



Reality Chick

Lauren Barnholdt

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All-hour study fests . . . all-night parties . . .

Going away to college means total independence and freedom. Unless of course your freshman year is taped and televised for all the world to watch. On uncensored cable.

Sweet and normal Ally Cavanaugh is one of five freshpeople shacking up on *In the House*, a reality show filmed on her college campus. (As if school isn't panic-inducing enough!) The cameras stalk her like paparazzi, but they also capture the fun that is new friends, old crushes, and learning to live on your own. Sure, the camera adds ten pounds, but with the freshman fifteen a given anyway, who cares? Ally's got bigger issues -- like how her long-distance bf can watch her loopy late-night "episode" with a certain housemate. . . .

Freshman year on film.

It's outrageous.

It's juicy.

And like all good reality TV,

it's impossible to turn off.

Reality Chick Details

Date : Published July 1st 2006 by Simon Pulse (first published June 20th 2006)

ISBN : 9781416913177

Author : Lauren Barnholdt

Format : Paperback 270 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Romance, Contemporary, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit

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From Reader Review Reality Chick for online ebook

Lyndsey O'Halloran says

After reading *Two-Way Street*, another book by Lauren Barnholdt, I immediately wanted to read more from her. When looking through her books on Amazon, *Watch Me* was the one that stood out to me the most, due to the nature of the plot.

Ally, the main character, decides to try out for a reality tv show before heading off to college. The show itself is a mix between *Big Brother* and something like *Jersey Shore*. There is no prize money and no one is locked in the house but they do all live together and are filmed at all times. Now, there are so many reality TV shows around and I wondered how this would translate into a contemporary book. The *Hunger Games* also has a similar reality TV theme but set in a dystopian world so nothing like what Barnholdt has created.

Ally's situation, as well as her as a character, were really interesting. I'm not sure if I would have ever entered to go on a show like she did when starting college and moving away from home. Surely it would have been too much pressure to handle in one go but I have to say, I was impressed with the way she handled things to begin with. Not only does she have classes to go to but she also has to learn how to live with a bunch of people she has never met and people who have completely different personalities. The book is told through different views according to time; then and now. The start of the book states just how messed up Ally is after being on the show so right from the beginning, you know nothing is going to go smoothly and I liked this. I liked knowing that Ally was going to have to struggle and that she was going to have a hard time being in that situation.

My only real problem with this book is the fact that you know the love triangle is coming and I would have liked for it to have been a little bit more of a shock. Drew was a lovely character though even if I didn't get to know as much about him as I wanted to. As there is so much going on for Ally, he doesn't make a real appearance until part way through the book and isn't in it nearly enough. Drew had a lot going for him that would have made him amazing had the time been spent on his characterisation. He definitely would have been a guy I would have gone for myself due to his depth and compassion. Then there is Corey, Ally's long distance, high school sweetheart boyfriend. I can't say that I liked him very much really though. Being in a long distance relationship, I thought that he would have made more of an effort with Ally but he just came across as full of himself and like he didn't care either way most of the time. Because of this, I don't really get what Ally saw in him.

The secondary characters, mainly the other housemates, were fantastic. With such a range of personalities, forced together for a certain reason, there was a lot of humour. I loved the other girls who lived in the house and the fun they brought to Ally's life. Jasmine is a Hooters Girl/ stripper tryout and is so outgoing and loud. Her presence can't really be missed and she comes to life on each page. Simone is the quieter of the three girls and stays to herself to begin with but it is clear that she is a good friend and only wants what is best for everyone. This book would have been quite boring without them I think. James, the other guy housemate, was terrible but I loved him. I like characters who mix things up a bit and cause chaos so here, James did his job really well.

What I love most about Barnholdt's work is the language she uses. The teenagers are real. They do things teenagers actually do like go to parties and get drunk and sleep around at times. They swear frequently and say exactly what is on their minds. Now, while I know this sort of thing is not to everyone's tastes and that I can see parents of younger teens complaining about it, I think it is great! I hate to see teenagers, especially 18

year olds in books, shown to be something that they're not. I understand that it doesn't set the best standard but I don't see the point in shying away from the real world and that is exactly what Barnholdt portrays in her books and I have to applaud her for taking risks and showing what life is really like.

