



# Starstruck

*Rachel Shukert*

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**Starstruck** Rachel Shukert

A new series set in the golden age of glam . . . Set in Old Hollywood, *Starstruck* follows the lives of three teen girls as they live, love, and claw their way to the top in a world where being a star is all that matters.

## Starstruck Details

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Author : Rachel Shukert

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# From Reader Review Starstruck for online ebook

## Katie says

I really liked this. Definitely more the kind of Hollywood book I've been looking for. And a 30's one! FUN!!!

I liked that it didn't shy away from the negative aspects of Hollywood, especially the ones in the 30's, though I kind of wanted a little more idealism, too. Which might've been solved if there were a more conclusive ending. I can't tell if the loose ends are left for a potential sequel or if I'm just demanding too much. I mean, I don't need everything resolved, but I needed more than this book gave me.

Edit: Okay, looks like a sequel is on the way! I think I still wanted more from this ending, though. Just a little bit more.

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## Celeste\_pewter says

**Two-second recap:** As the first book in the start of a three-part series, *Starstruck* is everything a historical fiction YA reader could want in a book. It's well-written, romantic and brings the glamour of the golden age of Hollywood to life.

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### Full review:

I grew up on a steady diet of films from the golden age of Hollywood - e.g. Audrey Hepburn's *My Fairy Lady*; Jimmy Stewart's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and Bergman/Bogart's *Casablanca*.

These films taught me about romance, took me to far off places, and helped me dream big.

So when I learned that Rachel Shukert had written a YA book about the time period, I knew that this was something I had to read immediately.

(Because really - awesome starlets + the glamour of the old studios + YA = win/win, am I right?)

I'm thrilled to say that after reading *Starstruck*, it's everything that a fan of the era *and* a fan of YA could want in a book.

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### What worked:

\* The characterizations. As the primary protagonist, Margaret - later to be reborn as Margo - is no wilting flower.

Yes, she's lived a very sheltered life in Pasadena, something Shukert illustrates very well with small details -

e.g. Margaret's housekeeper; Margaret's nervousness when faced with the opposite sex - but she's also no wilting flower.

At one point, Margaret has to make an incredibly difficult decision involving her future hopes and aspirations. She makes that decision without batting an eye. It's a testament to Shukert's writing and characterization that the reader is instantly able to understand why Margaret's made the difficult choice.

\* The multi-perspectives. Shukert makes the extremely clever decision of telling the book through three young women at very different points of their Hollywood career.

By diving the story between Margaret (Margo), Gabby and Amanda, Shukert keeps the narrative moving *and* avoids a common pitfall for seeking-stardom stories like these - exclusively focusing on the newcomer/young ingenue, which almost always results in the audience actively hating her.

(*Smash* on NBC, I'm looking at you. Also, considering Shukert writes *Smash* recaps for Daily Vulture, I'm guessing this is something she actively kept in mind when writing).

\* The plotting. Shukert does an excellent job in developing Margaret's evolution from innocent schoolgirl to the new Hollywood It Girl, in a logical, believable way. She provides enough detail and explanation for why Margaret is able to ascend so quickly, and at no point, does it feel unbelievable or larger-than-life.

\* As part of the plotting - the mystery. There's an ongoing mystery in the book, and it keeps the reader guessing until the very end. The eventual reveal is *very* heartbreaking, and completely not what I expected.

\* On that note, Shukert also incorporates some of the downsides of living a life in the Hollywood spotlight in a thoughtful, respectful manner. In the hands of another writer, some of the plotlines incorporated could have easily veered into melodrama.

(*Smash*, still looking at you.)

In Shukert's hands, these plotlines make you reflect, and honestly, leave you actually sort of saddened at the price that some people must (and are willing to) pay for fame.

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### **What didn't work/Things to consider**

Honestly, nothing. Even my usual critique that a multiple-perspective storyline can often take away from overall character development e.g. *Breathe*, doesn't apply here.

The only thing I'd want Shukert to explore more, is Olive Moore's interest in Margaret. It seemed a little out of left field, but I'm guessing there's going to be more to come in the sequels!

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**Final verdict:** *Starstruck* lives up to its title - it's a glamorous, sparkling addition to historical YA books.

I would recommend the book for slightly older YA readers, simply due to the content in the book. However, if you're dealing with a very mature young adult, than by all means - go for it.

