



Frenemy of the People

Nora Olsen

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Clarissa and Lexie couldn't be more different. Clarissa is a chirpy, optimistic do-gooder and a top rider on the school's equestrian team. Lexie is an angry, punk rock activist and the only out lesbian at their school.

When Clarissa declares she's bi and starts a Gay-Straight Alliance, she unwittingly presses all of Lexie's buttons, so Lexie makes it her job to cut Clarissa down to size. But Lexie goes too far and finds herself an unwitting participant in Clarissa's latest crusade. Both are surprised to find their mutual loathing turning to love.

A change in her family's fortunes begins to unravel Clarissa's seemingly perfect life, and the girls' fledgling love is put to the test. Clarissa and Lexie each have what the other needs to save their relationship and the people they love from forces that could tear them all apart.

Frenemy of the People Details

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From Reader Review Frenemy of the People for online ebook

Rose says

Characters

Lexie and Clarissa were not pleasant people. They were snotty, spoiled little brats and they acted like it. Lexie's gold-star lesbian girlfriend broke up with her to go away to college and she has no other friends at school. Clarissa's friends, a group of stuck-up girls who she has ridden horses with for as long as she can remember, prove to be unsupportive and distant when she suddenly comes out to them as bisexual and quits riding competitively. Her only remaining friends are her older sister Desi, who has Down's Syndrome, and her ex-boyfriend Matt.

Clarissa didn't make a good impression on me to begin with, as I found her coming out story to be trite and so unbelievable. She had a thought that "hey, I might like girls" and immediately announced to her friends that she was bisexual. To prove her interest in girls to herself, she went up to the only lesbian she knew of (who just happened to be Lexie's ex) and randomly kissed her. A stranger. Yeah. Not impressed. She pissed me off again later when she wildly overreacted to Lexie's mother's purchase of her beloved horse and took it out on Lexie.

Lexie wasn't much better. She was incredibly self-righteous and judgemental and reminded me of Ava from *Pink* by Lili Wilkinson (another character whom I found irritating). She was slightly more believable than Clarissa, but that doesn't excuse her behaviour.

The only character I actually liked was Desi. I thought it was nice to see a character with Down's, because yay diversity! Unfortunately Desi ended up being more of a plot device than a real human being, but it's a start...

Plot

There's not much plot here to speak of. The biggest conflict was that Lexie's parents were broke and were losing their mansion (which they shouldn't have bought in the first place). I thought it was kind of ridiculous that Lexie oh-so-conveniently knew a shit-ton about banks and loans and mortgages. What kind of sixteen/seventeen year old girl has that kind of knowledge? I'd nearly twenty-two and I don't know that stuff (nor would I be expected to at this point). The secondary plot, Desi's desire to be homecoming queen before graduating, was little more than a way of getting Clarissa and Lexie to spend more time together.

Writing/Pacing

Behold, info-dumping! While most of the writing was what I expect of contemporary YA – informal, casual language, minimal description with more focus on introspection and dialogue – there was WAY too much info-dumping here. I also thought that it was strange how similar Clarissa and Lexie sounded in their respective chapters, considering how "different" they supposedly were.

Verdict

If this had been a hetero-romance, I'd have DNF'ed it. That said, there are so few LGBT books available in YA that it was worth reading. If you're looking for quality with your girl-romance, I'd look elsewhere.

Andrea says

This book is such a horrible cliché.

First off, Clarissa's "coming out" is so blah. Like she was trying to make a point but thought about it and was like "oh that makes sense so it must be true." I felt like her coming out was more of a joke and not something significant. I felt she should have had a better storyline than that.

Then there is Lexi and here we have the biggest cliché. She is a vegan and all into dumpster-diving and people's rights. I'm not saying this is wrong, just such a stereotype that it ruined things for me. However, I enjoyed how smart she was. She was interesting when she was using her knowledge but then she started fawning over Clarissa and this led to making her character weak.

There were heavy parts when it came to the bank stuff and it was kind of hard to get through. Not to mention some serious criminal activity that, while precedented, was also kind of dumb.

Overall, the story is kind of blah and stereotypical. Not really my kind of book.

Sofia Li says

This review originally appeared on my blog [Loving the Language of Literacy](#)

Disclaimer: I received this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

My Initial Thoughts: I'm sitting here, on a Tuesday afternoon, trying to figure out how on earth I should describe *Frenemy of the People* because it was such an unusual book. I have a lot of complaints about *FotP* particularly about word choice that may have been altered in the final novel.

Characters: If you expected some lovely rainbows and butterflies story where the main characters go through tremendous change and growth.... you won't be getting that here. Clarissa is an extremely unusual character in the aspect that she is an extremely ignorant one. I swear, I knew more than she did when I was eight years old than she did at almost eighteen. She has apparently lived an incredibly sheltered life in a ritzy home and neighborhood. Yet that is absolutely no excuse for being CLUELESS about your financial situation (which was going down south), and not even knowing what the word "foreclosure" meant. I could swear, I kept waiting for some point in the novel where she would do a (cliché) 180 in terms of character, and become this better person because of being in love and being exposed to the world. At least that would be realistic to the "movie magic" (book magic if you will) feel Nora Olsen might have been going for.

