



Dream Things True

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A modern-day Romeo and Juliet story in which a wealthy Southern boy falls in love with an undocumented Mexican girl and together they face perils in their hostile Georgia town.

Evan, a soccer star and the nephew of a conservative Southern Senator, has never wanted for much -- except a functional family. Alma has lived in Georgia since she was two-years-old, excels in school, and has a large, warm Mexican family. Never mind their differences, the two fall in love, and they fall hard. But when ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) begins raids on their town, Alma knows that she needs to tell Evan her secret. There's too much at stake. But how to tell her country-club boyfriend that she's an undocumented immigrant? That her whole family and most of her friends live in the country without permission. What follows is a beautiful, nuanced, well-paced exploration of the complications of immigration, young love, defying one's family, and facing a tangled bureaucracy that threatens to completely upend two young lives.

Dream Things True Details

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From Reader Review Dream Things True for online ebook

Sophie says

I received an Advance Reader Copy from the publisher via NetGalley. This in no way impacted on my view.

Dream Things True was an enjoyable book to read, but was somewhat lacking. It is a modern day retelling of Romeo and Juliet, with Evan being a wealthy, privileged Southern boy, and Alma an undocumented Mexican girl, who has lived in America since she was two years old. As they fall in love, legislation that Evan's senator uncle has implemented threatens their relationship, and Alma is at risk of being deported when ICE arrive in sleepy Gilbert County.

I really enjoyed the nuances of their different upbringings. To learn about the Mexican culture than Alma and her family still embrace was wonderful. The little dialogues in Spanish were a bit difficult, as I couldn't really understand more than a couple of phrases here and there (even though I have a Spanish GCSE, oops!). For the most part, they were sort of translated, so it didn't ruin the reading experience completely. I loved how Evan embraced the Spanish, and wished he spoke it better, to be closer to Alma and her family. Though it is a retelling of Romeo and Juliet, Alma's family don't mind Evan, not like with the original. Rather, they, especially Alma, and her brother, Raul, become really close to Evan.

The secondary characters were fun to read about too. Whit was by far my favourite, and the revelation that was revealed about him helped to explain why he was that way. I don't excuse what he did, but at least he tried to make amends for his actions. I also loved Mrs King, and all she did to help Alma, even from before the book began. Alma was a straight-A student, who should've had the very best opportunities, for scholarships, college, etc., if not for her citizenship status. When everything kicked off with ICE, and Alma lost family members left, right, and centre, Mrs King did everything she could to get the best help for Alma, and to explore the options that were available to her.

Though the book seemed to lack a certain something, the little side plots that came full circle by the end of the story helped to build up the plot. One of these side plot was to do with Whit, alluded to above. The other had to do with a manifestation of the Virgin Mary: Our Lady of La Leche - Mary breastfeeding Jesus. The reason for why she is important to the family is revealed right at the very end, and when it is, it makes a lot of sense.

The thing that I think brought down the rating of this book was the ending. It just stopped. I know most YA contemporaries tend to leave the reading wanting more, but this was different. The very last page seemed, to me, like the middle of a scene. There was no real resolution, and I'm left feeling a little cheated, and unfulfilled with the story now. If there was even just one more chapter, that would have made it so much better.

Overall, the book was enjoyable, but not fantastic. I'd probably say it's sort of a 'meh' book: neither good, nor bad. The story was lovely to read, but the ending let it down. I think the book will appeal to some, but not to others.

Mrs. Aloise says

Alma's family is full of secrets while Evan's is full of expectations. He's a soccer star from the privileged part of town and she's the landscaper's daughter. She wants to go to college, but is afraid that her family will be sent back to Mexico if she applies. He is expected to take an athletic scholarship. This is a heartfelt story about what happens when two young adults from very different backgrounds fall in love. This is a strong story with sympathetic characters. I learned so much from Alma's family about the struggle and fear of undocumented workers. This is a story that needs to be read.

Stacy Moll says

The topic of this book couldn't have better timing. This is a subject that seems to divide everyone, and each side is very passionate about what they believe. I for one feel strongly, that if I lived in a place that didn't have much to offer my children and was violent, I would do anything in my power to get them to a place that would allow them the best life they could have. A also do not think that the majority of illegal people are criminals, they just want a better life. Additionally, I'm tired of hearing that they are stealing jobs, let's be honest, most "legal"citizens wouldn't do the work undocumented workers do! Why wouldn't we want hard working, family loving, God fearing people coming to America? If you ask me, we need more of them and less of what we have here already.

