



## The Friendly Young Ladies

*Mary Renault*

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## **The Friendly Young Ladies** Mary Renault

Set in 1937, **The Friendly Young Ladies** is a romantic comedy of off-Bloomsbury bohemia. Sheltered, naïve, and just eighteen, Elsie leaves the stifling environment of her parents' home in Cornwall to seek out her sister, Leo, who had run away nine years earlier. She finds Leo sharing a houseboat, and a bed, with the beautiful, fair-haired Helen. While Elsie's arrival seems innocent enough, it is the first of a series of events that will turn Helen and Leo's contented life inside out. Soon a randy young doctor is chasing after all three women at once, a neighborly friendship begins to show an erotic tinge, and long-quiet ghosts from Leo's past begin to surface. Before long, no one is sure just who feels what for whom.

Mary Renault wrote this delightfully provocative novel in the early 1940s, creating characters that are lighthearted, charming, and free-spirited partly in answer to the despair characteristic of Radclyffe Hall's **The Well of Loneliness** or Lillian Hellman's **The Children's Hour**. The result is a witty and stylish story that offers exceptional insight into the world of upcoming writers and artists of in 1930s London, chronicling their rejection of society's established sexual mores and their heroic pursuits of art and life.

## **The Friendly Young Ladies** Details

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Author : Mary Renault

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## From Reader Review The Friendly Young Ladies for online ebook

### Sharon Terry says

I was severely disappointed in this novel, by an author whose classically-themed books I enjoyed. I actually read the Virago 2005 reprint, which contains the Afterword by the author herself, but no other commentary.

The story concerns the timid, repressed Elsie Lane's great adventure in running away from her stifling, conflict-ridden, suburban life in Cornwall, to go in search of her older sister Leonora, who also ran away, ostensibly with a man (actually, a good mate). Leo, as she's known, has all the independence and spirit that Elsie lacks. Elsie only gets up the spunk to make a break for it because she's fallen for the local doctor, Peter, an utterly charming cad who encourages her to develop herself more.

Elsie finds Leo living in a houseboat on the Thames with her girlfriend Helen, a nurse. Helen is smart and sophisticated but also kind-hearted. After the initial shock, they take Elsie in on a temporary basis. In response, finally, to a letter Elsie writes him, Peter then turns up and proceeds to make a play for both Helen and Leo. He is partly successful, but doesn't seem to realise they both have his measure and quite wittily play him for a sucker.

If this was all the story was wrapped around, it would have worked, but Renault utterly spoils it by introducing a much more substantial character, Joe Flint, a man raised for a time in Arizona, who now also lives on the river and who writes serious fiction. He has become Leo's best friend, giving her much of the material for the Westerns she writes for a living. He is, predictably enough, in love with Leo, but he manages to keep his feelings under wraps for quite a long time. However, one night he catches Leo having a light flirtation with Peter, a man he instinctively dislikes. Forcing the issue, he gets Leo to sleep with him and this plummets into a discovery that they actually care for each other deeply enough to cause Leo to consider leaving Helen and following Joe, who has announced, in a farewell letter to her, that he is leaving England to return to Arizona and that he'll wait for a few days, in case she wants to join him.

The novel leaves this situation frustratingly unresolved. In the morning, Helen finds Leo asleep on the couch after coming home late the night before and assumes she's been with Peter. She gets a shock to discover it was Joe instead and is indecisive about going into work, but finally does, leaving Leo by herself. Leo starts to pack her things - intending, presumably, to follow Joe - but is pulled up short when she sees one of Helen's dresses. In confusion, she is left to cry her eyes out on the bed. Does she pull herself together and go to Joe? Does she leave a note for Helen? Does she stay until Helen comes home...? I found this sad, confusing ending totally unsatisfactory and very much out of phase with the tone of the rest of the novel. Leo and Helen have had a happy relationship for years; Leo and Joe, a top friendship. But Renault seems to suggest that all Leo's boyishness and independence is some kind of "arrested development"; find True Love with the Right Man and she'll be able to drop her competent, butch exterior and become a Real Woman after all!