Lexie. Well, in the first chapter, I thought she was the contrast to Clarissa's severe idiot syndrome. And I was right about the contrast she provided.... for all of the first two chapters of the novel. After that, I was just reeling with major "What the hell is happening?" reactions. I honestly don't understand how this book made it past the editors, with a character being so complex and caring about worldly issues one moment to being downright juvenile the next. I hope this changed in the finished version, because if it didn't..... *crickets*

Clarissa's Coming Out: Somebody needs to punch this girl in the face, like right now.... please, somebody just punch her. I mean, I made a whole category of this review dedicated to her "coming out." I myself am not part of the LGBTQ+ community, so I can never know exactly how coming out works, and have never had the struggle of not being accepted for who I love. Yet I know enough to know that no one can just wake up one day and decide to be bisexual like Clarissa did. I am not kidding whatsoever, she was literally at a horseback riding awards event, texting her friends, and she decides she's bisexual. I mean, I would understand if she had been holding it in for a long time, and finally revealed it to her friends, but that SO was not the case. Somebody brought up the topic of kissing girls and BAAAAM! Clarissa declares she's bisexual.

Just. Like. That.

Does anybody else who has read the book, or understand from what I am saying that that is the most unrealistic thing that could happen in a realistic fiction novel. Anybody?

Originality: As I was reading reviews, a pattern I saw was that a ton of people thought there were too many Lesbian stereotypes. Especially Carelessbookgeek who pointed out the stereotypes for Lexi as

Vegan. Tomboy. Punk. Smartass. Doesn't Like People. Dumpster Diving.

Personally, I live in a very open, accepting environment, and was not aware of these particular stereotypes, but I do see how they could be very annoying and unoriginal.

Spoiler Alert

Clarissa and Lexi ran over Clarissa's now foreclosed house with a bulldozer. Let me repeat myself. They ran over Clarissa's house with a FREAKING BULL DOZER!!!! Does no one else see why I am so distressed and CAPS LOCKING here?!? This is the kind of thing crazy girls do in movies that wind up with them being arrested, or showing up on Pretty Little Liars. This book does not have witches and goblins. It is trying to be a story about two girls trying to navigate their lives in a generally conservative high school and be in a relationship. Not something that could, would, and never should happen.

End Spoiler

#Disappointment: What really disappointed me was the fact that the story of Frenemy of the People could have been told really well. It would have had the whole two-unlikely-people-end-up-in-a-relationship-against-all-odds situation, which is albeit overdone, but still could have been endearing and sweet. Instead the characters were so idiotic, plot events were generally impossible, and the book overall did not make much sense. I also think adding the LGBTQ+ aspect could have made FotP a novel that was truly thought provoking, about characters overcoming diversity. Instead, it almost seemed like something Olsen just tossed in to spice up the story a bit.

Conclusion: A story that could have been heartwarming, about change, and growing as a person, ended up annoying me a lot because of its unrealistic characters, and plot elements.

What about you? Have you ever had that one book that you just didn't enjoy, that felt like the author tossed in a bunch of ingredients into plot element stew and called it a day?

Jenni Frencham says

Olsen, Nora. *Frenemy of the People*. Bold Strokes Books, 2014.

Clarissa has it all - a perfect family, plenty of money, supportive parents. Then her parents find themselves in a financial crisis, and Clarissa isn't sure what to do. Also, her sister, who has Downs Syndrome, wants to be crowned homecoming queen. Lexi has a rich but mostly absent mother who tries to buy her love. Clarissa is devastated when she has to stop taking riding lessons and her horse is sold, and Lexi is confused when her mom suddenly buys her a horse. Eventually Clarissa and Lexi work through their problems and fall in love. End scene.

I really wanted to like this book. I was glad for the inclusion of a bisexual character, especially since she didn't spend the entire book trying to decide if she was gay or straight. But the characters in this book were SO immature it drove me nuts. This seems like the kind of book I would recommend to a 3rd or 4th grader who wants to read "big kids' books." Clarissa has a fit because her parents sell her horse. Yes, really. And then she gets mad at Lexi when it turns out Lexi's mom bought Clarissa's horse, as if Lexi did that on purpose to hurt Clarissa. Being inside Clarissa's brain feels like watching an episode of Barney.

I love the idea of having a book with a bisexual character and a lesbian character that's about other issues instead of just their coming out, but this one was way too childish. The cover art is wonderful, but I wouldn't be able to convince my students, who are way past their horse obsessions now that they're in middle school, to pick up this book. And although I was interested in the information about mortgages and the financial crisis, I doubt that information would interest the audience for whom this book is intended.

Recommended for: tweens (maybe with different cover art to show that this book is really about a horse)

Red Flags: none

Overall Rating: 2.5/5 stars

I received a complimentary copy of this book through Netgalley for the purposes of review.