I do not know if there will be another book or if we are left to decide for ourselves if Evan and Alma ever get to be together. I hope that she gets to come back to America and things work out for her whole family. I'm pulling for all of them to have a happy ending!

This book comes out today. It is worth a visit to your bookstore!

Katherine says

Oh man, it hurts me to give such a low rating to a book with such a relevant subject matter, but **this book was actually becoming painful to read.**

Alma and her family are undocumented immigrants living in Georgia. Her father runs a landscape and gardening business cutting lawns and pruning bushes for the rich elite of the town, and her aunts and uncles work at a chicken plant. Alma wants nothing more than to get a good education and get the hell out of her oppressive hometown, which doesn't happen to take kindly to undocumented immigrant. Then she meets Evan, who just so happens to be one of her father's clients. They fall fast and furiously in love, which would be just peachy if not for two things:

- 1) He's white, rich, and everything Alma's family tries so hard to avoid.
- 2)He just so happens to be the nephew of a powerful senator who wants nothing more than to send families like Alma's back to where they came from.

But just Shakespeare's infamous star-crossed lovers, they can't deny or hide their feelings. But when something happens to Alma's family, will the old saying of "love conquers all" still ring true?

I was interested in reading this book for a variety of reasons. I happen to live in an area that has a high

concentration of Latino immigrants (and undocumented immigrants), and many of the issues addressed in this book pertaining to Alma's family are also ongoing issues here in our community. I was curious to see how a YA author would handle a topic like this with the sensitivity and honesty I was hoping for. **And for the most part, the author actually did.** The author took us into the lives of those living in the shadows and constant fear of being discovered and being sent back to the countries they tried to hard to escape from in order to live a better life, and/or create one for their families. That despite what some people believe, the immigrants coming into this country are, for the most part, hardworking honest individuals who just want something better for themselves and the ones they loved. I got the faint sense of that when I was reading, but not enough to quench my appetite.

Obviously, the main focal point of this book was the romance, but to be perfectly honest, I wouldn't even call it a romance. **To me, it was more of a lust-mance.** At least that's the impression I got from the way the author wrote the Evan and Alma's interactions with one another, particularly when it came to Evan. Such as their VERY FIRST INTERACTION.

"Her silky hair was pulled into a ponytail that fell to the middle of her back and he felt the urge to touch it, to let his hands trail all the way down her body."

I could see this being written down in some bodice ripper or steamy new adult romance, but a young adult romance dealing with immigration reform? No. And it doesn't stop there, folks. The second interaction is even better.

"Her dark, shining hair flowed down to the middle of her back, but a few strands fell forward to brush her perfect breasts."

Dude, I know that teenage boys can be horny but **STAHP ALREADY!** How am I supposed to be convinced that these two are teenage soulmates who could hypothetically spend the next sixty years if he keeps going on about her boobs?

"He wasn't touching her, but her skin, so alive, felt as if it were being caressed in a thousand different places."

I've recently dipped my toes into the historical romance and bodice ripper genres and have developed a tolerance for more of the intense love scenes. With this book, I found myself openly cringing at the descriptions of the kissing scenes, and I'm not one to do that with YA books. EVER. So the author has a wee bit of work to do with those descriptions.

Evan and Alma were marginally likable characters, but once they fell into their lust-mance with each other, they kind of ceased to be rationally thinking characters, as YA romances tend to make their main characters do.

The book also kind of deviated from its own topic to either focus on the romance, or side characters that I was not even remotely interested in. And why the author decided to have one of the side characters to something as despicable as sexual assault **AND HAVE THE AUDACITY TO BRUSH IT OFF** will never make sense to me. Not to mention, despite the author trying to dispel Latino stereotypes in her book, she made Mrs. King the most cringeworthy African American woman stereotype imaginable. As in, every other word out of her mouth was 'child' or 'Lord Jesus', donut eating, Baptist worshipping angry black woman we unfortunately read about. I mean, really?

If anything, this book would have gotten a three stars from me because up until this point. I didn't hate it, but

it wasn't the best, albite cringeworthy at times due to teenage hormones going into overdrive. However, that opinion went straight out the window when I got to pg. 243.

