



Speakeasy

Sarina Bowen

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Sometimes you fall for Mr. Right. And sometimes for Mr. Right Now...

May

Did you hear the one about the girl who walks into a bar and catches her live-in lover kissing someone else? No? You're the only one in town who missed it.

Luckily Alec is there to wrap me up in strong arms and carry me out the door before things get too ugly. And that's not all Alec is good at. Our unexpected chemistry makes him the perfect rebound guy.

Alec

I should know better than to hook up with my rival's little sister, but the fiery look in May's eyes really turns my crank. She needs cheering up, and I'm just the guy for the job.

It's not like I'll fall in love. Not even after a string of scorching hot trysts, and the realization that we're good at the same things: wild nights and familial disappointment. I don't do love, never have, never will. So this is the perfect arrangement, for both of us.

Nobody would approve, but nobody has to know...

Speakeasy Details

Date : Published May 29th 2018 by Tuxbury Publishing LLC

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Author : Sarina Bowen

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Genre : Romance, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance

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From Reader Review Speakeasy for online ebook

Geri Reads says

DNF @24%

This hurts my heart. I enjoyed all of Sarina Bowen's previous books but unfortunately, this one didn't work for me.

Number one reason is I didn't really feel the chemistry between May and Alec. I loved May. I wanted her story since book 1. Her struggles and her bisexuality were handled wonderfully by Sarina Bowen, but I just didn't feel invested in her romance with Alec, maybe because I wanted to turn back time and have her be together with Lark. :(

Number two reason is Alec. I didn't dislike him, I think he's just there. He's okay, I guess but meh.

So DNF.

An ARC was provided by the author.

?lleskelle - teamSøren? ?I like big b00ks? says

There is just something so heartwarming about this whole series, even when the premise doesn't necessarily speak to me from the get go, I always—ALWAYS— end up swooning my heart out.

It's about the quiet, easy, light and tender moments.

It's about the real, honest, messy feelings.

It's about the awkward, non-rehearsed, spontaneous sex scenes.

And it's about friendship, lovable family, endearing secondary characters.

All in all, Sarina Bowen creates very relatable characters, engaging dialogues, a sweet, shy but solid romance in an all too charming setup. Vermont seems like a dream destination of all sudden and I'm left craving craft beers, apple ciders, lemon poppy seed muffins, farmers and bartenders.

May Shipley and Alec Rossi had a rocky and uncertain start, a handful of issues we're used to read about in romance but addressed here in the most honest and non-dramatic way.

It's super refreshing.

An all winning romance series for me.

Sarina Bowen writes, I feel. Easy.

More reviews and book talk at :

You can find me here too 

Astrid - The Bookish Sweet Tooth says

READ MY REVIEW ON THE BLOG

The best recipe for a book slump is a Sarina Bowen book. I said it before and I'll say it again. And again. And...again. She's one of my favorite authors. She's dependable to deliver an engaging, beautiful story with lovable characters and even if it's a well used trope, she always puts her own twist on it. I don't think I've rated a book by this author below four stars.

With *Speakeasy* we are back with the Shipley family. May is the child that causes the Shipleys constant worry. She's a recovering alcoholic and everyone, especially her mother and her brother Griff. They handle her with kid gloves and May's had enough. She feels like a failure as it is and her family doesn't make it any better. When she walks into the Gin Mill, the town's new hot spot for premium beer, to surprise her girlfriend the joke's on her. She finds her in a liplock with Daniela's ex. Alec Rossi is her knight in shining armor who also saves her from herself and her righteous anger.

This story focuses a lot on May's addiction and she finds a long list of reasons why Alec and her won't work. Alec is the resident man whore and nobody expects him to be serious. None of his friends give him much credit, not even his own family. He thinks he's a failure too and he really wants to turn around everybody's opinion of him by making the Gin Mill a success. When the long-legged, beautiful May Shipley walks into his bar he didn't anticipate this to be a life changing moment. They start a friends-with-benefits relationship that is supposed to be fun. Alec, the man who takes little seriously, soon finds himself more than tempted to change the rules of their arrangement.