Sarah says

You know what my favorite thing about this book is?

HERE IS A STORY ABOUT A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A BISEXUAL GIRL AND A LESBIAN WHERE THE BI GIRL DOESN'T JUST EXIST AS A DISHONEST AND MANIPULATIVE FOIL TO HIGHLIGHT THE SWEET INNOCENT LESBIAN CHARACTER.

Yeah I put that in all caps and bolded it. Because it is that important. Because after choices like *Bermudez Triangle*/*On The Count of Three* and *The Difference Between Me And You*, teens deserve better. Bisexual teens deserve better.

And *Frenemy of the People* delivers. Read the rest of this review at bisexual-books.tumblr.com.

Jillyn says

Lexie is an angst-ridden, critical-minded, punk vegan. She's also the only openly lesbian girl in her high

school. Clarissa is a popular girl on the equestrian team, bright and bubbly. Clarissa comes out as bisexual and reaches out to Lexie to start a Gay-Straight Alliance, but there's just one problem; Lexie hates Clarissa to the bone. But when Lexie agrees to help Clarissa's disabled sister run for homecoming queen and Clarissa's posh, comfy world starts to crash down around her, Lexie starts to question if she could be falling for the girl she'd sworn to hate.

I really, really liked this book. I think a large part of that is because Nora Olsen struck gold with me as a reader; I relate to this book on a lot of levels.

In addition to the stunning cover, I was swept in by the blurb on the back because I absolutely hated my girlfriend when we first met. I thought she was weird since she had an obsession with wolves and anime and horrible bands and lord, let us not talk about her appalling spelling and grammar. But eventually, she started sneaking into my thoughts more often. In all honesty, I'm still not really sure what happened but lo and behold here we are four(ish) years later. Lexie is the kind of girl I'd love to date: exceedingly intelligent, protective, passionate, a great taste in music, tattooed with dyed hair? Sign me up for one of those please. She also had a few really good one liners that made me chuckle.

On the topic of characters, this book alternates POVs with each chapter, switching between Clarissa and Lexie. I think Olsen did a great job differentiating the two; the characters each had a definitive speech pattern and vocabulary that made it fairly simple to understand who was speaking and when.

Now, at the beginning, I was a bit frustrated by Clarissa's coming out announcement, having found it to be a bit rash and sudden. But then, I got over it because I got to thinking "Well, wasn't yours?" And it's true. It may seem unrealistic to some, but I've been in Clarissa's shoes and sometimes labeling or recognizing sexuality is as simple as it appears in *Frenemy*.

Another thing thing that I found to be well done was the writing of Clarissa's sister, Desi. Desi has Downs Syndrome, and I feel that Olsen was nothing but respectful in her representation of a disabled character. She made this book a stronger one for me, for reasons I cannot entirely explain. She's strong and determined, and I like that.

The amount of drama in this book is really high but I mean, it's a high school novel about queer rivals. What did you expect? I thought it was well paced and believable, but this may be because I was friends with the anarchists in my high school. I also thought the progression of the girls' relationship was well done and I was rooting for them throughout (though for Lexie moreso. Did I mention I would date her yet?).

This book left me with a lot of feelings, but almost all of them are positive. Namely, I messaged my stupid girlfriend's face to tell her I love her. I'm mushy that way, apparently. I recommend this book to fans of LGBTQ YA. Thank you so much to Nora Olsen and Bold Strokes Books for a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. This review can also be found on my blog, *Bitches n Prose*.

Lauren says

I received a free copy of this ebook, courtesy of Netgalley and the publisher, in exchange for an honest review.

Ugh.

I get excited whenever I see bisexual representation in the media, because most people still deny that bi people even exist. This book could have been great. It failed miserably. *This review is going to be pretty disjointed, because there's just so much wrong with this book that I'm having trouble organizing my fucking thoughts.*

The summary: Clarissa is a goodgirl, captain of the equestrian team, and..... um..... well, she has a Down Syndrome sister. She really has no character traits. Lexie is a goddamn trope-filled, angry, blue-haired, punk-rock, vegan lesbian. Because of course. And of course she falls in love with Clarissa, because of course. Things happen, sort of. UGHGHHHGH.

This could have been a heartfelt coming-out story that broke stereotypes and truly illustrated rivals falling in love, which is a trope that I actually love. But no. No, it had to go and fuck it all up.

How? Well, let's start with the **casual racism/sloppy attempts at diversity!**

It made me mad, though, when people at school said we all looked the same. Not true. How could that be, when Jenna and Pacey are Asian, and Harney and I are white?

Let's not even mention the **Down Syndrome character**, who just seemed to be there at a sloppy attempt at diversity and to make Clarissa look better.

"Don't you know that people with Down Syndrome are incapable of lying?" my dad said. I thought that was going too far, but the officer flipped his book closed and said, "I believe it, sir. They're like angels from heaven. Have a good night."

..... WHAT THE FUCK????

And so much for bisexual representation, because **Clarissa's "coming-out" was, well.....**

The, just like that, I realized- Duh! I am so totally bi. Sometimes I get realizations all of a sudden.

