



## Playing Nice

*Rebekah Crane*

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Martina "Marty" Hart is really nice. At least, that's what people think.

It's Marty's junior year at Minster High. Minster's a small town where making great grades, smiling pretty, helping old people, running the new-student Welcoming Committee, and putting up decorations for all the dances--including the totally awful Hot Shot fall hunting celebration--gets you ... what? Marty's not sure. Instead of dreaming about a sororities-and-frats future at nearby University of Michigan, she's restless, searching for a way out of the box her controlling mother and best frenemy Sarah have locked her in. When Lil--don't call her Lily!--Hatfield transfers to Minster, Marty gets her chance. Lil's different. She smokes, wears black, listens to angry punk records, and lives in a weird trailer with her mother. Lil has secrets--secrets that make her a target for all the gossiping and online bullying Minster can muster. But so does Marty. And Marty sees something different in Lil. Something honest.

Something real.

PLAYING NICE is the achingly true story of a girl who's been following the rules for so long she's forgotten who she was when she started. It's about falling in love with the wrong people and not seeing the right ones, about the moments in life when you step out of line, take a chance ... and begin to break free.

## Playing Nice Details

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## From Reader Review Playing Nice for online ebook

### James Shapiro says

Rebekah Crane has crafted a thoroughly charming coming of age tale. She excels at providing the small town details that root you in place and time, but never distract from the story. And while young women growing up in high school is certainly a tale that's been told before, Crane keeps it new with characters you're drawn to for their realness and humanity. You feel that you went to school with these kids, but didn't quite know them as well as Crane did. The journey Crane takes you on is at times funny, at times wrenchingly sad, but it is always engaging. Ultimately, when the last page is turned, that strange feeling you'll have in your chest will be hope; hope for Marty, for Lil, and for high schoolers everywhere, who are just trying to grow up.

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### Kristen Jett says

Full review coming later, but I loved this book.

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#### Full Review 2/26

I'm always really nervous to read novels by authors who I've spoken to on Twitter. I'm all "What if I don't like it? HOW WILL I TALK TO THEM AGAIN?" - thankfully I haven't had this problem.

Playing Nice is so much more than just a story of good girl meets bad girl. I was so eager to see what happened to both Marty (good girl) and Lil (bad girl)...and I might have cried nearly a dozen times. Can we say over relate to the characters? \*nods head\* I could relate to both Marty and Lil, being a touch of both in my high school days - as well as being the Marty that had to understand the Lils of the world.

More than just being a story of one character's growth, Playing Nice is a story of deep friendship. Superficial friendship gets touched on often in YA literature, but a deep almost sister like bond is often missing. Playing Nice made me call friends I hadn't spoken to in months - you know the kind, the friend who you can always call and pick right back up where you left at in one moment - just to tell them I love them. Playing Nice made me grateful for the great friends I have in my own life (and that I'm not in high school anymore!).

I loved the complexity of all the characters. Each character has more to them than what meets the eye, and it was interesting to see Marty (whose eyes the story is told from) discover this in both herself, and the people she has known her entire life. In all honesty, the characters are what made this book so enjoyable for me - I can't love a book if I don't love the characters.

A few tough issues are brought up tastefully. (One is something I am often skittish to read about. I cried \*ahem\* okay, I bawled my eyes out, however wasn't nauseated by it. That's the unofficial KJ test, by the way.)

I love how Marty wants to see the best in everyone.

I love how Lil sees Marty for more than what she projects herself as.

I love how Marty's loyalty to her friends and herself.

I love how Lil wants her friends to be better than herself.

Most importantly, I love how Playing Nice made me think about my own life. That's what I love about YA (and NA) - it is easy to find truths and thoughts within the pages that can help you discover something new about your own self and life path.

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## **Shambhawi P. says**

Here's an age old adage when it comes to writing:

*Show, don't tell. Show, don't tell.*

**Even though I'm the nicest person in Minster, I don't have a gaggle of friends. I've found that most people like to be associated with me and the things I do, but very few actually want to get to know me. That's okay.**

### SHOW, DON'T TELL.

I would have liked to 'see' the way Marty was 'nice' and Lil was not so much - but in a first person narration it just felt that Marty was being a braggart about her and a judgmental b\*tch about Lil.