Watch Me will not be a book for everyone but I loved it and already want more from this amazing author!

Anncleire says

Recensione anche sul mio blog:

<http://pleaseanotherbook.tumblr.com/p...>

“Watch me” porta la firma di una delle mie scrittrici preferite Lauren Barnholdt capace di sfornare storie fresche e meravigliose, romance dal sapore adolescenziale che io letteralmente adoro. Ammetto che prima ne leggevo molte di più ma quando la Barnholdt esce con un nuovo libro non me lo faccio sfuggire. E anche in questo caso si tratta di una vera piccola meraviglia.

Lei pensa di non avere niente da nascondere...

Ally ha tutto sotto controllo. Sta per trasferirsi in una casa piena di estranei e la sua vita sarà ripresa e mostrata a tutto il mondo, ma finché ha il suo fidanzato a distanza, Corey, niente può andare storto. Niente, certo, fino a quando Ally non inizia a trascorrere del tempo con il suo coinquilino Drew, il bellissimo e sensibile ragazzo che sembra sempre starle intorno quando più lei ha bisogno di qualcuno. Mentre sospetti e bugie iniziano a spingere Ally e Corey lontani, non è sicura che si possa fidare di qualcuno, nemmeno di sé stessa. Ally sta per imparare nel modo più duro che la vita è quello che accade quando tutti stanno guardando, e non sempre cattura il suo lato migliore...

Ho semplicemente ADORATO questa idea della scrittrice americana. Prendete un gruppo di sei ragazzi che stanno per iniziare il college, metteteli insieme in stile Grande Fratello e iniziate a riprendere, ne vedrete delle belle. Ally è sicura che sarà la grande avventura della sua vita, quando si candida per lo show e non ha nessuna paura. La classica ragazza della porta accanto che vuole sfondare le porte della celebrità e per farlo si mette in gioco. Naturalmente non aveva considerato che essere in diretta 24 ore su 24 non è proprio facilissimo. Senza considerare che di mezzo ci sono anche le esperienze del college. Ally non ha mai affrontato niente di troppo drammatico nella sua vita e anche le sue esperienze nello show non sono niente di così sconvolgente, ma in qualche modo le aprono gli occhi su quello che significa diventare un adulto. Il classico meccanismo del reality show si scontra con i veri sentimenti di una ragazza che scopre un intricato livello di bugie e segreti. Sbaglia, chiede perdono e si rende conto che la vita non è un programma televisivo, che di fronte a certe cose c'è da sbattere il muso.

Corey è il suo sweetheart del liceo e nonostante la lontananza hanno deciso di stare insieme. Si sa che stare lontani è difficile, a volte è proprio la quotidianità del vivere ogni momento che costruisce una storia, ma a volte è inevitabile separarsi. Ma da subito si inizia a sospettare qualcosa, la Barnholdt non è particolarmente subdola. E il quadro si complica con l'apparizione in scena di Drew che di certo non passa inosservato, con i suoi sweetpants, i suoi allenamenti, la sua arte. L'amicizia nasce veloce, ed è bellissimo osservare come il loro rapporto si sviluppi piano piano con colpi di scena inaspettati e la diffusione mediatica.

Il particolare da non dimenticare? Una felpa.

Un libro entusiasmante, dalle tinte comiche e dai sentimenti autentici di una ragazza che racconta la sua esperienza televisiva senza pretese, alle prese con amore e amicizia e college in puro stile Lauren Barnholdt. Da non perdere.
Buona lettura guys!

Amy Jacobs says

Books by author Lauren Barnholdt are always hit and miss for me. I love some of her books, but others tend to fall flat for me. In the case of *Watch Me*, this is not one of my favorites. While I liked the idea of the whole reality TV show, the execution of it in this book was not well thought out.

Ally decides on a spur of the moment to try out for a TV reality show. When she is accepted as one of the college roommates for the show, she has no idea how it is going to change her life. She is in a dorm with several stereotypical housemates that are chosen to create some drama for the show. Ally is also dealing with the fact that her boyfriend of two years, Corey, is also away at college. Long distance romance proves to be hard, but also being on television all the time proves to put the biggest strain on their relationship.