^That is an ACTUAL FUCKING QUOTE, THAT'S BULLSHIT! I can't even deal with this shit. I thought it might even be a parody, because this is how Right-wing homophobes think sexuality works, but no. This is a serious book. I'm pissed.

The book could have portrayed the hardships of coming out, but it just felt half-assed.

"That's why she's bisexual," Pacey said. "Because she's greedy. She just wants everyone."

The snide comments and total misunderstanding of bi people is never clarified, and doesn't affect Clarissa. There's even a pint when the lesbian girl, Lexie, says she doesn't trust bisexuals. Clarissa explained and all, but I don't know, it just felt forced and the whole thing resolved too quickly.

Clarissa's parents are also losing their house, which was actually more of a major plot point than the whole romance thing. This book should have been marketed as 'Decidedly bi girl and stereotypical lesbian gf deal with bi girl's house being foreclosed upon, with all romance and representation falling by the wayside.

Clarissa doesn't even understand foreclosures, nor does she seem to want to learn. About anything.

Mortgage was one of those boring grown-up things that I didn't even want to understand. Like episiotomy and French drains.

I didn't see how you could lose a house, like you could lose a set of keys or a chapstick that rolled behind the desk.

She's not very open minded about sixty minutes, either.

What kind of sixteen year old watches 60 Minutes? That show is for old people.

Eh.

Lexie was a bit more believable than Clarissa, but she still felt flat and tropey.

At least she said some things that I could get behind.

I couldn't believe I was almost-friends with someone who said no homo.

I didn't want seem like some left wing ogre who hated everything.

Don't worry, I'm not a bring-a-gun-to-school type. I just hate silently.

I will admit this book was funny in a few places, even if it wasn't trying to be, and I found parts that I shouldn't rather hilarious.

All of the characters, though, were just meh.

The writing was just meh. The sentences were very choppy. Has this author seriously never heard of a linking verb?

There is more I could say, and I might edit this review sometime, but I have other things to do and i'm tired of pouring effort into this piece of shit. I feel like I used more effort on this review than the author did

actually writing the book.

Ugh.

Jeanne says

Disclaimer: I was given a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Trigger Warning: This book uses the r-word (ableist slur for people with intellectual disabilities and/or Down syndrome). Details on its use are in the review.

In many ways, *Frenemy of the People* reminds me a lot of various books and movies I loved as a kid with the notable difference of the leads in this love story are a lesbian and bisexual girl. As a preteen and teen, I longed for a story featuring two girls in love. I wanted something, books or movies, to mirror the kinds of relationships I was having at the time. This book does that so realistically that at times I was laughing with second hand embarrassment.

“I’m not sure what transgender is yet, but I found a website that’s going to explain it to me.”

The story is told in 1st person, the narrative switches between Clarissa and Lexie’s POV. This not only provides insight into the characters, but also into how they misunderstand and misjudge each other. Resulting in some of the most authentic and rarely seen teen voices I’ve ever read.

Clarissa and Lexie are spoiled, entitled, and often not likable at times. They think they know it all, jump to conclusion and make a lot of mistakes, just as we all do when we’re young, and even as adults. While they’re slips ups and stumbles are cringe worthy they are also realistic and true to the kind of teens we rarely see in media. They aren’t quirky, fast talking over-educated avatars for adult nostalgia. They put their are misinformed, inexperienced, and often put their foot in their mouths. These flaws are not trivial or token, but rather are tied to who they are and how they were raised.

“The word man doesn’t mean human,” I said. “We already have the word human, which means human. This is totally sexist.”

Lexie is self righteous, rude, insensitive and disaffected. She embodies the militant, vegan, punk lesbian cliché, complete with straight edge tattoo and blue hair. If that was all we knew of Lexie that’s all she would be, a stereotype. Luckily, we get to know Lexie, and her home life, and see there is real pain and reasons for what she does. Her parents’ emotional neglect plays a huge part in why Lexie acts out and clings to stark views of right and wrong. The story provides insight both through Lexie’s narrative, and Clarissa’s POV into a sensitive and deeply wounded girl, who wants desperately to be seen as good and worthy of love.

I was disheveled, smelly, and full of hate. They should fear me.

Clarissa could also be dismissed as a cliché, though a whole different one. She is the spoiled popular girl, complete with a gaggle of friends and trophies for horseback riding. Add onto this her sudden realization, at the beginning of the story, that she is bisexual and Clarissa could be the poster child for the “faux bi girl” stereotype. However, like Lexie, Clarissa proves to be complex, intelligent and surprisingly mature. Part of this maturity stems from growing up with a sister with Down syndrome, but some of it also comes from having flighty, fiscally somewhat parents. Clarissa is compassionate and determined, strengths that are all too often discouraged in girls her age, but here they give her the foundation she needs to weather some sizable adversity that has nothing to do with her sexual orientation.

“Brains, beauty and pizza.”

