



Manicpixiedreamgirl

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Sometimes the most dramatic scenes in a high school theater club are the ones that happen between the actors and crew *off stage*.

Seventeen-year-old Tyler Darcy's dream of being a writer is starting to feel very real now that he's sold his first short story to a literary journal. He *should* be celebrating its publication with his two best friends who've always had his back, but on this night, a steady stream of texts from his girlfriend Sidney keep intruding. So do the memories of his dream girl, Becky, who's been on his mind a little too much since the first day of high school. Before the night is over, Ty might just find the nerve to stop all the obsessing and finally take action.

Manicpixiedreamgirl Details

Date : Published April 23rd 2013 by Random House Children's Books

ISBN : 9780375870057

Author : Tom Leveen

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Romance, Realistic Fiction, Fiction, Teen

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From Reader Review Manicpixiedreamgirl for online ebook

Patrick says

Not a bad book. Well written with some ok dialogue. But the main character wasn't particularly likable, to me. Interesting read

Annette says

Once again, in *Manicpixiedreamgirl*, Leveen writes realistic, edgy teen characters that tug at your heartstrings and make you root for their ultimate triumph.

As *Manicpixiedreamgirl* opens, Tyler and his two friends are celebrating the publication of one of Tyler's stories in a magazine. The three of them are all in various stages of intoxication in a city park. Tyler is receiving texts and phone calls from two different girls--Syd, who has been his steady girlfriend for two years, and Becky, who he's been in love with for three years.

Through flashbacks, we are introduced to these characters and the history of Tyler's obsession with Becky (from afar) and his real relationship with Syd. Leveen is a master of creating a teen character in distress. It is interesting how Tyler, because he loves Becky from afar, really has no idea of who she really is. We slowly find out things, along with Tyler, that makes her less than perfect -- much to Tyler's disappointment.

Syd is also a great character -- realizing that Tyler has this obsession, but hoping he will get over it. The friends are great supporting characters to bounce off of, and all together *Manicpixiedreamgirl* is a quick, compelling contemporary book that will particularly appeal to reluctant readers. The ending of *Manicpixiedreamgirl* isn't all that surprising, but it's also not all wrapped up neatly. There are still some struggles to live through, and we aren't sure how everything will turn out for Tyler. We can only hope...

Zero is still my favorite of Leveen's books. I felt a more emotional connection to the characters in Zero. *Manicpixiedreamgirl* is more light-hearted and felt less serious to me. Still entertaining, but in a different way.

If you are wondering where the title came from, a Manic Pixie Dream Girl is "that bubbly, shallow cinematic creature that exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures," according to Nathan Rabin, via Wikipedia.

I'll happily recommend *Manicpixiedreamgirl* to teens at my library who want a short, edgy, believable contemporary story.

Katlyn says

For some reason, this book just didn't really grab me. I did try. I didn't even end up skimming, as it was so short. I couldn't connect though. I just found it so dull. Only two of the characters were ever really

developed, the MC and the love interest and I honestly found them to be pretty cliche. They weren't compelling in the slightest. Also, I really do despise Tyler. He was an absolute jerk to his girlfriend and she actually put up with it for some reason. Again, she was not developed in the slightest, so I really don't know why. The humour also fell flat for me. I do like manic pixie dream girls if done right (huge John Green fan), but this book just felt shallow and cliche-filled. 2.25/5

C.J. Sarcasm & Lemons says

Read more: <http://www.sarcasmandlemons.com/2013/...>

You know the Manic Pixie Dream Girl. She's Natalie Portman in Garden State. She's Summer in 500 Days of Summer, for a while. Ramona in Scott Pilgrim. Eccentric, adorably quirky savior of the brooding bad boy. She's the girl (or guy) you watched from afar in high school, invented daydreams about, held on a pedestal. Leveen plays with this most common of experiences in an authentic and clever way, creating the brooding boy Tyler and the dream girl, Becky, perfect and magical and unattainable. Only unlike the typical MPDG, Becky is more shattered than the guy who wants her to save him. It makes for a bittersweet tale of high school love and the problems with idealizing real people. Tyler's journey is often frustrating, often nervewrecking, and even the ending shows just how enmeshed people can be in their ideals. To the point of losing what's real and good. My occasionally extreme animosity towards Tyler knocked down my enjoyment of this a bit, but it was still a beautifully done book that feels so genuinely high school romance. It made a lasting impression, and left me curious about more of Leveen's work.

