



Meg & Linus

Hanna Nowinski

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Can friendship, Star Trek, drama club, and a whole lot of coffee get two nerdy best friends through the beginning of their senior year of high school?

Meg and Linus are best friends bound by a shared love of school, a coffee obsession, and being queer. It's not always easy to be the nerdy lesbian or gay kid in a suburban town. But they have each other. And a few Star Trek boxed sets. They're pretty happy.

But then Sophia, Meg's longtime girlfriend, breaks up with Meg. Linus starts tutoring the totally dreamy new kid, Danny—and Meg thinks setting them up is the perfect project to distract herself from her own heartbreak. But Linus isn't so sure Danny even likes guys, and maybe Sophia isn't quite as out of the picture as Meg thought she was. . . .

From crowdsourced young adult imprint Swoon Reads comes *Meg & Linus* by Hanna Nowinski, a fun friendship story about two quirky teens who must learn to get out of their comfort zones and take risks—even if that means joining the drama club, making new friends, and learning how to stand on your own.

Praise for *Meg and Linus*, from the Swoon Reads community:

"I also love that **friendship takes center stage** in this story. . . . **I didn't want the story to end!** Such a beautiful story." —Rita, reader on SwoonReads.com

"I liked that both characters are queer, and while it is a part of the story, it's not the story itself. . . . It's **delightfully refreshing**." —Tammy Wanzer, reader on SwoonReads.com

"What made this unique was the **strong friendship** between the two narrators (who were not romantically interested in each other), and how that friendship influenced their romances with their partners. It was also refreshing to have **LGBT representation that was beyond stereotypes**." —Julia Durrant, reader on SwoonReads.com

"This book is a really lovely story about **young love and being true to yourself despite the pressures to conform**." —Jill Watkins, reader on SwoonReads.com

"**Get ready to fall in love with two oddball nerdy best friends**. . . . This adorable, warm hearted contemporary YA is **tremendously funny**, and full of some seriously swoony moments. . . . The world needs more diverse love stories, whether that be long time girlfriends working through some issues, first crushes or friendships." —Charlie, reader on SwoonReads.com

Meg & Linus Details

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From Reader Review Meg & Linus for online ebook

Vee S says

4.5 but it kept me up til 5am last night finishing it soo I'm rounding up! I REALLY enjoyed this book. The characters took me awhile to warm up to, but I ended up falling in love with them. They're flawed and can be obnoxious at times, but that was actually... refreshingly realistic. We don't see a lot of queer characters who aren't 100% perfect and amazing all the time. That trend is definitely changing... but slowly. So I really enjoyed seeing these two with all their flaws and amazingness-- I came away wishing I was best friends with them, too.

This is a thoroughly enjoyable and tantalizingly paced novel-- I literally could not go to bed until I found out how this one specific subplot ended, and it was torturous but delightful.

Other highlights: gay nerds, gay best friends, already out gay people (I especially loved how they're comfortable with themselves but still face a number of microaggressions, because that's a middle zone between tragedy and utopia for gay people that's seen so little), GAY ACTING, coffee adoration, amazing Star Trek nerdiness and other nerdiness...

Yeah. All in all, one to put on your TBR!!

Sara (sarabara081) says

You can find more of my reviews at Forever 17 Books.

3.5 stars!

If I had to describe *Meg & Linus* in one word it would be – CUTE! Above all else, this is a story about friendship and Meg and Linus are major friend goals. They have that sort of friendship people strive to have in their life and it was a joy to read. They study together, join clubs, and set up movie marathons to watch. They have a deep compassion for each other and it showed on every page. When Meg's girlfriend breaks up with her suddenly before the new school year, she has a tough time dealing with it and basically suppresses her feelings and distracts herself by trying to set up Linus with a cute new boy he has a crush on. And this is the backbone of the story.