May Shipley scratches an itch that I didn't know I had.

Alec was such a fun character. Lighthearted, but good to the core and not as shallow as everybody seemed to think by far. I loved his silliness, how earnest he could be when he knew that something was important to one of his loves ones. He's exactly the type of man I'd fall for too. I was laughing my ass off with his so totally not funny bar jokes. For some reason the mushroom joke he told in the end had me in stitches and I couldn't stop laughing although I'm sure it wasn't really that funny.

Alec had me wrapped around his finger with his carefree and positive outlook on life, his sexuality and how he adored May. And don't get me started how cute he was with his niece. He also made me melt when he told May all the reasons why he wanted to be with her. He was so tender and sweet with her, yet showed her that she wasn't weak.

“I want all of this. I want the whispered late-night conversations. And the holidays where we have to touch each other quietly in a bed that's too small so we don't become one of your grandfather's jokes at the table.”

May is a complicated young woman. She struggles daily with her cravings but it's so important to her to stay sober. Rebound sex with Alec isn't really a great idea from her point of view. May second-guesses herself a lot and she's never sure if Alec is only a rebound lay or if there is something real. How can she know he won't run if she tells him that her struggle with alcohol is a daily occurrence? She doesn't trust herself, and how can she if her family doesn't seem to trust her?

I loved May as Alec's love interest although I have to say that the belief that they belong together was a little harder earned than I'd like to. She always thought she'd end up with a woman and along comes Alex. Half of her life she has been in love with her best friend Lark, who will marry the love of her life soon. May had to grow into the woman who was also into men first again and it took a little too long for that to happen. But when she finally accepted her feelings for Alec it was so, so sweet. I admired her so much, she was stronger than she thought.

We get to catch up with my favorite characters from this series. I loved Audrey and Jude in particular for being such good friends to May and Alec. Grandpa Shipley was a hoot, he's such a character! I didn't remember that he was so funny in Griffin and Zach's book!

“Hello, beautiful,” I say to her. “Who’s your favorite uncle?”

“Ack,” Nicole says.

“That’s right, babylicious. Ack is the man. Now— remind me. What’s his name?” I point at Benito.

“Bimbo,” she says.

Everyone laughs. God, I love this kid. “Don’t ever change, Nicole.”

I enjoyed every word of Speakeasy. It was lighthearted despite the sensitive subject of alcoholism. It has humor, the affectionate family dynamics of the Shipleys and a good portion of steam. This series has a warm, familiar feel to it, it's like coming home every time I read a new installment. Now the waiting begins for the next in the True North series and I'm super-curious who this book will be about!

Jennifer Kyle says

4 STARS !

☆ Bianca ☆ BJ's Book Blog ☆ says

??????????????

We all remember May from the first books. She's the Shipley's 'problem' child. She's an alcoholic. And nobody in the family really trusts her to make sensibly decisions about her love life and her life in general. Now she's living with a girl - Daniela - and hoping that for the first time in her life something is going her way. Hopefully forever. BUT, of course it's not - Daniela is cheating on her.

Poor May packs her bags and with the help of bar owner and her teenage crush Alec (who is the brother of the girl from book #4 and a little bit of a Shipley family nemesis - as in he hates them!) she moves back in with her parents. Just what any 27 year old lawyer wants.

Alec is busy with his bar. He needs money to make some changes; like brew his own beer, add a restaurant. But now he's horribly distracted by beautiful May.

But of course she's gay, right?

What will happen to May & Alec?

Will there be a Happily Ever After?

READ THE BOOK TO FIND OUT! ?

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Heep - I was so glad when I found out that this series was not over yet!
I loved Griffin and the other guys ... and now here's finally May's story.

She pretty quickly starts something with Alec...

And both know that it's only sex and only for a little while. Nobody can know. Griffin would probably kill Alec.

But it's not only for a little while. It becomes serious pretty fast. But poor May doesn't know if she can trust herself and she doesn't know that Alec really understands what it means to be with an alcoholic. But of course Alec is mega adorable about everything! Even though he has his own problems!