plot . 4/5

Alternating between the events of one night and the backstory of several years can get a little jarring. It took me a few segments before I had a good handle of the story. That said, Leveen does a good job of referring back to things and building the plot slowly with little dangled teasers, so you're always kept wanting more. Even though there was a lot of telling in the backstory pieces, Tyler's voice and descriptions were descriptive enough to make me feel like I was there. Imagine a friend of yours talking about something that happened to them at school the other day, only they're a really good storyteller. It stayed compelling to the end. Which made me angry, because I felt that there was such a great opportunity for Tyler to realize all the stupid, hurtful things he'd done. To be fair, it was a realistic ending and I did see some change in Tyler. It just leaves you wanting to slap him a little bit. But given the timeline, it's also probably more realistic than the big epiphany I secretly wanted.

concept . 5/5

The MPDG is not new. The fall of the MPDG makes this fresh. I watched wringing my hands as Tyler built up this fantasy image of Becky, creating a perfect dream girl that never could be. And watched as he missed hint after hint that the dream and the reality didn't mix. It says a lot about high school romance and the persistence of romantic delusions--how powerful infatuation can be. It's also something I've experienced before to a much lesser degree. That high school crush you idolize, only to discover later that they're a twit. Very relatable and well presented.

characters . 4/5

Tyler was endearing, partly because he was a dorky writer and partly because he just has no impulse control. You feel a little bad for him, living in his head like he does. You also want to strangle him for being such a jerk half the time and ignoring the totally awesome, way-too-forgiving girl in front of him. But deep down

he's a good guy. He just annoyed me for the way he'd realize he was a jerk and still fall into the same bad traps. But even though I didn't always like him, I still found his story very compelling and, as a high school boy, he was extremely realistic. The supporting cast is also great. Sydney is way-too-patient and shockingly honest. I respected her for it, and also felt a lot for her, chasing someone she knew was just using her as a substitute and vainly hoping he'd get the picture. Then there was Robby, who was hysterical and just a delightful human being. Becky, I kind of hated. I felt bad for her, but I also felt like she was too tragic. Also she just rubbed me the wrong way for reasons I can't articulate. But again, you don't have to like the character to like the book, and I thought she fit well in her role.

style . 5/5

Leveen's style reminds me of Bret Easton Ellis for young adults. Nihilistic, snarky, with hints of idealism that you just know are going to get shattered. Tyler sees the world as a writer, and so offers up a lot of very uniquely stated descriptions. I made a lot of highlights because there were so many ideas, common ideas, stated in such an unusual way that they felt completely new. And like I said, he's a fantastic storyteller. I hung off every word. The style did a lot to make up for my frustration with Tyler. It's an impressive command of language not often seen in young adult romance.

mechanics . 4/5

Like I said, the switch between past and present is a little jarring. I lost track of the story sometimes and got a little confused. However, it became easier to follow as I went along, and so I didn't find that it dampened my reading experience very much. Just made it challenging at the beginning.

take home message

A clever high school romance that takes old stereotypes and turns them around, ending up with something fresh and gritty and authentic.

Jennifer Strand says

I really want to jump into the pages of this book and give Becky some much needed parental love.

Liked this one an awful lot. Strong characters and lots of awkward.

rosalind says

"manicpixiedreamgirl"? i am in. i am so in. i am really, super in. requesting from the library now, omg.

after reading: okay, so this was pretty standard ya fare. no exceptional writing style or imagery or anything like that. leveen does a good job of making tyler both a real human and an obvious caricature of all those teenage boys who build women into goddesses and innocent flowers at the same time. spoiler alert: becky is a human being!

pretty nice slap in the face to the manic pixie dream girl trope. a lot of secondhand embarrassment, though, which is never fun.

