



Has to Be Love

Jolene Perry

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Years ago, Clara survived a vicious bear attack. She's used to getting sympathetic looks around town, but meeting strangers is a different story. Yet her dreams go far beyond Knik, Alaska, and now she's got a secret that's both thrilling and terrifying--an acceptance letter from Columbia University. But it turns out her scars aren't as fixable as she hoped, and when her boyfriend begins to press for a forever commitment, she has second thoughts about New York. Then Rhodes, a student teacher in her English class, forces her to acknowledge her writing talent, and everything becomes even more confusing--especially with the feelings she's starting to have about him. Now all Clara wants to do is hide from the tough choices she has to make. When her world comes crashing down around her, Clara has to confront her problems and find her way to a decision. Will she choose the life of her dreams or the life that someone she loves has chosen? Which choice is scarier?

Has to Be Love Details

Date : Published September 1st 2015 by AW Teen

ISBN : 9780807565575

Author : Jolene Perry

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Romance, Did Not Finish

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From Reader Review Has to Be Love for online ebook

Inge says

DNF 36%

This book should probably be called *Has to Be Hormones*, because that would be a more accurate description. I got over a third of the way in, and it was mostly the main character talking about how she got all these sexy feelings around her boyfriend and wanted to go all the way, but couldn't because religion. Enter sexy older teacher and Clara's hormones go nuts. Enter confused-as-hell love triangle that mostly deals with a lot of confused hormones.

I was intrigued by the fact that Clara had been attacked by a bear and half her face was full of scars, and that she would be going to Seattle in a bit to get those scars fixed. That was, by far, the most interesting bit.

Then there's the fact that she got accepted into Columbia with her writing, which puts a bit of stress on her relationship with her boyfriend (apart from the fact that she's also crushing on her teacher). But she DOESN'T TELL ANYONE. There's all this unnecessary drama building up because Clara doesn't talk about her problems and keeps them locked inside. None of this tension would've happened if you'd just told your boyfriend "So hey, I got accepted into Columbia". If he really loved you (and he kind of should since he's half-asked you to MOVE IN WITH HIM), he would be thrilled for you, and you'd skip off to Columbia and get your scars fixed and sleep with your teacher, who also goes to Columbia, and they live happily ever after.

No? Well, in any case, I wasn't going to sit around and watch this useless drama build up until it exploded, because other than Clara obsessing over her hormones, not an awful lot was going on. I feel like the best way to describe this book was "I almost care".

Thank you NetGalley for providing me with a copy

Dana says

Has to be Love, is a great book that is heartwarming, sad, beautiful and most importantly, authentic. I really loved Clara's voice, and while I did find a lot of her decisions to be frustrating, I also understood why she did them. Being a teenager is filled with extreme indecision, stress, regret and strong emotions. I felt that the author really did the reader a favour by keeping her so natural and age appropriate. A lot of what she is feeling, and even some of the specific issues, are issues that I myself struggled with when I was a teenager.

There is a Christian undertone in this book, perhaps not the most subtle. However, instead of preaching it came off more as simply a girl who happened to be Mormon, rather than a book that was Mormon. My only qualm about the religious aspects was with my huge confusion regarding forever marriages. I didn't think that it was explained as well as it could be, considering that some of the character's actions contradicted the concept of a forever marriage. Apart from the one very annoying confusion I had no issue with anything else in the book.

Overall this is an engaging read, with a relatable and strong female protagonist.

Buy, Borrow or Bin Verdict: Buy

Note: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

Rose says

Quick review for a quick read. My thoughts on "Has to Be Love" in retrospect are a streamline of "Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope" to just about everything in this book. I tried to have so much patience for the events and narration, but after a certain point, I couldn't do it anymore. I don't think it had a clear focus of what it wanted to be as a story, which is interesting because Clara's very scatterbrained for narrative voice and that's precisely how the story comes across - meandering and repetitive. I'm really surprised how a book with a premise that potentially has a great deal of emotional impact could come across so shallow and just...wrong. It went on far longer than it should have and by the time I was finished, made me glad it was over. I felt emotionally detached by the events and it had much to do with the way it was presented alongside the unraveling of events.