Such a sweet & moving & sexy & fun romance. With a lot of very serious topics.

I just adored it!

I soooo want this series to be on Netflix one day! PLEASE!

SPEAKEASY was such an adorable & moving & sexy & funny love story!

Will May & Alec get that happily ever after? Run to your nearest amazon to find out!!! ?

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Corina BookTwinsReviews says

4.5 stars

Wow!! Not only did the book-cover completely enchant me, the story on its own was absolutely stunning!!!

Speakeasy is honestly next to Bittersweet my most favorite True North story to date.

May and Alec were a stunning couple. And I can only applaud the author for writing a story that embraced May's sexuality, her believes, and her beautiful soul in such an amazing way. The way May connected with Alec was entirely genuine, and surprisingly sexy. She was a wild one. And I absolutely loved her for that.

Throughout the True North series, May's journey has been an emotional rollercoaster ride and deeply touching. It was a true pleasure to see her find her own HEA. And for me, her love for Alec, was a beautiful thing to witness.

Her new found interest in the male form, was quite the illuminating discovery for May. Nevertheless she embraced it with laughter, joy and utter contentment. And Alec, couldn't have been a better partner for her. His goofy, kind and funny side, was the right bandaid for May's broken heart. Together they found a kindred spirit in each other.

I truly adored Alec. His struggle felt real, and his less than perfect personality made him even more charming and likable. Although his reputation was everything else than stellar, his personality was an adorable mix of goofiness and hardworking businessman. With his steadfast and supporting demeanor he was exactly what May needed. Someone that didn't treat her with kid gloves, and took what she offered without dissecting everything she did.

Together they were a wonderful couple, confident enough in each other to overcome minor hurdles in a mature and kind manner.

I honestly feel like this series has only been getting better with each book. Which is on its own quite the feat. There aren't that many series that keep getting better. So, I'm beyond excited that Speakeasy was more than I could have ever wished for. It shouldn't come as a surprise that I hope the author keeps on writing this series, there are more Shipley children that need their HEAs.

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Jilly says

Oh yeah, I love when a book character makes me feel well-adjusted.

May is a girl that is a complete hot mess. She's been a background character throughout this series and was previously in love with her best friend, who was a female (and straight), and then decided she is bisexual. Then, she became a drunken mess and realized she is an alcoholic. Oh, an alcoholic with a cheating, bitchy girlfriend.

I had an alcoholic friend once. Great designated driver!

I remember this one time we went out to a comedy club and since she couldn't drink her two-drink minimum, I had to drink all four drinks. Then, we met up with this bartender who thought we were cute and he made us free drinks all night - which I had to drink them all too. I think he was hoping to be the filling in a blonde/red head sandwich because he kept making me sex-on-the-beaches, screaming orgasms, etc. Okay, he wasn't that subtle. And, no, we didn't take him home, we took off in her little convertible and yeah, maybe I vomited in her assigned parking spot, and sure, maybe I woke up to the smell of her spraying air freshener because I was seeping alcohol out of my pores from my passed-out position on her couch. But, gosh that was fun. Well, after I had a mysterious bout of the flu the next day. It was completely gone by that night. Huh. That was strange. I wonder what ever happened to my friend. We lost touch for some reason.

Anyway, what was my point? Oh yeah, May is a hot mess.

At least she's hot. Because of this, she attracts the attentions of Alec, who was also a background character. He's a party boy, who owns a bar.

Yeah. The bi-sexual alcoholic and the party-bartender. This is gonna be good.

But, it was good. I have really liked this series because they have the perfect blend of angst, romance, and smut. If it were too angsty, I would be running far away. If they were too gooey on the romance, same. And, thankfully, the smut doesn't have those creepy genitalia descriptions going. Thank you, Sarina Bowen, for not using the words "satin", "turgid member", or "cream". Eww. Just writing those words are the equivalent

of a cold shower with a picture of my dead grandma on the wall.

It's bad enough that she's on my cell phone. Makes sexting with the hubs a little awkward.