So, (view spoiler)

The latter half of the book completely ruined it for me, turning an average romantic read into something I was literally cringing my way through. If you're expecting a book that focuses on the important issues with a little side of romance, you'll get the exact opposite. And if you're hoping for characters to act rationally and logically, then you'll be horribly disappointed.

And remember, don't eat the tamales with the corn husks on. As much time as it takes to make those suckers, they're not meant to be eaten with the husks on, haha!!

A.L. Player says

(Review based on an ARC.)

Absolutely gorgeous! A touching love story, beautifully written, which sheds a light on the many difficulties faced by people who come to the US searching for a better life. Still, the book never feels preachy or overly dramatic. Alma and Evan are each endearing characters in their own right; they're warm and real. I also particularly loved Whit and Mary Catherine. I couldn't put the book down!

Mitchii says

I had that sudden impulse to discontinue when things went too mushy way too quickly. But I pushed through the initial discontentment thinking maybe there was reason why it needed to establish the relationship quite early in the game. Well, there was, but to me, the romance as merely an accessory to the conflict later on & that didn't totally satisfy me.

This book has that kind of set-up where the boy is from an esteemed family that fell in love with the girl from the wrong side of the tracks. One would already guess that there's be gonna lot of hindrances ahead. For one, the guy was the nephew of senator that firmly supported law against illegal immigrants; and so, it was the quite an irony when he fell in love with a girl who was undocumented. They were eager to find a way to make her legal, even though at the start she felt hopeless that she'll able to have that status. But for him, he'll find a way for them to be together.

It was really tough on her part; living in constant fear that they'll be caught. Being an undocumented brought lot of consequences even if their only desire was to have a better life. I knew a bit about illegal immigrants. I've watched few documentaries regarding Filipinos living abroad illegally. And I can't completely fault them on their wish to better their lives (even if the method was wrong). Life here in my country is hard; seeking for greener for pasture in order to survive is a choice they need to make. There are legal ways but

it'll take time—long time. So at most, I understand the girl's struggles and difficulties more than the guy's drama at home. He did have some burdens but I think it wasn't as significant as the girl's.

The fast romantic development paved way to making their decisions more concrete; as if reasoning their feelings for each other as an adjunction to the possible answers to their problems. The guy was willing to sacrifice for her, to give him her his name so they can't be apart, but she opted out. Even with her sound intention, the thin relationship development made it so unconvincing (guy went saying something like it came from John Meyer's *Your Body Is A Wonderland* lyrics & that sudden protectiveness; and I was only at page 34!). Although I *kind of* understand her (but at some selfish thought I still saw it as passing a chance & as I said, they guy was so keen to give her security). But in the end, their decision sort of made sense; probably not the most ideal for some but willing to start on clean slate is I think what they really need (after all that happened).

Originally published at The Aeropapers.

nick says

Dream Things True first came to my attention thanks to Nereyda at Mostly YA Book Obsessed. We were having a discussion about immigration laws and **undocumented immigrants**. I was looking forward to reading the book especially because the author seemed to be **well-versed in the topic** and I knew she would bring some **authenticity** to the subject in YA. While I completely appreciated everything that I learned about immigration laws and what it's like to be undocumented in the United States, a heartbreaking situation really, I **wasn't as affected** by the book as I would have liked to be. Simply put, the **characters** in *Dream Things True* were **bland**. They didn't really have any dimensions to them and I needed them to be **more fleshed out**. I was **emotionally distant** from both protagonists and while they had qualities that I enjoyed immensely, I thought they needed to be more developed. This could have been a very **powerful story** had they been better characters and more **layered**. I also thought the **pacing** in the book was a bit **off** and there were moments that felt like **information dumping** to me. In the end, I was **disappointed** with *Dream Things True* because of its **textbook-style writing** and my inability to relate to the characters. There is still a valuable amount of information that you can learn about the topic of undocumented immigrants though.

Cora ? Tea Party Princess says

I love how this one sounds, it doesn't sound like anything I've read before. Lots of mixed reviews though so fingers crossed?

Summer says

Later rerated to*: 3 Stars

*I'm rerating a lot of the books I read in the past to fit my current taste. Most of the time it's downrating books that I thought I really liked at the time but there are a few exceptions. :) And it'd be too much to try to

reflect these changes on my blog, so the ratings will remain as the original ones on Xingsings.