The chapters flop back and forth in points of view between Meg and Linus. We get to see both characters sort of transform and come of age. Both characters are extremely smart and have a passion for learning. They love coffee, and *Star Trek* and I definitely noticed a reference to *Lord of the Rings* and Lembas bread thrown in. Meg is a little more outgoing and is determined to try new things and distract herself from the breakup. Her number one distraction comes in the form of trying to push Linus towards his new crush, Danny. Linus is the definition of adorkable. He is incredibly adorable but oh so nerdy and I loved him. His social awkwardness was so cute and man did I resonate with him on that. His chapters were my favorite. Unfortunately, Meg gets a little too pushy in her quest at times and I think I felt just as uncomfortable as Linus as I remembered my experiences with that in high school. But the thing was, it was never done maliciously. It always came from a place in her heart with the best intentions and that is exactly why this friendship worked so well for me. Even when the characters made mistakes, they always genuinely wanted

happiness for each other and could realize their mistakes themselves.

Something else to love about *Meg & Linus* is the progression of friendship for Linus and Danny. Linus was crushing hard on the new boy before school even started but lacked the confidence to talk to him, feeling himself too nerdy and not so sure Danny was interested in boys romantically. Their interactions were so adorable as they formed a friendship that got Linus out of his comfort zone. It was slow goings for Linus to come around and be a little more himself (holy awkward convos, Batman!) around Danny but I did love this part of the story a great deal and had a big ol' smile on my face whenever they graced the pages together.

There were a few little things that didn't work for me as well as I hoped. It lacked somewhat in believability for teenage characters. Everything- conversations, inner dialogue, actions- seemed just a little too clean. I wish the characters felt a little more like teenagers and had that bit of edge to them. The plot is on the simpler side and focuses on the evolution of the characters but I would have liked to have seen a little more conflict thrown in to help the pacing.

I love reading a novel that represents the LGBTQ in such a normalized way like *Meg & Linus*. There was so much to enjoy with this read – learning to step outside your comfort zone to make new friends and opportunities, learning from mistakes, the art of moving on, supportive family, strong friendships, adorkable characters, and embracing your nerdiness. If you are looking for a cute coming of age novel than this is one to check out.

Ava says

This was entertaining, but didn't have any fabulousness to make it stand out for me. Of course I LOVED our queer characters, but the writing style wasn't for me and the dialogue felt off. I think this book is a great representation of nerdy LGBTQIAP+ characters, though, and THAT'S what I loved. The characters annoyed me at times, but like I saw in another review, it was so refreshing to see realistic queer characters.

Kristen Lemaster says

More rambling than dialogue, drama than plot, but this could've been such a cute and real story!

Shelly says

A cute story! The characters weren't very well developed but *Meg & Linus* was pretty good.

Jen Ryland says

I was excited to read this LGBT BFF book featuring a guy and a girl who are best friends (Linus likes guys; Meg likes girls).

This was cute in parts but after a few chapters I started to feel like the substance of the book was 98%

romance drama (1% drama club, 1% Meg and her mom) and the style of the book felt way too heavy on the dialogue. I wanted more substance and my attention wandered.

A cute friends-find-romance (with other people) story. Check it out if you are in the mood for something talky and light.

Read more of my reviews on YA Romantics or follow me on Bloglovin

Annelise Lestrangle says

Review originally posted on The Book Adventures of Annelise Lestrangle :)

I received this copy from **Xpresso Book Tours** through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Let's go :D

~.Book Analysis.~

Just remembering that those were my impressions and opinion as a reader :)

This book was really cute and a refresh in YA in terms of thematic. **Meg & Linus are two sides of the same coin, with a unique perspective on how not to treat your friends after a break up.** It was so nice to read a book focused on friendship rather than romance for a change! Nowinski did a wonderful job with characters construction and plot developing. This book only didn't make it to the big five stars to me because of two reasons: a) I wasn't as invested in the narrative as I thought I'd be, but I guess that's because; b) Meg & Linus is my 15th first person narrated book in less than a month. I really am not a fan of this narrative style and I'm really saturated of it at the moment, regardless of the quality of the books. I think it's a classic 'it's not you, it's me' situation, oops! >.<

The narrative style is first person with alternating points of view between Meg and Linus. While they didn't crawl under my skin and made me want to slap them (effects of usual first person narratives on me), I also missed being out of their thoughts and seeing the story in a more broad perspective. Does this make sense? Probably not, haha! Nowinski's writing style was refreshing, with awesome humor catches, nerdy references and relating situations.