I don't know what to say about Ally. When she was around her other roommates, she seemed to actually care about their feelings. Yet, at other times I felt she was a snob and not worth reading about. I did like the character of Drew, but we didn't really get to see him interact that much with Ally and the rest of the cast. Their budding romance that is suppose to happen in the book felt forced and didn't have much substance for the reader to grab onto and enjoy. The reality show is also like an afterthought in the story. The author throws it in whenever the story starts to drag in hopes that it will help.

Overall it is a quick and easy read, but not one to get your hopes up for. Like I said, her books are hit and miss for me so this might be the hit for you.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Julie T. for TeensReadToo.com

Being a college freshman is hard enough. There's homework to worry about, the dreaded freshman fifteen, guys, parties, and a lot of other things. When Ally Cavanaugh starts college she has one other thing to worry about, that most don't have to: cameras.

Ally's every move during her first semester at college is taped for the popular reality show, *In the House*. At first, it seems like a dream come true. Ally's show is being broadcast nationwide; she's practically a celebrity! She gets to live in an awesome house with her roommates, who don't seem too bad.

But soon, things start to turn around. Ally's faraway boyfriend is acting really distant, and she thinks that she may be developing feelings for her hunky roommate. Her escapades at a fraternity party are recorded for the

entire world to see, including her parents!

In the House is Ally's reality check; how tough life can be sometimes, but to take it in strides. You never know what great things are in store for you around the corner!

REALITY CHICK by Lauren Barnholdt was a fantastic read. It was fun, fresh, and fabulous, with a great concept and flawless reality. REALITY CHICK is a must read for those looking to lighten up the new school year!

Fred says

I think the main thing I like about Lauren Barnholdt's books is her characters' tone and voice. They seem so real and fresh and like the kind of people you'd want to just keep talking to you. This one is no exception. There are no huge plot explosions or twists, nothing crazy happens, although there is plenty of emotional uproar and drama. The side characters are fun and fleshed out (Grant, especially), and it's fun to root for Ally as she makes her good and foolish choices. A great way to spend a few hours.

Ryan says

This book was a nightmare. In reality, it's more of a 1.5 star read for me. I didn't hate this book, but I certainly didn't enjoy reading it.

The premise of this novel sounds fascinating. I am a reality tv addict. (Some of my favorites are: The Hills, Shark Tank, The Girls Next Door, Little Women of LA, Kendra on Top.) So I was excited to read this. Freshman college girl gets casts in reality series, causing complications within her personal life. Sounds like a drama filled, fun, easy ride, right? Wrong.

My biggest issue with this book was Ally, our main character. Ally wasn't terrible, but she did say/do a lot of problematic things. For example, within the few pages her best friend, Grant, tells her he is bisexual. Ally completely disregards him and labels him as gay. I thought this issue would be resolved later in the text, that Ally would realize Grant was telling the truth. But no, the entire length of the novel she refers to him as her gay friend (even though he's told her multiple times he bi). Again, this isn't a huge issue, but bisexual erasure sucks and I personally think this says a lot about Ally's character. Ally was also into slut shaming. It seemed like every chapter her and her friends were bashing different girls. Throwing out "skank" and "slut" and "whore" like it was a name. For example:

"Did you...did you fuck him?"

"No!" I say, shocked. "I didn't have sex with him. God, what kind of a whore do you think I am?"

"Having sex with a guy does not make you a slut," Jasmine says, putting her arms around her. "Now if you start having sex with every guy you like, then we'll reclassify you according to level of skankiness."

Those are just a few. There are many more than that.

Another bothersome aspect of this story was how unrealistic the reality show portion of this novel was.