3.5 Stars, Completed September 8, 2015

Dream Things True is a modern *Romeo and Juliet*-esque story about a wealthy, privileged southern boy falling in love with an undocumented Mexican girl. Evan seems to live the perfect golden boy life as a soccer star and nephew of a widely-supported, conservative senator. When Evan meets Alma he begins to question the family figures he's admired growing up and he becomes caught up in complicated issues he's never considered before. ICE (Immigration Customs Enforcement) tightens security on the borders and raids the counties of Gilberston, Georgia for undocumented individuals, making things much more difficult for Alma and her family. As Evan and Alma, get to know each other, Alma struggles with composing the right words to reveal her true identity to Evan. With facing the complications of immigration and tangled bureaucracies, will Evan and Alma be able to overcome these obstacles?

Like in *Romeo and Juliet*, every character in this book is incredibly flawed, yet unlike the Shakespeare work I actually ended up feeling great sympathy for them if not a connection. I live in a primarily white dominant community, so I was raised and schooled with people like Evan, the rich country club and charity auction goers. However, I did have some friends similar to Alma, the population that didn't quite fit in. I thought **Marquardt did a fantastic job with attempting to display the two very different perspectives.**

Even though the writing had its own uniqueness, I wasn't a big fan of it. ***Dream Things True* is told in an awkward dual perspective alternating between Evan and Alma.** The narration often switches mid-chapter so I found it a little disconcerting, but after a few chapters the abrupt transitions were not a big deal for me. Also, **there was a good bit of Spanish woven into the dialogue, which is something I'm sure a lot of readers that can understand Spanish would appreciate.** Since I only know the elementary basics of Spanish having taken the language when I was in my primary school, which was 10+ years ago, I was often times lost. Thankfully, these Spanish phrases were translated so it didn't hinder my reading experience entirely.

Evan and Alma's relationship progressed abnormally quickly, which made me feel a tad uncomfortable. I know that many boys (and girls too) are often hormone-driven during their teenage years but I found it too odd that when Evan first met Alma he was already driven by the desire to touch her-this first encounter was in a span of a couple of minutes, mind you. For that reason, I didn't find Evan the sweet, swoon-worthy boyfriend material, which is the prototype I tend to prefer in these type of romances. Instead, their relationship was one dimensional because of this insta-lust in my opinion. So I felt like there were moments where the immigration issue could have been more focused on but instead readers got a lot of "oh, this girl is so special and not like any other I've known before" and "I love him but I shouldn't," inspired *Romeo and Juliet* scenes. I know that romance can be a great contributing factor for some readers-me included, admittedly-but I think a non-romantic relationship would have worked well for *Dream Things True* actually.

On the other hand, **though Alma had her flaws and experienced moments of Juliet syndrome, I really enjoyed her point of view in the story.** She's a coffee addict, honest, and new to young love and dating. Also, she defies all stereotypes on the girls of her race. Also the fact that Alma grew up in the States most of her life, made her more American than Mexican at times, which made her and her brother more special in comparison to the other undocumented teenagers in the novel. Her "coming out" about her undocumented status and confession that she didn't really fit anywhere-Mexico not being her "home" since she was two years old and the States being a tedious, temporary "home" was realistically honest and plausible.

My favorite character in *Dream Things True* was definitely the witty, sarcastic Whit. He's everything that his dad, the conservative southern senator, isn't. Whit acknowledges the complex issues that brew around him head on-with an unbiased political view. He's also a closet intellect, openminded and embraces diversity, and speaks flawless Spanish (he was adored by all the Mexican grandmothers of the story because of his eloquence). Even so, Whit's character is not any less broken than the other characters. After the events of last summer and his addiction to drugs and alcohol, he's been lost and nursing pent up remorse. It's not until the very end do the readers see him accept rehab, heal, and make amends for things he's done. **Whit is the character that highlighted important points such as standing up for what you believe in and righting your wrongs.** I wish Alma was the face for this campaign, but the branded "good for nothing" Whit surprised me for his premature wisdom, self-awareness, and redemption.

Was the ending a tragic *Romeo and Juliet* "till death do us part" type? Fortunately, no. Most of the side plots were wrapped up cleanly, but Evan and Alma's story remained open-ended or rather the book sort of just ended after a momentous scene. In that final scene readers realize why the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of La Leche, was so important to the Garcia family. And even though there's no dramatic death, there's also no sense of redemption to look forward to for the main storyline. But there is hope for Alma's character and her future. So overall I was pretty pleased with the ending.