Let me take a break to talk about my favorite character in the story, Desi. She is Clarissa’s older sister, and she has Down syndrome. A character like Desi could easily be a token or plot device, Desi is neither. She is a teenage girl with a boyfriend and the same dreams many teenage girls have. Desi is blunt and unapologetic, and doesn’t let her disability or people’s ignorance about it stop her from getting whatever she wants. She is very aware of how people treat her differently, and even uses it to her advantage. While I wish there were a few more disabled characters with as much of a presence in the story as she has, she does have several scenes with characters other than her sister and parents where she’s treated as an equal. One of my favorite moments in the book is a scene where she’s playing a game with Lexie and another character, Slobberin’ Rob, where she shows she’s a clever little smartass. Desi is everything I LOVE to see in a female character, and wish I saw more in fiction, it’s even more awesome that she is all this and has Down Syndrome.

Lexie and Clarissa are also refreshing female characters in how they’re allowed to not be perfect, or idealized versions of what adults wish teens were like. They both make mistakes and say the wrong things at the worst possible moments, much like we all do. Despite their imperfections and missteps they grow and learn from each other and their experiences.

A great demonstration of one of these mistakes is linked to the Trigger Warning. Early on in the story, Lexie uses the r-word in reference to Desi, in a comment about how the concept of a Homecoming queen is a joke. Clarissa immediately calls out Lexie and explains that the word is a slur.

It is an important moment for both girls, and their relationship. Lexie is forced to deal with the consequences of what she says, and that she is not as socially conscious and knowledgeable as she believed. She also sees Clarissa in a new light, and is forced to reevaluate her view of a girl she’d written off as shallow and ignorant.

Other stories would either not even use this word, or would give this huge misstep to a villainous character. By giving it to Lexie it not only allows her to be flawed, but to also demonstrate her capacity to learn, while providing a similar opportunity to unknowable readers. It shows the error doesn’t make her a bad person. In fact, her ability to apologize and grow shows her heart is in the right place. Clarissa has similar moments of growing awareness. Both girls go through significant character growth that is grounded in realistic situations. Part of becoming an adult is realizing that you’re not always right, and neither are your parents.

Speaking of parents, there is a refreshing abundance of parental figures present and deeply involved in the story. While the girls' parents are source of stress and emotional pain, they also are sources of love and support. I loved how the parents felt like real, deeply flawed, people too. They had lives outside of the girls, and very realistic dialogue.

All these layers, and thoughtfully constructed characters come together to weave a profoundly enjoyable and surprising emotional read for me. I was transported back to my own youth, and reflected on my own mistakes and turbulent love life with a forgiving eye. That part strikes me the most.

Women are rarely allowed to forgive themselves for mistakes, even when they are understandable and a natural part of growing up. We are taught, from a very young age, to judge ourselves and other women harshly. I often seen this judgement extend to fiction depiction of women. Where fictional teenage girls are held to unrealistically high standard. They are judged to be shallow, cliché and unimportant simply for not being an idealized version of what adults think teens should be. That is not only unfair, it's damaging.

Real teen readers should be able to see a wide range of teenagers and teenage experiences. Fantasy and wish fulfillment are great, but not all teen characters have to embody ideals that are often unachievable for real teens. We should have a diverse range of experiences and characters for readers of all ages and all sexual orientations to identify with, especially teenage girls who often are only given a singular, homogenous image of themselves in media.

Showing teens that they can make mistakes, not be perfect, and of course not be straight and still be good people, who find love is profoundly important to the health and well being of LGBTQ teens. Not liking or relating to Clarissa or Lexie shouldn't be a value judgment on them, just as it shouldn't be on any young girl. They are not poster girls for lesbian and bisexual teens, they're just two teenage girls in love.

Frenemy of the People is an honest, earnest view of the messy, imperfection of teenage life and young love. It shows how girls are capable, intelligent and worthy of love, but most of all it shows how the experience of young love is a universally uplifting, hilarious and even cringe worthy at times.

Patricia Lynne says

I got this e-ARC throughout Netgalley from publisher in exchange of an honest review.

When I've first started reading this book, I thought it was trying to be funny. I thought that maybe the thing it was doing is that it put all these ridiculous events and bunch of stereotypes and made fun of it all. But as I read on, I realized that... actually no, this book was trying to be serious. Shocking, I know, because this is such an unrealistic, ridiculous book full of stereotypes it made me cringe so bad I thought my face was going to fall off.

Don't let the premise fool you, this is not a love/hate book, this is not a book dealing with coming out, struggling with it and such and it is in no way tragic. It's just a lot of dumb girls acting smart and destroying things and acting like they know everything there is to know.