What I'm really looking forward to is the hopes of a male/male romance in the future. There is a potential couple in the background. Fingers crossed!

Wendy's Thoughts says

4 Do Not Underestimate Stars

*** * * * *Spoiler Free It's Live!!***

You know you are a hardcore fan when a specific author's book lands on your kindle and you drop everything to read it...That's what happens when Sarina Bowen graces me with her words. I have found for me, she handles universal human issues so incredibly well...She takes the ugly, the insecurities and the questioning thoughts we all have experienced at some point and shows how we are all in this together... no one is immune.

In all of the True North books, our characters have had to deal with all sorts of issues... and each time I felt they were handled with authenticity and a frankness of how it would feel to deal with them.... never a sugarcoating.

This time Bowen takes two people who are seen by others as either a player and not serious about anything or as fragile and needs to be watched and monitored for their own good.

Alec Rossi comes from a big family that never lived on the right side of the tracks...His father worked for Shipley Farms and would imbibe and bicker with his wife. This would lead to his going on benders and disappearing from the family. There was cheating and bad feelings. Alec knew things were bad but then one night after he lost his Shipley job, the father decided not to come back.

This change in the family dynamic caused a number of things to happen...The mother held them all together and the kids supported each other. Each took on a part and Alec's was good time, honest middle child. Keeper of the Peace.

This persona took on a life of its own during the teenage years went by... need a player to have a bonfire...ask Alec. Need a Keg or place to party... Alec will figure it out...
Alec was easy going and the women were more than happy to be easy going with him...

But as the years continued... Alec took on more responsibility with purchasing an old warehouse in disrepair and not wanted. Alec worked with his own hands and brought it to life... he made it a bar which became a mecca for Craft Beer Fans in Vermont. He worked almost seven days a week to make a go of it... but no one, especially Uncle Otto sees him as being the responsible person he has become. They still see the easy going guy who can make you smile with silly bar jokes.

May Shipley has dealt with her own image issues..As the sister of dynamic siblings, she had felt lost in her own family. College was a challenge and her experiences there turned her away from guys... they were just

Ugh. She decided she liked guys ok...but maybe life would be easier taking a dip in the Lady Pond...

May was accomplished and did law school. There she met a woman who she thought was her possible forever. At first things were great...but then not so much. This partner also wasn't supportive of May's sobriety. Her sobriety wasn't a game... her meetings were real and she wasn't going to backtrack for anything.

May is driving back from a meeting and sees her girlfriend's car at Alec's Bar. She figures she will go in and say hey...Only to walk in and see her girlfriend at a table in the corner sucking face with her ex....

Now Alec had been watching this happen from the bar and was conflicted by it... no one likes a cheater and May was the only Shipley he liked. She was a few years younger than him but he always thought kindly of her.

When time stops and May sees the cheater at the table with her ex....Alec is there to make sure May does nothing to jeopardize her legal career...Getting in a knockdown drag out fight wouldn't be good for May or the bar...So he steps in and holds May back. Words are said and before May realizes it... she is out of the bar via Alec and he is helping her move out.

May is so annoyed she has to move back to the family farm. Her family means well but ever since May came to terms with her drinking, they treat her like she is made of glass. She hates it. She is a licensed Lawyer, for gawd's sake.

Alec checks in with May once he leaves the farm...a quick text to see if she is alright. May appreciated the concern and texted back...a few silly bar jokes are exchanged.

A few back and forth exchanges happen and then May decides to ask Alec to help her out. She has to go to this law school event and the ex-girlfriend will be there... Alec is happy to assist and when he sees May looking quite hot, he let's her know how great she looks. A game plan is discussed as to how they are going to deal with the ex and before May realizes it... she is responding to all the yummy maleness of Alec...

This story is something special because it addresses so many things all at the same time. It handles the fear we all have in allowing ourselves to lay bare to one another... emotionally as well as physically. When we are fighting preconceived images or fighting our own belief in how ugly our challenges are...it can be very difficult to trust and share how we feel. We can present a mask of what we think others want when we think we are not worthy to show true fears. Bowen brings all of this front and center.

