



Ship It

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CLAIRE is a sixteen-year-old fangirl obsessed with the show *Demon Heart*. FOREST is an actor on *Demon Heart* who dreams of bigger roles. When the two meet at a local Comic-Con panel, it's a dream come true for Claire. Until the Q&A, that is, when Forest laughs off Claire's assertion that his character is gay.

Claire is devastated. After all, every last word of her super-popular fanfic revolves around the romance between Forest's character and his male frenemy. She can't believe her hero turned out to be a closed-minded jerk. Forest is mostly confused that anyone would think his character is gay. Because he's not. *Definitely not.*

Unfortunately for *Demon Heart*, when the video of the disastrous Q&A goes viral, the producers have a PR nightmare on their hands. In order to help bolster their image within the LGBTQ+ community-as well as with their fans-they hire Claire to join the cast for the rest of their publicity tour. What ensues is a series of colorful Comic-Con clashes between the fans and the show that lead Forest to question his assumptions about sexuality and help Claire come out of her shell. But how far will Claire go to make her ship canon? To what lengths will Forest go to stop her and protect his career? And will Claire ever get the guts to make a move on Tess, the very cute, extremely cool fanartist she keeps running into? *Ship It* is a funny, tender, and honest look at all the feels that come with being a fan.

Ship It Details

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From Reader Review Ship It for online ebook

Catherine ? says

Damn. This was amazing.

I read Fangirl by Rainbow Rowell and honestly it was the most boring and disappointing book ever - and I've read some that are similar and I never found a book that accurately described what it was like to be a fangirl. This book gets pretty darn close.

I'm not going to sit back and pretend that the main characters were without fault - in fact, everyone was downright annoying and horrible at times. But I don't know, I kind of liked that at the end, everyone made up for it - and that even though they may have done some bad things, the most important part was that they all learned from it.

Another problem I had while reading *Fangirl* was that I didn't care about the fandom in the story at all. I didn't care about the ship. But I did when I read this book. The author really brought SmokeHeart to life, and I could see myself shipping them, writing fanfiction about them, crying over clips of them as well.

I'd definitely recommend this book for any YA reader, and it's got a delightful dash of LGBTQIA+ and diversity that I was super glad to see.

M.K. England says

Folks, this is the book I've been waiting for. Fandom is so close to my heart, especially the kind of fandom depicted in this book, and I've so wanted someone to give us a voice in a way that is honest, powerful, and authentic. THIS IS THAT BOOK. I always worry with fandom books that they'll have a sort of outside-looking-in perspective that doesn't quite get or fully respect fandom, but SHIP IT is definitely not like that. Every word of it reads so authentically that I kinda wonder if Britta Lundin and I are secretly following each other on our fandom tumblrs. It engages with gender, race, and sexuality in a way that feels so true to modern sensibility and directly calls out a lot of the problematic shit in the TV world and in fandom itself. Add in a super sweet f/f romance and it's like YOU'VE ALREADY SOLD ME OKAY JUST SHUT UP AND TAKE MY MONEY. This was 100% a wish fulfillment book for me and Britta nailed it. Thanks. <3

(This review is based on an uncorrected proof... but it was AWESOME SO WHO CARES.)

kav (xreadingsolace) says

Disclaimer: I received an ARC from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This in no way impacted my review.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: MAJOR HOMOPHOBIA, PHYSICAL ASSAULT, BORDERLINE RACISM, QUESTIONABLE WEIRD-ASS BEHAVIOR

Note: This is a somewhat ramble-y review that may contain minor spoilers, so read it at your own risk.

Ship It is young-adult contemporary novel about fandom and queerness, where our main character Claire is a fan-fiction writer who attends a Con and asks one of her heroes if the m/m ship she believes should be canon will be canon, and he laughs her off. In order to save their image, the cast and crew of the show invite Claire to come along with them on the rest of their tour. In the meantime, Claire is also discovering her own sexuality and falling for a girl.

I really wanted to like this book far more than I did, but I just didn't.

Going into this book, my primary concern was that it come off fetishy and I really hoped that it wasn't. And in all honesty, that was probably the smallest problem in the book because everything else was a giant trashfire.

This novel was told in two point of views - Claire and Forest's. Claire is the previously main character, while Forest is the "hero" who laughs Claire off.

Both of these characters came off as unlikable main characters, I have no idea if they were intended to be written that way, but that was the first thing that made this book difficult for me to read. I love morally grey characters, especially when those characters *know* that they're morally grey. Neither Claire nor Forest know that they are not exactly decent people and right off the bat, this rubbed me the wrong way.

For most of the book, Forest comes off as a giant asshole. He eventually gets a minor redemption arc, but Claire just does not realize that she's a giant mess.

I love books that delve into fandom because fandom is a real part of many teen lives today and books that reflect that can make teens feel seen. And I definitely think the author knew about fandom, that wasn't even a question for me. Lundin understood fandom and her representation of fandom in this novel is probably the main positive I got out of it.

But Claire's character as a fandom influencer was just...sad. The amount of morally questionable actions she takes in this novel all to make her ship canon that she never has to face consequences for is wild. I understand wanting queer representation in media, I want queer representation in media. But risking people's jobs, blackmailing people, and more to get that representation is downright wrong and Claire participates in all those and never takes accountability for those actions.

Not to mention Claire tries to defend her actions by claiming that a lot of the backlash comes from the fact that she's a teenage girl. Are teenage girls seen as lesser because they're teenage girls? *Yes*. But that doesn't justify Claire's actions throughout this novel.

Then there's Forest, who's a mess in his own ways. Like I said, he comes off as an asshole for the majority of this novel and then gets a minor redemption arc at the **end** of the novel. Throughout the novel he has lots of internalized homophobia to work through (as does Claire), and he just doesn't treat Claire well for a lot of this novel.

And then there's Tess, Claire's love interest, a queer homoromantic pansexual black character. I know what you're thinking - **WOW REPRESENTATION??** Well, her and Claire's relationship is just as much of a trashfire. I don't think it's fair of us to ship this relationship because it's f/f when this relationships oozes toxicity.

At first, I found their dynamics adorable. Two fangirls bonding over their love for a show and falling for each other? Adorable. But that goes downhill fast. There's this one specific scene that is a MAJOR TRASH-FIRE that ruined the entire ship and, honestly, the entire book for me.

To set this up, Claire doesn't have any friends and is open about her life as a fan-fiction writer. Tess, on the other hand, is not open about her fandom life. When Claire meets Tess' friends, she basically "outs" Tess' fandom life to her friends which is so messed up and I was absolutely furious. Claire's justification is that Tess shouldn't have to be ashamed of herself to her friends, which is true, but that's not Claire's place to decide. And to make matters worse, literally a page later, Tess outs Claire to her mom. Tess already pushes Claire to come out for most of this novel which is so cringey, but outing her to her mom was the final straw for me.