I didn't quite know what to expect from the plot of Meg & Linus, but it had quite a few twists and I had fun following these two around. Of course, there are no over complicated points or a mystery to be solved, but life itself is already a handful, especially for teenagers. Things get wild real quick, haha!

Meg and Linus, as characters, were great – each in their own way. Again, the problem was me. I couldn't connect with them or relate to half of the story. And this sucks hard for me because I love gay romances and Linus was living a real cute one. I need therapy.

BUT I DID SAVE A DIALOGUE FOR YOU, GUYS. Because it was so cute aaaand BECAUSE NOTHING SELLS THE BOOK BETTER THAN QUOTES =D

Linus: Can I tell you something really sappy, and will you promise not to laugh at me if I do?

Meg: No. I'm absolutely going to laugh at you. But you can still tell me.

Linus: I really missed you, Meg. Although right now, I'm desperately trying to remember why.

Meg: Aw. You're right. That was incredibly sappy!

~.Cover Analysis.~

This cover. I feel in love as soon as I saw it. I'm such a hard goner for black with metallic colors, you guys have no idea. This panda was a crow in its past life FOR SURE. The inversion with the pink and blue on the names, the simple illustrations along the way, the handwritten type font of the title... I CAN'T STOP FANGIRLING ABOUT THIS COVER.

~*~

Overall, if you like your drama spiced with humor, nerd and pop culture, YA and LGBT reads, you totally should pick up Meg & Linus!

Thank you so much for reading this review! Also, thanks so much to Xpresso Book Tours and NetGalley for my review copy =D

Bee says

More like 2.5 stars. I enjoyed parts, but mostly I was kind of disappointed and underwhelmed.

RTC

Ann Elise Monte says

I wanted to like this book. It was cute and enjoyable at times, but also extremely frustrating.

It was nice to see nerdy protagonists who are into school because they like learning, not just because they have to be there to survive in the world. Linus talks about his love of numbers sometimes, which was great to read. I'm more of a music and words kind of person, a little like Danny in some respects, so it's nice to have a different perspective. The characters are also highly relatable, even if Meg annoyed the heck out of me *a lot*. Despite that, I really liked her relationship with her mother. And Danny was definitely a highlight of this book for me.

I wanted to say some nice things about this book since it wasn't all bad, but there is a lot of bad. So strap in. I'm frustrated and need to vent. I have a few things to cover so I'll save the one I'm gonna rant about until the end of the laundry list.

I'll touch on the craft-level issues I had first before getting into the *numerous* representation issues. The writing really isn't very good. There's a lot of unnecessary repetition and, if I didn't have a vague idea of how author pay works, I would be wondering if the author got paid by the exclamation mark or something. She could've cut 90% of them without any trouble whatsoever. This, however, was all overshadowed by the problems with the rep.

First of those: our old friend, ableist language. **TW: I'm including censored ableist slurs under a spoiler**

tag in a sec. It's bloody everywhere in this book. And there is never a good reason for it. No characters are doubting their own mental wellness or anything. So it's completely superfluous and downright frustrating. Some chapters you can't go two pages without (view spoiler) popping up.

TW over.

This isn't my lane, I've also noticed some cissexism about the way attraction is spoken about. It didn't come up often, but characterising sexual orientation as the kinds of body parts you're attracted to is weird as hell. Like... trans people exist, and you don't necessarily know what body parts people have unless they tell you or you happen to see them. Let's be honest. They're talking about genitals, just in a roundabout way. It's been established time and time again that gender \neq genitals. We've got to stop making these basic-level mistakes already.

I'm also not wholly comfortable with the way Linus's weight is treated at times. This also isn't my lane, but lines like "He has kind of a round face and he's more than a bit... rotund" rub me the wrong way. In this particular case, his weight was already mentioned in the previous sentence already so this borderline euphemism was unnecessary in the first place and gives off vibes that being fat is something negative that you have to tiptoe around. I don't know if I'm reading into things, but that's the feeling I got.

And now...