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### **Richard Kramer says**

INSIDE RACHEL CLOVER ... I use that headline because for me Rachel Shukert's novel (the first of a trilogy, which is very good news) compares to one of my favorite books of all time, which is: INSIDE DAISY CLOVER, by Gavin Lambert. Ms. Shukert tells the story of three very different girls in Hollywood in the 30's, all of them starstruck not only by Hollywood itself but by a fantasized dream of themselves. Shukert knows her way around the tangled freeways of the show business novel (and her sense of period, and evident love of Hollywood, are everywhere), but she also keeps just enough distance from the page-turning goings-on of her girls so we can see this is a larger story about identity, a timeless one about how a young woman struggles to become herself and about the obstacles the world throws in her way. STARSTRUCK is categorized as a YA, which is both just right and also doesn't do it justice; this could and should become one of those Young Adult novels "That Adults Read, Too!". I look forward to the next book in the series, which I haven't said since the RABBIT books.

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### **Lauren says**

I've read Shukert's adult essay collections and, although the topic of her debut novel is vastly different, I could still recognize her sly humor and eye for detail. "Starstruck" is an amazing book, whether you read YA lit or not - full of all the glitter, glamour, and darkness of old Hollywood! I'm really hoping this is going to be a series, I'm not done with these characters and their world yet!

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### **Natalie says**

3.5 stars

Was this book on the verge of trashy? Yes. Did I enjoy every minute of it? Yes.

Starstruck follows three young starlets trying to make it in the Golden Age of Hollywood--the innocent Margo Sterling, who's always dreamed of being in the movies and can't wait to make it out of Pasadena; Gabby Preston, who's a veteran of the vaudeville circuit at sixteen and caught between the studio and her mother; and Amanda Farraday, whose stunning looks hide a dark past that she hopes to erase forever. This book perfectly captures the aura of 30's Hollywood, from the clothing to the stars to the control that the studio exercises over it's stars' lives. It conveys both the glamour, as Margo is discovered reading a magazine in Schwab's Drugstore, and the dark side, as stars are forced to hide their unseemly secrets and Gabby is put on an endless regimen of pills to help her lose weight. The reader is always aware of the thin line that these

stars walk and the sense of suspense that it creates, as the author slowly reveals the secrets of the studio, makes *Starstruck* a page-turner. The plot is fast-moving and full of surprises, some truly surprising.

Margo, Gabby, and Amanda are all intriguing protagonists. You always want them to succeed, but they're far from perfect, propelled by both their own flaws and the pressures of the studio system. Having three different main characters also allows the author to present a broader range of the starlet experience, and to investigate different kinds of narrative arcs and love stories. The supporting characters are also intriguing, if a little less developed. Finally, *Starstruck* may have some scandalous plot elements but it's also surprisingly (and pleasantly) progressive for a book like this. There's an examination of the kinds of roles women were restricted in during the 30's, a reminder of the conservative isolationists politics that were influential at the time (huzzah for historical accuracy), and a gay character. Overall, a series opener that manages to deliver a satisfying story while still making readers eager for the sequel. Recommended for readers of historical fiction and lovers of Old Hollywood glamour.

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### **Abby says**

This book is more of a 2.5/5 for me. I was entertained in some parts of this book, but I found most of the story boring. It would make a great movie though.

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### **Melody Grace says**

I love, love, loved this book! I was totally swept away in the glamor and excitement of 1930s Hollywood, and all the thrilling insider rivalries and relationships. You really get to go behind the scenes of the movie industry in this fascinating period, and Shukert does a wonderful job balancing the historical details of the era with all the relatable drama of Margo, Gabby, and Amanda's journeys and ambition.

All the main characters were so well-drawn and interesting, and their dynamics were refreshing: this is definitely a book about female friendship and ambition, and although there are fun romantic entanglements, the girls are front and center, which I loved.

I can't wait for the sequel!

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### **Mitch says**

It was one of those nights in Hollywood, the kind that made gossip columnists and newspapermen and the announcers on newsreels say, "It was one of those nights in Hollywood."

The glamour and magic of old Hollywood may be gone, but Rachel Shukert's captured the spirit of the era so perfectly, it's almost as if the Golden Age of film lives on in the pages of *Starstruck*. My favorite historical

fictions are those that feel like magic even though the plot of course calls for no real magic, simply because everything about the subject period, the mood, the atmosphere, the whole works, comes alive as the pages fly by, and *Starstruck* is definitely such a book. Pure moviemaking magic.