I give *Dream Things True* full marks on exploring and encompassing tedious subjects such as immigration, tangled bureaucracies, racism, and other prevalent issues in society today. Sure, not all aspects of these issues were tackled, but overall I think it serves a great introduction for those interested in these complex topics, particularly immigration. The incorporation of Spanish surely will wow some readers and the dual perspective did serve to display two very different point of views. Also, like all Shakespearean romantic tragedies there's some drama and comedy. So if you're into that, I recommend this book for those reasons as well.

Special thanks to St. Martin's Griffin for allowing me to participate in this blog tour and sending me this review copy of *Dream Things True*. In no way did this affect my reading experience or honest review.

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Rachel (APCB Reviews) says

Although I had a few issues with this novel (mainly with the plotting and the characters' decisions), I really loved the romance and Marie's passion to share the injustices of the immigration issues that plague our nation. Review to come.

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten! My copy was an ARC I picked up at BEA 2015.

Diversity Rating: 2 – It's a Start!

Racial-Ethnic: 5 (most of the cast is POC, being that Alma's family is so large)

QUILT BAG: 0

Disability: 0

Intersectionality: 3 (Alma's family is fairly poor and suffer from racial discrimination/racism)

A few years ago, I read this little book called *Burning* that I loved and hated in equal measure. The Romani girl Lala's POV chapters touched me and got me to root for her; the white boy's chapters were odious in their offensiveness and made me want to feed him through a wood chipper because he never grew to learn better. *Dream Things True*, what with its rich white boy and undocumented Mexican immigrant girl sharing the third-person narrative, is much the same way. Alma's sections are lovely and shed a much-needed light on life as an undocumented immigrant in an era where Donald Trump's racist, early-Hitler-esque rhetoric puts him at the top of the Republican polls. However, Evan's hardly-questioned mounds of privilege really weigh down what could have been a great novel.

Alma's life is a difficult one, but she's a survivor through it all. Though she and her large extended family are living in fear of being caught and deported—completely reasonable given that local anti-undocumented-immigrant sentiment is all over the place—they live normal lives. Alma goes to school, thinks about college, and does anything a “normal” teenager would do. There's no way to tell if someone is an undocumented immigrant by just looking at them. When their lifelong fear suddenly becomes real and multiple family members are deported after being arrested in ICE stings, she rises to the occasion and doesn't take bull from anyone. Not even Evan, the white boy she inexplicably loves.

Speaking of Evan, his rich-boy-with-a-dysfunctional-family problems are banal on their own, but when they're equated with Alma's much deeper, very real problems, they're downright laughable and somewhat offensive. His problems will never equal hers. Ever. When factoring in his troubled cousin Whit's issues (which are more understandable in part but also more offensive; see below), there are a lot of moments that may make readers roll their eyes at Evan and Whit's Rich White Boy Problems.

For instance, one scene early on demonstrates the problem between Evan and Alma. When she goes to a party at his house, she has to wear one of Evan's mother's skimpy bikini's and it's clear she feels uncomfortable. Evan offers her his shirt to cover up with after committing Description Sin #1 of comparing the color of her skin to milky coffee. That's innocent yet questionable on its own, but the scene as told from Evan's POV focuses on how she looks vulnerable with so much skin visible, not her visible discomfort that's only explicitly mentioned once they start talking. Evan expresses then that he noticed her discomfort and that's why he gave her the shirt, but that's not what readers see. How can I get on board with something like this?

Sympathy for Whit comes in because he's dealing with substance abuse and trauma he sustained from raping

a girl with someone else while drunk/high, but then again, HE RAPED A GIRL AND POSSIBLY GOT HER PREGNANT. There's only so much sympathy he can earn given the rape subplot is far in the background and Whit gets more time on the page than the actual rape victim and her feelings. Evan? Eff that guy, he ain't nothing.

Also, eff everything because this was the perfect opportunity to make Whit asexual and give us another example of representation even if he's a rapist:

"Whit didn't seem to be into girls, but he wasn't showing many signs of being all that into boys either." (p. 151)

(I'm being restrained because I'm tired of having to do extra edits to my reviews to please the Amazon Overlords, okay?)