The author definitely didn't do her homework with this. The show is broadcast every night? Sure, forget about editing, plotlines, timeslots, and the needed amount of advertisement for the show. Just release a new episode every night. That makes perfect sense. Also, Ally got the part so quickly. She didn't have a screen test or multiple interviews or a personality assessment. All she had was one meeting audition/meeting with a producer and that was it. (The author later said that they needed to fill a cast spot quickly, but that just seemed like an excuse to get out of writing the hard stuff to me.) Truth: I don't work in television. I've never been on set. But with the vast number of reality TV shows and behind the scenes clips I watch, I know most of the cast members get to see the episodes before they air, and you never talk about the cameras on set. In this book, the cast isn't allowed to watch the episodes and they're always looking at the camera and talking about being filmed. It's little details like those that take away how authentic a story like this can feel.

The friendships Ally formed with her castmates: Jasmine, Simone, Drew all happened very quickly. We actually didn't see them become friends. They were strangers one day, fast forward two weeks and suddenly they're BFFs.

This book is dividing into alternating chapters of "Then" and "Now" but I don't see how this was imperative to the story whatsoever. The Now chapters were so short, usually about a paragraph long or so.

Don't even get me started about the relationships in this novel. **Even in the beginning, it's so obvious that Ally's longtime boyfriend, Corey, is a problematic douche. He was terrible. Controlling and possessive in that annoying way where he almost looks like a good guy.** Some of his other offenses include slut shaming and suggesting that his girlfriend should order a salad. So the entire length of the novel you're just waiting for them to breakup. It was frustrating to read about.

This is me nitpicking, but I think it's important for writers to be very careful about which – and how many – pop culture events/people they put in their work. I get that every story is set in a certain time, but you want the book to feel timeless. **This book was weighed down with so many early 2000s references, it felt dated.**

Overall, this was a quick read. Painless but sort of boring. If you're into books about reality TV, I'd pick up "Something Real" by Heather Demetrios instead.

Lisa says

3 1/2 stars

She thinks she has nothing to hide...

Ally has everything under control. She's about to move into a house full of strangers and have her life broadcast to the world, but as long as she still has her long-distance boyfriend, Corey, nothing can go wrong. Nothing, that is, until Ally starts spending time with her housemate Drew, the hot and sensitive guy who always seems to be around when she needs someone the most.

As suspicions and lies start pulling Ally and Corey apart, she's not sure if she can trust anyone, not even

herself. Ally is about to learn the hard way that life is what happens when everyone is looking, and it doesn't always capture her good side...

Meg says

This book was definitely cute and what I needed right after the feelings that my last book I read left with me but there wasn't anything that really stood out to me throughout the novel and I wasn't a fan of the format that the author chose to tell her story in.

I did love the story however and that it was very cute! A fun, quick, read! :)

Longer review to come!

Tara says

fluffy romance, snarky drama

fat shaming and bi erasure

Stephanie A. says

Basically an MTV show in novel form. In fact, I'm surprised there isn't a reality show that looks like this already, unless I just missed it. It's not really trashy in terms of vulgar content, but definitely counts as a "junk food" novel.

ORIGINAL/IN-DEPTH REVIEW: Once upon a time, I wrote a list called "How to Write a 21st Century YA Novel," based on several trends I had seen in all the new books. One of the top numbers was "drop pop culture references like mad. This will show your young readers that you are just as hip and trendy as all of them, and you know what the teens these days like!"

The plot of *Reality Chick* in a nutshell: college freshman gets onto a reality show which consists of her and four other people sharing a special house but otherwise going about the normal routine of a college freshman. With cameras recording every aspect of their life, to be broadcast nightly on TV.

The library is full of glossy-covered books like these, and for lack of anything better I gravitate towards them because they entertain me, even though they have about as much substance as that shiny red apple that looks so nice in pictures, but when bitten into will be made of mush.

As far as the pop-culture references go, they're usually somewhat reasonable. I wrote about TV shows and the like in my journal, so the occasional comparison is to be expected when written in the voice of a teen girl. However, in this book, I didn't even get past page 1 before the author described how the media loves scandal by using an example with Madonna and Courtney Love on MTV. Right then, I knew it was going to be one of THOSE books.

And that's what I'll be focusing on today.