First off, I'd like to start with Clarissa's... coming out. If you could even call it that. You know, as an actual person who clarifies herself as bi, I found it extremely offensive and just plain dumb. Not one queer person

looks herself in a mirror one day and says "Oh hey, I'm going to be bi!!! Girls and boys are pretty!!! Oh yeah!!!" That's why I was thinking that maybe author was trying to make it funny because conservative straight people make it out to be this way, but no! That was actually motherfucking serious coming out!! Just... what the fuck? You don't look at a girl one day and go all "I'm bi, hihihhi." She just decides that she's bi. There's literally a quote in a book that says that but I'm too tired to try to find it now. I've known my whole life I was attracted to girls and boys both and okay, of course that one day it just became more obvious and accepted it with a bit of a freak out, but I certainly didn't smile and laugh while saying "I'm bi!!!!!" and announcing it to everyone I do and don't know just right after I decided that I'm bi. I'm actually baffled because this is not a joke. I seriously am.

And when we're with Clarissa already... how is she supposed to be smart? I don't get it. She's actually the stupidest person on the planet most of the time (or all the time really). She actually starts doubting that she's bi the next day she comes out because she has never kissed a girl, so she goes to the girl she sees on the street and kisses her. I mean, what? And then she's all "Oh yesss, that's the best kiss ever I'm totally bi!!!!!" Do you see now why I thought this was some kind of a joke? Do you?

She's all pouty and pretty and she laughs a lot and she didn't know there are actual money problems until her family's house is put for foreclosure (she doesn't know what that and mortgage is before that happens.... I mean, come on now!). But somehow, she's praised by the fucking lawyer of her knowledge and is offered a *job* just because her lovely girlfriend knows some shit. I did whole facepalm thing after that. The whole novel through, Clarissa is this stupid girl who knows nothing about the world and then suddenly, we're told she's smart enough to work for a lawyer? Give me a fucking break.

Then we have Lexie. She'd be a somehow decent character if it weren't for all the stereotypes surrounding her. She's a vegan, she's all tomboyish, she's a punk, she's a smartass and she doesn't like people. What a shocker. She doesn't believe Clarissa's really bi (I don't too, but Lexie, you're just a softie) and she thinks Clarissa's stupid and all of that. I wished that has lasted throughout the whole book. I'd maybe even like Lexie if that remained. But of course, we don't actually get any sort of hate because they become quick besties and then girlfriends for half an hour (and Lexie gives Clarissa a ring for it????????????) and then....
drum roll ANGSTTTTTTT!!!!!!

It gets so fucking angsty over such dumb things that I couldn't believe what I was actually reading. One more proof that Clarissa is the dumbest girl ever and that Lexie is becoming stupider and stupider as the novel goes on. Both of them just become slowly more and more unlikable through the novel until you actually can't stand any of them and you want to throw your copy (or tablet, in my case) across the room.

You know, I was thinking of giving this book 2 stars just because the writing wasn't so bad and I gave many bad books higher rating just because of it, but then that one thing happen that I just couldn't turn a blind eye to, and I couldn't make myself give it any more than this.

Did you know that the actual thing that happens in this novel is that these two girls destroy Clarissa's former home with a fucking bulldozer?? That they have no idea how to use except that they've watched some movie that showed how to do it?? And that says it's not easy?? But they're so great at it they destroy it all! Oh and then there's a police chasing them and they leave their ski masks in the *bushes*! Are you kidding me? How fucking dumb are you? I don't know if police finds them because of course it's nowhere written but if you're going to commit a crime, then do it properly!

And then, guess what, *they don't get busted by the police*! Because good ol' Lexie's daddy is a rich man who will lie for his daughter and her girlfriend and then will punish his daughter real, real bad (and he doesn't

even tell Clarissa's parents. They know nothing. Really. No joking here). If this were the real life, they'd be in jail in no time. Of course, they don't regret a thing and Clarissa would do it again. *facepalm*

Also, another thing what I didn't like what how poorly the money subject was done. It draws throughout the whole book just to be all fine and dandy in the end. Just like that.

Other characters in the book were just - there. Even Desi, Clarissa's sister with a Down syndrome, was just there so this novel would get sympathetic looks. Every character was emotionless through the whole book, and when the author was trying to write *emotions*, it felt so forced and so out-of-place I couldn't believe it.

Overall, the whole book was too unrealistic for a "realistic fiction" and too ridiculous to be believable. I'm sorry, but I didn't enjoy it one bit.

Lissa says

My review of this book is probably going to be as disjointed as the book itself is.

Ugh, where do I even begin? I wanted to like this book; I truly did. And even though I ended up thinking that the book was meh, there were a few good things to be found within its pages:

1) Desi - Yes, finally, a character with Down's Syndrome who is a real person and not a stereotype. Desi's relationship with her sister Clarissa was such a typical sisterly relationship, alternating between loving one another and wanting to strangle one another. And even though people with Down's Syndrome are typically portrayed as 100% sweet and hugs, Desi isn't that. Sure, she can be sweet. She also has a temper. My niece has Down's Syndrome, and even though she loves hugs and tends to be very sweet much of the time, she can and will also whallop the crap out of her younger brother and throw fits to get what she wants like any other child. Because, guess what? She IS a child. And I loved how the author made Desi just like that as well.

2) Clarissa is bisexual and confronts the bisexual myths head-on ("why don't you pick a side," "does this mean you want to date more than one person," etc). She doesn't become a lesbian, even though she has a girlfriend. She still identifies as bi at the end of the book.