Audrey Wilkerson says

Rating: 3.5

The Low Down: Ever since he first saw her freshman year, Tyler Darcy has been drawn to Becky Webb like a moth to the flame. She has no idea of his almost obsession with her; after all, in the beginning, he can't bring himself to speak to her, much less spill his secrets. All his friends know of his infatuation, hell, even his girlfriend knows. Syd is beautiful, smart and so cool. Why she puts up with his fixation is beyond him. But every chance he gets, he looks for Becky. Thinks about her. Writes about her. Concocts scenarios in which she falls madly in love with him. Writes about that. Even when they eventually become friends, he keeps her in the same box marked "perfect."

Watching closely makes you learn things, though. Things that maybe you don't want to know, things that might ruin your idea of perfection about someone. In Tyler's case, though, discovering certain things about Becky only makes him want to protect her. She's unwanted, both by her parents and the boys that use her, ignore her and spread tales about "Becca," the girl who doesn't say no.

But how do two people with such conflicting views of the same person ever get on the same page?

Best Thang 'Bout It: I love that the protagonist is a male. A guy with a huge attraction who can't act on it. In fact, he can't stand up to any of his relationships: his girlfriend, who got that position because he said nothing; his sister, who, while is supportive, is frank about how she thinks Tyler needs to run his relationships; and his friends, Robby and Justin, who act like court jesters but who express their opinions about his lack of fortitude with both his girlfriend and his obsession.

If there's such a thing as a "healthy" obsession, this was it. The more Tyler learns about Becky's history, the more he wants to be her knight. But he can't act on it. First, it is because he doesn't know her and is too nervous to talk to her. Then he can't because of his girlfriend. So his best outlet is writing about it. The stories are fiction, though, and when Becky reads one, she can't believe that's how Tyler sees her. She says: "That won't ever be me!...They'd never let me...This is who I am now, I'm stuck with it."

This story just felt like real high school. Tunnel vision, letting life run you, not knowing how to handle hurt and big problems. Being a mess on the inside, being stupid, missing the obvious. Finding out that not everyone has a great home life. Discovering how much stuff people try to hide.

I liked how Syd was portrayed; she really knew what she was getting into when dating Tyler, but she was willing to take a chance. Her reaction to their discussion in the park toward the end of the story is perfect. No stereotypical mean girls or histrionics here, either. All the female characters felt real; flesh, bone and brains.

I'm Cranky Because: It just stops. Ends. No neat bow, no thanks for reading, no fiery car crash. Now, I don't really mind the "nuff said" approach, but I felt like we were still on the on-ramp, and we were just getting ready to merge. Imagine being on a roller coaster on the biggest hill, climbing, climbing, and just before you reach the crest, it's over. No apex view, no plunge. Damn.

Also, this idea of Becky as the Manic Pixie Dream Girl? I can't tell if it is being used ironically, since it's a deeper story than that trope. (Unfamiliar with the term? Read about it at TV Tropes.) Where's the

wackiness? The freedom? The spirited behavior? The opening up of the stuffy male lead? I didn't see it.

The Bottom Line: MPDGs aside, it's a good read that says "stop imagining; discover the truth instead." But be ready for what you uncover.

manicpixiedreamgirl by Tom Leveen was published April 23, 2013 by Random House Children's Books. A free copy of this book was given to Ink and Page in return for an honest review. Big thanks to NetGalley, Random House Children's Books and the Author.

Genre: Young Adult Fiction Contemporary Romance

Ages: 13 and up

You Might Want to Know: Underage drinking; drug use; sexual content; profanity

Susan (Wastepaper Prose) says

This is my first Tom Leveen novel and I am head over heels for his writing. You can bet after reading this slim but superb novel about a young man chasing a vision of what he wants instead of appreciating what he has that I will be adding Leveen's other novels to my shelf.

Manicpixiedreamgirl opens on Tyler Darcy and his friends Rob and Justin celebrating after Tyler sells a short story to a literary magazine. After three years of pining for Rebecca, Tyler's forced to decide whether it's time to act or time to move on.

I can't say enough about this book. It's 256 pages of real people with real emotions, actions and reactions that is nothing short of absolutely compelling.

Every character is unique and steps outside of some of the stereotypical teenage characters you see in fiction. For example, Tyler's friend Rob is constantly evolving, changing his look and trying new things but never trying to become someone else. Vignettes that showcase this evolution are a testament to the teenage search for self that everyone goes through in high school.