She also takes two people who are so good together, you root for them once things start happening... Oh and happening they do...Did I mention Alec is yummy....

Well, May is totally up for the challenge and I suggest laundry being done before reading.

As you can tell, I read this quickly and enjoyed it all. Both of these characters were wanting more out of their lives. Both of them were able to achieve it by being who they were together.

Bittersweet (True North, #1)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Steadfast (True North, #2)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Keepsake (True North #3)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Bountiful (True North #4)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Speakeasy (True North, #5)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Fireworks (True North, #6)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

~~~~~ Before Reading ~~~~~

*Take Me Back...*

*Please Take Me Back to Bowen's True North Vermont...*

*Where Craft Beer and Complex Love Flows...*

*Where Sarina Bowen leads our hearts...*

*Through a perfect maze...*

*To the HEA we all want...*

*Going in and will report back...*

**Speakeasy (True North #5)-May 29th 2018**

*A gifted copy was provided by author/publisher for an honest review.*

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**Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says**

**ALL THE STARS!!!!!!!!!!**

True story. When I discovered that this one wasn't going to feature Roderick and Kieran I had a sad, because **something is up with those two!** But I soldiered on and guess what happened?

I fell in love with this book! I might even like this better than *Bittersweet*! Bold statement I know, but this book filled up my love tank to bursting.

And now I'm going to squee. A lot. So brace yourselves.

This series always feels like coming home. I love the atmosphere in this sleepy little Vermont town called Tuxbury that SB has created. I love the Shipleys and look forward to catching up with them every time a new book comes out. Tuxbury is really more of an extended family than made up of merely neighbors. They love their craft beers, baked goods, whatever Audrey cooks up in the Shipley kitchen for Thursday dinner, organic farming and the sense of community that pervades the True North series are what make it special for me.

May is the oldest Shipley daughter. She calls herself a hot mess for many reasons; she's an alcoholic, made mistakes aplenty and she generally feels like she's always fucking something up. In short, no one is harder on May than May. She's bisexual and been in love with her best friend Lark for years, but Lark does not reciprocate her feels. She actually went and fell for the nicest of nice guys Zach in *Keepsake*. That probably sent May into a bad "rebound" relationship with Daniela. Who is a bitch. A controlling, abusive and awful bitch.

Coming home from work one night May spots Daniela's car at The Gin Mill and in an effort to be a nice girlfriend goes in and finds her putting on a show in a booth. With her ex. Who is also awful. Alec, The Gin Mill's proprietor, intervenes before blood is shed. Good thing since I'm guessing the Vermont Bar Association would frown upon one of its members being charged with assault.

Alec Rossi is the boy your momma always told you to stay away from. He's made a lifestyle out of partying. He's the fun guy that found a way to hold a kegger in high school. Every weekend. He's allergic to relationships and commitment, an allergy which has earned him a rep as a sex wizard. The ladies are never in short supply. Oozing charisma with an aura of laid back that borders on zen makes him VERY popular. He's also a Rossi. There's been bad blood between the Shipleys and Rossis since forever, so there's a certain Romeo and Juliet vibe about *Speakeasy* that's extremely appealing. There's something sexy about sneaking around, isn't there? Adds to the excitement or something.

Naturally both of these characters have more depth than they believe themselves to have. Both are well constructed and infinitely likable. The banter between them put a smile on my face and kept it there for the majority of the book.

They have sizzling chemistry and embark on a friends with bennies relationship which of course segues into deeper feelings. They both have baggage but that baggage felt genuine, honest. I never felt that mountains were being made out of molehills or that their angst was contrived. As I watched them fall in love I could see how well they compliment one another which is guaranteed to make me swoon.

May's addiction is still very much a part of her life and isn't downplayed. I wouldn't say that I enjoy reading about addiction but if it's going to be integral to the character then I applaud when it's portrayed authentically and SB not only did that for May but she again addressed the opioid epidemic that's plagued the northeast for several years now and is now spreading like wildfire through the rest of the country.