That was one of the two issues I had with this book. The other being the way the characters were stereotyped. Marty is nice - nice, virgin, studious, nice, wearing cotton dresses, virgin, nice again. And in the first few chapters that was the depth of Marty's character. And Lil wears black, smokes, listens to ~~good~~ rock music, talks back so Lil must be 'bad'. It felt awfully cliched and a few chapters in I was not really sure if I would like the book.

But Crane's writing won me over eventually as the book progressed. I really love reading a book where character development is well shown - and I could actually see Marty, Lily as well as secondary characters like Sarah or Alex-of-the-great-boner (~~exactly what the name says!~~) and Matt Three-Last-Names grow as the story progressed. I even liked Marty's mom the way someone would like Dolores Umbridge in the Harry Potter books - by wanting to throttle her because obviously that is the reaction the author wants us to have.

In some ways Playing Nice is a typical story. There's a good girl who does not want to be good anymore. There's a bad girl who is befriending the good girl. There is drama, b\*tchy High Schoolers, awkward crushes, drama, emotions. The book is basically what one can expect from the blurb. But what is better is that the sense of reality Crane has been able to infuse into the pages. Once you get over Marty's rantings of how she is nice and wants to get over her virginity (which does get kind of annoying) there is a flow and gradual growth in the story. Even Marty's poems show that growth in her as the story moves forward - I like the latter poems hell lot more than the earlier ones.

But most importantly what I like the most is the way Crane has left some open questions in the story that she expects the reader to answer themselves, (view spoiler) Not only did they make me feel closer to the characters, questions like this made sure that the book stayed long in my mind even after I finished it.

The fact that I still have 'One Love' by Bob Marley stuck on my head still is another plus!

## **2.5 Stars**

### **The Twins Read says**

This review can originally be found at [The Twins Read](#) .

Playing Nice came as a surprise to us, initially we thought that it would be a bore-fest or maybe a book filled with angst, angry teens. Turns out we were wrong.

The leading characters in Playing Nice were surprisingly real, Marty is a nice girl confined in the box her parents and everyone else has stuffed her in and it stifles her to no end. She struggles to meet her parents' expectations along with her friends' and schoolmates' but in the process she loses sight of who she is. There were days where she wasn't sure if she liked something because she liked it or if it was forced onto her by her parents. She's a little lost and I think we can all relate to that. Lily Hatfield or Lil is brash and surprisingly honest, being forced to live with the stigma of her mother's reputation has made her secretive and unwilling to trust anyone. As the story progresses we got to know Lil a little better and we ended up liking her all the same. She's just like everyone else despite her unwelcoming exterior - a little lost, a little scared.

This is one of those books where the first half is kind of hard to read and plow through. We thought that Marty has a bit of a scary obsession with sex, boys, and her virginity. We're also pretty sure that a lot of girls don't wear dresses or skirts for easy access to their panties. It was also kind of... unnatural for her parents to be so obsessed with her being a good girl. Parents who practically live for their kids' report cards, we get. Parents who want their kid to be dubbed as The Nicest Girl Within a Thousand Mile Radius? Not really. We really thought we wouldn't get to really like Marty, given that But as the story progressed, things began to surprisingly get better. As it turns out, Marty may learn some things the hard way, and she's found out for herself that she doesn't need to keep forcing herself into an identity that others have boxed her in. The teenage years are the years where you supposedly experiment and try to find yourself, and we couldn't be prouder of Marty.

If you ever find yourself wanting to read book with a heroine that grows on you as she finds out the true meaning of friendship, and all the while dealing with a brand new identity, you might want to check out Playing Nice.

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### **Emily Lloyd says**

Though on the surface it seems like a typical high-school girl about a girl struggling over peer pressure and tough parents, Playing Nice is really so much more. Marty, and especially Lil, are much more complex characters than they seem on the surface and Crane somehow convinces the reader that the "good girl turns bad" tradition is not as black and white as it seems. This book does a great job of including ALL the complexities girls face in high school on every level rather than just scraping the surface. Recommended to every incoming high school student.

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## **Aditi ~ •A Thousand Words A Million Books says**

MORE ON: <http://athousandwordsmillionbooks.bl...>

An entire spread in the yearbook is awarded to the nicest girl. Well, if you went to same high school, you would know who it was. There was never a question. From the toddlers to the bridge club ladies, you would get just one answer: Marty Hart.

She knows it, her family knows it, her mates know it. She just is, and always has been, the nicest girl in the whole, albeit rather small town. Her University of Michigan application has been on her desk ever since she took one look at the building, one of her perfect choices. Her dressing sense, her whole attitude, her friends can be described in just one word. Impeccable.

