



Girl Next Door

Alyssa Brugman

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See, what happened was, our lives were going really well. My mom got a promotion, I enrolled in an A-list school, and then my Dad had this great idea to start an empire. But now he's "gone to the country." What does that even mean when she talks to me at all, which is less and less lately. Hello! Can somebody please tell me what's going on?

Girl Next Door Details

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Author : Alyssa Brugman

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From Reader Review Girl Next Door for online ebook

Vivien says

It was a nice read and though i am confused at how much she relates current stuff to the past it was funny and the book made me think of my actions, reactions and views. I agree with her view on doing it and how it was sexist at how other people view girls and boys *sigh*. At least JB is learning by observing other peoples actions and its consequences especially about the money bit.

Marita says

This is a book about a family on the way down. They have a 'monster' house, as teen narrator Jenna-Belle tells us, 'a house with wings.' She and her brother go to the best schools. Mum has a killer job and Dad has left work to start his dream business.

That was then. Now their father is 'in the country' (the kids know no more), their mum is pregnant, they have a boarder in the spare room and an increasing amount of empty space where their possessions used to be. Oh, and the house is worth less than they owe on it.

Brugman plunges the reader into the world view of a rather shallow teen narrator before the plot switches to strikingly more serious matters. The family decline, which has been happening for months before the events of the novel, continues to a tipping point. When their father reappears, nearly half way through the book, the children's relief gives way to greater anxiety as the penny drops. There is no rescue package. At this stage their boarder, Bryce, turns out to be a better bet. He understands their predicament and offers material help to a point, but is himself a professional punter, and apparently not a hugely successful one.

Girl Next Door has a surprising impact. What is lost begins with the unnecessary trappings of a pampered lifestyle, then access to a private school education, the normal home comforts and finally a place to live. Along the way the family is disintegrating, father absent, mother detached and flagging, and a stranger the best hope they have. Jenna-Belle also grows closer to her friend and neighbour, Declan, but is as confused and hurt by his naive attention as she is by the apparent neglect of her parents. Her world view has changed rapidly:

After about twenty minutes Mum lights a cigarette and ashes out the window. The ash whips back into my face. This morning I thought the least your mother could do is feed you, now I think the very least your mother can do for you is not to flick hot ashes into your face.

In the end Brugman delivers a more hopeful ending than expected, but this story needed a soft landing.

Study Guide PDF

Lizzie Penson says

This is a really good book. Great story line. I really felt for the characters but at the end it kind of ended

abruptly and I think it needs a sequel because I think it needed a better explanation as to what happened to the characters. Good book overall

Sarah says

I loved this mainly because I love, love, love Alyssa Brugman's quirky sense of humour. So random and unexpected that it really does make me laugh out loud, which I rarely do when reading. But yeah the story was interesting and dealt with some gutsy issues like homelessness, gambling and parent/child relationships without hitting the reader over the head with The Moral, always a plus. Ripped through it in one sitting (of several hours) (hey, I didn't have anything else to do today anyway...)

Good Golly Miss Holly says

I picked this book up by chance at the library, and I'm glad I did. Jenna-Belle's story of misfortune is very relatable in the current financial crisis, I also found their to be plenty of drama and humor to keep you reading and wanting more.

Girl Next Door is Alyssa Brugman's eleventh novel for Young Adults, the first being Finding Grace which has recently been translated into Dutch and shortlisted for many awards.

Jenna-Belle just got comfortable going to a private school, living in a big house and being able to rely on her parents, that all changes when her dad attempts to start an empire, loses it all and leaves the family to pick up the pieces. Jenna has a quirky relationship with the boy-next-door Declan, who initially helps her out but then her mum comes up with a great idea to rent out a room and this provides Jenna-Belle with a make-shift parent to help her out.

The unreliable Bryce Cole spends his days betting on horse races and trains Jenna in the art til her mum realises she has been removed from school for non-payment and puts a stop to it so they put Bryce Cole to good use and he shows them how to live on not very much money at all.