May's bisexuality wasn't sidestepped either. She truly believed that her future lay with another woman but once she realizes that she's fallen for Alec she doesn't hold back. She fully commits to him and the possibilities of a future with him, but it's made clear that doing so doesn't make her any less bisexual.

The fact that Alec isn't intimidated by her bisexuality and is prone to "perving" on her lesbian fantasies made me adore him. Well, that and that he's not afraid to show emotion. He wears his heart on his sleeve and is honest with both himself and May where his feelings are concerned. He's a refreshingly honest male character who is alpha in many ways without being an alpha-hole. As much as he likes to believe he's the antithesis of Griff, I noticed a lot of similarities between them. Alec's just not as grumpy.

Making her happy makes me happy.

The backdrop of their love story is The Gin Mill and its future. It's Alec's baby and he has designs on expanding, just not the capital to do it. The way this storyline evolved put May and Alec's connection front and center. It also showcased what makes me love the Shipleys and this little town so much. It made me a little verklempt a couple times to see it unfold. Maybe it was a little "too easy" but I do not even care. Not. One. Care. It was perfect to me in every single way and I can't wait to reread it.

I have nothing else to say on this long and rambling road other than **I LOVE GRANDPA SHIPLEY AND HIS OLD SCHOOL WORDS!** Can't wait to catch up with everyone in the next installment \*side mouths\* which I'm rully hoping is about Kieran and Roderick. Please don't make me beg, SB.

*An ARC was provided.*

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### **Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says**

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life in Books.

I loved this book! May and Alec were just great together and I really loved that this story was a little different. I only recently stumbled upon this series when I read the fourth book, Bountiful, and immediately fell in love with the characters, the setting, and the style of storytelling. I have since went back and read the first book in the series but I can assure you that each book in this series works well as a stand alone story. Readers of the series will enjoy getting to catch up with favorite characters but anyone new to the series will have no problem jumping in with this book.

I was hooked by this book from the very beginning. Alec sees someone he thinks he knows kissing the wrong person in his bar one night and knows he has to do something about it. He doesn't get the chance to figure out what he should do because the person being cheated on walks in and sees everything for herself. Alec stops things from getting out of control and helps May move back home that very night.

I thought that the chemistry between Alec and May was very well done. Even when May has just been hurt by her girlfriend's betrayal, I thought that these two worked very well together on the friend level. Alec just seemed to know how to be the support that May needed at that point in her life and she accepted him in that role. I liked how open these two were with each other from the very beginning and how they just seemed to have a lot of fun together.

When things heat up and they decide to act on their attraction, Alec and May just seemed to fit each other perfectly. On paper, these two shouldn't work. May is a recovering alcoholic while Alec owns a bar. May is bisexual and always thought she would end up with a woman but Alec is definitely all man. I had such a good time watching them try to figure things out and was cheering them towards their happily ever after.

I would highly recommend this book to fans of contemporary romance. I had a fantastic time with this book

filled with wonderful characters, steamy moments, a few laughs, and scenes that melted my heart. I can't wait to read more from Sarina Bowen very soon!

*I received a digital review copy of this book from the author.*

### **Initial Thoughts**

I loved this! May and Alec were great together and I liked that the story was a little different than the norm. The chemistry between them was amazing and I really enjoyed watching them figure things out. Getting a chance to visit with the other character from the series was a nice plus as well.

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### **Christy says**

#### **4 Stars!!!**

Sometimes you fall for Mr. Right. And sometimes for Mr. Right Now...

Sarina Bowen has done it again! Her *True North* series is strong and I've enjoyed every book! I was excited to get to May Shipley's story. She's one I've been curious about since Zach and Lark's story. Boy did she meet her match with Alec! I absolutely loved their pairing!

The last place May Shipley expects to be is a bar. As a recovering alcoholic, she tends to avoid them. When she sees her girlfriends car in the parking lot, she figures she'll just stop in and say hi. What she doesn't expect to see is her girlfriend kissing another woman. May is upset, but thankfully, Alec, the bar owner and a family friend, is there to have her back and help her out. Alec is funny, sweet, and makes this whole situation a little less awful.