One example of "shortcut writing" in this novel is when a character in the book is describing how she and this other girl both wore the same dress to Prom. Rather than use any adjectives, the author's entire description was as follows: *"To understand the seriousness of the situation, you have to know what she looks like: Picture Scarlett Johansson's face with Eva Longoria's body."* And that was it. The character's boyfriend is also a central figure in this book. The sum total description surrounding him? He's an extremely talented basketball player who "looks exactly like Chad Michael Murray."

Nope, that will never get dated *at all!* When I mentioned this depressing phenomenon to an English teacher, she agreed and described how books are now often perceived as "disposable" rather than with the expectation that they will stand the test of time. They can hyper-focus on the "now" because there won't be a later. But why is that OK?

So I went through and I made a list of every single celebrity, brand name, TV show, etc that the author used. It's not the first time I've done this to a book, but it's always a fun game to play. This time, I decided that if the same name was used several pages apart in a different context, it counted as a separate reference. Now admittedly, some of these are perfectly acceptable (it would be more awkward to NOT just say "Oreos," for instance), but when I'm revved up, anything that requires capitalization gets on the list. And for Reality Chick, we have:

Courtney Love, Madonna, MTV, Dave Matthews, Queer Eye For the Straight Guy, Desperate Housewives, Nick Lachey (2x), Jessica Simpson (2x), Teen Vogue, The Apprentice, Dawson's Creek, A Cinderella Story, Scarlett Johansson, Eva Longoria, Chad Michael Murray (2x), Girls Gone Wild, Nelly, Saturday Night Live, Justin Timberlake, Eminem (2x), People magazine, Teen People, Ashlee Simpson (2x), the Zone diet, Lindsay Lohan, Mean Girls, Legally Blonde (2x), Katie Holmes (3x), Tom Cruise (2x), First Daughter (3x), US Weekly, Hooters, Alias (2x), Viagra ads in email, Google.com, Paris Hilton, ESPN, the Lifetime channel, Dr. Phil, Seth and Summer (as in "Nobody goes out of their way to say someone's a "friend" unless they're really not. Look how long Seth and Summer were "just friends"), Mary Kate [Olsen], Brittany Murphy, "in that one movie where she played an insane girl" (couldn't get copyright clearance for that one?), On Demand, Pay-Per-View, Creature of the Black Lagoon, the Halloween movies, Jay Z, the WB, The O.C., Seventh Heaven, Debbie Downer, Sorority Life, John Travolta, Dateline, The Amazing Race, Seventeen magazine, Judge Judy, Ruby Tuesday, Jennifer Lopez, Whitney Houston, and advertisement for Oreos and Diet Coke With Lime as well as Nike, K-Swiss, Abercrombie, and The Gap.

SUM TOTAL: 77, or an average of one reference every 3.5 pages. I'm not saying the book wasn't entertaining, I'm just wondering if there was a point to all of those. Is there a code to crack that allows you to read a secret message? (fingers crossed, because that would actually be pretty cool)

Alyssa says

I really thought this was going to be an interesting, fun, cute read... I was wrong!

Everything just fell flat for me. I didn't feel like Drew was even in the story enough for me to really feel anything for him, Corey was just a jerk, the whole reality tv aspect wasn't even realistic at alllllll, and I felt like the whole time I was waiting for something more to happen.

Oh, and I had to start skimming the last 1/4 of the book just to finish.

Addison says

Ally and her boyfriend are ready to go off to college. Ally is going to Syracuse University while her boyfriend Corey goes off to Miami University to play basketball. They have been together for two years and have a healthy relationship and distance won't stop them from loving each other... or so they think. Ally decides to go onto a reality TV show to give her something to do considering her boyfriend is away at college, and Ally is not really the type to have a lot of "girl friends". Ally thinks there is nothing that could possibly happen considering she has nothing to hide. However, rumors say different about her boyfriend Corey. This makes Ally question and think twice about everything with Corey. Ally and Corey become distant throughout the book. As her and Corey's relationship become weaker her and someone else in the house become closer. This book was very entertaining and a book I did not want to put down. The book had drama and humor. It made it seem like I was reading about an actual reality show and I could not get enough.

Catherine says

Nice quick read. Would have received 5 stars but I didn't like how it seemed to have ended so quickly. Like so much happens right at the end and then it's over.