Voice is the thing that gripped me most about manicpixiedreamgirl. Tyler tells his story as it happened. For the most part it's his unembellished, true account of what happened down to his self-doubt and reflection on his actions or lack thereof. His honest review of his past during a single day of his present is what made this novel so difficult to put down.

Tyler's obsession with Rebecca is lost on his girlfriend and two best friends. Rob and Justin wonder why Tyler put her on a pedestal and why he hasn't given up the dream, especially when Sydney is right in front of him.

Sydney is convinced that maybe Tyler will eventually realize what he has. All he needs is time and she's willing to be patient, but that day might be further away than Sydney thinks.

If you're looking for a fantastic read that nixes the melodrama of high school and overblown archetypes associated with it then your search ends with manicpixiedreamgirl. Simultaneously quick-witted and achingly real, Leveen's latest work is not to be missed.

Mel says

Tom Leveen's *Manicpixiedreamgirl* is an eponymous novel about the trope coined in 2007 but existing far back in the history of stories about a particular type of female character who acts as a muse to the main character. Initially described as: "The Manic Pixie Dream Girl exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures. The Manic Pixie Dream Girl is an all-or-nothing-proposition."

Since this novel is titled about the concept of a MPDG, my review might sidetrack in discussing the success in bringing attention or subversion to the MPDG trope. This is in conjunction to the regular enjoyment of the plot of boy meets girl, girl doesn't really meet boy; boy begins to build a fantasy world about the idealization of girl and audience collectively slaps their foreheads in exasperation as boy ignores girlfriend he has for girl he barely knows because social cues are hard, dude.

In this story we have seventeen-year-old Tyler, our sensitive writer-director, as the narrator. Leveen is very good at writing an authentic teenage boy voice, and even though I spent a lot of my time wanting to shake Tyler for being a moody and self-centered jerk about his obsession, his personality felt real. Aggravatingly real. The majority of the other inhabitants of the novel, while entertaining, are mostly vague character sketches. Tyler's parents are supportive. His two friends, Justin and Robby, are guys who are more extroverted and less artistic than Tyler, but loyal and providers of much banter. The English teacher is inspiring and awesome while being a little bit terrifying. Etc., etc.

Thankfully, there is more attention given to the two girls who occupy most of his time: Becky Webb, the aforementioned MPDG, and Syd, his flesh and blood girlfriend. Bonus points go to Tyler's sister, who often serves as a deus ex chaperone driver device, but is also given some conflict and depth in regards to her own wild ways and advising of Tyler of the ways of girls and "so's your face" retorts.

Syd probably gets the short shrift of the characterization stick, because, while we know a lot about her hobbies: she's mature, she's on the debate team, she's smart and forward thinking...we never know why she likes Tyler so much to put up with his inattentive boyfriend ways and his obvious obsession with another girl. It is even lampshaded in the narrative and joked about that he must have an amazingly large package to compensate for his poor boyfriend behavior, but it's still unconvincing. Her tolerance of Tyler's fixation is probably the one sticking point many people might have of the novel because it doesn't entirely seem to fit with the rest of her personality.

And Becky Webb, the majority of the novel she *is* a MPDG because that's all Tyler allows her to be. At the beginning, all we know of her is that she has a star tattoo, she eats broken animal crackers but not the whole ones, she listens to esoteric bands. She is, at alternating times, written straight and then written as a subversion of the trope. Obviously, she is his muse since he writes endless stories about her, being perfect and someone for him to save and protect. Then he sees things about her that are not so perfect, that in a meta way are earmarks of a MPDG's "broken quirkiness" but do force Ty to confront his own problematic idealization of her. So, rounding back to that whole title and successful reappropriation thing: Leveen does and doesn't. Mostly he does.

From my experience, the Manic Pixie Dream Girl trope deconstruction happens in two ways.

1) the narrator's opinion of the dream girl is discredited, either by the character maturing and having a greater understanding of the girl/themselves/everything (Joel from "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind") or the narrative frames that opinion as a flaw that the audience sees even if the character does not (Tom from "500 Days of Summer" ...although the effectiveness of that one is debatable).

2) the dream girl is made into a fleshed out character with her own motivations, backstory and desires (Ramona Flowers from the *Scott Pilgrim* comics or Amelie from *Amelie*, who is very MPDG in her actions but--being the main character and having her own agency--doesn't apply to the major criticism this trope brings up).