Alec has big dreams and goals when it comes to his business. Starting a relationship with anyone isn't really in those plans. But then comes May Shipley walking into his life, and he can't stay away. May and Alec are friends. Then they're friends with benefits. Then, it turns into something else entirely.

Alec is SO GOOD for May. She needs someone like him in her life. Someone that supports her, treats her well, and doesn't walk on egg shells around her, like so many in her family do. I loved this couple together. Not only did they have an insane amount of chemistry, but they were just so sweet together. I couldn't love Alec more than I did in this book, and May was great as well.

*Speakeasy* is a fantastic addition to the *True North* series. It has some heavy issues, but it's fun and light hearted at the same time. It made me laugh, smile, and swoon all the way through! Alec just might be my new favorite character of this series. I was completely enamored by him and I loved his and May's story! This book was a win for me, and I can't wait to read more about the *True North* gang! I hope Sarina doesn't stop writing these books any time soon.

Love is messy, unpredictable, and occasionally loud. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

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## Angela (Reading Frenzy Book Blog) says

4.5 stars

### Top 5 Reasons Why You Should Read Speakeasy

1. **The cover is gorgeous!** I know they say you can't judge a book by its cover, but seriously. It's sexy yet classy. Both the cover and the story make me proud to be a romance reader.
2. **Alec.** From his corny bar jokes to his extreme loyalty, I loved every inch of this underestimated man. Despite his ambition and hard work, he can't seem to shake his slutty party boy image or the voices in his head that tell him he's not smart enough to succeed.
3. **May.** This refreshing woman fully embraces her sexuality and faces her vices head on. I've never read a romance where one of the main characters is bisexual. Sex between two people can be a beautiful exchange of physical and emotional connections, regardless of gender. However, May's sexual orientation creates a fascinating kaleidoscope of insecurity, confusion, heartache, and optimism.
4. **Alex and May make a terrific couple.** They have a common bond since both come from large families, and they consider themselves to be the black sheep among their siblings. Their attraction takes them both by surprise, but they fit so well together. Their easy friendship, late night texts, playful teasing, and spectacular chemistry checked all my boxes.
5. **It's my favorite book in the series.** I'm amazed by the diversity of the books in the True North series. Each story is unique, but this one has the perfect balance of humor and emotion, with enough meat to keep me interested.

*\*I received an early copy of this book.\**

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## Stacey is Sassy says

\*\*\***IT'S ALIVE!!!**\*\*\*

### It's easy to exceed low expectations...

*A wee bit spoilerish if you haven't read this series yet, please, proceed with caution.*

I can truly sympathise with both May and Alec because I too suffer from...*Middle Child Syndrome*. Scoff all you like, but it's a known fact that we, the middle child, are overlooked, forgotten and misjudged. I too have seen the shock on relatives faces when, surprise, surprise, I do something well. For me - \*Oh, you're a book reviewer? I didn't even know you could read...\* - NICE!! (slight exaggeration) For Alec, he's a good-looking guy who likes to party, so, of course, he should hang out in a bar. If he owns and works the bar and it succeeds, it's only because a partier knows what a partier wants...not because of long hours and hard work.

In May's case, she's a recovering alcoholic which means she'll always be A RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC.

You're probably all doing one of those soft chuckles, shaking your head at us *poor middle children*. But honestly, we get it tough. I'll give you an example...growing up I had to do whatever activity my sister did. I was a tomboy, she was a girly girl. My mother made me do JAZZ BALLET...I still have nightmares. Both my older and younger sisters are DRAMA QUEENS (in the nicest possible ways), me, I get nervous answering the telephone. Guess who was signed up for a singing ensemble?

I better stop here, or the rest of the review will be about... *It's the Hard-knock Life...for a middle child*.

So, I get it, I really and truly get it. Alec and May have to face life's battles while also prove that they are more than the partier or the alcoholic. I don't know why but it seems that friends and families have low expectations of a middle child. Even funnier, we tend to live up to those low expectations. Why try harder if all you expect is mediocre? Maybe, it's because we love to, occasionally, surprise the bugger out of you.