After this, Claire *never* truly apologizes to Tess for what she did, and though Tess does apologize, I can't be on board with a relationship where the two aren't truly supportive and understanding of each other.

Then, there's the unbearably cringey parts where Tess and Claire discuss reading brother!Jonas Brothers fanfic and LAUGH about incest fic. I was actually gagging during that part. And then, to make matters EVEN worse, Claire writes real person fan-fic about Forest and Rico (the other actor) where she includes details about Forest's life that he told her as a friend. First of all, real person fan-fic is already weird, and writing it with details someone told you...that's just messed up.

Throughout all of this, Claire never actually takes responsibility for her actions. She continues to victimize herself for the entirety of this novel and never acknowledges that she is actually perpetrating half the issues in this novel.

Furthermore, I also heard that there's been discussion on twitter where people have talked about a white writer writing a book with a white main character and a black love interest where the love interest teaches them about racism. This novel could be the poster child for that trope.

Essentially, this novel is one giant trash-fire and I am so disappointed by it. That's all folks.

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

I shade my eyes and look out and see...girls. Women. Moms, daughters, friends. All screaming.

“Fangirls,” I whisper to Rico

Lawd. This book is like Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl* but **worse** (if that's even possible). Y'all know how much I love that book. Holy shit this was bad.

This book is dumb. I know I use that ever-so-eloquent word for many book reviews, but what can I say? It's simple. It's concise. It is (in my ever-so-humble-opinion) accurate. Again, warning, much cursing ahead.

This book gives fangirls a bad name.

Don't get me wrong. Fanfiction is fine and great as a tool for escapism and when you just want more of your ships. Some ships sink before they ever had a chance to sail *sniff* and fanfiction allows some sense of release. I used to read them in my teens. I was really, really dumb and immature as a teenager. I didn't think I was, but holy shit was I stupid. But even I had the good sense to realize that fanfiction is just that, yanno? Shit ain't true. Don't take it so seriously.

Fuck, I accidentally read a story about Harry dying and Hermione like magically making his penis erect so she could conceive a child. I clicked the page shut in horror, and thought no more about it.

The point is. IT'S NOT REAL, PEOPLE. Fanfiction isn't real. And you shouldn't get fucking angry when you realize it's not real.

Having said that, the main character in this book is fucking stupid.

It's about this girl named Claire who writes gay fanfic for this rip-off of *Supernatural* (WINCEST! WHOO! Just kidding). In this book, that rip-off is a show called *Demon Heart* and its version of Sam and Dean is Heart and Smokey.

Heart and Smokey? Really? Come on.

So anyway, there's a Demon Heart convention and Claire gets a chance to ask Forest (the actor who plays Smokey) whether he's gay for his co-star.

"Are they in love with each other?"

Dead silence.

I continue, "I think they are. So I guess my question is, are they going to realize they're in love with each other by the end of this season...and kiss?"

And when the Forest shoots that down...

I don't stop running until I make it to my hotel room. The tears start welling as soon as I close the door. Mom isn't there, so I drop my bag on her bed and crawl into mine and let myself sob in private.

Facepalming so hard right now. Forest describes Claire at one point as "**unhinged**", and I have to say I agree.

Claire is annoying. She is a fucking bitch. She is painfully determined, selfish, with a martyred holier-than-thou attitude and a hypocritical asshole. She is so irritatingly *teenager*. The other characters in the book are clichéd characters in every teen 80s movie you've ever watched. The fan convention is a caricature who portrays fangirls to be a bunch of losers (ok, granted, I've been to my fair share of conventions and those people exist, but not all of us are like that). Claire is painfully irritating and I spent much of the book wanting to slap the living daylight out of her.

Beej says

I should start out with something at least trying to be witty here like “I don’t ship it” or this book could be called “shit it” instead of what it is but my brain is melted from reading this garbage so here we are.

I’ll get right in to it, this book is riddled with problems. It starts with Claire writing fic and being judgemental to another girl who just asks her about a homework question. But she’s not Claire and doesn’t know fandom so clearly she doesn’t matter here. The bitch.

Anyway, Claire watches the girl kiss her boyfriend and gets all huffy that it’s obscene where her fanfic is beautiful and true love and I’m already ready to set this book on fire in flames of hell where it belongs. I probably should take some self reflection here as once upon a time I probably was like Claire. Except I didn’t write RPF about an actor for petty revenge and shoved fandom things in their face so I’d like to give my high school self a pass there. She still sucked though. Moving on!

So Claire’s whole thing is she has this ship, this otp, and loves it a lot and yeah, we’ve all been there as fans pretty much. Of course I can’t speak for all fans since fandom isn’t a monolith like many think it is. The representation of how fandom looks like always ends up with girls like Claire, slashers who are single minded for their otp never mind that fandom is as varied as it gets. Yet Claire’s got her head stuck in the sand so much that when people at a panel point out that they kill an Asian girl on the show or how little poc there are she just nods but the second someone asks about the ship and the actor dismisses it she’s up in arms and yelling at him.

Forrest is our other protag, the book goes back and forth between him and Claire and I kinda felt for him at first being an actor overwhelmed by all this. But he’s also an ass like Claire in a different more homophobic way. Anyway, he yells back at Claire that his character isn’t gay, she leaves in tears, and I’m supposed to suspend my disbelief that the PR department cares enough about LGBT fans that they fake a contest for her to win to follow the actors on a convention tour. My buddy, my gal who is definitely not my pal because I want you to stay the hell away from my bisexual ass, I got news for you: this would never fucking happen. But we move on again.

Claire’s whole goal now is to convince the showrunner to make the characters gay, because it’s important to her. Now the whole time this is going on she’s met a fanartist named Tess, who’s black and describes herself as homoromantic pansexual or just queer to make it easier for herself. Claire is stunned that Tess is queer, she wears dresses and the only lesbians Claire has met are into basketball. As we all know, these things can’t mix. All queer people are alike and never wear dresses.

Thems the facts.

Tess asks Claire out but assures her ‘it’s not a date’ and then takes her to a gay centric restaurant and that sits badly with me because it feels like Tess is trying to force it to be a date anyway. They kiss back at the hotel, it’s actually kinda cute and the gay panic Claire goes through could be relatable in some ways but Claire ruins it by continually focusing on her gay otp instead.

Oh god, I don’t want to remember more of this book, I want to purge it from my memory but Claire and Forrest fight and Claire writes RPF about him and his co-star using facts that Forrest told her in confidence as revenge and makes up the story that his dad used to beat him. Our protag.