The thing that really got under my skin: the inconsistent inclusiveness of bisexuality. Early in the book, Linus says "even if he's gay or maybe bi" but then Meg says in another chapter, "we don't know if he's gay." This is a pattern. The book will occasionally nod to the fact bisexuality exists, but then the next time it is conspicuously absent. And don't even try to tell me it's meant to show one character is biphobic/bimisic without condoning it, because it is *not addressed in the text*. Furthermore, the character who paid vague attention to bisexuality falls into the same trap later when he says "and Danny might not be gay" so... there goes that argument.

Furthermore, the moments where we are acknowledged are usually tacked onto the ends of sentences talking about how he might be gay, like we're an afterthought. By itself, I probably wouldn't have been so annoyed, but that combined with the erasure makes for one really gross cocktail.

I thought we were done with that when the sexuality speculation dropped off as we entered the second quarter of the book, but then it cropped up again 2/3 through. Because apparently I am not allowed to have a moment's peace.

The thing is, inclusion isn't a "one and done" thing, where you can pay some bare-minimum lip service and then stop trying. You have to be consistent. Giving a nod to the possibility of bisexuality is meaningless if you undo all that work next time. There's a world of difference between "I don't know if he's gay" and "I don't know if he's into guys."

The fact this book has given a few rare and half-assed acknowledgements that bisexuality exists, only to ignore us every other time, gives the impression that the author cared more about dodging criticism than actually being inclusive. You can't just throw us scraps on occasion while continuing to erase us anyway.

The thing is, when you erase bisexuals, you erase other people, too. We're something of a canary in a coal mine when it comes to queer rep. People who erase us also tend to erase pansexuals, asexuals and aromantics. Often, they erase binary trans and nonbinary people as well.*

**Some nonbinary people ID as trans, but not all. Hence the separation.*

This book is a recent release. It's 2017. Bisexuals have been talking about erasure for years. We're getting to the point where you have to actively ignore us in order to not understand this.

The constant vacillation between bare-minimum acknowledgement and outright erasure completely spoiled any enjoyment I could have for this book. Without that issue, I might've given it a three-star Goodreads rating instead of two.

Get it together, authors. Bisexuals are human beings, too. Stop treating us like this. I'm sick of having to brace for mistreatment every time I read a queer book that isn't by a bisexual author.

Alana says

This book is so bland it should be in a Gordon Ramsey meme.

It is so harmless, it's the first YA I'd give to an eight year old.

It's so lacking in chemistry and realistic sexual content, I imagined the characters had Barbie doll-style lack of genitals.

Elke says

2.5 stars

This book wasn't really it for me.

It's about Meg and Linus, best friends and both gay, smart and nerdy. It was great to read about characters that were genuinely excited about school, did well and were interested in a variety of things. I love that friendship had a strong focus. It was great to see that, even though most people around them were accepting of their sexual orientation, the story didn't pretend other people didn't exist, and I really liked the part in which Meg explains she is lucky she only gets a little harassment, instead of a lot. That's horrible, but that's life, and it's good things like that are acknowledged.

However. There were also things I didn't like.

The writing was not that great, and in some places even very repetitive.

I didn't really like Meg all that much for the most part of the book, she was way too pushy and failed to see why what she did (was it the meddling or never really standing still to deal with the fact her girlfriend dumped her) was unhealthy, even when that was really obvious.

Linus was cute but so oblivious I got irritated after a while. I get being insecure and not wanting to believe the best, I do. This just felt like a bit too over the top for me, but obviously, that might just be me.

Most of the characters fell flat, which was really sad. It's too bad if that happens with supporting characters, but here I had the feeling even the main characters were a bit underdeveloped. I did like seeing somewhat involved parents though.

Bisexual people exist. They do. All the time, not only when you think of them, and they deserve to be mentioned. I don't really get why it was necessary to always say "we don't even know if he's gay" instead of

"we don't know if he's into guys" because both get the point across and the latter does not erase bisexual people. I know it got mentioned occasionally, but occasionally is not good enough, and even then, it was always as an afterthought, which sucks. That just really tires me.