Renault wrote the book partly in response to the unrelieved misery of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, the first novel in English, as far as I'm aware, to feature lesbian relationships as the central theme and to plead for acceptance and understanding on the part of society. The book caused an almighty ruckus and was banned in the UK until 1948. Hall had the misfortune to be only a "middlebrow" writer, so the book cannot be read as seriously today; it is sentimental, overwritten and at times mawkishly self-pitying, so I can understand Renault's rejection of it. But it was never intended for people like Renault, with their smug sophistication; Hall was well aware of the many people in society who could never openly and honestly

proclaim who they really were and she intended her novel to be read by her usual readership: people who went to church on Sundays and had probably never met a homosexual.

While I can understand Renault's reaction to *The Well*, I find her comments, in the Afterword, on the "defensive stridency" of "congregated homosexuals waving banners" highly offensive. What kind of society does she think gays are living in? Until recent decades male homosexuality was against the law in western society; lesbianism, often simply unrecognised. In conclusion I would have to say that I regard this novel as not only poorly thought out, but also homophobic. I have yet to read the truly Great Gay Novel.

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### **Lisa says**

I don't know that I would call this a romantic comedy. I doubt I ever came near to laughing, nor was there much actual romance. I liked some of the writing, the descriptions of people's feelings and thought, but much of it seemed wordy and vague. The focus of the story was all over the place, which I didn't care for. I doubt I'll seek out another title by this author.

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### **Kelly Hager says**

Definitely worth reading!

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### **Megan says**

I read this in 2005 and found it to be incredibly frustrating. For one thing, don't believe any of the blurbs on the back of the book - this book is neither a romance nor a comedy. It doesn't really have much at all to say about artists communities in the '30s. And for that matter, it doesn't really have that much to say about lesbian relationships either. The characters are mostly either dispicable or tragic.

After reading this, I wrote a long exposition of my problems with this book here:  
<http://magnetgrrl.livejournal.com/132...>

It's very spoilery.

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### **Tara Calaby says**

This was readable enough, I guess, although everything is implied rather than stated, meaning that I have come out of it still not knowing exactly what the relationships between people were and even what happened in the end. It's not one I'd raise up as an important queer work, because really it's mostly about women sleeping with men, even if those women happen to have a possible relationship with each other as well. It gives the impression that women will never be fulfilled in relationships with women and will need to seek sexual satisfaction with men. Its portrayal of women leaves a lot to be desired as well, although I guess I have to give it a pass for that given that it was written when it was.

## 1.5 stars

Also, I am tempted to put that down to a straight one star due to the author's afterword (40 years after) in this edition. Apparently:

"...I thought it becoming in people whose only problem was a slight deviation of the sex urge... to refrain from needless bellyaching and fuss."

"Conventions change; but defensive stridency is not, on the whole, much more attractive than self-pity.

Congregated homosexuals waving banners are really not conducive to a goodnatured 'Vive la difference!'" and

"People who do not consider themselves to be, primarily, human beings among their fellow-humans, deserve to be discriminated against..."

What an obnoxious human being Renault was! *This* strident homosexual pays respect to the banner wavers that came before me and allowed my life to be lived in less danger than theirs.

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## Dorothea says

I think this is Renault's only contemporary novel (it's set in 1937; she wrote it during WWII) and (maybe?) her only one with a lesbian couple.

The Vintage edition includes an afterword Renault wrote in 1983, which is interesting but rather annoying because she mostly uses it as a soapbox to tell the younger LGB to stop marching around demanding that everyone respect their differences. She frames this as an explanation of why she wrote *The Friendly Young Ladies* -- she wanted to show that people in same-sex relationships were perfectly capable of getting through life without grand tragedy a la *The Well of Loneliness*, and that in the light of great suffering such as that caused by war, she couldn't feel sorry for herself for being different in a way that she could so easily downplay in front of unsympathetic heterosexuals. What a nice generation gap, Mary Renault!