And this? This is her story. The story of how all of that changed.

Being a part of the welcoming committee into the most treacherous part of high school, forces her to meet Lil. With her black leather clothes, dark as the night sky lipstick, and secretive past, filled with the ghosts of yesterday she is exactly the opposite of everything Marty is. Too dark for this little town, Lil is somebody that nobody understands and nobody even tries too. Except, unexpectedly, Marty.

Playing Nice is exactly what the title suggests. About a girl who lives her life playing nice, and then realises that that's all she was doing. Playing. It's not real, not really. Being all nice, all the time is not really being you, if you even know who you are. It's not giving yourself space to breathe. It's living in a made up world. And one that this girl intends to escape, even thought she's just finding out she wants to!

The nice girl with the rebel, the sweet perfect one with the flawed one, together, that blooms into the sweetest of friendships. As Marty learns that being nice isn't everything and finds herself lost in the world she thought she knew, and Lil sees that not everything needs to be in a shade of black, nor does your heart have to be worn on your sleeve for you to see the love in life, Playing Nice will show you just how hard and beautiful it is for you to see yourself, as you really are!

\*I received a copy of this book to review via the publisher, but that in no way affects my opinions of it\*

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### **emily says**

#### **Synopsis**

Martina "Marty" Hart is really nice. At least, that's what people think.

It's Marty's junior year at Minster High. Minster's a small town where making great grades, smiling pretty, helping old people, running the new-student Welcoming Committee, and putting up decorations for all the dances--including the totally awful Hot Shot fall hunting celebration--gets you ... what? Marty's not sure. Instead of dreaming about a sororities-and-frats future at nearby University of Michigan, she's restless, searching for a way out of the box her controlling mother and best frenemy Sarah have locked her in. When Lil--don't call her Lily!--Hatfield transfers to Minster, Marty gets her chance. Lil's different. She smokes, wears black, listens to angry punk records, and lives in a weird trailer with her mother. Lil has secrets--secrets that make her a target for all the gossiping and online bullying Minster can muster. But so does

Marty. And Marty sees something different in Lil. Something honest.

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Review: It's hard not to love this book. I'm not a huge fan of straight young adult but I LOVED this book. Normally, I wait for that twist, that thing that pushes your imagination to the limits. Nothing in this book is too crazy. Even the most horrendous, appalling moments are (unfortunately) completely believable and they happen every day. It is a beautiful vision of the appalling truth behind prejudice, arrogance and (what I hope we all strive for) empathy.

The Fabulous: When I finished reading this book, Bekah asked me what my favorite character was and I had a really hard time picking one. My initial reaction was Lil, but that was too easy. Her strength was palpable, yet she had a depth of despair that she barely hid. Marty's Dad was an amazing character as well, and his scene with Marty in their kitchen was incredibly touching. Of course, Alex is the perfect mix of humor and kindness for a girl just trying to figure things out. And who doesn't still wonder WTF was Matt thinking. Yes, that deserves the F. In the end, the most fabulous thing about this book is that you can't pick a favorite. They're all too real.

The Flaws: It ends.

Favorite Moments: There were so many in this book. The trip to the store to pick out decorations for the dance. The awful moment where gossip makes someone a victim. The jelly bracelet. Mom's humanity. The life and death of being a social teenager. It's just all perfect.

Best line: "You're all a bunch of penguins. Penguins!"

The one that brought tears: "Everyone leaves."

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## C. Vescio says

Can I just say that I'm tired of all the special people in YA? Super special girl meets totally super special guy and they fall super special in love. There's a lot of that- and while the stories are well written and a hot commodity- I'm on the edge of being sick of them. Don't get me wrong- I'd love to hunt demons in a parallel dimension or kick it with werewolves but sometimes my geek needs a break. Supernatural, superhero, super fucking next please.

Let's kick it old school... and that's what Playing Nice is. It's a dose of reality- sure... which might be the reason we flee to all the fantasy in the first place- but holy shit did I miss reading about real teenage angst. The dumb problems we had at sixteen, the best friend you settled for, the flawed judgmental mother, the crush on a guy that seemed unreachable. Crane's humor and ability to bring her sharp imagination to these characters is what really sold me...