She also gets into a fight with Tess and tells Tess' friends she's really into fandom, this sucks but then Tess tells Claire's mother Claire is gay as revenge so hey, that's worse. Nothing really comes of it though, there's no talk with her mom at all. Tess does apologize over a text thankfully and Claire readily forgives her. Tess also points out that being a black fan isn't easy and this is about thirty or so chapters in, Claire's response is that she can't make the showrunner turn the characters black but she can try to make them gay. Charming really.

The showrunner is an ass I'll grant you that but Claire's final card is to break into his twitter account and send out a bunch of tweets. That's illegal. I wanted her to get sued by the end of it. I was actively hoping our main character got sued. Fans like her give all of us a bad name, they're the ones on twitter who relentlessly tag the actors in fanart or fanfic and try to force it on them. If an actor wants to actively look for it, that's one thing, if you have genuine criticism they should hear, that's another. Forcing this personal stuff on them is just uncomfortable.

But of course Claire gets away with it all. Nevermind that the showrunner decides to kill Forrest's character and keep him dead, that fans were whispering about facts of him they got from reading Claire's RPF, and now he doesn't have a job. But don't worry, in the end he gets the shipping thing and representation is important and acts out a love scene with his costar on stage. At San Diego comic con. Again my suspension of disbelief doesn't go this far. Also Claire gets to moderate the talk at San Diego comic con. Sure Claire.

She makes a heartfelt speech about rep which honestly, I agreed with but at this point she and Tess have talked about how much better slash incest shipping is than boring old het shipping and I'm rolling my eyes so much I can look inwards and see my brain melting from this mess.

This book was a nightmare when it came to the idea of fandom. In the words of an anon: it represents us the same way 50 shades represents the bdsm community. Fandom is a lot of things and certainly there are people who are like Claire in this book, who see their ship as the be all end all and care nothing else, who are fine with shipping real people and incest and anything else under the fucking sun but holy fuck do I not want that to represent me. I just wanted a fun wlw story about two girls falling in love at a convention while loving a show because I get that. Hell I've always wanted to maybe meet someone at a con. But this story was like the worst parts of fandom shoved into a blender and turned on to puree and promising it's good for you.

I've never been as angry at a story as I have with this one and when I found out the author writes for tv shows I genuinely worried about the state of the writers room. Then I found out it was Riverdale and it explained so much honestly, that show is trash like this book and I want to purge it from my head with an ice pick.

Madison says

* I received a copy of this book through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review*

It's truly astounding to me that dozens of people read this book before it got to this final form--agents, editors, trusted friends and loved ones--and presumably not one person thought to compassionately but firmly say, "yeah, no, this probably shouldn't be published."

(Naturally, this review is full of spoilers, and no, I won't tag them. I will, however, tell you that in this review I do mention homophobia and physical abuse.)

Before I get too fully into it, I feel like I have to state this for the record that I was very much enmeshed in fandom throughout much of my life, so yes, I “get it,” and yes, Britta Lundin “gets it.” Shipping (a term I’ve come to revile thanks to this book) is usually a perfectly harmless, common, and creative way to engage with content, and I don’t take issue with the practice.

Cool! Let’s get started!

Claire, our protagonist, is a junior in high school and a superfan of Demon Heart, a TV show with essentially the same exact plot as my favorite One Direction/Supernatural fanfiction. We know that she’s a superfan because we first meet her writing smutty fanfiction about the two main characters, a demon hunter named Smokey and his sworn enemy, a demon named Heart, in the school library. During this scene we also know that she’s misunderstood by her peers, because a Mean Jock and his Airheaded Lady Friend come over to mock her. She #owns them with fandom knowledge, and they leave chastened. We are further convinced of her social isolation when we learn that her sole friend is the Weird Bible Kid on the Bus, the long-suffering comrade of every socially inept teen in every piece of media since the advent of Christianity.

All of this is bad, but it isn’t Bad; I am willing to overlook the idea that in 2018, the year of our lord Steve Rogers, there is just one girl in this high school interested in fandom, and that everyone else loves Carhartt and tight ponytails (yes, this is the specific information we’re given). I’ll take Lundin at her word when she says that Claire is the only Tumblr user within town lines, even though YA books about fandom are currently one of the best-selling and fastest-growing subgenres in popular literature. I will even overlook the fact that when I was in high school a decade ago, Supernatural merchandise was the best-selling thing in Hot Topic, and the Sherlock fans were the loudest table in the school cafeteria. We must leave all of this anecdotal evidence and common sense behind us in order to forge ahead.

Onward!

Some historical context for those of you who haven’t lost precious years of your life to the tar pits of the Internet: in 2013, Supernatural was one of the most powerful and vocal fan communities online and at conventions, and this was driven in part by folks who saw the chemistry between demon hunter Dean Winchester and an angel named Castiel. At New Jerseycon that year, a teenage girl asked Jensen Ackles, the actor who plays Dean, a question about the homoerotic subtext in Supernatural, which he brushed off, admonishing her not to “ruin it for everyone” and asking to move on. The girl left crying, and it sparked a great deal of conversation about Jensen’s personal feelings about gay people, the place of ships at Q&As, and the validity of accusations about queerbaiting. You can read more about this, from a perspective that’s clearly sympathetic to the fandom, [here](#).

If you read the article, you’ll probably notice that Lundin lifted this situation almost word-for-word. After Claire asks a question about her ship, the lead actor brushes her off, and she leaves crying. The difference between the real-life interaction and the fictional one is that the Demon Heart publicity team inexplicably decides to invite Claire to travel with them as a form of damage control. It comes to light at this point that Claire is famous in her own right, someone that the show’s social media manager, Caty, hilariously describes as a “digital influencer” and a “tastemaker in the fandom.” That means that she writes a lot of popular fanfiction.

If I were to describe every logistical concern I have about this premise, we’d be here all day. I don’t have a moral issue with Lundin writing this book as a way to exorcise her frustration about intra-fandom drama. It reads very much like an attempt to have some belated control over a 5-year-old crisis: here, a teen stands up to a Jensen clone on a panel for a show that is barely even different from Supernatural, and actually makes a

difference. I can understand the impulse to write this story. Is it embarrassing? Oh, totally. But that's to me personally. It wouldn't necessarily warrant a one-star review.

There's a great deal of lead-up to the point when Claire becomes a member of the Demon Heart entourage, but none of it is that important. I honestly don't have the brainpower or patience to break down the idea that a publicity team would invite a belligerent and immature superfan to travel with the showrunners and actors to three separate conventions. That is, indeed, what happens. Claire is determined to use this opportunity to convince Jamie, creator and, apparently, the show's single decision-maker, that Smokey and Heart should fall in love so that her ship can become canon.

Another thing that happens around this time is that Claire meets Tess, a fellow Demon Heart superfan. Tess, we learn, is traveling by car to the same conventions Claire will be attending, and she is doing so alone because none of her friends know about her interest in Demon Heart, and she would surely be shunned if they found out. I just need you to know that this is one of the **VERY** first things Claire learns about Tess, because it becomes important later.