Jenna-Belle is very relatable and someone I can imagine being friends with in real life. I loved this book and it's many sub-plots and it helped me to form a new opinion on the homeless and how they get to be the way they are.

Ellen says

Basically I thought the book was OK but there was too much happening, Declan, the gambling, getting kicked out of school (public school too hard to find?), her dad being missing, the affairs her parents were having, and to be honest I don't know how old Jenna was supposed to be but she and her brother were ignoring the situation really well, I mean the writing was on the wall and they were twiddling their thumbs wondering where in the country their Dad was.

Lore says

it was alright. not the most riveting story ever

Watermelon Daisy says

Girl Next Door was a light-hearted book, which yet touched on serious subjects.

It was one of those “eh” books –you know, the kind you’re certain you’d forget afterwards. Not bad per se, but simply not memorable. I did, however, adore the coming-of-age story circulating Jenna-Belle from the beginning to the end of the book; I could see the difference easily.

Perhaps it’s because she was so teenage-like and girly, but I just couldn’t connect with her. Sure, she was snobby, made horrible decisions and was oddly naïve for somebody supposedly by age –but that wasn’t it. Her character should be somebody we connect to; yet, I felt nothing.

Maybe it was just me, but The Girl Next Door is possibly Brugman’s weakest work. Finding Grace, on the other hand, remains one of the most memorable books I’ve read in this lifetime, so this one must just be a fluke.

Isabella says

not finding this book very interesting, i think i might find something else soon

I have recently finished this book. I found that it is quite an interesting story line but i didnt like the way it was written. The story did get more and more interesting as it progressed but the ending want the climax i was expecting. I think i didnt enjoy it much ecause it isnt my kind of book but for some one who likes the family drama senario it might be one to consider,

Kirsten says

Tougher than I anticipated given the light, friendly cover. Coming of age amidst poverty striking a previously wealthy family. Sassy heroine and neat friendship made this a pretty fun read despite the tough subject matter.

April Summers says

I have no idea why I read it. :/

Vanya D. says

Umm, well, the story was very realistic - going homeless because of huge debts; losing your spouse because of cheating; sleeping with the boy/man next door.....

But it wasn't a smooth read. It made me want to skip pages. First, because there was so little conversation, it was hard to find; second, because the descriptions were so weird, it was difficult to keep your attention on them; third, the characters seemed somewhat out of place. Like they didn't know how to react in the situation they were in. True, it was kind of a complicated situation, but would a mother - who had a prosperous career - never go search for a job, and just leave her kids starving? I mean, c'mon! Who does that?

Matilda Rose says

After reading this whole book... I don't have much to say about it. Just that it wasn't great. It wasn't thrilling or exciting or sad or funny or... well, anything. It didn't evoke any emotions and whilst the storyline was interesting and it had a potentially excellent plot, I felt like the writing was too flat.

Maree Kimberley says

I've read a few books by Alyssa Brugman in the past and think she is a fantastic writer. *Girl Next Door* seemed to me to be a bit of a departure from some of her other novels I've read, and the character of Jenna Belle took me a bit of getting used to. She's a little immature, a little annoying at times, and often confused but by the end of the novel I really empathised with her situation. The 'riches to rags' story is an interesting one, as Jenna Belle tries to navigate not only her family falling apart but the slow realisation that her once pampered life where she got everything she wanted has gone, never to return.

The novel raises some interesting questions about class (in the supposedly classless Australian society) and how those without access to even the most basic of life's necessities can be ground down by the experience. A turning point for the character of Jenna Belle in her maturity was her ability to understand, if not forgive, the violent actions of the teenaged guys at the caravan park (where Jenna Belle, her mother and brother end up staying along their descent into homelessness).

The development of Jenna Belle's character, the way she matures from annoying, self-absorbed teen into a girl who is able to look beyond the surface of things and get real insight into the way the world works, was the best part of this book for me. Brugman has a real talent for looking inside issues in a non-didactic way. This novel, like her other work, is entertaining as well as thought provoking, and the questions it raises resonate after the final sentence has been read.

Highly recommended.

Natalie Veart says

an enjoyable read.