Here's a summary: Clara is Mormon, has a boyfriend named Elias and lives in Alaska. Clara was brutally attacked by a bear, which killed her mother and left her with horrible scarring, including visible scars on her face. (Which I did feel for her on.) Her father clings to the church to cope, Clara criticizes her faith constantly in back and forth tangents. Clara starts growing closer to her boyfriend, who encourages her about her writing, shows her affection, seems to treat her with respect and notes her boundaries.

Clara has raging hormones that pop up at inappropriate times. Clara keeps too many secrets. Clara does not have a decisive bone in her body. (I will return to these three points shortly.)

Lo and behold enters Clara's new teacher (Rhodes), who is attending Columbia (Clara's dream school, which she's been accepted to and keeps it a secret for reasons that don't seem strong enough to hold the narrative conflict for as long as it does). Rhodes has traveled the world and graduated early which is the reason why he's so close to her age. At one point Clara's talking about how her mother was killed by a bear but quickly defers to the "OMG, my teacher's so HOT!" mentality. (I did mention Clara had raging hormones. And she repeats her feelings in the novel much like the Energizer bunny keeps going.)

But then she remembers she has a boyfriend and she wants to do more than just kiss him. But she doesn't know whether or not she wants to spend forever with Elias, even when he proposes to her (I did mention she was indecisive. And wait...marriage WHAT?) Then the story ventures in a weird love triangle go-between which has Clara's development and growth hinging on her relationship between these two guys - like having confidence in her writing, going to college, her sentiments surrounding her scars (she repeats her insecurities about her scars in every chapter - this would be something I'd be sympathetic toward if it wasn't repeated. so. much.). There are side conflicts/things she comes to terms with with her father regarding his faith, relationships (with one token woman of color mind you, who really doesn't have much to do in the novel, sadly), but ultimately this book ends up having her choose one future prospective relationship, only to turn around and realize she'd rather be with the other guy. But hey, at least she's in college thanks to said guy! And the other guy seems to be a-okay despite Clara's decisions. Huzzah!

I'm left at the end of this book giving it major side-eye and feeling empty from the experience. It felt patronizing and repetitive and didn't have a strong cast of characters or conflict to really carry it along. I did not enjoy it.

Overall score: 1/5 stars.

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from the publisher.

Paula M. of Her Book Thoughts! says

[Cheating will NEVER be okay with me. No matter what your reason is. And honestly, I don't have any sympathy to give to the main lead even though she went through a traumatic encounter with a bear and earn those scars. I didn't see any reason to like her, even from the start.

Maybe this is more of a personal reason but I really don't care so I'll still give a rating even though I just skimmed the last part of the book. **Jolene Perry has one of the most lovely writing style in this ge**

Tanya (Girl Plus Books) says

2.5 STARS

I will start by saying that Jolene Perry's The Summer I Found You was one of my favorites of 2014. I clicked with those characters so completely and was so emotionally invested in their story. That book truly made an impact on me.

Fast forward one year to when I saw Has to Be Love on NetGalley. And my delight when I was approved for an advanced copy. I was beyond ready to immerse myself in another offering by Perry.

And now fast forward once again to where I'm left completely disappointed. Can this be the same author that created characters like Kate and Aidan (from The Summer I Found You)? Who created a story line that was so realistic and emotional that it truly resonated with me? Color me confused.

Clara is not a particularly likable character. Problematic when she is the main character and the reader is supposed to get behind her and be invested in her choices. Didn't happen. Clara was a survivor of a bear attack that killed her mother and left her with facial scars. While I empathized with her situation, it was frustrating that Clara used the facial scarring to define herself. It ruled every aspect of her life. After 5 years, she was still living with the notion that she was nothing more than her physical appearance, unsure why her boyfriend was still with her, and putting her future on hold until her scars could be "fixed." I tried to put myself in Clara's shoes, I tried to chalk her feelings up to her age, I tried everything to get past her total fixation on her scars but I just couldn't. Clara was so convinced that she was nothing more than her scars that it started to convince me, the reader, of the same thing.

I mentioned above that the reader should be invested in Clara's choices. That proved almost impossible because Clara never made any! This was 250+ pages of Clara waffling back and forth over EVERYTHING. Again, I tried to chalk this up to her age. Seventeen is a time of big life changes. But even so, it was

maddening. When faced with where to go to college, her future with her boyfriend, her feelings for a newcomer... she agonized over what to do but never actually made any decisions. She simply allowed events to unfold and then reacted. I was ready to shake her.