And, in my opinion, the best stories have both these things occur in various shades through the narrative.

This novel gets so on the nose about the subject that Syd blatantly calls Becky a "manic pixie dream girl" by name when she confronts Tyler about it. Leeven is pretty careful to hint how Becky has more to her than Tyler sees, even if it's largely uncapitalized on. And he has everyone, including Tyler, pointing out how this idealization is not really beneficial. That for all the times he dreamed of being the hero and whisking her into his arms, seeing her actually cry--from her actually real problems--is decidedly not as fun as it was in his imagination.

At the same time, Becky never really gets her own chance to shine. We have the moments of debunking Tyler's perceived moments of significance, like when she mentioned how the star tattoo was really something she just picked off the wall for a lark and not pointing to anything "deeply symbolic." Her characterized breakthrough moment is simply being surprised that Tyler wouldn't take advantage of her and the revelation that she is complicated and more than love's true kiss can heal messed up. Likewise, Syd's departure as Tyler's girlfriend is so easy and uncomplicated it feels like she pulled a MPDG move herself by vanishing from his life to leave him. The story ends more for Tyler's peace of mind than either of their stories being resolved.

In spite of these reservations, I still think Leeven succeeded in "Manicpixiedreamgirl." Largely for the insight drunken Robby brings by saying "when you talk about her...I gotta say you're not much fun to be around" ... "but on the other hand, after you've seen her? After you've hung out with her for a bit? Dude, you're a party" that pretty much shows it's Tyler's own issues, his hang ups and perceptions. When he's not being self-absorbed, the novel gives hints to deeper motivations and interpersonal relationships that Tyler simply doesn't see, but might at the end of the story. It's a short novel, clocking in at 241 pages, and the brevity shows in the lack of details and character moments that would give the subject real punch, but the general thrust of it is there. And while not so amazingly enjoyable for me (enjoyable! nice! but also short and I wanted more of it), I think many other readers could enjoy the story on its own merits or as a contribution for the larger discussion of what exactly constitutes a good/bad/stereotypical/nuanced Manic Pixie Dream Girl character.

My vote is for Clementine, just saying.

Reving says

Many thanks to Random House for offering this ARC on netgally.com. This is the second Tom Leeven ARC

I have received and read. I loved Zero and Loved Manicpixiedreamgirl even more. Leveen's first book, Party, gave me some mixed feelings, but Zero was great and Manicpixiedreamgirl just proves that Leveen is getting better and better. His characters are real and avoid stereotypes. They are not "all bad" or "all good," they are characters who live in grey, who make good decisions and poor ones...just like real people! The title comes from the idea of a stock film character, like Marilyn Monroe's character Sugar in Some Like it Hot, Kirsten Dunst in Elizabethtown, and Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany's. According to film critic, Nathan Rubin, who created the term, the MPDG is "that bubbly, shallow cinematic creature that exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures."

Becky Webb is Tyler Darcy's MPDG. He spots on her his first day of high school and loves her (loves the idea he has created of her, actually) from afar for two years.

Becky is a girl of mystery. She doesn't seem to have any friends, everyone pretty much ignores her, except for the guys who hook up with her in a closet, or a car and leave without acknowledging her further.

Tyler has a girlfriend, Sydney, who knows of his obsession with Becky, but keeps hoping that someday he will let it go.

It all comes to a head though, in one evening, when Sydney sees a copy of a short story that Tyler has published in a literary magazine. Now his deep feelings for Becky are out there and he must decide what to do about them, if anything at all.

The story is funny, brilliant, honest and real. As I said, truly Leveen is a rising star.

Petty Lisbon says

I've read and enjoyed some of Tom's other books so I thought I would at least enjoy this but the main character being a weirdo over the titular Manic Pixie Dream Girl was too annoying and even if they mentioned the trope, they didn't really address it at all.

A. says

I've read quite a few of the other reviews of this book, and it seems that NO ONE has the same concerns that I have.

This was a good book. I thought the characters seemed pretty realistic for the most part and I liked the style of storytelling. But what bothered me was that no one, excluding the main character, Tyler, seemed to give a damn about the girl in question, Becky.