Lillian Faderman's 2003 afterword annoyed me just about as much, though. Look Dr. Faderman: if someone is in a long-term open relationship with another woman, and both women have affairs with men for the first 14 years of this relationship, and then they stop that and live together monogamously for the rest of their lives, and during all of this they refuse to identify as lesbians and call themselves bisexuals instead --- any chance you could really respect that instead of sounding so skeptical about it?

Anyway, the story.

It starts off focusing on Elsie, a painfully naive seventeen-year-old girl who decides to run away from her horrible parents and find her older sister, who also ran away from home. Elsie imagines that Leo will have grown up into one of the varieties of sophisticated woman categorized in the romance novels Elsie reads. But she finds that Leo hasn't changed at all from the tomboy she remembers; Leo still loves messing about in boats and makes a living by writing trashy Westerns under a male pseudonym. She lives in a houseboat with the actually sophisticated Helen, a technical illustrator of surgical procedures.

The other two characters of importance are men -- Peter, a young doctor whose favorite method in treating women is to make them fall in love with him, and who has utterly succeeded with Elsie; and Joe, an adventurous, empathetic novelist and Leo's best friend.

Much of *The Friendly Young Ladies* is an absolute masterwork of double meanings. Helen and Leo are a perfect team in giving Elsie what she needs while protecting their relationship and in getting exactly what they want out of Peter without giving him anything more than he deserves (which is very little). They, and the way Renault writes about them, are brilliant and hilarious.

The rest of *The Friendly Young Ladies* is more difficult -- it's about Leo's relationship with Joe. I thought that what happens in this part of the story was quite ambiguous, but both afterwords discuss it as though (view spoiler)

I have really mixed feelings about Joe. He is clearly a really, really good friend for Leo, and he seems to be a good human being too, except for the occasional small reminders (mostly having to do with his past as a rancher in the U.S.) that much of what makes him fun for Leo (who, again, makes her living off writing popular Westerns that are full of inaccuracies and stereotypes) is also what makes him a colonizer. 19th and 20th century British novels are a lot nicer when you can ignore Britain's global context....

And I have really mixed feelings about what Joe does (view spoiler)

He's brilliant and I don't know whether to love him or hate him (or his author), but then I probably don't have to choose either for a person who can write, "Love is a word, like God, which can be used to beg every kind of question."

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### **Shirley nature says**

Groundbreaking, profound, intellectual, complicated, funny, thoughtful, and frustrating, but very worth reading! I bookmarked about a dozen pages of this book because the writing rang so true! I was surprised how accessible the language was in spite of being British.

Quote from the back cover: "Set in 1937...a romantic comedy of off-Bloomsbury bohemia...Mary Renault wrote this delightfully provocative novel in the early 1940s, creating characters that are lighthearted, charming, and free-spirited partly in answer to the despair characteristic of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* or Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*. The result is a witty and stylish story that offers exceptional insight into the world of upcoming writers and artists in 1930s London, chronicling their rejection of society's established sexual mores and their heroic pursuit of art and life."

I may never read *The Well of Loneliness* or *The Children's Hour*.

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### **Aldi says**

Le sigh. Like all of Renault's books, this is beautifully written with richly drawn characters, and it's not like the story is BAD, but it does take you in entirely unexpected directions in entirely unsatisfactory ways. Some of that may be to do with the sentiments of the time this was written, some with the author's personal experiences (which I take it some of this book was based on). Either way, it didn't work for me.

At the centre of this story is a pair of lesbian lovers in an open relationship, who live together on a houseboat on the Thames in (I guess) the mid-late 30s. I loved both of them and their entirely unapologetic, no-fuss way of life. I could have happily read a book about them and their relationship and yes, sure, by all means their casual hook-ups, as long as a) the central story was about them and b) the casual hook-ups included women. But that's not what this story is. Instead, the cast includes a younger sister coming to stay with them, a complicated relationship with a (male) fellow river dweller, and an absolutely insufferable douchenozzle of a young doctor who's made it his mission to "help" these women out with what he thinks is well-intended, careful psychological cultivation and what is in fact nothing but infuriating attempts at callous, clumsy and cluelessly harmful emotional manipulation. (The girls do make fun of him a lot but he's so completely oblivious and self-satisfied that he rarely ever notices, which rather takes the fun out of it.)