Claire is attracted to Tess, but she reminds herself that her only goal on this tour is to convince Jamie to make her ship canon. From the outset, Tess is positioned as an obstacle to this goal--she thinks that having fanfiction about Smokey and Heart is enough, but Claire wants more. Their second-ever conversation is a bitter argument about this difference in opinion, and then they're all off to Convention #2. Yes, this is the romance everyone mentions in the other reviews. Cute, right?

As she travels with the cast, Claire becomes closer with Forest Reed, the actor she antagonized at the Q&A. He asks for information about fandom, and wants to see her fics. It's clear he's working through some stuff of his own, and he admits to Claire that his father was a virulent homophobe. This is another piece of information to hold onto for later.

Claire is constantly bothered by Jamie and the rest of the Demon Heart team assuming that she's not straight, because she thinks the assumption cheapens her logical argument for why SmokeHeart should be canon. Claire draws a distinction between merely wishing for a gay relationship on a show and knowing that the actors are, to use Lundin's phrasing, "playing it gay." She distances herself from other shippers because she sees her mission to be one of truth, not of wish fulfillment. This is a perspective I have never once witnessed myself in fandom, but it seems important to Claire, so we'll let it be for now.

During the first night of the second convention, Claire goes on a date with Tess, and they end up making out in her hotel room afterward. The next morning, Forest and Tess get into a conversation about Tess's identity (homoromantic pansexual) and, look, a lot of this book is very silly, but this is where it takes a gross turn: because Claire is embarrassed by Forest knowing that she and Tess are seeing each other, Claire sneers at Tess and tells her to stop trying to impress Forest. Tess is described as being humiliated by this, but somehow, when they discuss it later, Tess ends up being the one who apologizes to Claire.

This is also the point at which Claire begins writing fanfic about Forest and his co-star, Rico. She reasons that it's because she wants to create an environment within her mind where Forest is "vulnerable" and "real." This is, coincidentally, the point at which I realized I might be reading a truly bad book.

Things come to a head at the final convention stop. Claire conspires with Caty, who I now understand to be a truly unhinged social media manager, to hijack Jamie's Twitter and...tweet nice things about SmokeHeart fans until he agrees to make it canon. At this point the book feels so off the rails that I'm expecting it to turn suddenly into a *Kill the Boy Band* -style cautionary tale about the dangers of overzealous fans. But Jamie

just storms out, and Claire idly wonders if she might have been a little off base.

Another thing that happens now is that Tess and Claire go out for sushi and, of course, they run into Tess's friends. As they all chat awkwardly, Claire decides it's time for Tess to come clean about her interest in Demon Heart. So she tells all her friends, right there at dinner/

At this point, I was ready for a hamfisted moral lesson about how Claire is the real Mean Girl of the story. That never comes. After Claire tells all of Tess's friends that she's secretly into this TV show, she leaves. Later, in retaliation, Tess tells Claire's mom that she's gay. Cool relationship! After that, they don't talk for two months. They get back together in the end for reasons I cannot possibly begin to fathom. The fact that every other review of this book describes this as a "cute romance" is so far beyond me I might never recover.

Finally, the worst part.

I mentioned earlier that Claire has been writing fanfiction about Forest and Rico. Forest overhears some girls talking about a fic of Claire's they read that involves Forest, so he goes hunting for it. He finds a fic that describes a sexual encounter between himself and Rico in vivid detail. That's horrifying enough, but he discovers that Claire took the information he'd shared with her about his homophobic father and extrapolated. In her (published, public) fic, Forest shows Rico a bunch of scars on his back from his father's abuse. Later, when Forest confronts Claire about how he feels violated, her response is, and I swear to God this is written on the page: "they're just dicks, you dick!"

If you're wondering if Claire ever faces a single consequence for her disgusting and willful cruelty, the answer is no. You will read this book waiting for Claire to become a better person, or for someone, anyone, to realize that she's an abusive bully. None of that ever happens. Lundin clearly attempts to paint Claire as a person worthy of our sympathy.

At this point, Claire leaves the tour early, but they all meet up a few months later at San Diego Comic Con and have a neat little resolution. Claire defensively apologizes, and Forest realizes how much he's missed her. Cool. He even steals what she wrote in her pornographic fanfiction to confess his affection for Rico, though for some reason at this point he's dating that social media manager who gave Claire Jamie's Twitter password and yet somehow still has a job. Claire is allowed to moderate a Demon Heart panel, and, when asked by a ten-year-old for some advice about writing fanfiction, Claire goes on a long rant about something completely unrelated before coming out as queer to the audience, and let me just say that if I were that ten-year-old I would be totally pissed.

Listen, I can clearly go on forever about how angry I am, but I'm going to stop here. I need this to be over. I've spent the last few days constantly thinking and talking about this book, and while I know saying that makes it sound buzzy and interesting, it's actually just kind of gross and sad. Someone should've sat down with Britta Lundin and explained that her book is not good, and it's not going to be able to stand on its own among the many other very similar books coming out right now. If they were really feeling it, they might have also told her that being a fan of a television show in 2018 is not really grounds for persecution. If someone had taken on that uncomfortable role, we all might have avoided this. It would have been a real mercy.

Lola says

3.5 stars. The cover may imply otherwise, but this is actually a very intense, sometimes even dark, story. Not dark as in terrifying, but as in “the fandom world has gone bloody mad”.

Fans gone wild.

The story centers around two key characters: Claire, a fanfiction writer who ships Smokey and Heart—the two heroes of her favourite TV show—together as a gay couple, and Forest, the actor who plays Smokey.

When Forest tells Claire that she is crazy for thinking that his character is gay and in love with Heart, her dreams are crushed. Not only that, but she also decides to make it her life goal to prove to everyone that Smokey and Heart belong together forever.

Based on my experience reading novels about fandom, I fully expected this book to be super cute, feel-good and include lots of cheesy quotes about the fact that geeks rule and fandom is life. However, the author surprised me by exploring a controversial fandom-related subject.

Like Claire, I was hoping that Smokey and Heart would become romantically-involved, because how amazing would that be? (Side note: I do so wish the author will write their story in her next novel, like Rainbow Rowell did, and please make them gay thank you oh so much.)

But then again, is it her decision to make? How far can fans go to push their opinions to become reality before they’re crossing a line? Is it fair to the producers and writers, who have their own ideas in mind, to pressure them to make their characters queer?

It’s not entirely realistic. While I do believe in an audience influencing aspects of a work, and while some scenes in this novel do mirror reality, some of the characters’ behaviours make me reluctant to agree that this is how people would have reacted in real life.