Another issue I had was how the theme of religion was used. Religion was supposedly a large part of Clara's life. However, she used her religion only when it suited her. When she wanted to engage in behaviors that were questionable (according to her religious beliefs), poof! Religion seemed to go out the window and was nowhere to be found. It smacked of hypocrisy and became a big sticking point for me.

Boyfriend Elias was a plus. Yes, he bordered on the too-good-to-be-true, but he was genuine and sweet and earnest. BFF Cecily's only purpose seemed to be as a sounding board for Clara. I nominate Clara for the Worst Friend Ever award since this friendship appeared to be completely one-sided. All about Clara, all the time.

The ending provided a fairly satisfying conclusion but that did not make up for my issues with Clara. She came across as a self-absorbed girl who would neither make a decision on her own nor open up to those around her for help or advice.

While I do enjoy Perry's writing style and will likely read more from her, *Has to Be Love* is not one I recommend.

Note: ARC provided by NetGalley and AW Teen in exchange for an honest review.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Albert Whitman & Company and NetGalley.)

“Let go of the idea that you should be without the marks that are part of you.”

This was a realistic story about a girl who basically didn't know what to do with her life because she had scars on her face.

At times I felt for Clara in this story, and at other times I didn't really understand her at all. I got that she had these thick, raised scars, and that she hated them, but she seemed to think it impossible that anyone could love her, which I really didn't get. She had a father and a boyfriend who both adored her, but she couldn't see it at all. She also couldn't see how lucky she had been to come out of a bear attack with only scars, when her mother had lost her life.

The storyline in this was okay, but again, Clara's choices bothered me a bit. I felt like she complained far too much, and totally threw it back in her face when her boyfriend showed her how much he loved her. Maybe it's just because we are different people, but if you love someone, you'd do anything for them/to be with them, and Clara just didn't behave like that at all.

The romance front did have a couple of steamy scenes, which made the book a little bit more interesting, but there wasn't enough romance for me.

The ending to this was okay, but I still felt like Clara needed to do some more growing up, and some serious thinking about what was really important to her.

6 out of 10

Abbie says

(I received a copy from Netgalley, In exchange for an honest review.)

I felt really sorry for Clara in this. What she went through was awful, and to be left with scars on your face that were impossible to hide wouldn't have been very nice either.

This started out okay, although after a bit I found it to be pretty slow, which made the story drag. I wasn't a fan of the romance either, which really didn't help.

Overall, Not a bad read, but not as good as I thought it would be.

Sophie says

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

Has to Be Love was a nice, and enjoyable story. I read it in under a day, and was quite intrigued about Clara, and her life. When she was younger, Clara survived a bear attack which killed her mother, but no unscathed. She was left with scars running across her face, her shoulder, and her back. She has felt disfigured and ugly ever since that has happened, and is basically putting her life, and future, on hold until she can have cosmetic surgery to reverse the damage. Her biggest dream is to study at the prestigious Columbia University, her mother's alma mater, and she has, somehow, been accepted. She doesn't know what to do. Does she defer a year, have the surgery, then go to New York? And what does she do about her long time boyfriend, who believes they'll be together, forever, and she has no plans of leaving the state at all? These issues all come to a head when student teacher, Rhodes, himself a student at Columbia, arrives, and makes her question everything.

First things first, I had a few issues with this book, the biggest being that Clara was about to put her life on hold for her boyfriend. For someone who has dreamt of being a writer all her life, and studying on the other side of the country, I couldn't believe she was going to forget all that for some guy. Elias was a character I was not keen on, at all, though I understood that he really loved Clara, and it wasn't his fault that she'd kept everything from him.

The secret keeping was another issue I had. She lied to a lot of people about her true feelings, and, for someone who kept preaching about religion and saving sex for marriage, she also cheated on her boyfriend. I'm not a religious person, so I tend to be a bit wary about books in which religion plays a big role, but I felt like Clara was a bit fake. She criticised the lack of church and state (something that should definitely be criticized), and kept mentioning how boring her sermons were, but then used religion to hold her back at times. I understand wanting to save yourself for marriage, and commend that. But in this case, the answer to that was getting married at 18/19? You haven't lived life at all, and are about to settle down, in the only place

you've ever been?