While the younger sister's painfully gauche, overly sentimental and entirely blind perspective is at least amusing to a degree, the amount of attention that was given to the titular ladies' relationships with men in general, and the two primary male characters of the novel, was frankly just frustrating, especially since there is next to no focus on the established relationship between the women (as another reviewer put it, it's a story about lesbians with no lesbianism). I particularly hated the way that Leo, a non-gender-conforming, down-to-earth, entirely self-made and self-confident woman, was slowly unravelled as the novel moved into its final third, and all the ways in which she'd previously subverted and casually poked fun at any attempt to "correct" her were eventually turned back on her as she fell disastrously apart over a guy. Barf.

I guess what it boils down to for me is that there are so few truly great novels about women loving women that when I come across one that had the potential to be one but ends up wasting it over a couple of idiot men, it's going to make me cross. JUST LET US HAVE GOOD F/F, FFS!

(Also the afterword revealed some pretty gross opinions of Renault's that I really wish I hadn't learned.)

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### **Bandit says**

Where do I even begin? Why did I even read this? I didn't care for *Praise Singer* at all, but I thought well, maybe where the homosexuality didn't entice, lesbianism might. But this...I hated this with passion, made all the more frustrating by the fact that it had so much potential. Specifically it had a deathly soporific beginning, decent first part of the middle and then abysmal last part of the middle and the end. Much like her other book, this one was terribly overwritten and in all the wrong parts, the things you want to know more about are obfuscated, the tedious minutiae is drawn out. Whether this is due to lack of proper editing or simply was ok by the era's standards is impossible to tell. But there are some things about this book that are very era specific (originally published in 1944), mainly the fact that it's a lesbian book without a lesbian component. All Sapphic matters are at best alluded to, so as one critic put cleverly put it the readers never quite know just how friendly the ladies are. And of course I wasn't expecting graphic sex scenes from a book of that age, but this one lacks even simple affections that couples share. And probably that's precisely what happens when a self hating lesbian writes a book about her own kind. Elaborating...and gently since one must dis the dead...the author was in a relationship with another woman for most of her life. For the last 30 or so years the relationship was exclusive, for the first however many years both of them apparently had male lovers. This promiscuous disclaimer led them to think of themselves as bisexual, which was apparently ok, while despising the term lesbian, which apparently wasn't. Sounds like someone was either in seriously denial or seriously desperate to fit in. Labels...aren't they ever so important. More than you know, in the author's own afterword she states (and I paraphrase) that anyone who dares think themselves as something other than a carbon based bipedal life form first and foremost DESERVES to be discriminated against and

shouldn't mind it. Seriously? That's an argument? Yeah, ok, maybe in some perfect world where gender/sexual/racial equality has somehow been achieved, there is a nice homogenous society where everyone is happy just being a citizen of the world. Considering how terribly gays have been (and in all too many places still are) treated historically, that attitude is insane. No one deserves to be discriminated against for being themselves if they harm no one in the process, no one. What sort of a Nazi attitude was that to have for a person who wrote gay books and supported an anti apartheid movement? Also, for someone who lived for a long time in South Africa there is a really casual racial slur in the book, that's absolutely gratuitous and probably should have been edited out upon republication. Just a thought. I don't really want to get into all that political correctness and digress from my righteous rage about the contents, so here we go...again from the afterword, the author appears to have glorified male homosexual relationships of Ancient Greece and Rome (oh the romance of older men and their catamites, the allure of child molestation), it's evident in all her other books, because presumably it was so widely accepted. Of course, lesbians didn't fare quite as awesomely, but who cares, right. Author certainly didn't, she didn't even think she was one. Maybe it's a mentality of a bygone era too, total acceptance of a patriarchal society and its rules. Who knows. This book (her most autobiographical ironically enough) was written as a reaction to a much more serious work of the time dealing with gender and sexuality, which the author found too depressing and dour and literally laughable. She wanted to write her (pseudo)gays to be actually gay. Happy, irreverent, romantically and sexually indiscriminate...and so ultimately unbelievable and subsequently utterly unlikeable. Maybe believable and relatable to the author (it was her life essentially) or someone like her or someone from that time, but that just isn't enough. A genuinely good character stands the test of time despite the era's conventionalities. The author (afterword again) proudly states that she made the relationship as explicit as she wanted to...right, like sensors of the time didn't have a field day with this so much so they minded the title. But ok, pride's important, though apparently not gay pride. Anyway, you don't have to support the parade marching and flag waving and all that, there's something to be said for being low key...but this book's message stated very plainly within its pages is if you're gay or otherwise different hide yourself, be quiet, don't draw attention to yourself, you're a minority, the majority makes the rules, mind their rules no matter what, behave, show your colors to no one but select others like you, maybe just maybe the right person of the majority designated appropriate gender will come along and save you from yourself. Otherwise as mentioned above you deserve to be discriminated against and you should endure it. Quite possibly one of the worst messages conveyed by a book. I suppose this is what happens when a self hating person writes about their life. And not even a good book at that. Infuriatingly frustrating anger inducing waste of time this was. Stay away. Just stay away.