For instance, the fact that Claire’s parents are automatically accepting of her sexual orientation, even though she has never before opened up about it in the past, is very sweet and certainly admirable, but most kids are not so extremely lucky.

On top of that, actors care a lot about their public image and just the way they are perceived in general, because they know that everything they do will affect their careers and reputation. So it’s unrealistic that Forest would be so explicitly offensive to a fan, even if he is relatively new in the business, seeing that as an actor you have to do multiple appearances and interviews even before your TV show premieres. How has he never heard of fanfiction? Shipping? It makes him naive...

But even if it’s not one hundred percent realistic, it’s structured, surprising and discusses topics other fandom books don’t.

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Biz (Formerly Rachael) says

“I want you to picture something for a second. I know you feel like an underdog...But imagine if you were a teenager again, and, instead of being a scrawny, uncool, nerdy kid, you were a

scrawny, uncool, nerdy, gay kid. Or... what if you were all that plus black? Or disabled? Or trans? Or anything? Who would your superheroes be then? What costumes would you wear on Halloween?"

Y'all, this book was **freaking amazing**. It had good representation, and it was wholesome, and it was cute, and it dealt with tough topics, and it was so fandom-positive I want to throw this book at every person I know with a loud and proud outcry of "*REEEEEEEAAAAAAADDDDDDD IIIIIIIITTTTTT*"

I mean, really, though, I have DNF'ed the past, idk, like, 5 books I've read? And this one hooked me from the very beginning? It's such a gift to humanity and I'm so happy!

That being said, this book wasn't without its faults, but before I talk about those I just want to rant about everything that I adored!

First off, the characters were all so gorgeously flawed and nuanced and I want to know them! I want to be friends with all of them (except Jamie)! Everyone was likable and wonderful and gorgeous. Claire was the perfect protagonist, all full of passionate love for fandom and insecurities and awkwardness. There were moments when I envied her and moments when I wanted to be like "Claire,,,,,, no,,,,,,," but that made her super real!

I wasn't a fan of Forest for a while, but he grew on me and his issues with internalized homophobia were written really well. It made me uncomfortable at times, but never because I didn't agree with what I was reading (okay, maybe sometimes) but more because I feel as though a lot of people can relate to Forest's journey (Claire's as well!) when it comes to discovering who you are and where you stand in the world. Forest's inner journey redeemed him in my eyes.

The secondary characters, though definitely not as dynamic as Forest and Claire, also warmed my heart. Rico was funny and sweet, and I felt as though this passage described him nicely, "*[He was] a warm, gentle, thoughtful, ridiculously obnoxious, funloving weirdo who wants to make sure everyone feels heard and has a good time.*" Because honestly?? Big mood right there.

Tess was another amazing fave, and was by far the **most nuanced of the non-narrator characters**. It was interesting and relatable to read about she and Claire's issues with confidence and how they differed from one another.

Jamie was a jerk and I hate him, end of story.

But back to my faves! Caty was another one of the good secondary characters – I loved her spunky style and that she made fandom and social media her career, and that she was as passionate about representation as the fans of the show. It was refreshing and hopeful to see a canon, successful queer character in a position that helped her make a difference.

And that brings me to my next point! I *love* positive portrayals of fandom in literature, and this one is **one of the best**. It's not one hundred percent positive – though not in a bad way. Rather, it acknowledges when fandom and fans can get *way* too personal with actors, authors, and other real human beings. However, the way fandom is shown is generally, and overwhelmingly, positive. It describes the joy of going to your first Con, the wonder of realizing that real actual people are as passionate about your favorite things as you are, and the power that fans can have. You also got to see people that made fandom their career – like Caty, and a

cameo character whose career was collecting and selling vintage posters of her favorite movies. It was hopeful and beautiful and lovely.

Ship It also makes a very important and very real distinction between two types of fans: straight girls who ship slash/yaoi and want their m/m ships to be canon bc they think it's hot, and actual queer teens who want their ships in fiction to be canon because they are longing for more representation in the media. This is an important distinction to be made, because **while it's easy to write off fans of heteronormative shows as just cishet girls who think like that the two male mc's have chemistry, a big chunk, and possibly even a majority, of most teen fans are realizing that they are members of the LGBT community and want to see people like them on their television screens.**

The story was also super original for a contemporary, and I enjoyed the plot almost as much as I enjoyed the characters, and I think it's because the story, for the most part, is largely character-driven. A lot of the action, persay, happens in Claire and Forest's heads. I am **physically incapable** of giving character-driven books less than three stars, and this one was just so realistic and wonderful!

This book was **hella hilarious**. It gave me some awesome new terms like “gay panic” and “hetero brodudery,” and I had so much fun reading this! I don’t want to spoil anything by listing any of the jokes, but **this was a book written by a fandom person for fandom people**, and if you spend any inkling of time on the internet, you will surely find it as funny as I did.

But now, listen. I wish this book had been perfect. I wish this had been an easy five stars right off the bat, but it **wasn’t**. And that makes me so sad you wouldn’t believe! No doubt that with some improvements, **you will have to pry this book out of my cold, dead, hands**, but right now, with this unfinished copy, there are just some things I can’t ignore!!

First, I want to applaud this book for its examination of the lack of diversity in TV and movies, but for such an amazing and needed message, the actual representation in this book **didn’t live up to it**. By no means do I want to take away from the representation in the book, because we have pan rep, and both of the narrators are questioning, buuuuut the main cast of the novel is overwhelmingly cis and white.

We have two side characters who are people of color – Rico and Tess – but both of the narrators are white. And while the book acknowledges racism in both the entertainment industry (“*You know how many black characters have been on Demon Heart? Like two, and they were both demons. Now they’re dead.*”), and fandom/the LGBT community (“*You’re not pushing for more black characters, are you? You only care about one thing.*”), the fact that there are only two characters of color with speaking lines rubs me entirely the wrong way. It was mostly talk with very little action when it came to POC rep.

And also!! This book had literally no trans characters. None. Zip. Zero. It had all that LGB rep but where was the T? Where was it?????????????

Okay – I’ll say this. There was 1 (one) (**ONE**) cameo androgynous character who is a server when Claire and Tess go to a gay café, and, Claire, upon not knowing what gender the character is, uses they/them pronouns, but this character is in the story for a paragraph, tops, and it wasn’t enough!! Why couldn’t a main, side, or tertiary character have been trans? There were so many possibilities, but this book didn’t take them.

trigger warning // mild transphobia

There is another moment when Forest is talking to Tess and she explains the difference between pan and bi, and he laughs it off and says *“Wait, how many genders are there?”* and Tess patiently explains about the gender spectrum, but Forest’s transphobia in the moment is nowhere near as challenged as his homophobia, and that was so disappointing for so many reasons.

end trigger warning

Another thing I had a problem with was the positive portrayal of straight slash shippers. And while this book didn’t, to me, fetishize mlm in the media like I was fearing it would, it didn’t explicitly call out the straight women who *do* fetishize gay men. I wish that had been acknowledged.