Her romantic relationships were both problematic, and I'm not entirely sure if I liked either of them. Both male characters limited her, and she needed to think about herself, at least in my point of view. I'm glad she had her female friends to talk to, and especially visited New York in order to fully decide on what she was going to do with her future. Cecily was the best friend I could've picked for Clara, and I loved how she helped Clara feel right about herself, and start to consider her scars as something other than ugly.

The ending was something that really helped the book, and I'm glad that events turned out the way it did. That being said, *Has to Be Love* isn't exactly a memorable book. I'm writing this review less than half an hour after finishing the book, and I've already had to go back and check names, details, etc. I think, overall, it's just a nice, contemporary book, one that was neither good, nor bad. It had a nice protagonist, an angst filled plot, and fun side characters. It's one I'd recommend for someone who just wants an easy, cute read, that also has an important plot.

rachel says

There has been a lot of comparison between *Has to Be Love* and another new release, *Truest*. I kind of get why. There are some similar elements between the two stories: love triangles (a “forbidden” love interest that tempts the protagonist away from her steady boyfriend), religious elements, small town settings, links to Alaska, female protagonists, elements of tragedy etc. You get the idea. However, I thought both of these books were very, *very* different in execution.

Truest, while not my favourite book of the year, certainly built itself up into an enjoyable read in the end. *Has to Be Love* though... not so much. I didn't enjoy it at all really.

Why not?

The protagonist. I was not a massive fan of West but Clara did little to impress me either. West could be a bit of ass at times, but it was Clara that drove me more insane. It irritated me that she could not make a decision to save herself. While I can be the same in real life, Clara just needed to shake off her self-pity and make a goddamn decision. It drove me insane when she made choices which put herself in a worse situation. She didn't really help herself at all and I could not understand her reasoning. There were honestly a ton of opportunities presented to her – ones that she *really* wanted to take – but she almost threw them all away for reasons I am still struggling to understand. If she had just sat down in the beginning and made her intentions clear to everyone - and didn't lie or keep so many damn secrets – it would have all worked out so much better.

I did like that the story tried to have a “non-perfect” protagonist. Clara had facial scarring from the bear attack which killed her mum. It was refreshing to have a disfigured protagonist, but I don't think the way it was executed – with Clara's obsession with getting plastic surgery and disregarding Elias' love for her because she wasn't “pretty enough for him” – was the best way to go about it.

Oh, and the fact that Clara was meant to be an immensely talented aspiring poet when the poems included in the book read like a third grader's attempt to rap annoyed me more than it probably should have. It made it very hard to understand why everyone thought she was so brilliant!

The romance was another sore spot. There is a love triangle in this book - of course - and it was very poorly written. I had no interest in either of the love interests and there were elements of cheating in this story - which is literally *always* a big no-no.

One of the love interest was also Clara's teachers. Now, I *can* sometimes go along with this sort of romance if it is written well - like in Vampire Academy and The Paper Magician - but this romance was anything but well-written. The 'forbidden' element of Clara and Mr. Kennedy's relationship was not explored to the extent it should have been. In fact, we barely saw them together in those sorts of comprising sort of situations, like at school. I found it be a really hard to believe that no one noticed them or how little they seemed to care if someone did, despite the fact that he could go to gaol if they were caught (or at least lose his reputation/get into a legal trouble). I guess it didn't help that - in general - I actually found him to be a bit of a creepy character. He always seemed to just be there when Clara left the house, he touched her face *all the time*, and he watched her in class. *shudders*

However, what made me rage most of all was the fact that her current boyfriend was so flawed. In fact, he was built entirely around his flaws in an effort to make the readers like him less than the other love interest and understand Clara's gravitating feeling towards Mr Kennedy. I hate when authors do this! It is a twisted version of the 'bitchy cheerleader girlfriend' trope which I find appalling. Cheating is not okay, not matter how awful in comparison the character's current partner may seem. Also, the ending concerning this character was pathetic and made me rage.

Religious elements. I don't know if it is really fair of me to mention this since there were barely *any* religious elements in *Has to Be Love* compared to *Truest*. While I am not a massive fan of this in the first place, at least *Truest*'s religious aspects actually affected the story. *Has to Be Love* tossed around the word 'Mormon' every now and again but didn't try to delve into how this affected Elias and Clara's relationship, even though their faith was quite an important part of their individual identities. The few times it did mention religion, I got confusing. Maybe this is just my ignorance of the Mormon faith but I had to look up what "forever marriage" meant as it was not explained very clearly. The book also did not make Elias' faith very clear. I know that he went to another church but it never stated whether he was also Mormon or of another faith.