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### **Lucie says**

After I finished this, I had to do a little research into the author and how the book was received in order to feel like I'd really gotten it. The language is great; I was struck how strongly I was seeing the scenes in my mind while I was reading. It's set in a time period I'm really interested in, and I liked getting another perspective. The thing I struggled with the most was feeling like I'd walked in on the middle of someone else's conversation, especially during exchanges between Leo and Helen. There was SO much that was implied and never stated, and I just didn't feel like I had the key to understanding it. I'd definitely recommend this as an engrossing read, but it wasn't a straightforward one for me at all.

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### **carlageek says**

A cleverly wrought, beautifully written, and often very funny picture of a handful of Bohemian entanglements, which packs a surprising emotional punch as its most ambiguous thread snaps in the climax. The titular young ladies are Leo, a trousers-wearing, swaggering author of Western novels under the nom de plume Tex O'Hara, and her lover Helen, a kind-hearted gentle woman with a delicious acerbic streak. But the story is almost entirely Leo's, and as she comes more and more into focus - and finally comes apart at the seams - the book reveals depths of psychological insight and compassion.

When I wrote here about Renault's *Fire From Heaven*, the first of her *Alexander the Great* series, I remarked that Renault "makes you share some of the work," by leaving much of her characters' feelings and motivations implied rather than explicit, exercises in inference for the reader. I found the challenge participatory and engaging.

In *The Friendly Young Women*, Renault had already brought this style to bear. Here, though, the obliqueness verges at times on maddening. Conversations between Leo and Helen, in particular, are frustratingly opaque. I spent the first nine-tenths of the book baffled by Leo; the nature and purpose of her relationships with men were a complete mystery. I couldn't make sense out of her.

And perhaps the density of that shroud makes it all the more devastating when the shroud dissolves in the book's climax, when Leo cracks open and the pieces fall away to reveal her true inner life. Suddenly all her ambiguities come into sharp focus, and the picture one sees is achingly sad.

It is an astonishing execution. The events leading to it play themselves out in vicious subversion of expectations; the sequence has elements of a sex farce, but there's nothing funny about it, and it grows increasingly grotesque as rawer and rawer emotions become exposed.

And, it's very nearly a dirty trick, coming as it does in a book that until then had been light and funny, quick-witted and deliciously trenchant. (A hilarious highlight is the sequence in which Leo flirts with a woman expertly and outrageously, with the purpose of humiliating the woman's boyfriend, a thoughtless, arrogant jackass who aims to cure her with his superior psychology.) The dissection of Leo is equally trenchant, of course, but the air of lightness and fun is lulling and deceiving.

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### **Avril says**

Having read this book in a little under twenty-four hours I feel as if I've over-eaten. *The Friendly Young Ladies* has a lot of over-wrought emotions for a book that was apparently meant to be a lighter response to the equally over-wrought *The Well of Loneliness*. And if *The Friendly Young Ladies* is meant to be a less despairing book than *The Well*, I'm not quite sure I can see it.