Read the Whole Review on [FICTIONAL CHICK](#)

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## **Andrea at Reading Lark says**

Review Posted on Reading Lark 6/4/13: <http://readinglark.blogspot.com/2013/...>

Playing Nice is a novel that all high school girls should read. It's an intriguing look at bullying and how appearances can be deceiving. There also is a fair amount of friend on friend warfare happening in these pages. Sadly, I can remember times when my friends and I were not always nice to one another. What is it about being a teenage girl that brings out our inner witches from time to time?

This novel wasn't anything I expected it to be, but it turned out to be better than I predicted. Based on the cover and summary, I was expecting it to be about two girls who didn't get along and all the horrible things they did to one another. Instead the story follows Miss Manners and Sunshine, Marty, as she attempts to befriend the surly, dark new student, Lil. These girls are complete opposites in almost every way, but they learn that their differences actually make them really compatible as best friends. The friendship is looked down upon by everyone from classmates to townsfolk; Marty's parents are less than pleased with her new social decisions.

Rumors begin to swirl and Marty finds herself on the end of vicious gossip that cuts her to the core. Both Marty and Lil realize they could learn a lot from the other and change their lives for the better. Together they have to learn to avoid the rumors and the barbed words that are hurled down the school hallways. Sadly, too many teen girls will relate to this novel. Teenagers need to stop and think before the gossip. Bullying is a chronic issue that shows up in the news all too often. It needs to stop.

While this novel provides commentary on some serious issues, it is also a story about friendship. Friendship isn't always easy - like most things in life it has its ups and downs. Being a teenager is a volatile time and people don't always make the best decisions. Playing Nice does a nice job of showcasing the conflict that can arise in teen friendships. The happy moments do afford lots of laughter. Be warned though - a lot of the humor is on the raunchy side and Lil curses like a sailor. These weren't deal breakers for me, but I would certainly say this novel is for high school aged teens as a result. The humor, dialogue, and situations are all realistic reflections of teenage life, however, as an adult reader I found the humor to be annoying at times. I reacted much the way Marty does from time to time when Lil would go off on one of her tangents.

Another element that I liked about this novel was the concept of first love and first crushes. We can all remember that first person that made our hearts do cartwheels every time they walked by our locker. We can all recall the weakness in the knees that always managed to show up when smiles and hellos were exchanged. The giddiness of that first crush and the longing to have the feelings returned saturates these pages. Rebekah Crane truly does a beautiful job of conjuring up those first crush feelings; she also laces them with a bit of unrequited love and daydreams. The lesson Marty learns about matters of the heart is a difficult one, but I appreciated seeing it reflected in fiction. It's unrealistic for there to be constant love triangles and boys tripping over themselves to woo the main character. I appreciated that the romance in this story felt real; I loved it all the more as a result.

Finally, Marty often keeps her feelings bottled up inside, but learns to channel her thoughts into poetry. The poems were one of my favorite aspects of this novel. I also related to this because I did the same thing as a teen. Marty's character growth is inspiring. I love when she finally finds her voice.

Playing Nice is well written, engaging, and thought provoking. Being a teen girl isn't always easy, but surrounding yourself with awesome people can help you navigate the rocky high school current a little easier. I love seeing real issues reflected in fiction; it is always therapeutic for me to see fictional characters struggling with issues that I struggle with (or used to struggle with) and finding a light at the end of the tunnel.

Rebekah Crane's future work is certainly earning it's way on my TBR list.

**One Last Gripe:** I was really frustrated by Marty's love issues. I think this will be easier for teen readers to relate to and I am sure as a teen I might have made the exact same choices, but I still wanted her to wake up and see reality.

**My Favorite Thing About This Book:** I loved the entire concept of appearances being deceiving. This theme pops up in so many ways throughout the story.

**First Sentence:** My mom likes to tell everyone that from the day I was born she knew I would be a nice person.

**Favorite Character:** Alex - He was the one character who truly knew himself and always did the right thing

**Least Favorite Character:** Pippa

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### **Lauren says**

Great book for teens, young adults (and honestly I loved it too). The teen angst rang absolutely true, while not playing to stereotypes too much. The characters were authentic and complex - not something you find in YA all the time. I will hold on to this one until my own child is in high school. And it will be something I share with the kids of friends.

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### **Lucy says**

Marty Hart is the nicest girl in Minster - but she's starting to wonder if that's all she really wants to be. When brash and brutally honest Lil moves to Minster, Marty is instantly drawn to her, and begins to step outside her comfort zone. Its a concept we've seen before in contemporary YA, but what really drew me to *Playing Nice* was the focus on female friendship rather than romance. All too often in YA, a cute guy is the catalyst for the protagonist to make changes in her life - and that's fine, as long as she's changing for herself and not for him. But friendship (especially between two girls) is often cut or sidelined to make way for the central romantic relationship. In *Playing Nice* there's a little romance but friendship is the main focus of the story, and I enjoyed that.