Louis says

I listened to the book on CD version of this title. When I typed in this title and author, another book "Reality Chick" came up that seemed to have the same plot details. I didn't have the interest to investigate further.

Listening to this book was a little bit tricky. The protagonist, Ally, often thinks during her verbal conversations with others. So I had to pay attention to discern when she was speaking aloud versus having internal thoughts.

Ally has positive qualities as a character. She is clearly smart as she is taking a psychology class, got into college in the first place, is faring well in her photography class, gets invited to join the photography program, and spends a lot of time in the library studying as a way to avoid all of some of her roommates.

Yet this is not the characteristic that is emphasized in this book. Ally is portrayed as self-destructive in several ways. First, she prejudices everyone she meets and allows this to guide her decision-making only to discover that she misjudged people. This repetitive activity became very predictable and boring.

Second, Ally is the world's worst communicator. She makes assumptions about situations and then acts on them. She could actually communicate with people in an open way and clear up her assumptions, but instead she just barrels ahead and makes her life and others' lives miserable. In order to avoid communicating, she engages in avoidance behavior or, at one point, becomes a slob/deadbeat for a week until her roommates stage an intervention. This lack of communication reminded me of several romance novels I have read where, if the 2 leads would just talk, they would be together in 2 chapters instead of 20.

Now an author has a right to portray a protagonist as they see fit. What I am saying here is that this continuing self-destructiveness made Ally a tiresome and uninteresting character.

Other problems that I had with the story include the unbelievable way that Ally gets tired of being filmed all the time. The book is inconsistent as well since there are passages where she doesn't notice the cameraman anymore and then later wails about having no privacy. This from a person who had watched this reality show for seasons and actively applied to be on.

SPOILER ALERT!!!!!!

Another plot development which I believed stretched credulity was the breakup with her boyfriend. They had been dating for two years. Within the space of 2 months of being in college, they have broken up. This from a couple who allegedly shared everything, IMed each other constantly, and talked on the phone all the time. Ally was not allowed to IM from the house, but there is a phone for heaven's sake. And what about e-mail? Instead they fail to communicate in the aforementioned ways, each making assumptions and failing to clear them up. This did not seem believable. I admit that changes going to college were inevitable, but in two months time they change so much that she breaks up with her boyfriend of 2 years. The dialogue between them did not ring true for a relationship of that long standing, even one from high school.

The supporting characters are an interesting batch. The parents and brother are predictably ciphers with only stereotypical things to say.

Her best friend Grant is somewhat interesting, but is not in the story often enough to learn much about him. He is somewhat dysfunctional in his own way too, which may be why he is friends with Ally, who seems to be an emotional disaster zone with limited emotional intelligence.

Of the roommates, the author does a good job with Simone and Jasmine. They and their stories made this novel interesting. It made me think how much better this book would have been told from five perspectives, instead of just one.

But the boys in the house, even Drew, are again ciphers for the most part. What Drew does all day is a complete mystery even to the end of the book. We know that he goes to the gym, is buff, and goes to school. But for all we know he is flunking out or majoring in basketweaving.

James is another stereotype, a jerk who uses women to have sex and dumps them. I don't recall that he is described as having one redeeming feature, save for the fact that he is nice to Simone until he has sex with her and then dumps her.

All one can hope by the end of the book is that Ally learns to communicate to make her life easier and that she learns to stop making prejudgments and assumptions about things.

Nicole says

I'd actually give this novel a 3.5 out of 5 stars. This novel was very quick to read, and very entertaining. The part I didn't really enjoy about the novel was the then and now portions....because there didn't really need to be a now. This novel is basically the Realworld TV show meets college students in school. The part I enjoyed the most about this book was Ally's relationship with her female roommates. It felt like she finally found genuine girl friends that she could trust and confide in. There was also one character twist I didn't see coming. And I will say a lot of her inner monologues about issues with school and boys ...is what I feel like really happens in life (or at least to me). I get nervous and second guess things, and when I was younger this definitely happened a lot more. I really enjoyed the school atmosphere and showing that not everyone goes into college knowing exactly what they want to do, sometimes it takes a minute to figure it out. Will definitely read more by this author!