The characters of Elsie and Peter are humorous in their absolute inability to understand anything that goes on around them. I'm not sure whether the reticence with which they're treated by everyone is because Renault was writing in 1944, when some things were unsayable, or because a certain reticence was just characteristic of the English middle-class, but I did long for someone to speak to them with a bit of blunt honesty.

As for the lesbian relationship at the centre of the book, it's depressing. I understand that Renault did not see herself as 'lesbian' and was appalled by anything that approached a 'gay rights' movement. But I'm not convinced by her comparing sexual intercourse to mountain-climbing, and the idea that sometimes you just have to go on 'with someone you trust at the other end of the rope'. I'm horribly afraid that the central

message of the book is that a lesbian just needs the love of a good man in order to become a real woman.

Renault's afterword to this edition, written in 1983, acknowledges that the ending didn't work and that the idea of Leo and Joe living happily ever after was ludicrous. But I wish Leo and Helen could have lived happily ever after which, some eighty-odd years later, would now be possible because of the gay rights movement that Renault despised.

I've given this four stars as a useful historical source. But I'm glad that 'congregated homosexuals wav[ed] banners' - even if Renault turned her back on them.

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### **Thomas says**

There were moments when I thought I would really like this book. But things just didn't go the way they should have. I know, it's up to the author to decide how a book should go, but my wishes for every single character were thwarted and I didn't really like how anyone behaved or ended up.

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### **Kate says**

"Stifled by life with her bickering parents in a bleak Cornish village, Elsie Lane flees to London to find her sister Leonora who escaped eight years earlier.

"But there are surprises in store for conventional Elsie: not only does Leo live on a houseboat, she writes Westerns for a living and shares her boat -- and her bed -- with the beautiful Helen.

"Elsie's arrival is the first in a series of events that will set Leo and Helen's contented life spiralling away from cosy domesticity. Soon a handsome young doctor pays a visit, turning his attention from one 'friendly' young lady to the next and the delicate calm is broken -- with results unforeseen by all.

"Mary Renault write this delightfully provocative novel in 1943, partly in answer to the despair of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. The result is this stylish social comedy set in the 1930s."

~~back cover

*Sometimes I wonder if the people who write back cover blurbs ever actually read the book they're distilling to try and tempt readers to buy the book! This person starts out well enough: the first part of the book are indeed in depth portrayals of Elsie and the spirit-breaking atmosphere she lives in with her constantly bickering parents. And she does indeed manage to escape and run to her sister. And Leo indeed does write Westerns for a living, and she and Helen do indeed both live quite happily on the houseboat. But there the resemblance ends, at least imho it does.*

*Poor Elsie has been aggressively sheltered by a mother who lives in a fantasy world, and thus remains an unworldly child at 17. Helen and Leo do their best to gently open her eyes -- a very kind thing to do as Elsie's presence does indeed completely upend their comfortable calm existence.*

*Many threads weave in and out of this tale: Elsie's "love" for the smug insufferable young doctor, and of course she cannot see him as he is but as her knight in shining armor & her future lover. Makes me want to*

*grind my teeth together! And Leo & Helen's relationship: are they or aren't they? Other reviewers have been certain they are, but as the story's written it's not clear. And then there's Joe: another writer (though not of Westerns) who lives on an island not far from the houseboat; he and Leo are very good friends, and Leo relates to him like another man would. And of course the reader wonders: is it really love? On his part? On hers?*

*This edition contains an afterword by the author, written exactly 50 years after the novel was first published. It annoyed me immensely at first: [spoiler]: "Leo and Jose have both been credited with reasonably good intelligence. He at least, the brighter of the two, would surely have had sense enough, in the sober light of the morning after, to steer them clear of such inevitable disaster. Sexual harmony apart, one cannot contemplate without a shudder their domestic life, hitherto so well arranged. Of course, more doomed and irresponsible unions happen in real life every day, but it is naive to present them as happy endings." At that point I wanted to throw the book (and the author) against the wall in pure frustration.*