Instead of focusing on the rape of this Mexican girl by two white men and the complications created because of her status as an undocumented immigrant, readers get the underdeveloped, insta-love-ridden romance of Alma and Evan a la Romeo and Juliet themselves. Though this point is debatable, such a quick romance works for good old R and J because the play can only go on for so long and the point is that it takes two children dying to get two families to stop feuding. Books have all the time in the world to develop a romance and this book in particular has no real point with the romance other than DRAMATICS. It would honestly be better without one. They call it love very quickly and a hard-headed adult lawyer even validates this undercooked romance by talking about how she can sense their love. It's a major case of show vs. tell.

As flawed as *Dream Things True* is, it managed to turn on my editor brain because it has so much untapped potential. For instance, imagine Evan is an adopted child born in Mexico instead of a white boy born to white parents. Imagine all the complications! Imagine the gross "white savior" vibes he regularly gives off disappearing! Better yet, what if he were that and a girl named Evanna? It could have made for a lovely *Lies We Tell Ourselves*-esque story and tackled the everyday homophobia encountered in small towns across the United States. Oh, the beauty of it! Now I want to write fanfic!

That this story takes place in late 2007 and 2008 is a bit strange too. With thousands fleeing gang violence in Central America and coming to the US (aka the place that caused the instability in Central America #irony), the immigration debate as of the last two years has been especially volatile. It was a big deal in 2007/2008 too, but the novel would be better suited for a more current setting. (Alas, the book was finalized by the time Donald Trump jumped into the presidential race with racist aplomb, so I can't fault it for omitting his brand of rhetoric. I can only imagine how many people are kicking themselves because of that.)

But really, the novel isn't all bad! It reaches some of its potential! Once Alma gets fed up with being the model minority and dealing with the patriarchy (aka her father's controlling ways and Evan's determination to "save" her), what she lets fly from her lips is so beautiful I can't bear to quote it. Whereas a large number of terrible people fail to recognize rape when it happens to someone who is drunk, high, and/or drugged, Alma calls it exactly what it is: rape.

The ending is rather uncertain thanks to Alma's brother Raul, so it's up to readers to decide if everything turns out okay or goes straight to hell. I can't particularly recommend *Dream Things True* because it's a book that refuses to cut as deeply as it needs to, but I'm glad I stuck with it for Alma's sake. She's worth it. But seriously, choosing to focus on Whit more often than the girl he raped was bull and I hope someone else gets angry about this.

Jessica Brooks says

2.5 stars (for GR, because, with GR's rating system, 2 stars = "it was okay")*

Dream Things True is an interesting book. On one hand, it's all about immigration. On another, it's about how people with completely different backgrounds can come together, find something important in each other, and look out for one another. It's also about standing up for what you believe in, facing your mistakes, and righting your wrongs. So there's a lot going on, but a lot of the side plot doesn't really come to light until around the halfway mark.

I enjoyed the standing up for what you believe in, the side characters, and the righting of wrongs (though one part was also done illegally, which made me realize that so much of the storyline's values were blurry as decisions were made not according to what should be done, but what the characters *felt* like doing--more on that below); and it pains me to say that my least favorite part of the entire book was the focus on immigration. It was the main storyline, so I understand that that was the point, but the execution came across a bit pushy.

Though I felt sorry for Alma's situation, I was never able to fully connect to her/her family. Ms. Marquardt definitely tried to get the reader to understand the laws of immigration and see how biased the local townspeople (law enforcement, politicians, and so on) were being, and she explored consequences of breaking the laws, but even so, though most of the time, decisions/actions made against the illegal immigrants seemed unfair from a HEART's point of view, they were still, at the end of the day, (mostly) legal. (Notice I said "mostly". There were a lot of instances where Evan and/or his cohorts were given preferential treatment when they did illegal things, and of course, that was definitely not cool.)

Basically, it's kind of like someone sneaking into a supermarket, deciding to live there and eat the food, drive the supermarket's delivery trucks, invite the rest of the family to move in, and do other things obviously and blatantly not legal; then not understand why doing all of that was not okay, because, hey, they needed food. (You understand where I'm coming from? Heart strings vs. right and wrong, legal or illegal. Is it fair for them to be hungry? No. Is it fair for their families to be? No. Is it fair that they aren't given the same opportunities? No. Does all of that then make it right to do things not legal? No.) Which is what made DTT difficult for me. Because I felt Ms. Marquardt trying to pull out that sympathy card over and over, and while I felt it to a certain extent, I also didn't. Maybe that was in the way the story was told. I don't know. All I know is it almost felt as though that was not a learning experience, but a part of the story being shoved down my throat.