Tyler has a thing for Becky. He just sees her and starts building fantasies about her. However, she has no friends. Her parents hate her. People think of her as just an easy lay. She's so broken and so alone and absolutely NO ONE cares.

Tyler has a girlfriend named Sydney. Everyone thinks she's great, but I found her irritating. It seemed to me that she latched on to Tyler because they both got A's on their first English assignment, so obviously he must be an overachiever with a perfect family and perfect prospects for the future like herself. And in fact, when Tyler fantasizes about Becky, he pretty much imagines her to be the same way.

Sydney tells him not to bother with her, and as he finds out more about her, such as her pot smoking, her tendency to have sex with other guys, he has trouble reconciling it with his ideal of who she is. She's supposed to be perfect, but she's not. Even his older sister tells him not to bother with her because clearly she's worthless and nothing but trouble.

The truth about Becky is that she's neglected and abused. She is the way she is because of how horribly people treat her. AND NO ONE CARES. They think she's just a throwaway. Don't bother with her, she has personal problems. She's not obviously perfect like your girlfriend Sydney. There's absolutely NO POINT in even being friends with someone like that.

People just completely ignore Becky's good qualities. She's smart. She's cute. She's a fantastic actress in the school plays. But who cares about that when she has PROBLEMS?

Honestly, I was really concerned about what kind of message this novel sends to people. The point seems to be that you shouldn't obsess about someone to the point that you fantasize about who they really are. But instead, it sort of comes off as, 'Just forget about anyone who has real issues, They aren't worth the bother.' And that is really upsetting to me. Tyler was ridiculed for wanting to be her 'knight in shining armor.' And sure, Tyler could help Becky to some extent. But the fact that no one else even wants to bother with her is horrible. This is someone who clearly needs help. And one person, no matter how they feel about her, isn't enough to really make a difference.

Other people are saying 'oh, this book is so realistic, I just love how realistic it is.' And the sad thing is that in reality, there are a lot of people who get stuck in a hole and labeled like Becky, and then everyone thinks of them as throwaways, and after a while, that's what happens to them. Even Tyler, at the end of the book (SPOILER ALERT), tells himself that it just isn't going to work out (even though he tries), and everyone agrees.

And to me, that's really depressing.

Jen Ryland says

For the complete review, including a brief history of the Manic Pixie Dream girl,
Check out my blog, YA Romantics

Manicpixiedream girl is about a boy who drifts into a relationship he's not that into because he can't bring himself to reach out to the girl he's really interested in.

The book switches between the past and the present, between the aftermath of Tyler's girlfriend discovering that he's obsessed with another girl and his prior encounters with Becky, the girl in question. The flashback sections do start in a different typeface, but once or twice I did get a little confused about what time I was in. And at times, I wondered if the whole conceit of the short story being published was even necessary-- why not just write a book about a guy who's in a relationship with one girl and in love with another? But by the end of the book, I'd decided that Tyler's story shows Becky how he sees her, which offers a needed sense of poignancy and hope as the story resolves.

The characters -- and especially the female ones -- in Manicpixiedream girl are drawn with both subtly and precision. There's Tyler's girlfriend Sydney, the efficient, go-getter who is often superficially written in YA books and movies as the high-achieving student council type. But I got the feeling that, deep-down, Sydney is just as bewildered about her relationship with Tyler as he is. That Sydney decided to make Tyler her boyfriend for the same reason that she gets good grades and participates in debate: because that's what she thinks she's supposed to do.

For much of the book, Becky is a bit of an enigma. In fact I really wouldn't call her a true MPDG at all. Maybe just a PDG. She's a talented actress, quiet and kind of a loner. As Tyler gets to know her, he finds out

some things about her that would be off-putting to a lot of guys. But he doesn't give up on her. He needs to know why. What he finds out is heartbreaking, and mostly so because it's told with matter-of-factness, not melodrama.

Definitely recommended for fans of character-driven stories.

Carla Martinez says

I didn't like Tyler Darcy.. He has a girlfriend but he's in love with someone else. Cheater. But yeah, good book though. ??????????

Estelle says

Absolutely, positively enjoyed every minute of this.

Best male narration since John Green's Paper Towns. Need to get my hands on more of Leveen's work.
