



## The Pros of Cons

*Alison Cherry, Lindsay Ribar, Michelle Schusterman*

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Drummer Phoebe Byrd prides herself on being one of the guys, and she's ready to prove it by kicking all their butts in the snare solo competition at the Indoor Percussion Association Convention.

Writer Vanessa Montoya-O'Callaghan has been looking forward to the WTFcon for months. Not just because of the panels and fanfiction readings but because WTFcon is where she'll finally meet Soleil, her internet girlfriend, for the first time.

Taxidermy assistant Callie Buchanan might be good at scooping brains out of deer skulls, but that doesn't mean it's her passion. Since her parents' divorce, her taxidermist father only cares about his work, and assisting him at the World Taxidermy and Fish-Carving Championships is the only way Callie knows to connect with him.

When a crazy mix-up in the hotel lobby brings the three girls together, they form an unlikely friendship against a chaotic background of cosplay, competition, and carcasses!

## The Pros of Cons Details

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## From Reader Review The Pros of Cons for online ebook

### Sofia (Bookish Wanderess) says

\*4,3 stars\*

This was so fun to read, I laughed a lot and honestly, I just really, really liked this one.

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### Anna Priemaza says

I adored THE PROS OF CONS. It's so full of fandom and friendship and quirkiness and girls supporting girls, and I basically grinned non-stop from start to finish.

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### Kat says

I love reading about incredibly specific subcultures, so this book was basically made for me. It's fun and sweet, while also digging into some intense issues--including some fandom-specific ones. There's a diverse female-led cast, and I think this is only the second book I've read with a non-binary character, and the first I've read where a non-binary character uses gender neutral pronouns. I'm so excited this book is middle school appropriate, because I can think of a few of my students off the top of my head who would love it.

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### Shoshana says

A YA book first and foremost about friendship: 1,000,000 points.

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### Stewart Tame says

Full disclosure: I won a free ARC of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

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Wow! This impressed me much more than I expected it to. I mean, I expected it to be good and fun, and it was both of those, in spades, but it was also moving and compelling and had me grinning like a maniac at some times, and all but crying into my mustache at others. What I'm saying is that this ride is a heck of a lot more thrilling than it looked from the queue.

As the cover states, this book is set at a convention center in Orlando where several conventions are taking place at once (So this book is sort of the prose of cons. If it were set at a well known French film festival, it would be prose of Cannes. Sorry. The title does inspire puns ...) Vanessa is looking forward to the We Treasure Fandom convention--WTFcon--and to meeting her fanfiction collaborator and online girlfriend, Soleil, in person for the very first time. Phoebe is there with her band classmates for the Indoor Percussion Association convention, where she hopes to win the solo competition. Callie is playing assistant to her father

for the World Taxidermy Championships, but discovers a secret her father has been hiding from her ...

Each girl is the main character in alternating chapters. I'm assuming that each of the three authors wrote one of the characters and there was probably a final pass by one of them to get it all blended together nicely. Normally, seeing so many names would give me pause. Books written by committee can be pretty awful. This one is a spectacular exception, probably due, at least in part, to its structure.

The plot itself isn't too surprising. Each of the girls faces a crisis, some relationship that's completely out of whack, and they help each other through it, bond, and become friends. But the details are what make it great, and everything plays out in a very satisfying fashion. Their separate (at first) stories are cleverly and convincingly interwoven. Having been to a few similar conventions (except for the taxidermy one) myself, all of the setting details ring true. The characters feel three dimensional, and I found myself caring deeply what happens to all of them.

This book is a gem and a delight. Highly, highly recommended!

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### **Samantha (WLAPP) says**

What do you get when you gather four different cons under one roof? You get a fun story of friendship, which simply charmed the pants off of me.

- Pro: Books featuring female friendships always rank high with me, and I really felt the love among these three. It didn't matter that they were so different from each other or not even attending the same convention, they saw someone in need, responded, and a friendship grew from there. Girls supporting girls for the win!
- Pro: The cons were pretty awesome. I learned so much "attending" the percussion competition and taxidermy convention. These are worlds I am not too well versed in, but the information was shared in such a way, that it was quite fascinating.
- Pro: WTFcon was also a ton of fun. This was more in my comfort zone, and I could totally relate to all the con related talk. The contests, the panels, the nerdy talk, and all the events brought back memories of all the fun conventions I have attended in the past, and it really made me want to attend an event again soon.
- Pro: The main characters in the book were simply wonderful. They were teens, who were still figuring stuff out. They made mistakes, and learned from those mistakes. Each character grew, and learned to see things a little differently, and be a little more open minded. They forgave and atoned, and I am all about people being able to do those things.
- Pro: The three authors did a wonderful job tying their three stories together. At first, each characters' story plays out on its own, but then, worlds collided, and that's where it took off for me. I enjoyed flipping between the three POVs and absolutely adored the interview portion of the story.
- Pro: There is like zero lag in this story. It was highly entertaining, amusing, heartwarming, and adorable.
- Pro: I love people who chase their passion, and these three each had something they were super passionate about. It was awesome to see them working towards these dreams, and was sort of inspiring too.