This book also took some stances on discourse in the LGBT community that I don’t personally agree with (i.e. the split attraction model being applied to non-aces), but I didn’t really mind it *too* much for it to affect my review. Whatevs.

To conclude, even though this book **definitely had its issues**, this was honestly just a **cute and wholesome book!** I would still recommend it to others, especially because of the three-dimensional characters and issues that it addresses. It was overall a cute read that was somehow quaint and larger-than-life at the same time. So wonderful!

I was provided an eARC copy by NetGalley in exchange for a complete and honest review. All quotes and opinions are taken from an unfinished copy.

P.S. My first book for #SapphicATHon and I’ve already crossed off a lot of categories! :)

Mackenzi says

Guys, this is one of the good ones.

Blurb to come.

Brenda Ayala says

SPOILERS.

Claire is a bitch.

There, I said it. She is an incredibly selfish person who can’t see past her own nose long enough to see how her actions influence others. She successfully hurts Tess, Jamie (whose portrayal as the “villain” is its own issue), and Forest and then REFUSES TO APOLOGIZE TO ANY OF THEM except Tess.

And just because the author chose to have things all work out all nice and pretty in the end, I'm supposed to accept that what she did was right?

No.

She butted in where she wasn't wanted, was self-righteous and managed to make a mess of everything. She made such a big deal about this show not having gay characters and then the end of the novel has her watching a show with lesbians.....so basically her fucking up Forest's career and Jamie's show THAT HE CREATED amounted to nothing except her being a smug asshole. I don't care if you're straight or queer or male or female, Claire was a jerk whose actions were only dictated by her own feelings.

Riley Redgate says

hi here are my official Blurb Thoughts:

I can't stop smiling about this book--a winsome, emotionally rich joyride through the parallel worlds of fame and fandom and self-discovery. This is the perfect story for our current moment, as vibrant and funny as it is thoughtful and political, and packed so full of heart that it made mine skip a few beats. SHIP IT is utterly irresistible.

and here are some thoughts with worse grammar

firstly. dude it's great to read a book about fandom clearly written by somebody involved in fandom.

secondly. to hopefully clear up some stuff? as we can see from early reactions to the premise, this is a politically charged concept! and yes, the main character could easily have been written as a perfect angel of vengeance against the evil tide of queerbaiting, but she isn't portrayed that way. she is complicated and flawed and frustrating. all the characters in this book are. everybody here makes mistakes and questionable choices, like real people do, and so if you're expecting spotless paragons of morality, lol, look elsewhere.

¬_(_?)_¬

thing is, alongside a clear love for and experience with fandom, the book has such a necessary insider's view to the tangled politics of TV, from the struggling actor who needs to cling to his livelihood & is afraid of being pigeonholed to the showrunner who's dissolving under the stress of being beholden to everybody + their mother + the internet. the book engages with the impossible expectations of pleasing every type of fan, and the icky-feeling invasion of privacy that can happen with RPF, and the fact that actors have to stake their next rent check on something that could evaporate if you don't "perform with the demo." all this is done with heart & empathy. people assuming it'll just be a rosy-eyed romp through slashfic paradise will, i think, be surprised.

look—i did not like everybody in this book equally, nor did i agree with their views equally, but i understood them all equally. that's what i really want with Issue Books. and in my opinion Britta Lundin wrote a damn good one. it takes an even greater feat to do all this and still have me laughing with every other page.

aer says

I knew I had to read this book after my favorite gossip site tore it to shreds... and good god, they were spot on. To start, let me just say that it glorifies everything that is wrong with fan culture. It's one of the most infuriating novels I've ever read. ...And I wrote 2000 words on this -so buckle up!

This review is full of spoilers. Actually, it's a complete synopsis (with my biased opinion).

There are some batshit crazy fandoms out there (Supernatural & Teen Wolf (for starters)) and this book really zeroes in on that culture. The author, in my opinion, most definitely self-inserted herself into her novel as Claire, our "hero". There is no way that Britta Lundin could salvage this character and still have her end up a champion at the end of the novel if she didn't share the same ideals.

Claire, of small town, Pine Bluffs, is a rabid fan of a 'Supernatural'-esque show, Demon Heart, about demons and their hunters (much like SPN). Not only is she a fan of the show, but she ships the two male leads (Forrest and Rico) together (SmokeHeart) and is BLINDED by it. She cannot separate fiction from reality. This is a constant theme throughout the book, where she is told over and over again by the actors and show runner that her ship is not real. She cannot accept it. It consumes her life and she doesn't make friends because she has the show. Fine, I respect that. By chance her beloved show is having a panel at a con in her state, Claire and her odd duck of a mother, Trudi, travel to Boise to attend it.

Emboldened by her mother's words, Claire ends up asking the panel about her beloved ship, SmokeHeart. She is shut down by half of the ship, Forrest Reed (Smokey), but it gets the crowd riled up. The social media and PR women track her down and through a 'twist of fate' Claire ends up "winning" a role as superfan extraordinaire on their convention circuit. This functioning television series allows this rabid and delusional fan 24/7 access into their lives and business - and oh boy, does Claire push their boundaries. She's determined to get show runner, Jamie Davis (*cough* Jeff Davis of Teen Wolf), to make her SmokeHeart canon!

SmokeHeart is everything to Claire and she goes after Forrest because he is obviously a homophobe and deserves hell rained down upon him for not bleeding for this ship. Forrest tries to play nice at the behest of his handlers and Claire repeatedly rejects his peace treaty offers. Finally, after finding a commonality, Claire's developed feelings for Tess, do they strike up a working friendship.

There's a small subplot of Forrest being bicurious and or not confronting his sexuality. This is touched upon several times and quite frankly feels out of place because both author and main character needed to feel vindicated in their fetishizing of gay men and the validity of their character shipping.

Claire meets Tess, this super cute, confident woc and talented fan artist who is also a diehard SmokeHeart shipper. There is an immediate attraction although Claire hasn't even begun to grapple with her sexuality. Tess is honestly, a lovely character, who hides her love for 'Demon Heart' because being a queer woc is hard enough in a small town, let alone a nerdy queer woc in a small town. I honestly wish more of the novel was spent on Tess. In fact, before I read the 'Oh No They Didn't' takedown of this novel, I assumed that this book was more of a 'Fangirl' by Rachel Rowell situation and that it would focus on the girls' relationship and their ship would be in the background. The ship consumed the entire story and while I normally relish in reading queer coming of age novels, Claire's sexuality felt like a chore. I was unimpressed by her unstoppable desire to will her SmokeHeart ship into existence and felt like her being queer was just a diversion to make her more likable/relatable.