Not my lane, but I thought the descriptions of Linus' body or his looks were sometimes a bit odd. We need fat rep, but I think it might've been stronger if there weren't so many euphemisms used. It made me feel as if the word fat, or being fat, was something to dance around, and that shouldn't be the case. Again, this is not my lane, so I might be wrong or saying the wrong things. It was just something that felt weird, so I wanted to point it out.

The story is not really memorable. Not all stories are plot-driven, and neither do they have to be. This one, however, also didn't have the characters to make a strong character driven story, nor the writing to stand out.

Overall, it was **kind of a disappointment** to me and I'm still not sure if I should keep the 2.5 stars or change my rating to two.

Lynda Dickson says

Meg and Linus are best friends who initially bonded over their mutual appreciation of Star Trek. They both also happen to be gay. Meg starts her senior year of high school just as her girlfriend Sophia breaks up with her and leaves for college. Meanwhile, Linus fancies Danny, the cute barista at his favorite coffee shop, who later shows up in his history class on the first day of school. When Meg realizes that Linus has a crush on Danny, she decides to set them up. Tutoring and joining the drama club are just part of her plan. Meanwhile, Sophia starts messaging Linus, and he doesn't tell Meg. As the secrets and lies between them mount, so does the tension. As one relationship ends, another is beginning, and these two friends need to learn to cope with the changes it will bring to their friendship.

Alternating chapters tell the story from the points of view of Meg and Linus. The chapters are really short and the constant change in viewpoint is disorienting. Both characters have the same voice, and I often found myself forgetting whose story I was reading. The narration is awkward and repetitive, with too much introspection and self-doubt, and full of unnecessary comments - almost as if they are telling us everything as, and when, it comes into their heads. It's phrased like they are speaking directly to us, which feels a bit odd, especially in the present tense. Both the narration and the dialogue are lacking in contractions, making the writing stilted and unnatural. The author should try reading her work aloud to hear how it sounds. The dialogue also suffers from an extreme overuse of exclamation marks! Nevertheless, there is some really insightful writing throughout, as you can see from the "Some of My Favorite Lines" section in my blog post.

It's nice to see a bit of ethnic diversity among the characters (Danny is Indian and Sophia is African American), and the gay best friends angle is a nice touch. However, Meg herself is too unlikable for a protagonist. She's extremely naive, talking first about her prospective marriage to Sophia, and then about Linus's marriage to Danny - when they haven't really met and we don't even know if Danny is gay! Meg's behavior and treatment of Linus doesn't correspond to that of a best friend. I found her very annoying and was amused when Meg herself later said, "I'm seriously starting to annoy even myself." She's also always feeling sorry for herself; even she admits it: "And now I'm feeling sorry for myself again." The constant shoulder bumping between all characters also gets a bit tiresome.

What I did love was Meg's relationship with her mother. I also enjoyed the interactions between Linus and Danny. Their first conversation is adorably awkward. And the reactions of Linus's parents are priceless. Meg and Linus learn to take risks and try new things as a prelude to their life after school, and it's nice to see them

grow throughout the course of the book. I just wish these so-called best friends would learn to talk to each other a bit more.

A light and fun, if slightly disappointing, read.

I received this book in return for an honest review.

Full blog post: <https://booksdirectonline.blogspot.co...>

Olivia says

This was such a cute book and more people need to read it! I thought Meg was a bit too pushy sometimes, but otherwise I really enjoyed this. ♥?

I think everyone should read this, but especially if you like:

- sweet, innocent friendships
- cute, awkward gay boys
- drama club
- Star Trek and other sci-fi/fantasy fandoms
- lots of coffee
- quick, fluffy contemporaries

(This has been one of Liv's Lazy Reviews™.)

Julie (*Happily Ever Chapter*) says

3.5 stars

Meg and Linus are inseparable best friends. They bond over their love of Star Trek marathons, coffee, and cookies. Things start to change a little bit for them when Meg's girlfriend of two years suddenly breaks up with her before heading off to college. Meg doesn't want to talk about it yet, and starts to pull away from Linus a bit and also becomes a little antisocial. When she finds out Linus has a crush on the new guy in school she makes it her mission to get them together. Linus wants Meg to open up to him about how she's feeling and what exactly happened between Meg and her now ex-girlfriend, but she refuses to talk about it. Linus is really shy with people he doesn't know and has some self esteem issues. He gets really flustered and embarrassed around Danny, and hates that Meg seems to be pushing them together so much. They both start to keep a few secrets and while having the best of intentions, things become more strained than ever with their friendship.