Overall: A heartwarming and hilarious story of female friendship, that kept a smile on my face.

\*ARC provided in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Angie says**

While I was reading this I just kept looking up at my husband and hitting him excitedly and shouting things like:

"I love this book! The teens are communicating!"

"They're learning from their mistakes!"

"OMG they're speaking up for themselves and avoiding toxic relationships!!"

"And building better and more loving ones and lasting friendships and there's character growth!"

"OMFGBFEDHJSSHUFJEDHUFISD!!!!"

So yeah, I love that!

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### **Jenna Scherer says**

A sweet, nerdy tribute to loving the weird stuff you love, and also friendship. (Which is fitting, since it was written by three of my friends who are sweet nerds.) Come for the "Harry Potter" references, stay for the newfound knowledge of percussion instruments and taxidermy.

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### **Sana says**

Pro 1: Lindsay Ribar, pro 2: life-changing friendship, hell yesss.

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### **jv poore says**

This quintessential Young Adult read is quirky, cubed. A mad mash-up of three (and a half) conventions under one roof results in a delightfully amusing tale that is not without substance. And it has a pretty great title, you know I love it when something can mean two things.

It isn't Phoebe's first time. She's come before with her high-school percussion ensemble, to participate in the Indoor Percussion Association Convention. Perhaps there is a bit more pressure this time, though.

Vanessa is very excited to finally meet her girl-friend, face-to-face, for the first time. Sweetly naïve, she really does not know what to expect from the We Treasure Fandom con.

Callie came as her dad's assistant for the World Taxidermy & Fish Carving Championship, but she's only here hoping he will see her as his daughter, instead.

The story starts properly, with a literal bang. A collision in the lobby leads to a shuffling and unnoticed exchanges of carrying cases. From that point forward, nothing goes as planned.

Phoebe finds that her mallet bag is actually filled with tools for Buchanan Taxidermy, definitely not the mallets she needs. But, she's only thrown for a second. Since she has the xylophone solo, she has to improvise. She uses the scalpels.

Vanessa is feeling confused and out-of-place. People are different in real-life than online and she's just beginning to figure that out.

Callie is bummed that her dad continues to treat her like a disappointing assistant, but when she realizes his cold-shoulder is just the tip of the ice-berg; she plots sweet, public revenge.

I learned a lot from The Pros of Cons. I hadn't heard of half of the percussion instruments played, nor did I know that "critical listening" is different from "analytical listening." "Fan-fic" and "cons" were familiar terms, but I had no inkling of the depth. Or that it gave way to its own language. By the way, I also know what sock-puppeting means now. Oddly, I did know a bit about taxidermy.

This review was written for Buried Under Books by jv poore.

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### **? Silvia ? says**

4.5 stars!

I loved this book please read it

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### **Gaby says**

The cute, nerdy, multi-POV book of my dreams, really ? The perfect mix of angst, kissing, and shenanigans recommended for anyone who loves contemporary YA, especially of the fandom indulgent kind.

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### **kory. says**

There are many things I like about this book; the representation (some of it anyway), the girl friendships, the owning up to your own faults and doing better, the fun of cons and fandom, the humor, how supportive everyone is, the actual communication that goes on instead of blown out of proportion misunderstandings for the sake of conflict/angst, the relationship or lack thereof between Callie and her father is relatable - as is the relationship between/what went down with her parents, girls hating girls is called out, standing up to toxic people, lots of Snape love, I appreciate that pansexual is defined as liking all genders (even if the pan character is trash), the one time Vanessa's social anxiety is visited it's quite relatable: *I'd basically based it on how I felt every day at school. Hanging off to the side, not really talking to anyone, not understanding how other people seemed to feel so comfortable around each other. I took a deep breath, trying to work up the*

*nerve to claim credit for that scene—but by the time I got there, Danielle was already talking again.*

This moment is adorable and makes me chuckle:

*"Man," I said. "You're really hardcore. I hope you disinfected the crap out of your hands afterward. Some of those scalpels were, um, inside a badger on Monday."*