In *Speakeasy*, we are treated to another visit with the Shipley family and the True North gang. I loved feeling like I was visiting old friends and having a catch-up. These characters have grown so much since the beginning and we get to witness them grow even further. Instead of cider, it was all about the beer this time.

You may be asking, well Sassy, how does a recovering alcoholic end up in a relationship with a bar owner? Well, my book reading friends, it certainly wasn't an easy journey. It all came down to how much you want it.

**IT**, you ask?

A relationship will work if both parties want *it* enough. Sobriety works if you never forget where you've been and keep on keeping on, walking the path to where you want to go. I loved that it wasn't easy for either Alec or May. If *it* was easy, I'm not sure I would have believed it. *Sarina Bowen* gives it to us real, and that's why she's a master at her craft.

*Speakeasy* was real and at times emotional. I loved the storyline, the characters and the feelings this story provoked in me. Yes, I understood the characters better because of our shared battles of living the life of a Middle Child, but it was more than that. I recognised May's feelings of failure and hating to disappoint loved ones. I could sympathise with Alec when bad choices in your younger years seem to be a name tag you'll wear for the rest of your life. I loved that by the end of the story, you couldn't help but look at May and Alec in a new light. They are more than their pasts and their bad choices. Both want to move forward together and once they start to trust their feelings, it was obvious they were perfect for each other.

I'll be a little honest here...I think I may love Alec a little more than May. Seriously, wait until you meet this guy. He's far from perfect but he's sweet, kind, thoughtful, hard-working, lovable, good with kids, sexy and honest.

Anyways...MIDDLE CHILDREN UNITE!!

I highly recommend *Speakeasy* and if you haven't started the *True North* series yet, get to it.

*Stacey is Sassy, received a complimentary copy of this story. The copy provided is not the final copy and may be subject to edits and changes.*



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## Hollis says

**Five stars for Grandpa Shipley!** He's like my favourite character.

In all seriousness, though, this is the first *True North* I've **really** liked since STEADFAST. Sure, there were parts maybe I wasn't too fond of, but my favourite Bowen is the Bowen who goes dark. And she tackles some heavy in SPEAKEASY (May's alcoholism) but then offers us a character like Alec. Who is just one big loveable delightful charming unflappable goofball. Other than Grandpa Shipley, he gets my stars.

*I want more of May than the naked parts. Although the naked parts are pretty great.*

But May was great, too, because it's so wonderful to have more bisexual representation in romance. While she was definitely holding onto her recovery hangups and I didn't always like how she treated Alec, I can totally understand where she thought she was coming from as far as being reluctant to put herself, and her recovery, through more upheaval by becoming romantically entangled.

*The Shipleys don't pair up with the Rossis, I once told my heartbroken sister. That's now how it works. The joke is on me now.*

Also I'm glad someone finally told Griffin where to shove it.

But yeah, this was fun, adorable, and perfectly weighted by real and relevant issues.

3.75 stars

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## Sabrina says

**NOW LIVE!**

Amazon US \* Amazon UK

*Speakeasy* started off a little confusing for me since at the beginning May is dating a woman, and then even has an inner dialogue about her female best friend. It seemed a little odd to me to have that much attention on the fact that she was into girls all while the hero was more of a background character. I'm in no way, shape, or form saying I had a problem with her being bisexual, just that it had questioning if she was even going to end up liking the hero in a romantic way.

Once I got past those parts though, and Alec started to get more of the attention focused on him, I became entranced with his and May's story. Seeing them together was so fun and I loved the dialogue between them. Alex could be a little immature at times but it always made me laugh at how silly he could be and I thought his personality mixed perfectly with May's more stern one.

Overall, this is a great book and one I think anyone would enjoy. It had a really light vibe to it all while

dealing with more serious subject matters, mainly May's alcoholism, and I thought it was great that this author blended the seriousness with a more lighthearted feeling. This book can definitely be read as a standalone without feeling lost or confused about secondary characters that are mentioned.

*ARC kindly provided in exchange for an honest review.*

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