Small Town Setting. I loved that both of these books were set in the country but I felt that there just was not enough Alaskan-ness to the setting. It was described in a way that it felt like they were living in an ordinary American town. Now, maybe that is just what Alaska is like but I thought the difference in seasons/daylight hours would create something distinctive about the town. Instead, it could have been interchangeable with West's town. I really wanted to learn more about Alaskan culture!

The ending. The last forty percent of this book was just a mess. The story had no direction. The plot meandered around Clara's pity parties, and it was honestly so darn dull. The ending resolved nothing and made the rest of the book seem pointless and redundant. The romance took an awful turn. It just didn't please me at all.

Overall?

I tried to give Jolene Perry another shot after disliking Stronger Than You Know but it didn't end up to well. If you have read about the *Truest* and *Has to Be Love* debate before and still cannot decide which one to pick up, I'd strongly recommend *Truest*. This one was just not for me at all, and I couldn't for the life of me recommend it.

Review copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Cassie Mae says

This book showcases something that I adore: a character that has some major metaphorical mountains to climb. Clara was a girl that I especially could relate to, dealing with the teenage hormones and struggling with the fact that a lot of ways to "release the tension" is against her religion. Though the religion played a very small part in the overall story, it plays a significant part in Clara's character. It reminded me of the struggle in Miranda Kenneally's *Things I Can't Forget*, which I loved reading.

I love books that can suck me in with unpredictability. Clara had a journey to go on, and I had no idea where she'd end up. She made mistakes, she learned from them, made more, learned from them, and so on. It was a beautiful transformation, but also a realistic one. I cried when Clara had to deal with what she'd done, and cried more when she pulled herself out of the chasm of despair that so many people, teens and adults alike, find themselves in and are unsure of how to unravel the knot they've tied around themselves. Books like these give me hope, make me feel normal, and I don't mind recommending to all of my friends.

And I can not leave without mentioning Elias. Because hello adorable leading guy. :)

Michelle (Much Loved Books) says

I am a big fan of Jolene's work, so when I saw **Has to Be Love** on NetGalley I made my request and kept my fingers crossed, and within hours I was approved. When I first got this from NetGalley the synopsis did not mention anything about a bear attack, or losing her Mum so I didn't know that was a big factor in the book until I began reading.

As the synopsis says, Clara was attacked by a bear when out walking with her Mum, in the forest right outside her house. Clara was lucky to survive with only scars, her Mum was not so lucky and died. However, if you asked Clara she would say she was not so lucky. Her scars are the bane of her existence, and she is willing to delay college and have surgery to get them removed, so her face can be normal, and so that she doesn't have to see the sympathetic glances or hear the whispering. So she can go to Cambridge and hold her head up high and not have to worry about the looks she will get.

As **Has to Be Love** begins, I did feel sorry for Clara. The accident makes her very self conscious, and her life in Alaska means she has been sheltered growing up, she sees the same faces in school, church, and work. She has no experience of the 'outside world', and doesn't really have a grasp of who and what is out there for her. When Rhodes comes into the picture I could see where it was heading, and I think the rush of having a new face who clearly shows an interest in her, meant Clara made mistakes. Mistakes with her actions, her feelings, and others feelings. Leading to a lot of heartbreak but also opening new chapters for her. I think her relationship with Elias was easy, they had been together before the accident, and he was with her after the accident, but she wants more than he can give, and I think her feelings of being torn between her religion and her needs led her to Rhodes. Yes, Clara is flawed, but aren't we all in some way, and unfortunately for Clara, her choices not only affected herself, but others around her.

Clara was a determined young lady, she has her future all mapped out for herself, have surgery, go to college and live the life she missed out on, but with this came the failure to see what she had already. Her

determination to focus on the surgery clouded her judgement and she had no back up plan in place.

But what we also get from **Has to Be Love** is the feeling of hope, that things may not work out for you, but that there is always another way to fix things, and when fences do fall, and bonds are broken, there is a way to rebuild them, to get some semblance of normality back again.

