this. This is packed full of awe-inspiring ideas and images and the two main characters are convincing teens yet completely out there all at once.

For me, there were a few lapses where my attention waned, especially at the point when their journey takes a different turn, but there are more than a few genuinely creepy and slightly horrifying moments as the story gathers pace again. As much as I loved Wildgirl and Wolfboy, I wish I'd had just a bit more of an emotional connection with them, but this will come in the sequel, yes? YES!

So if you want YA with traditional elements yet is like nothing you have ever read before, then yes, believe it folks, there is such a book (it's this one, in case you're wondering).

So was that an interesting enough review?

Oh well, I've written it now, so there.

(and thank you to Jo for lending me her copy...ages ago. And apologies to her also for not reading it for a criminally long time)

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### **Lindsay says**

Holy Sweet Mother of dubs-tee-eff. I'm still wrapping my thoughts around this one. Here's what I've come up with: the Brothers Grimm meet up with Pablo Picasso during his Blue Period for a drink. They decide it's going to be a GREAT idea to make a Before Sunrise martini with a younger lad and lassie splashed with the *Neverending Story* and shaken with the surrealism of a dream.

You with me?

On second thought, I am not really sure if it's possible to adequately define *This Is Shyness*. Leanne Hall has managed to create something that feels entirely 'other'. You can't put the book into any neat little category; it's simply young adult, and that's about as far as you are going to in terms of categorizing.

The good news is that this cocktail goes down fairly smoothly. Hall's narrative swings through from start to finish, and Wildgirl and Wolfboy both are intriguing, resourceful characters who come to bat with their own set of problems. Wildgirl comes from a way-less-than-privileged background and is dealing with some serious B.S. at school because of it. Wolfboy is living in a singular pit of sorrow - you know the kind - it's the sort of hole a person has to fight and claw to get out of. It's a random night that these two find each other, and it leads into an absolutely crazy, no-rest-til-dawn adventure. Hall's writing really shines in her characterization of these two (I've added quotes for this book - lovely, aching, sharp), and you will get to know them and their thoughts through the wonderful internal dialogue she gives to both.

Beyond that, it's difficult to discuss the book without giving too much away. Shyness is just over the border from where Wildgirl lives, yet she never heard how the sun doesn't rise there. The fact that you can't really pin down the setting makes reading the book feel a bit like falling down Alice's rabbit hole - you can't tell if this is an alternative reality, a futuristic setting, a paranormal community - everything feels familiar, but it's not - I won't say it's like a dream - it's a bit more maddening than that. It's something akin to Dorothy's returning to Oz and finding it turned upside down, or Mac's reaction to there being a 'secret' Dublin that's disappeared off of maps and been forgotten about in the *Fever* series. It's a familiar unknown.. I got the feeling that the darkness which encompasses Shyness is somehow connected to Wolfboy's sadness, who holds special status in that community. Or perhaps his sadness is a singular symptom of its overall origin. Things happen: embarrassments endure, deaths occur, addictions develop, social pressures constrict, etc. It's the self-determination and the connections with others, the support that gets you through. Shyness doesn't feel like a place of punishment for the things that have happened to you in life, but more like a place of suspension, a consequence of not talking about and moving through the things that have happened.

The balance and two-person dual narrations make this a fast-paced story that doesn't lag. The surreal situations and people they encounter hold your interest and sometimes boggle you. There is a play-counterplay between Wildgirl and Wolfboy's POVs, and it really offers insight into just how easily looks and words can be misconstrued, especially between two people who hold an attraction and growing affection between them. There is a sweetness in their vulnerability that helps you connect to them as characters. There is a bare bones honesty in their hushed confessions that make you repect their experience. I'd love to be friends with them both.

However, that same connection also drove me nuts with not getting clear answers to some questions. The upside is that *This Is Shyness* is so 'other', so unlike anything else that I've read, that it gave me the ability to 'just deal' with the lack of answers. Here's the thing with this book: as with any new person you might meet, you have to take the book as it is. There is no comparing it, no standard to hold it up against, not with this story. It has a beginning, middle, and an end that doesn't feel like an end - it feels like a continuation. That's not to say that there is a sequel, because in all honesty, I get the feeling that there won't be one (although I would love answers to my questions). It's more like the characters are going to 'swing through' if that makes sense.