ANYWAY, she fends off her feelings by remembering past experiences with boys and writes it off. SHE'S GOTTA FOCUS ON SMOKEHEART, SHE CAN'T GET DISTRACTED, DAMMIT!!! Our main character refocuses on her mission and staves off her feelings because they're understandably scary.

With her passion refocused, Claire spends the entire novel trying to make her beloved ship canon: she commandeers panels, sabotages the events, and berates/corners the actors and show runner. Somehow, people in the industry are still on her side and think she's doing a great job!!! SOMEHOW, one delusional 17-year-old girl is saving her favorite television show from being canceled - because that's a totally realistic situation.

She gets quite an online following too! Her tumblr is blowing up, people start recognizing her at cons, by her tumblr handle no less. She's a little shipper hero!

Things start to get messy and Claire gets praise for causing a scene at the next panel. Jamie is infuriated by the stunts she pulls and avoids her like the plague. She continues to push boundaries by meddling in Forrest's life, even going as far as writing 'Real People Fiction' about him banging his costar and adding in really personal and confidential information about him. Forrest is horrified and cannot believe she would violate his trust. REALLY, BUD? YOU REALLY THOUGHT THIS LITTLE NUTJOB WOULDN'T SEXUALIZE YOU??? Well, she did. Forrest, while reading this 'RPF' starts questioning his own sexuality, because shit, when you start thinking about a creepy fangirl writing about 'slotting dicks together' (real quote), YOU JUST GET REAL TURNED ON AND CONFUSED, RIGHT? Forrest's mind is blown. (Don't worry though, he completely forgives her and actually apologizes for getting upset and she accepts his apology (even though he literally did nothing wrong)).

But she hasn't gotten her way yet, despite being on this con circuit, show runner, Jamie, hasn't made his lead characters fuck. And that is just not okay with Claire, so she devises a plan to really trip him up. With the help of the social media girl, Claire gets a hold of Jamie's twitter and hijacks it. When Jamie comes roaring after her, she attempts to blackmail him into not only admitting that he queerbaited his batshit fans, but to get SmokeHeart to be real. Jamie, a grown adult, loses his mind and starts to physically come after her. Claire is terrified. Jamie decides to leave it alone and storms out, leaving SmokeHeart's most dedicated fan at a loss.

There's only one thing Jamie can do to end this chaos, he fires Forrest to put everything gay to rest and get his show back on track. Forrest, not only feeling betrayed by Claire for publishing her wacko fantasies about him banging Rico, has now discovered that SHE is the SOLE reason he's been fired and tweets out to his fans it was all her fault and mentions her by name.

Now, Claire knows she has fucked up. When all the fans camp out to watch the season finale of Demon Heart and Smokey (Forrest) dies, they know he's dead for real. Forrest is no longer on the show and the fans also know that it is Claire's fault. She deletes her social media and is sickened by the end result (even though she completely brought it on herself). Claire hides away, goes off the grid and resumes her boring life in Pine Bluffs. Oh, and her romance with Tess blew up but honestly, there's just too much going on in this story for me to get into that.

Three weeks pass and the social media lead for the show reaches out to her, they want her to come back for the San Diego Comic Con and moderate their last panel. The cast loves her!!! Everything is great!!!!!! The fans are back on her side!!!! As moderator, she gives a touching speech about her sexuality because now she's had a total change of heart and implores the show to cast poc, more female representation, and to stop queerbaiting. When truly she shipped these two characters because thinking about them having sex turned her the hell on. It was unrealistic even by the book's standards to have her come out and say that, because it

just wasn't true. Queer representation was never on her mind, not because she hadn't come to terms with her own sexuality, but because she was just all consumed by the turn-on of her ship.

Everyone is inspired by her speech. Forrest (remember that Claire, by simply being in his stratosphere and reading her 'RPF', has stirred up old and repressed queer feelings) is particularly inspired and **DAMMIT, HE'S GONNA GIVE THE BATSHIT AND BOUNDARY PUSHIN' SHIPPERS WHAT THEY WANT.** He shares a meaningful look with his way too chill, and accepting of this batshittery, costar, Rico, and announces that 'someone will want to film this!' **AND THEY MAKE OUT. YEP. FULL ON TONGUE TANGLIN' MAKEOUT.** Claire, as you can imagine, is creaming her jeans.

The novel ends with a happy resolve. Claire and Tess end up together and loosely plan a future together, perhaps UCLA, and snuggle on the couch. Plucky Rico continues on with Demon Heart as our embattled Forrest lands a character arc on a new hit show. Yeehaw!

So...

There are a lot of questions that go unanswered. **CLAIRE IS A PSYCHOPATH.** Why are all these **ADULTS** giving a child free range, paying for all her travel and letting her act like a little animal? Why does Forrest allow her to torment him, why does Rico take a shine to her? **HOW DOES HER MOTHER CONTINUOUSLY CONDONE ALL OF HER BEHAVIOR? HOW IS SHE PROUD OF HER?** Well, Claire really can't do anything wrong in this novel and remains a hero.

I was aggravated by several points in the novel where Britta Lundin incorrectly used feminism to make her shipper points. Claire would bring up feminism in attempts to deflect from her insanity and it was instantly accepted. There could've been great opportunities for actual feminism in this book but all of them were wasted.

I'm also not over how disappointed I am that Claire's sexuality wasn't the main focus of the novel. It was really anticlimactic. As a queer person myself, I really wanted to connect more with her inner struggle but she was so damn awful I kept thinking to myself 'some of her feelings are, in fact relatable, but I'm so taken out of this story I can't do this'. Figuring out who you are can be so scary and real, but it didn't feel so impactful in this novel. I think that Britta does have the ability to write queer stories, I just can't believe she wasted this opportunity.

I found Claire to be one of the most unlikable characters I've ever read. She wasn't a villain and we weren't meant to hate her **BUT I LOATHED HER.** The secondhand embarrassment I felt had me **SQUIRMING.** I can't believe that there are a bunch of people who are reading this, have read it, or will read it, that probably deeply relate to Claire and find this book touching. It's downright disturbing that fandoms find it acceptable to bulldoze the 4th wall and demand that shows kowtow to their ships and desires. Once I read more about the author, everything started clicking into place.

I don't believe there's any harm in shipping characters together and y'all are perfectly entitled to your OTP but please keep it to yourself or within the fandom. We've seen what happens to shows when they start to give into fan demands and no one ends up happy.

To each their own! I do not recommend this book because it was clearly written by an unhinged person (who I can't believe is also getting paid to write for a hit TV show). It was entertaining in the sense that it was so over the top and unbelievable that I was scoffing throughout. Read it if you want to waste the \$11!