*I think the ending remains undelineated, and I thought that was a deliberate construction by the author to get the reader to examine their responses to the novel. It certainly caused me to realize that, in spite of my cynicalness about men and their devious ways, I usually root for the HEA ending. And here's the author saying "No no -- people don't change, people don't ever grab for the brass ring and go to great lengths to make a relationship (marriage) work." I suppose that's the author's philosophy of life -- her description of the Lanes' marriage makes that excruciatingly clear: "The truth was that they had never loved one another, only images of their own devising, built up from books and the romantic conventions of their young day; no moment of pitiful, of humorous, of self-forgetting light had ever revealed either of them to the other, for the passion of mind, or even of the body, was lacking which might have kindled the spark. So Maude did not mellow Arthur, but rather serrated his edges; and Arthur did not temper or sharpen Maude, but on the contrary led her to associate logical thinking with coldness and disillusion, sentimentality with kindness and faith. Having no trust in one another's fundamentals, it was hardly surprising that thy felt no eagerness to concede in little things, such as the arrangement of rooms, or meals, or social engagements; their disagreements in these matters, like fragments of a cracked mirror, reflected in miniature their central dissatisfaction, but were too trivial and too hopeless to bring their back to it." And evidently the author assumes that that's the template for marriage -- Joe & Leo's "reasonably good intelligence" apparently of no avail. She certainly has a jaundiced view of marriage, doesn't she?*

*On the other hand, if it's assumed that Helen and Leo are, and if you think that sexual orientation is a function of genetics, then perhaps it's not possible to change -- perhaps the brass ring will always be missed under those circumstances, and if that's the case, then the author's logical, clinical assessment of Joe and Leo's probable success as a couple is very true.*

*I like this book very much, in fact I will probably reread it. I think it's one of those books that is so well written that different things pop out to the reader each time it's reread, and since I'm still turning this one over in my mind several days after finishing it, I think the book deserves another go.*

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### **Kike Ramos says**

Español / English

Calificación real: 3.5 estrellas.

Dos amigas comienza con Elsie, una chica de 17 años con muchos problemas en casa, que decide huir para buscar a su hermana que se fugó hace 8 años. La idea de huir fue implantada por un médico de 28 años de quien Elsie está enamorada. Elsie encuentra a su hermana Leo, quien vive con Helen, una bella mujer con quien parece tener una relación. Elsie llega a meter drama a la vida de estas dos mujeres.

Una novela muy basada en el desarrollo de los personajes. Es de esos dramas donde la gente pareciera guardar secretos, pero crean planes y usan técnicas en los diálogos para hacer que los demás expongan los suyos y mantener los propios a salvo. Se torna interesante cuando se van involucrando mas personajes, algunos no con tan buenas intenciones. Creo que Leo es la personaje principal y no Elsie, pero bueno. Un libro muy basado en desentrañar las bases psicológicas de la personalidad de los personajes.

No me gustó el final, me pareció algo forzado, pero bueno. Es un libro que está escrito maravillosamente. Aunque no sé si ponerlo en mi lista de libros LGBT sea lo adecuado, pero bueno. Recomendado a quienes gusten de un drama literario bien escrito.

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Real rating: 3.5 stars.

In this book we follow Elsie, a 17 year old girl with lots of troubles at home, who decides to run away looking for her sister, who ran away 8 years before. The idea was seeded by a 28 year old doctor, on which Elsie has a big crush. Elsie finds her sister Leo, who now lives with Helen, and it seems like the two women have a romantic relationship. Elsie has come to bring the drama to this house.

This novel is really character driven. It is one of those books where characters seem to have lots of secrets, and through dialogues they want to make others expose theirs, while keeping their own secrets safe. It is interesting when other characters join in, and not all of them have good intentions. I think Leo is the main character here, since she is the one that has the most focus on since we meet her. This is a book that really wants to explore the psychological structure of the characters' personalities.

I didn't like the ending, it feels really forced, but whatever, It is written beautifully. I recommend this one to anyone who wants to read a really nice written drama.

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