3) The housing crisis is portrayed pretty well here. Clarissa's parents are facing a lot of money problems, and the predatory lending schemes that came to light in 2007/2008 are really put on display here. I liked that. I would love to read more leftist politics in my lesbian fiction.

And that's about all that I liked.

So what didn't I like? Well, it was the same tired case of instalove. The characters go from despising one another to loving one another really quickly. And then there was the ridiculous (and yet seemingly obligatory) "misunderstanding" that tears the lovebirds apart for fifty or so pages until they realize, hey, we should have just talked to one another and smoothed things out, lol. I'm kind of sick of that trope, to be honest.

And speaking of tropes - ugh. Lexie was super tropey. As was Clarissa, to be honest. And I had VEGAN RAGE when Lexie made a big deal about being environmentally conscious and being a vegan for 90% of the book, only to eat cheese pizza because Desi made a mistake when she ordered for her. Like it would be so

fucking hard to go back to the counter and say, hey, I want a slice of cheeseless. But, nope, Lexie just eats it - and likes it. Ick. And she's so serious about being vegan (among other things) that she has a straight-edge tattoo, but she doesn't think twice about eating cheese. Look, I haven't had cheese in a while, but I used to be a cheese fiend. And I slipped a couple of times in my own vegan path and ate cheese. And each time I was guilty feeling as fuck because I knew that I was going against my principles. The last time I ate cheese, after not eating cheese for months, the cheese was literally so disgusting that I almost vomited. It was just so thick and oozy and gross. So my palate doesn't even want cheese anymore. And if Lexie had been vegan for a while, she'd probably have the same reaction (I know several vegans who "slipped" only to discover that they no longer even liked cheese or milk). And I just hate that nearly every vegan character in a young adult book (which are damned few and far between) either "cheat" without any remorse or give up being vegan because it's no longer hip. Sigh. Can I just have one fucking vegan character who stays vegan throughout a book? Please?

Ahem.

Anyway, this book felt like it didn't know what it wanted to be. There were just too many poorly-developed plot lines. Is this book about Clarissa founding a Gay-Straight Alliance Club at her school? No, because it's only mentioned a couple of times. Is it about Clarissa coming out? Ha, no, because she literally just decides one day that she must be bisexual. Is it about Lexie realizing her own privilege? Nope. Is it about getting Desi elected as homecoming queen? Not really, because that's sporadic at best. It's just a pile of loose threads.

Laura says

Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for this free Ebook!

Ok, so this book was OK.... I was super excited to read this book, it sounded great. The thing though that bothered me was Clarissa 's coming out. Ugh. I just didn't like the way it was handled. She texted her friends under the table because it just suddenly clicked that she was Bisexual.... Whilst I realise that coming out is different for everyone, I just feel like that the author could have improved this.

Besides that, "Frenemy Of The People" was a cute, fun and quick read. Whilst it wasn't great, it was still good.

Lexxie (un)Conventional Bookworms says

I received a free ARC of Frenemy of the People from Bold Strokes Books Inc. via Netgalley in exchange of an honest review

This is a very refreshing story, about two girls who seemingly have nothing in common, but who fall in love anyway.

Full review to come soon.

This and all my other reviews are originally posted on my blog **(un)Conventional Bookviews**

Chelsey says

When I get ARC's, I feel REALLY BAD about writing negative reviews.

That being said, there is nothing nice I can say about this book, and it makes me feel kind of depressed.

I wanted to like this book. Really I did. I wanted to be able to bring in a book to the store I work at that represents the lesbian and the bisexual crowd, that was something they could relate to, that I could actually TALK about. I wanted to be able to say, "Hey, this is a great book, this is something you can use for a bit of support- this is what life is like for those of us who identify as Bi/Lesbian. Those on the female end of the spectrum."

Sadly, I'm going to have to continue leaving this kind of thing to my gay male coworker, and all the literature that revolves around boys at this point in time. [More because this is the first book that actually focuses on the homosexual female side of things that I've READ, but I digress.]

This book took EVERY TERRIBLE CLICHE YOU'VE EVER SEEN ABOUT A FEMALE FEMALE RELATIONSHIP and PILED IT ON HEAVY. And the language? So bloody ridiculous I almost couldn't bring myself to finish it. I seriously haven't gagged this much over language used in a novel since Twilight, and I handed that back to my siblings covered in red pen because I edited it.

I was so disappointed, and I can't express this enough.

audrey says

Clarissa is a wholesome seemingly well off teen who loves horses. Lexie is a rich, socially conscience activist who loves butterflies. Two very different personalities that become unlikely friends as they partner up to make Clarissa's sister homecoming queen. The newest victims of the foreclosure crisis, Clarissa and her family find themselves in danger of losing their home. Clarissa looks to Lexie for advice and support soon finding their friendship deepening to love.

Frenemy Of The People is book that had a few memorable scenes and moments where I connected with the characters. There were a lot of interesting ideas that were presented but I felt it became over burdened and incoherent as the story went on.