My favorite thing about this whole book was the cuteness between Danny and Linus. I absolutely loved their interactions, awkwardness and all! Danny was an absolute sweetheart, and always tried find more reasons for them to hang out. It became pretty obvious that he liked Linus back, but Linus is so self conscious that he didn't see it at all. Danny is very patient with Linus and just waits him out. These two are kind of opposites but I think it works well for them because Danny helps get Linus out of his shell a lot and shows him how to have a little fun. Danny is a social person and has no trouble making friends right away. Linus only has one

friend (Meg) and he doesn't really try to change that. He loves math and is very intelligent. The smiling and blushing between these two was so adorable.

Meg was struggling a lot in this book, but she did it quietly. She wouldn't talk to anyone about things that were bothering her and I was just waiting for her to explode....and then I was almost kind of disappointed when she didn't. I wanted her to finally break down and show some emotion. She never cries in the entire book. What she does do is push her feelings aside and focus on getting Linus and Danny together. I thought she was a little too pushy...and a little cruel at times. She knows Linus hates being embarrassed but pushes him into situations that make him very uncomfortable. She didn't even know if Danny was gay or not and still kept trying to force things between them!

I thought the ending was really sweet and wrapped everything up in a satisfying way. I think the writing style was a little younger on the Young Adult side, but I still really enjoyed parts of this one and thought it was super cute.

*I received an ARC of this title in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own. *

Cat says

"I guess there is a really fine line between helping someone and sticking your nose where it doesn't belong."

LGBT OwnVoices Bingo: Contemporary

Meg and Linus are gay best friends about to enter Year 12. Linus has never dated while Meg's girlfriend Sophia is a year older. However, she breaks up with Meg because she's moving away for college. Meg is heartbroken, but tries to distract herself by attempting to set Linus up with his crush and the new boy in school, Danny, by arranging for Linus to be Danny's maths tutor and both Meg and Linus joining the drama club, of which Danny is a member and Sophia used to be part of.

I felt the synopsis was kind of misleading where it says "maybe Sophia isn't quite as out of the picture as Meg thought she was". She messages both Meg and Linus occasionally and appears at the beginning and end, but that's it. Following on from that, it felt like Meg's chapters were frequently focused on Linus and Danny, hence they ended up taking over the whole book while Meg's storyline was neglected. In addition, Sophia could've used a lot more character development.

My other major issue was the racism. Danny's surname is Singh and he's described as 'brown', but that's it. Some mentions of his ethnicity could've been easily worked in and given him more character development outside his relationship with Linus. Sophia is Black American and there's this part during Meg's POV where she recalls a guy harassing her and Sophia with misogynistic, homophobic and anti-Black comments. Meg complains about the homophobic misogyny and it's established as wrong in-text, but misogynoir is ignored completely. Sophia is also the closest thing the book has to an antagonist so it's deeply upsetting that a Black WLW is demonised like this for the development of White characters. Meg makes a new friend (implied at the end to be her new love interest) through drama club, Alyssa, whose surname is Valdez, but like Danny her ethnicity is never mentioned. These three characters of colour (or possible character of colour in Alyssa's case) are props in the stories of the White MCs and it feels like we never get to know any of them outside their relationships with Meg and Linus.

Overall, if you want YA books about MLM/WLW solidarity then check out *You Know Me Well*, *The Conqueror's Saga* or *The Diviners* instead.

Representation: Meg is a lesbian. Linus is gay and fat. Danny is an MLM (sexuality unspecified) and presumably Indian American. Sophia is Black American WLW (sexuality unspecified). Alyssa is implied to be a WLW and possibly Latine (see above). It would've been nice if at least one of those three had been explicitly bisexual.

Ownvoices/author info: Hanna Nowinski is a WLW.

Content warnings: mentions of homophobia and homophobic misogyny (called out), racism/misogynoir as above, q slur reclaimed.