Ok, I have to confess, I'm kind of a film buff. Names like Olivia de Havilland, Katherine Hepburn, and of course Clark Gable mean something to me, but even if theirs create the setting, *Starstruck* goes much deeper than just a few (famous) name drops. Sure, at its core it's about three girls trying to make it big, get their names in lights, and the plot when you think about it isn't so much different than Lauren Conrad's book of the same name (which I have read, don't ask), but unlike every other book about girls, fame, and Hollywood, only this *Starstruck* gives the meaningful insight into a bygone era that qualifies as so much more. And Margaret Frobisher... er *Margo Sterling* is the best kind of tour guide, because if you want to capture the glamour, tell a story about the movies, well you need a character that reflects the kind of excitement and enthusiasm and energy that's at the heart of the Hollywood mythos, and hers is an attitude that's absolutely infectious. Whether she's excitedly pouring over the pages of the newest issue of *Picture Palace*, experiencing firsthand the wonder of Olympus Studios that day of her first audition, or even slowly piecing together the dark side behind the fame, I felt like I was there at every moment, and that's how historical fiction succeeds.

More than that, Rachel Shukert sure knows how to cast a fully immersive spell. It's not just getting the setting right, making sure the characters are in character, or shoving the anachronisms under the doormat, but it's like this book lives and breathes 1930s Hollywood. I could approach the effect from many different angles, whether it's the excitement, the name checking of period cars and designers, perfectly capturing not just the inner workings of a 1930s movie studio, but the atmosphere and tone as well, or even getting the politics of the day just right with characters who are clever reflections of the effects of the then rising Nazism and communism on the movies, but even for those who haven't watched hours of documentaries on the subject, it's easy to appreciate that *Starstruck* is a book that *gets* Hollywood's Golden Age. And it's the little things, Margaret's father's rant, director Raoul Kurtzman's story, that line about the Karpis and Goldwyns and the other power players of the movie business not being allowed into the Pasadena Country Club, that really sell it. For a classic movie buff, experiencing all of that *is* the fun.

If there is a problem, it's that yeah the plot is still about three would-be starlets trying to make it big in Hollywood. It's overdone, and *Starstruck* still follows the same basic pattern of a girl swept up by the glamour before she's exposed to the dark side beneath the glamour while her not-quite-friends and sometimes rivals deal with their own problems, their stories intersecting at various points. Still, a few things do set *Starstruck* above the field - Margo's story, even if overdone, works because hers alone is an exploration of a time most of us can only see in black and white - although she desperately needs a better best friend. And while *Starstruck* is about Margo, and Gabby, and Amanda, the specter of Margo's missing predecessor Diana Chesterfield looms over everything, and it works as a reminder that, even as Margo climbs towards fame, something bigger, something from the nasty underbelly of Hollywood, is lurking in the background, waiting for that one slip up.

It's easy to dismiss *Starstruck* as just another in a long line of entries starring a trio of would-be Hollywood starlets. It would also be a mistake. *Starstruck* is really a celebration of Hollywood's Golden Age, and as a fan, I'm a fan.

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**Oda Renate says**

A wonderful, swell historical book set in pre ww2 hollywood.

it is not overwhelmingly unpredictable, but at the same time not cheesy nor very predictable. the characters are interesting, the setting great, and some plot twist you do not see coming. At least I did not. Higly recomended.

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### **Liz at Midnight Bloom Reads says**

I absolutely enjoyed reading Rachel Shukert's debut YA novel Starstruck! Set in the 1930s, Rachel Shukert sweeps you away into the glamorous world of Old Hollywood, where dazzling lights flash and future film stars are born seemingly overnight. I hadn't heard too much about Starstruck beforehand, but once I read the plot description, I was immediately captivated and just had to know more.

The lives of Margaret Frobisher, Gabby Preston, and Amanda Farraday are about to intertwine as they chase their dreams and learn that fame always comes with a price. Margaret had a privileged upbringing, but she wants a very different future than the one her strict parents have always expected her to have. She doesn't want a life of country clubs nor settling down to marry a rich man and carrying out the duties of a wife. No, what she wants is freedom and independence, a chance to be in the movies she has loved ever since she was a little girl.

Gabby has been performing acts for years to support her mother and herself, and still feels the pressure to always work harder. She's a well-trained singer and dancer, but her youthful looks have typecasted her into roles which have stopped her from becoming a leading lady. Amanda is determined to forget her past and be more than just the girl with a sultry body that attracts the eyes of men whenever she walks into a room.

Not all that glitters is gold in Old Hollywood though, and at the heart of Starstruck is Margaret's growing curiosity in the mysterious disappearance of Diana Chesterfield, a famous starlet everyone at Olympus Studios only speaks about in whispers. What makes it all the more complicated are Margaret's growing feelings for Dane Forrest, her new co-star who was rumoured to be dating Diana before she suddenly vanished.