I made many concessions when rating this book because it was in the young adult genre. The genre has a particular audience in mind and has to adjust the language and story elements to where it's easily digestible. So I'll forgive the stereotypical characters and predictable plot.

The characters were interesting but were often underdeveloped and inconsistent. The strongest character was probably Clarissa's sister, Desi and I commend the author for taking the time to write a respectful and accurate portrayal of a character with down syndrome. Lexie had a strong voice that came through in her chapters and I would have loved to have gotten to know her better. I was disappointed that her character development was stifled because her chapters had to solely hold up the romance story line. Clarissa's voice

in her chapters tended to waver, strong at times and weak in others. Her development was inconsistent resulting in her motives being blurred so that when she took action it seemed drastic and out of character.

I was really looking forward to the romance story in this book but it just seemed neglected and pushed to the side. The blurb promises rivalry and hints at an intense relationship tested by outside forces. The reality is that Clarissa and Lexie aren't really rivals just different people that find themselves becoming friends once they see past each others facade. No outside forces trying to tear them apart just a stressful situation with possibly losing her home that has Clarissa abruptly pulling away. The romance often seemed entirely one sided with Lexie holding it up and taking the initiative. There were a couple of cute moments but it was just a luke-warm romance that wasn't properly established. I was also hoping for the LGBTQA themes to have more depth and emphasis but it was taken at face value and down played.

The overall plot was choppy, conflict seemed forced and the pacing was off. Some scenes and additional descriptions seemed unnecessary. My biggest complaint however were the massive information dumps. It's obvious a lot of research went into this book and it's very informative, thorough, and accurate. However it was conveyed in lengthy text heavy dialogue that was so dense it weighed the story down and threw off the pacing completely. It took the focus away from the story and was quite frankly boring. Especially when a lot of the information shared had no bearing on the story or the end result.

Frenemy Of The People has beautiful cover art and a lot of interesting concepts it tried to get across but I just didn't care for the overall execution of the story.

[Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review]

Carla Lee says

Rating: 2.5/5 stars

Recommended?: It's not a terrible read, but the characters are tropey and flat, the dialog left me feeling disconnected, and the ending was unbelievable. I'm glad I read it, but I can't unreservedly recommend it, either.

I was ecstatic when I first heard about this book, because everyone who talked about it was quick to mention that it was a love story between teen girls, one lesbian and one who actually used the label "bisexual." Do you know how rare it is for a bisexual character to actually use the word bisexual? Really damn rare.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to connect with the characters the way I hoped, and the book didn't live up to the hype. The relationship absolutely did. It was fun and cute, the two girls adorable, and I love that they are so different, so frustrated with each other, and then fall in love. Mostly, it was the dialog that killed it for me; there were a lot of places where the dialog read more like a textbook entry about the topic, from subprime mortgages to ableism to biphobia. I love that the book addressed these topics so, so much, but I wish it had been more smoothly integrated into the text, on a writing basis.

Character-wise, both Clarissa and Lexie are in turns adorable and annoying, wonderful and horrible, and a lot of fun to spend some time with as a reader. I also loved Clarissa's sister, Desi. Desi has Down Syndrome and really wants to be Homecoming Queen because this is her senior year. She has a boyfriend who we don't see much of, but their relationship is pretty delightful from what we do see. There are a lot of moments where other people, including Lexie, say shitty, ableist things (often when they are trying to say nice things, which

happens a lot in real life, too), but the text is pretty clearly against that, and we are supposed to understand that isn't the right thing to do. Mostly, I think Desi is a pretty solid character with her own motivations who isn't just there to be a lesson or inspiration, or to add to Clarissa's character. Desi and Clarissa have a pretty delightful sibling relationship, fighting each other, but also working together when they need to team up.

Example of the say a nice thing, still be ableist:

"Don't you know that people with Down Syndrome are incapable of lying?" my dad said. I thought that was going too far, but the officer flipped his book closed and said, "I believe it, sir. They're like angels from heaven. Have a good night."

Clarissa's internal coming out is also pretty much a non-entity. She figures out she's bisexual in a way that seems really casual, but is at the same time, a nice alternative to the more deep, painful realizations we often see in media (and experience ourselves, sometimes; mine was more like Clarissa's, to be honest, pretty casual), and her coming out to her parents, while not great, is straightforward. I wish we'd seen a little more of her reaction to things, but that's a weakness throughout the book. We're deep in the girls' heads (alternating chapters between them), but there is a lot of telling the reader how things are, not showing us.

Finally, there's a completely unbelievable event at the end of the book that both stretched my suspension of belief to breaking and reminded me that, no matter what else is going on with them, these girls are pretty damn privileged in their whiteness. Further, racism is not addressed in all this other diversity talk.

Overall, I enjoyed reading it, and I'll probably check out Olsen's other books, but the characters are pretty tropey and shallow, the dialog needs work, and the ending left me filled with pure disbelief. I don't regret reading it, but I don't know that I'll ever reread it, either.