*Playing Nice* has potential, and it's a story that I think will resonate with some teens - as a teenager, I was constantly worried about how other people perceived me, and Marty's obsession with her own self-image was very relatable to me personally - but ultimately, I felt that the story was let down by clumsy exposition: the reader is constantly told how "nice" Marty is, but her actions don't always reflect the same nice girl persona. Example - surely politely turning down an offer of a ride, saying you don't want to inconvenience

the driver, is kinder than accepting out of a bizarre sense of duty? Marty also gossips constantly with her best friend, says nothing when Sarah insults other students, and slut-shames most other women in the book, including her own teacher. I realise that Marty isn't actually supposed to be as nice as she tries to appear, but if I met Marty (or, more accurately, the girl Marty is trying to be) the first word I'd use to describe her probably wouldn't be "nice", and I can't imagine anyone else would either. Other little details seemed out of place - like a bizarre schoolwide dating rule that no students would actually enforce or even want no matter how conservative their town is.

Marty is naive and melodramatic, but she does think and behave a lot more like an ordinary teenager than most YA narrators do. I'm not sure what to make of Crane's other characters (Lil didn't make as much of an impression on me as I'd hoped, Matt's game was obvious from the beginning, and Alex seemed to be the embodiment of the nice guy who 'deserves' the uninterested girl trope). Ultimately, *Playing Nice* was an easy summer read, and I enjoyed it but I'm not sure I'd read it again.

*Many thanks to the author, who provided a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.*

**Rating:** 2 stars

Review cross-posted to Paperback'd.

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### **Alexandra Ray says**

review to come. too emotional right now to write one :P That should say something.

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### **bethany says**

As I began reading this book, there were moments that actually made me sad for the rest of the book. Some things (especially in regards to Marty's characteristics) were so cliché and stereotypical that I thought I wouldn't finish the book. I mean, there are innocent girls, but I highly doubt any high school girl is thinking what Marty's thinking in the early chapters. I bought this book on a whim because it was on sale in the kindle store and I was kind of in the mindset of "eh whatever I didn't pay that much for it."

But as the book progressed it got less and less cliché and became just a story about two friends. Once you swallow down the first few chapters, the characters are really well developed and there's a sense of reality that just comes off of the pages. There's this reality in the way Marty loves someone who won't love her back, the way she feels like something is wrong in her life, and the way she wants to make a change that I haven't found in many other books. I felt like that really overshadowed the first few chapters and made for a good book.

Oh, and points for a cool soundtrack. The ending gets about 50x cooler if you actually listen to "Human" by The Killers after reading.

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### **Emily says**

I was sent a copy of this book and asked to write a review when I finished reading. So, as I read, I tried to

take in everything I was reading in order to fully capture my feelings over *Playing Nice* and translate them into a review.

When the book begins, we're introduced to absolutely the most vanilla character we could ever meet in a book. Marty Hart is as squeaky clean as her shiny white smile suggests, from the thoughts in her mind to the pleats in her dresses. She is known as being the nicest person at her high school and even has a page dedicated to that fact in her yearbook. She strives to please her mother, never wanting to see disappointment on her mom's face. She never strays outside the lines. Marty is always home on time for her curfew. She's had two kisses in her life, one on stage in a school musical and the other from playing Seven Minutes in Heaven (turns out, even that experience was clean and nice). But then she meets Lil, a girl who is so much Marty's opposite it's comical, and Marty begins living life for herself in new ways.

There are two reasons this book stands out to me as being different or new. One of these reasons is, because of how Marty is introduced as being so... boring, it's almost like her character is being created as we read. Lots of book characters grow as we read their stories, but with Marty... she didn't have a whole lot of substance or individuality. As we read more about her, she sort of breaks out of her perfectly nice shell and becomes the character we know by the end of the book. I think that's a really interesting way to build a character, letting the reader experience her birth and not just her growth. We really know nothing about Marty from the start other than she is so ... nice. And the reason we know nothing about her is because she doesn't really know herself. So we follow along and learn about her as a person while she is learning these things about herself.