Has to Be Love took me on an emotional ride, of love, laughter, sadness, and tears. I devoured the pages of this book, needing to know if what I thought was going to happen would come true. There were twists and turns along the way, and a few things I did not see coming, but I really enjoyed the ride.

Final Verdict

Has to Be Love was another enjoyable read from Jolene, I ended up liking the characters more than I thought I would, and although it wasn't the perfect ending I expected, it did end on a somewhat happy note.

Shannon (It Starts At Midnight) says

This review was originally posted on It Starts at Midnight

I am going to try to stay away from spoilers, however some of the stuff that made me the angriest probably falls into spoiler territory. I'll try to mark them, but... proceed with caution.

When I started Has to Be Love, I didn't hate it, didn't love it. I didn't feel much of a connection to Clara, nor did I feel that I knew a lot about her, other than "likes to write" and "bear attack facial scar". She wants to leave Alaska, but how can she possibly, with something as awful as a scar?!

This is going to sound insensitive, and I assure you it is not. I understand her insecurity and apprehension, that makes sense. But I'd like to think that there's more to a person than a facial scar? I mean, as a parent of a kid with a facial scar, I hope not? Granted, Clara's is more severe, but again, the fixation was over the top. I don't remember if she was in counseling (if she was, it wasn't a huge plot point) but she needed all the counseling, for real. Like, the bear attack itself was horrible, and traumatic and killed her damn mom, but she was more concerned about the scar. I... don't get it.

Some background: Clara's best friend is at her mom or dad's house (whoever the non-custodial parent is, I don't remember), and so she's not there for Clara to whine to. Clara's dad... I don't really know what his problem is, but they need some kind of communication system (again, counseling would be helpful). She's gotten into Columbia, but doesn't tell anyone. For reasons. And Elias is building a house so they can get married right after high school (gag) and live in a quaint Alaskan town making babies for the rest of time.

Enter Rhodes. He's visiting his aunt and student-teaching for the rest of the semester. Where's Rhodes from? Unrealistic coincidence time! Columbia, of course. Rhodes is enamored with Clara, I guess because she's a writer? I don't even know, it was pretty insta-lovey. At first, I didn't even mind the thought of them getting together if it'd rid us of Elias. But then I realized that Rhodes was a complete asshat as well.

Rhodes is everywhere, seeing everything that Clara does. It's weird and unsettling. Elias... well, you know, he is way too committed for a seventeen year old dude. The irony is, his religion precludes him from basically even touching Clara. Rhodes does not have these same views. Rhodes is kind of full of himself, thinking he's so worldly because he is from Columbia and he's traveled. And I guess we're supposed to be impressed?

Yeah... no. Now, here's where things get dicey and kind of spoilery. Carla has to make some decisions, obviously. Some about college, some about her relationships, and some about her scars. And she does a brilliant job of waffling, going back and forth, and pissing me off. But even that I could get past, because she is a teenager, and I can't make decisions as an adult, so I get it.

But here's where the story lost me for good, and there was no coming back:

Religion was used as a plot device without explanation. Elias uses it for his explanation of not doing anything more than kissing Clara, even though he wants to marry her. [View Spoiler »](#) There's no furthering of these themes as far as reasoning, it's just "I shouldn't" or "it's bad to...", which really angered me. If you have beliefs, so be it, but they can't just show up for five minutes and then run the hell away.

This is the worst for me. The worst, and the reason for such a low rating. I am a pretty generous rater in general, but this made me so angry that I actually yelled at an inanimate object (my Kindle). It's a spoiler though, so I shall hide it as such. [View Spoiler »](#) So much rage.

My problems with the book never resolved. I am not saying that the plot didn't resolve, I am saying my issues didn't. Clara was bland, unlikable, and indecisive, and I still knew nothing about her by the end. Other than her need for a mental health professional (I don't mean this offhandedly, I am serious). The guys were still annoying me. Things started happening very quickly and randomly toward the end too, to the point where I was certain that I'd missed a few chapters or something.

This book was simply not for me.

*Copy provided by publisher for review

**Quotes taken from uncorrected proof subject to change

Deniz says

So I am not sure how to rate this

I was for more than 80% of the book annoyed by Clara.

And then I felt for her and I am not sure how I feel about the end.

I would have dnfed this if it wasn't an arc... But I am so glad I finished it.

Will ponder all this and write proper review soon

Cynthia says

I received digital ARC of this book from Skyspace through Netgalley

Review is also posted on Let's Say It's A Blog.