*Phoebe gazed at her palms in awe. "Sweet, I've got Hufflepuff hands!"*

There are also some things I don't like about this book; the taxidermy (sorry you can say it all want but animals that die in zoos did not die of "natural causes" because being in a zoo is not natural for animals) or the "PETA: People Eating Tasty Animals" thing - PETA is garbage but damn meat eaters are EXHAUSTING with their pettiness, Soleil is the actual worst and it pisses me off that this is the SECOND time an author writes a character meant to be disliked and makes them pansexual (interesting enough, both books are set at conventions), I would have liked to see Soleil get some of that "I've been awful, I recognize it, I'm going to do better" development but whatever, the use of "more than/just friends" FRIENDSHIP IS NOT LESS THAN THANK YOU GOODNIGHT, a character (Soleil; The Worst) refers to a gender-neutral character as "a they", a character (Soleil; The Worst) thinks Mexican people only eat corn beef and cabbage and then gets mad when she's called out for it, a character (Soleil; The Worst) fetishizes queer men, a character (Soleil; The Worst) uses polyamory/an anti-monogamy stance to appear more enlightened or progressive or interesting which is a shame because polyamory deserves to be accepted and represented rather than just used as a prop, there's a comment about how a character cares about diversity in media "especially race and sexuality" which comes off to me as prioritizing certain representation over others, Vanessa's social anxiety is mentioned once and then never really visited again, and pretty much all the ships mentioned at this con are m/m ships which is...suspect. I know fandoms \*cough\* female shippers \*cough\* favor \*cough\* fetishize \*cough\* m/m relationships but throwing in some f/f ships or even just calling out the fetishization would have been nice.

This deserves its own paragraph: a character uses an allergen against another character. Callie puts an ingredient her father is allergic to in a product he uses which makes his hands break out in welts to "get back at him" in a way that is supposed to be publicly humiliating. Not only is this not funny, but it's incredibly dangerous and NOT something that should be portrayed as funny in a book targeted at young people. This does not exist in a vacuum. People, usually kids, have actually died from having their allergen used against them by bullies, abusers, or just people who are trying to pull an "innocent prank". It's not fucking funny or okay.

One thing that I don't like turned into a whole rant, so I had to give it its own little section lmao. That thing being Callie's relationship with her father.

Callie blaming herself for her lack of relationship with her father because she didn't "try hard enough"...honey no, he's the grown ass adult who treated you as if you did not exist and that is on him. HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOUR BIRTHDAY! FUCK HIM! THAT IS NOT YOUR FAULT!

And Jeremy saying he doesn't want to be involved with Callie's family drama, but then inserting himself to make excuses for her father...like, again, HER FATHER IS THE ADULT! HE DOESN'T GET TO HAVE A CHILD AND KEEP THAT CHILD AWAY FROM HER MOTHER ALL WHILE NEGLECTING SAID CHILD AND HAVE IT BE WAVED AWAY WITH "HE'S BAD AT FEELINGS" AND "HE'S HURTING TOO"! HE. IS. THE. ADULT. HE. IS. THE. PARENT. DON'T HAVE KIDS IF YOU AREN'T CAPABLE OR WILLING TO MAKE THEM NUMBER ONE IN YOUR LIFE.

And then, get fucking this, Callie POURS HER HEART OUT to her father on two separate occasions and he just says "sorry, I made mistakes, and I know I was harsh but it's because you have potential" like? SERIOUSLY? THAT'S IT? NO SORRY FOR FORGETTING YOUR BIRTHDAY? NO SORRY FOR IGNORING YOUR EXISTENCE? NO SORRY FOR TREATING YOU LIKE GARBAGE? NO SORRY FOR BERATING YOU IN PUBLIC? NO SORRY FOR BEING AN UNGRATEFUL ASSHOLE? JUST A BLANKET "I'M SORRY"? FUCK THIS SHIT!

Honestly this parent/child relationship is just so toxic and awful and a classic "parent can't admit to wrongdoings and always has a reason". And I'm so fucking pissed off that there is that shitty "redemption" for the father, because Callie should have just gone to live her mother who actually wants Callie in her life AND EXPRESSES IT BECAUSE SHE'S A FUCKING PARENT WHO DOESN'T NEGLECT HER KID AND EXCUSE IT WITH WORK OR BEING BAD AT FEELINGS OR BEING HURT.

I'm just really pissed about this, because Callie was so set on living with her mother and said "it's too late" for her father to suddenly start acting like her father, but then she does a complete turnaround and is all "we're family and family doesn't quit" FUCK THAT. IF A FAMILY MEMBER NEGLECTS YOU FOR YEARS, SOMETHING THEY PREVIOUSLY DROVE AWAY ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER WITH AND THUS DID NOT LEARN FROM, FUCKING GO. YOU DON'T OWE THEM ANYTHING. YOU ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO WORK THROUGH IT OR SHOULDER THE BLAME FOR THE SAKE OF FAMILY.