But, really, 'swinging through' does make sense in *This Is Shyness*. The story here is not in some neatly wrapped up plot; it's in the character details: the shy looks, the hanging conversations, the private confessions and resolute actions. They're like puzzle pieces that make up the same picture, but don't quite match up at the edges. You try to force the edges into each other, rather than just let them complement each other, then you are going to come up frustrated. But if you let the story just 'be' what it is, then you have something singularly special. *This Is Shyness* is the quirky friend you might never fully understand, but once you stop trying to figure it out and pick it apart, you will fall into its unique personality and truly appreciate it for what it is. And the story is about two young people who don't find answers, but by coming together, they come to terms with facing the questions. There's a lot of beauty in that.

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### **karen says**

this book is charming as balls.

to me, there's a hairsbreadth difference between "charming" and "trying too damn hard to be charming." i have no patience for cutesy or twee, but i appreciate "cute" more than most adults. the distinction is a personal one, by which i mean "specific to me" and not "private," and it's inconsistent - i never know what my response will be to things like this book, which is a quirky adventure/love story with a fantasy/dystopian angle.

but it totally worked for me. and i'm still trying to understand why.

the YA i usually favor tends to involve survival elements. i like post-apocalyptic scenarios, zombies, dystopian "grouping" books (think factions, think districts), and even just "lost in the wilderness" situations. and i am willing to overlook the social simplifications that dominate those books as part of the unspoken agreement between reader-of-YA and author-of-YA; worldbuilding corners are frequently cut, science doesn't always make sense, and you just have to allow yourself to accept that certain things aren't going to be logical and details will be sacrificed for pacing or focus. YA tends to be faster-paced than most adult lit, and to properly enjoy it, you have to just get caught up in the momentum of the story and don't ask questions. you also have to accept that there will invariably be a romance element. for me, these are usually the weakest bits in these types of books, because they distract from the flow and what, to me, is the more interesting storyline. i tend to skim over all the perfunctory sexual tension and the limpid gazes in order to get back to the peril, because that's why i showed up - for the peril.

but this book is pretty much a straight-up love story. sure, there's action, but the motivation?? the central conflict??? it's getting back A LIGHTER from a pack of feral kids and their pack of tarsiers. that's mindblowing, to me, that something so trivial is the impetus for the action. sure, the lighter has deep sentimental value, but it's shocking that this is what drives the action. but this story is about the journey, and the impetus for the journey is less relevant than in most books.

this is a love story that is actually about *falling in love*. the reason i skim the romance scenes in dysto-YA is because they always seem to be tacked-on afterthoughts. characters fall in love because of their proximity to one another and not because of any specific merits their love object embodies. oftentimes it seems like the author consults a YA checklist that demands "well, gotta have a love triangle in there somewhere!" and it never seems convincing. but this one is very focused on the process of falling in love. yes, there is immediate physical attraction, but as the night wears on and wolfboy and wildgirl flit from one bizarre scenario to another, their feelings for each other deepen in a way that feels earned through observation and experience and lighthearted banter. they are just two kids hanging out, sharing their stories, being their goofy-yet-troubled selves without putting on airs or trying to be attractive for each other.

*I can't believe how funny she is. I've hit the jackpot here. If I was a different person, if my life was less complicated, if I had more to offer her than just sadness, if I didn't feel so tired from the weight of the entire world pressing down on me, then this would be the moment I would try to kiss her.*

the thing to note about that is - although wildgirl frequently *is* funny, in the scene inspiring that thought, she *isn't* being particularly funny, which makes it abundantly clear that wolfboy is already smitten and seeing her through his love-goggles. and if that isn't a universal truth, i don't know what is.

and reading that quote over now, it does strike me as a little gratingly emo, but that's not the overall takeaway from the book. in a town without sunlight, where both characters have legitimate problems and damage, the story is ultimately hopeful and resilient, and their being drawn to each other makes sense and is lovely. they never lose themselves in each other, but they shore each other up in ways that strengthen and complement instead of consume their individual personalities.

i know i haven't said much about the world in which they live, because i think that would make it sound a little too crazy pants. that thing i said before about science?? yeah, you gotta do some realigning of your understanding of how the sun works and you have to enter into this bizarro-world with a clear heart and an accepting attitude. because it's magical and whimsical, but it's wholly worth it to watch these two characters interact. it definitely toes the line and nearly veers into "too much," but i think it always pulls back before that tipping point and remains just this side of charming and refreshing.

i need to get my hands on the sequel somehow, because i can't wait to see what happens after the events of this one tease of a night.

also, more tarsiers, please!

come to my blog!

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