Another issue I had was understanding all of the Spanish. There were hardly any specific translations, and though I was able to pick up the gist of most of it, I still didn't understand a lot. What was the point of so much of it if we weren't supposed to know what they were saying? Whose choice was it to leave us all in the dark? So getting the convos, it might have helped me connect to her family more. I'm not sure.

Am I glad I read Dream Things True? Mostly. Did I have to finish it to see how everything got tied up? I did. Will I recommend this to anyone looking for a modern Romeo and Juliet story? No. Will I recommend it to anyone wanting to submerge themselves in Mexican culture, romance between two completely different cultures, or people interested in immigration? That would be an emphatic *yes*.

*I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Jen Ryland says

Mixed feelings.

I was excited about this book about a relationship between an undocumented girl and an upper middle class boy (her dad does his family's yard work). But to me, the mix of rich boy/poor girl romance and issue book was a combination that didn't always work.

That being said, there is a lot here to like. I thought there was a lot of good information in this book for readers who have an interest in immigration issues and how they play out for real people who could be our neighbors and friends. But **Dream Things True** isn't a newspaper article, it's a story, and I struggled with this aspect a bit. I never felt fully absorbed in the narrative.

The POV-- close third person that alternates between Evan's POV and Alma's --felt awkward at times. I mostly liked Alma as a character, but to me, Evan gave off a vibe that kept feeling ... strange. I struggled with this a lot. I mean, yes, teenage boys are extremely hormone-driven, and yes, it's a definite possibility (probability?) that most YA books and readers idealize this teen boy demographic to an unrealistic degree. But the way Evan looked at and thought about Alma -- mostly in terms of the shapeliness and attractiveness of her body -- made me extremely uncomfortable. Back in college I took a film class that discussed the objectifying male gaze of film. I couldn't stop thinking about that discussion as I read this book.

Immigration is a topical (and often divisive) issue, and it's definitely tricky to take on a subject like this and not let the narrative become didactic. I think the key is to make the reader care so much about the characters that they don't feel like they are reading an issue book. In this case of this book, I think those things in the story I previously mentioned (narrative POV and Evan's gaze) kept me at somewhat of a distance from Alma's community and their plight.

In sum, I do think readers who are interested in immigration issues or those who want to learn more about them should definitely check this book out. I'd have preferred this with a non-romantic vibe but romantic chemistry can be a personal preference thing -- Alma and Evan's relationship may work better for other readers than it did for me.

Thanks to the publisher for providing an advance copy for review!

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Reading is my Escape says

Alma thought back to the day she learned that she wasn't in status -- that she was a person who was here but not welcome, embedded in this place, but also somehow apart from it.

None of it mattered. None of it mattered because she was, as she had always known, one of the kids stuck in

between.

Alma is a junior in high school, brilliant, with a bright future, but her family is undocumented and the threat of ICE is always looming. Alma wants to tell her new boyfriend, Evan, but she is ashamed, and his uncle is pushing for a crackdown on illegal immigrants.

I read this book for my multicultural lit class. Alma is a feisty girl and I like her. Her life is difficult, but she has a large community supporting her. Alma's parents just wanted to give her and her brother a better life, and they took a big chance by coming to the United States. This a good example of perseverance in a difficult situation. And the ending wasn't oversimplified.

This is a good book for teens to read. It may help them sympathize with the plight of illegal immigrants. Also, teens will see that the characters are just like them and experience similar feelings. I read three books on this issue for an essay I did for class. In all three books, the main characters dealt with shame and feelings of not belonging anywhere.

A good multicultural book for anyone to read, especially now.

Bekka says

The first strike was describing skin color with FOOD.

The second strike was "Evan resisted the overwhelming temptation to look down at her vulnerable, almost naked body" and then shoving a t-shirt at her to cover herself up because apparently she looked too good in the bikini that she was wearing TO GO SWIMMING.

The final thing was just so much manufactured sexual tension that did not really work at all and came on extremely fast. It just wasn't believable.

It's not a bad book, but I thought I would like it more. It's just not my thing, I guess. I thought the particular cultural lens would help, but I just felt like it was comparing Alma's family's very real struggles for employment and childcare and education with Evan's "boo hoo my mom wants me to go to a charity dinner" whinging.