When I first saw this book, I thought of *Has to be Love* as a cute teen's romance book which funny as well. Well, modified letters with those animated doodles kind of implying that impression to me. When it's not really true, it turns out not wrong either. **This book is funny on certain scene and sweet romance does**

exist somewhere on the story but the entirety of the book is complicated and frustrating at some points.

The lead female character is Clara Wesley, the girl with scars on her face as the evidence of her survival from bear attack that had not only half-wrecked her life but also made her mother gone forever. Clara was barely able to move on with her life as the ghosts from her past keep slipping into her every step. No matter how many times and how many people telling her to see past the scars, it's not something you could easily overlook when you had to see it every day in the mirror, you had to deal with people wincing every time they talk to you, had to deal with glances and stares that though some are innocent yet still there's a trace of judgment behind them. But God is fair because not only Clara still got a father who loves and supports her wholly, but also she's got a boyfriend who loves her unconditionally, sincerely, and deeply.

Elias was the dream boy every girl wished to have. He's kind, sweet, charming, undeniably lovely, and at the age 17, he could put any grown up men to shame with his gentlemanly demeanor. Elias was full of responsibility and careful with his every move. Elias was the safe haven Clara could always run to, except Clara didn't want to be 'safe' if it meant missing out all the challenges that calling to her; all the challenges and risky life out there that also meant living up a dream that she had for a very long time already.

Entered Rhodes, the guy from the part of the world where challenges and dreams were available for Clara on the same plate. While Elias represents a safe option with peace and easy life in a small town of Knik, Alaska; Rhodes represents a challenging option with longing dreams and possibly more intriguing future at an Ivy League school in the big city of New York. Clara didn't know what to choose as her heart was torn between staying on Elias' safe cocoon and jumping over the cliff following Rhodes.

Clara's character is quite frustrating for me. I do understand her wanting to chase after her dream to leave for Columbia University. I could understand why Clara probably would choose her dream in NY over settling down with Elias in Alaska. *I really do.* In fact, I'm not judging her for wanting to step out of her comfort zone. After all if we stay too long in our comfort zone, it would make it not comforting later on.

What I couldn't relate is that Clara feels the need to second-guessing what has given to her, everything because of her scar. I totally understand that it must not be easy to overlook her scar, I said this before. But what 'having a scar' had to do with second-guessing her boyfriend-for-years' sincere intention? More like there's a 'distraction' coming between them at a perfectly wrong timing.

***Has to be Love* tries to show us that sometimes to be able to find the right path we have to go through the wrong ones. And it doesn't necessarily make us a sinner, it makes us a learner.** Clara might be the one to blame for the hurts of people who got involved in her 'decision-making' process. But it taught her that sometimes what she thinks is good for her isn't always good for her. I love it that in the end everything finally falls to its places. I could see Clara learns her lessons as she comes to term with her flaws, apologizes for her mistakes, and accepts the consequences of her every action. **I might dislike her for her wrong steps, but she manages to save me from hating her as she shows us that somehow inside, she's still the girl with faith, belief, and pride stronger than most girls her age.** I like this side of her and I'm glad she doesn't entirely forget that about her.

Though the pace is quite slow in the beginning, **I like how the plot gives me the alternating feelings from frustrated, understanding, resenting, to accepting of the characters.** Clara's character perfectly pictures what being a teenager feels like along with the flaws, mistakes, and imperfect decisions. Elias's proves that even at younger age there's nothing impossible to feel as unconditional love. While Rhodes' represents that sometimes other people's perfect life isn't always perfect for us. I love it that the side characters play roles as

important as the main characters making the chemistry between the characters much stronger and the story becomes somehow complete.

Even though this book isn't exactly my best favorite, I enjoy the realistic feels this book gives.

Especially the most important message that this book tries to relay to its readers, that your scars, visible or not, don't exactly define who you are, unless you let them be.

Perks Of Being A Fangirl says

Honestly, I'm a bit disappointed with this book

I really wanted to like it but I couldn't. There wasn't anything outstanding and I failed to get into the plot and connect with the characters. The main character just rubbed me the wrong way therefore I wasn't too fond of her.

The love-triangle was messy- can I even call this a love-triangle? It was a source of escapism and thrill for the characters that failed to catch my heart.