If you love reading historical fiction novels with a tantalizing combination of glamour, secrets and mystery, then I would absolutely recommend Rachel Shukert's Starstruck! I have a feeling Starstruck will be underrated by many readers, so I sure hope the novel gets some love and attention because it definitely deserves it!

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### **Ms. Yingling says**

Margaret going to a finishing school in Pasadena in the 1930s and is obsessed with the Hollywood stars. Hanging out at Schwab's, she comes to the attention of a person at Olympus Pictures, and he invites her to come for a screen test. This doesn't go over well with her family, and when she is offered a contract, they tell her to never darken their door again. Since the glamorous Diana Chesterfield has gone missing, Olympus needs a new starlet for their historical epic, and Margaret is it. She is obsessed with fellow actor Dane, even though the studio sets her up with Jimmy, much to the dismay of her Judy Garland-esque friend Gabby. Many of the starlets in Hollywood have dark secrets, and Margaret soon finds that the glitter of Hollywood is not always what it seems.



Strengths: Anyone interested in the golden age of Hollywood will find the behind the scenes dealings in this interesting. Styles, types of actors, studio policy-- all of this aligns with what I know of this era.

Weaknesses: More of a YA book due to content, which includes a madame, homosexuality, and abortion. It's all done delicately and would be okay for high school, but there's so much that I will pass for middle school. I can't say I have any students interested in classic films, more's the pity.

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### **Jessica says**

Un-putdownable. I can't wait to read the second book.

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### **Kim McGee says**

This is the perfect combination of historical fiction and young adult drama. Set in the glamorous Hollywood of the 30's when every little girl's dream was to be a young starlet up on the huge movie screen, *Starstruck* tells the story of three young hopefuls. Margo, Gabby and Amanda come from different backgrounds and each has to give up something for the price of being a movie star. If you liked the *Flapper* series, *Bright Young Things*, or the *Luxe* series you will enjoy *Starstruck*. Each girl has to secrets that need to be hidden, each will have to learn the price of fame and each will remind you of someone you know. What is interesting is that their story isn't that different from what you hear about Hollywood today - the press, the studio, the politics and the pressure to be something you are not is all still there.

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### **Sherrie says**

I'm a big fan of historical fiction and *Starstruck* fit the bill perfectly. *Starstruck* tells the story of three young women who have been raised in extremely different ways but who all have the same goal, to be a star. Margo Sterling comes from a wealthy, conservative Pasadena family who doesn't support her dreams of being on the big screen. Gabby Preston is the daughter of uber stage mom, Viola who pushes her daughter to the extreme while Amanda Farraday grew up in the dust bowl and moved to California to escape her abusive stepfather. I love the way the author gets the period details right and how she shows that not everything that glitters is gold. I'm excited to see that there is a sequel to this book as the last chapter had a HUGE reveal. Excellent young adult historical fiction! 4 stars!

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### **Chelsey Welford says**

For those attracted to the glamour and lights of Hollywood, this will be a perfect read for you. We first meet Margaret, who becomes Margo later on, as she sits in a diner near the flashy streets of Hollywood. We soon learn that she is about to be discovered by one of Hollywood's biggest names, Larry Julius. Margaret's story turns into a story about three girls who are all trying to make names for themselves while pushing and shoving their way through the Hollywood lights, camera, and definitely a whole lot of action! When the famous Diana Chesterfield turns up missing everyone starts questioning their positions and who they can really trust.

I will be very honest when I say that this book started off a little slow to me. I have always been intrigued with Hollywood and all the publicity, stars, and mysterious stories that surround it; however, when I first started reading I was getting a little tired of the background information and wanted to cut right to the chase. Things did pick up drastically once we find all three girls in the center of the action. Margo's life was rather mundane at home and I was tired of reading about her life as a schoolgirl. But when she got to Hollywood and was thrown in the lion's den, the plot certainly became a lot more interesting and the story took some amazing twists and turns.

Two things in this book were done really well. One was a character. Amanda Farraday was my absolute favorite character and I loved rebellious personality and the fact that she came from a horrible background, but rose above it. She was written with this fire and spark that none of the other characters had and I absolutely loved it. Secondly, I loved the mystery behind the missing Diana Chesterfield. I kept relating her story to Marilyn Monroe, in a way, because that is just how I have always viewed Hollywood in the early and middle 1900's. Her missing character had me on edge and it was one of the driving aspects that made me get through this novel so quickly!

\*\*\*A HUGE thank you to the publishers at Delacorte Books for Young Readers for providing me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review\*\*\*

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