Callie's mother was neglected by Callie's father and she left. Callie should have done the same. If he truly cares, it wouldn't have taken him years, it wouldn't have taken Callie quitting her job with him, saying she's leaving, then sitting him down and explaining how family works and how to be a father to him for him to remove his head from his beloved fucking turkey's ass. If these characters were real people, all the effort (aka bare minimum; he literally just asks her about her day and spends some time with her, ALERT THE MEDIA WE HAVE A FATHER OF THE YEAR OVER HERE) we see Callie's father make in that last chapter, would not last. It would taper off and he would be back to ignoring her and being selfish. Trust me, I know.

So. While I have a problem with both the pan and social anxiety rep, among other things, I like this book overall. The fandom and friendship themes are very much appreciated. Now that I think about it, I read a lot of fandom themed books. I could name six off the top of my head, not including this one. Interesting.

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### **Claire Legrand says**

Simply put, reading this book was one of the most satisfying and joyous reading experiences of my life. It's about fandom and storytelling and girls supporting each other, and I can't recommend it highly enough. And I'm not just saying this because I love all the women who wrote it! I'm saying this because it is a sheer and utter delight.

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### **Mandy says**

Know that whole saying - never judge a book by its cover? Well, it's always a straight up lie. We always judge a book by its cover it seems like in the book world. If it's pretty, we instantly want to pick it up and caress it gently BECAUSE PRETTY. And it's, well, not so pleasing? We might get a little sketched out by it.

For me? I was completely sold by the premise of this book, but I was a little bit sketched out by the stuffed mouse on the cover with some musical instruments and a witch hat. It wasn't, um, the thing I really wanted sitting on my bookshelf for all to see? But lemme tell you, I forever judged this book cover too harshly, because the insides were amazinggggggg.

This story features 3 very different girls in 3 very different cons having a bunch of different problems. Usually, I have a habit of leaning more toward one perspective in multiple POV stories, but this one, I was invested in every single one of their stories and each one of them. I wanted each one of them to succeed, and I also wanted all of them to have the happily ever after they deserved. They were wonderful heroines full of heart, smarts, and such brilliant wishes and passions - that's right, each character had a thought desire and passion that they eagerly pursued. I remembered years ago that I was complaining that no YA heroine seemed to have a passion or dream or hobby, but each of these girls were so wonderfully detailed and complex. I loved it so much, and I desperately enjoyed each of these. Also, each girl got to shine in their strength and fierceness, which was just so wonderful.

I also loved how seamlessly this was brought together. I really had no clue how they would all meet and connect, but the authors all managed to come up with an organic, realistic way for them to meet and combine all three storylines together. I'm still marveling at the genius that the way authors did it. SO impressed.

Speaking of the authors, I honestly had no idea who was writing who until the end. Their writing styles gelled really well with one another, and they did each others' characters just the way they were meant to be. I couldn't tell it was 3 different authors and smushing their books and characters together. It felt natural and cool and **WAS SO GOOD**.

Another thing that was so brilliant that the messages that was brought in the book. There were definitely some feminist and sexist themes that were brought up. The story also included some fantastic conversations about gender neutrality. One of the love interests was gender neutral. It was the first time that I had seen it really highlighted in a YA novel before (I know I've seen it being briefly mentioned in some books or in books I haven't had the pleasure of reading yet), but I felt this book really made it a point to highlight the importance of the right pronoun usage and more.

I was also so involved with a lot of the ships. The ships weren't all the main parts - it was a lot more focused on self-discoveries and journeys for our lovely, lovely heroines - but I was still allllllllllllllll here for them. I also was super glad that not all of them had a ship that exactly worked out???? I thought it was so realistic, and again, showing us that we all don't need a love interest for a happily ever after.

Gosh, there was so much that I loved about this. It was so enthralling and easy to just lose myself in. The setting of each of the cons was absolutely brilliant, and I just eagerly flipped through page after page because I was so obsessed with it. Ugh, just a heartwarming book that got me a little misty eyed????? What happened to the heartless book princess??? IDK, but this book GOT ME.

Overall, this was such an enjoyable, wonderful read. Despite loving this book so much, I feel like a little bit of me isn't completely sold as a favorite yet??? I'm still debating, but I really recommend this book so much. It was super cool - whether with the setting, the romances, the characters, or the writing. 5 crowns, and a Tiana rating!!!

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