Jaye Berry says

I have never hated a book as much as I hate this one.

It's cringey, all the characters are actually awful, and almost every single thing that happens is ridiculous to the point where it doesn't even try to be realistic. Of course while lecturing on and on about things that, you know, the audience of this book knows already.

It shows the awful side of fandom, and the awful side of those teenagers who think they are entitled to whatever they want in a show that they didn't create, and have actually no part of. The MC constantly fights the idea and demands the showrunner of this fictional show to give her what she thinks she deserves while explaining how she isn't doing it for herself- oh no, it's for everyone else. Sure jan. At one point she even hacks the showrunner's twitter to *force* him to make her ship happen while thinking that was somehow okay. She even tells the guy who plays the character that he is wrong, **ABOUT THE CHARACTER HE PLAYS**. Because she somehow knows better than the guy himself? All while she has such an asshole attitude and calling him homophobic because his character isn't gay. But no, this book is **ALL** about celebrating fandom and how it brings us all together, all nice and happy. Again, sure jan.

I know this kind of fan. I've dealt with them so many times and they will never change. They *are* entitled and they are slightly delusional. I'm sorry kids but you have no right to come up to someone and demand they give you whatever you want. That isn't how the real world works and the idea of it even half working in this book makes me want to barf. Blah blah, the show/movie/book belongs to the fans? No. It belongs to the creators and writers who worked their asses off to create something, not the young adults at home on tumblr thinking it's theirs. Trust me, I've been on the side of wanting a ship to happen but you have to accept that sometimes, things don't work out the way you want, despite all the *subtext* you think you found. It really sucks, and more shows need to have diverse relationships but literally trying to force someone to make your ship canon is never going to work. (Seriously, Claire had some damn issues. Just so you are aware, Claire basically pulled the "not like the other girls" card.)

Maybe if this book actually put that in a negative light about the problems of fandoms but no. This was Claire, one of the MCs and it was celebrated. When a girl challenges her on her shit mindset, she gets mad and they fight. Until later making up even though **ALL** they did was fight and disagree on everything. Such romance. And I'm sorry but outing someone (and forcing them to decide on what they identify as) before they are ready or even sure? There is no forgiveness, or at least not that easily.

Queerbaiting is awful, I know. You know what else is awful? Fetishizing *real* people and shipping real people, hounding them multiple times about what their sexual identity is. Writing fanfiction about real people, while you have been spending time with those very real people was actually gross as hell. And of course, instead of feeling bad when Claire is called out by the very guy she was writing about, she goes off and says there is nothing wrong with it and how HE is the asshole.

This is an obsessive and awful tumblr girl's fantasy about how she gets the dream of a lifetime to harass members of her favorite tv while acting like she's even half a good person. Don't worry guys, she's doing it for the gay children, not for her fantasy of two hot guys making out. Also I'm pretty sure the fictional show could have at least tried not to copy Supernatural 100% but here we are.

This book is not just bad, it's insulting and gross. I saw red for half the book and I can't believe I put myself through the actual torture that reading this was. I just can't believe this book is real to be honest. I can't believe a team of adults read this book and went: "Ah yes. This is an amazing book, we should put this out in the world." I'm never like this but skip this book; I beg you to skip it. And I beg to one day move on from how actually fucking shitty this pile of work was. Nice cover though.

Kaylin (The Re-Read Queen) says

1 Star

Fetishization ≠ Representation

There are some reads so poorly constructed I don't hesitate to slap a one-star on them and move on. But *this book* has lingered in my thoughts for weeks... because it's a completely different kind of awful. Because this really, really *tried*. It really wants to open a discussion about how **some girls—especially queer girls find a place in fandom**. But this discussion devolves into **an incredibly misguided, tone-deaf monologue**.

Our main character, Claire, is obsessed with the TV show Demon Heart. It's pretty obvious from the start this is a thinly-veiled parody of Supernatural, but when Claire asks a question during a Q&A panel that's basically a recreation of real events... it's even more obvious. **So how does something based on a real-word occurrence lose all sense of realism?** It makes no sense that the producers would spend so much money bringing Claire to every stop on this tour. It makes no sense that her mother just lets her 16-year-old daughter run around all these different cities without asking any questions. The way Claire and Forrest (the actor who slighted her) speak to each other is extreme, stilted and comes across like some sort of parody. **None of this feels genuine or possible.**

At one point, **Claire literally blackmails the showrunner and holds him hostage while she 'convinces him' to make her ship canon.** This is!not!normal! In the real world we'd see a story about this 'deranged fan' on the nightly news. But making matters *even worse* is Claire's *insistence* she's not taken seriously simply because she's a teenage girl. The fact that we are supposed to sympathize makes it feel like the narrative believes this irrational behavior IS completely normal for a teenage girl. **This is insulting.** Claire screams, cries and threatens only to then play the victim and devalue the voices of those *actually* facing discrimination.

While most of this book is singularly focused on one girl's experience, there is some diversity added with Tess, Claire's love-interest. **Tess identifies as homoromantic pansexual and is vocal about the lack of POC characters on Demon Heart.** At first, I absolutely loved this and was hopeful Tess would aid Claire down the path of some development... instead **their relationship turns into a toxic push-n-pull.** They both show very little respect for the other, cumulating with Tess **outing Claire to her mother.** The fact that Claire's mother is accepting and kind then paints this whole event as inconsequential and neither girl really apologizes.

But perhaps the singular point that pushed this book to dumpster-fire levels is **the absurd amount of M/M fetishization that occurs.** Despite Claire insisting she doesn't only ship SmokeHeart because of the sex... she makes every discussion about it revolve around sex?? The first chapter literally starts with Claire **googling porn so she can 'properly' finish her fanfic.** Claire insists that she is focused on the importance of representation... but **she's literally incapable of discussing anything but the physicality of the**

relationship. To the point that she insists she won't be 'satisfied' until she sees it manifest on the show.

Claire writes real-world fic about the actors of the two characters having sex, and then is *flabbergasted* when Forrest is upset by this. (Side note: Forrest also has some development regarding his own internal homophobia, but saying that's the only reason he'd be upset by such fic... feels real gross) **Both girls also joke about writing/reading incestuous, smutty Jonas Brother's fic.** They defend this by saying that "slash fic is just more fun!"

Overall:

camera pans to me, still screaming into the void

I received an ARC of this in exchange for an honest review, thanks to *Freeform* for the opportunity! No quotes were included in this review, as I'm currently unable to compare them to the final printed book.

C.G. Drews says

I'm kind of awkward about this one because it contained a lot of messy problematic characters, and yes, there were solid character arcs, but I felt really uncomfortable (and often mad) reading their behaviours.

(However it's really awesome that it's queer #ownvoices and the author writes for Riverdale!)