The other reason this book stands out to me is because it is so honest. The plot and characters aren't really anything new. Almost every element of this story I have read or seen in some form elsewhere. Stereotypes are thrown shamelessly onto the pages of *Playing Nice*, but I think that's okay. A lot of times, we don't want to see things how they really are. The perfect guy may not be suave or charming, but he's perfect because he treats us the way we deserve, supports us, and makes us laugh when we need it the most. Our best friends may not be the best on paper, but they're the ones who understand us as people. The future that is best for us may not be the ones we have perfectly planned for ourselves. Reading *Playing Nice* reaffirms that people have layers and life isn't black and white, that it's okay to be confused as long as you're trying your best and are being true to yourself.

So, overall, *Playing Nice* was predictable, but heartfelt and honest. Not exactly a fluffy feel-good read, but not as deep as the ocean either. A good mix of the two, I think.

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### **Stacey says**

Read this review on my blog: <http://staceyleigh.com/?p=303>

My initial reaction:

Just... wow. I haven't read something that dredged up the kind of memories and emotions (both good and bad) that this did, in a LONG time. Here I am, almost a decade removed from high school, and reading this book put me right back there in an instant. I found myself relating to Marty as my seventeen year-old self. I was really similar to Marty when I was that age. I was a "good girl." I didn't do anything bad, I got good grades, I had a plan for my future. It took me a few more years to come to the kind of crossroads that Marty faced, but it was like a punch in the gut reading her story and being able to relate to it on an almost visceral level.

Also, Marty's parents reinforced my desire to never live in a small town and to PLEASE, PLEASE get me out of the mid-west! As a very liberal, not-so-religious person, I felt completely at odds with her parents and hated them almost immediately. I highlighted all the ridiculous things her mother said, and actually started laughing at some of it. Her parents were like a caricature of life in the mid-west. I laughed particularly hard when Marty's parents looked at her like she was "a three-headed atheist monster who believes in abortion and gay marriage."

I'm glad that Facebook wasn't around when I was a teenager. I can only imagine how much more unbearable my life would have been if my middle school bullies had access to that kind of social media.

I stayed up all night reading this, and I'm glad I decided to read it over the weekend because there was no way I could put this down. I'd be a very unhappy camper if I'd had to work the next day :)

Plot:

The plot was fairly straightforward, and pretty simple. The age-old coming-of-age, harrowing high school experience of self-discovery. The plot isn't what made this a great book. The characters and the narrative did the heavy lifting in this case.

Characters:

The characters were really the star of this book. I know you're probably thinking, well duh! Characters are always the stars! But not in every case do the characters completely carry the entire novel. In my opinion, the characters and their development are the most important thing when it comes to fiction. Because let's be honest here... when a story involves characters that it's hard to relate to, or hard to care about, the whole thing just goes limp. Marty's transformation was just incredible. She was so annoying in the beginning of the book, when she was just parroting everything that her mother had told her. Lil was just awesome... I wish I'd had a friend like her in high school. Even the annoying "bad" characters like Sarah were fleshed out and just... realistic. I was pissed at Matt. What a douche, seriously.

Writing Style/Editing:

Fabulous! An author's level of education and experience always come through in the way that they write. Rebekah Crane, as an educated and experienced woman, brought all of that to the forefront with her hauntingly real narrative through Marty's eyes.

Favorite Quote:

"To them, it isn't about loving everyone, like Jesus said, but loving the right people. That doesn't include homeless people, ugly people, poor people, gay people, or wonderful, bruised, banished-to-a-trailer people. I'm pretty sure Jesus would spit on my house and its plastic representation of love. Wasn't he born in a barn? I bet he'd rather be at Lil's. I bet he'd take one look around her trailer and remember what it felt like to be banished and he'd love her."

Final Thoughts:

I think everyone knows what it feels like to be trapped in that place between who you think you are, and who the world thinks you should be. "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." That quote, by EE Cummings, holds a very special place in my heart, and it applies in so many ways to this story. I am a 26 year-old married woman, and I still deal with the things that Marty was dealing with. No matter your experiences, your teenage years never really leave you. I'm still finding out who I am and finally cutting the strings on the person that my family thought I should be. I had dreams and hopes and opinions that I thought were mine, but it turned out they were just my parents' hopes and dreams and opinions... kind of like Marty in the very beginning.

There was a great message in all of this: don't give up on yourself. It gets better. Bullies and kids are cruel, but they will be out of your life eventually. Find out who you really are, even if it goes against everything you've been taught about yourself.

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