



Saving Francesca

Melina Marchetta

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Francesca is stuck at St. Sebastian's, a boys' school that pretends it's coed by giving the girls their own bathroom. Her only female companions are an ultra-feminist, a rumored slut, and an impossibly dorky accordion player. The boys are no better, from Thomas, who specializes in musical burping, to Will, the perpetually frowning, smug moron that Francesca can't seem to stop thinking about.

Then there's Francesca's mother, who always thinks she knows what's best for Francesca—until she is suddenly stricken with acute depression, leaving Francesca lost, alone, and without an inkling of who she really is. Simultaneously humorous, poignant, and impossible to put down, this is the story of a girl who must summon the strength to save her family, her social life and—hardest of all—herself.

A compelling story of romance, family, and friendship with humor and heart, perfect for fans of Stephanie Perkins and Lauren Myracle.

Saving Francesca Details

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Author : Melina Marchetta

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From Reader Review Saving Francesca for online ebook

Vinaya says

Aaaand Tatiana scores again!

I've read every book ever written by Sarah Dessen. I've read Elizabeth Chandler. And Kate Brian. And Melissa Kantor. And Lauren Barnholdt. And practically every other YA author out there. SO when I began reading Saving Francesca, I was slightly dismissive. For the first hundred pages or so, I continued dismissive. It's not like I haven't heard the story before. New girl in school, out of place, dysfunctional family, misunderstood, etc, etc. Don't get me wrong, I loved Marchetta's writing style even as I was mentally dissing her lack of originality. But nothing stood out; it was good, tight writing, but still sounded like the plotline of every other YA book I had ever read.

And then came the bit where Francesca follows Justine home, off the bus, and they hide behind a tree to avoid Tuba Guy. I started laughing then, and in a short while, I was rolling around stuffing my fist in my mouth in an attempt to avoid waking the 'rents and almost weak with laughter. I also felt the urge to thwack myself on the head for doubting, even for one moment, the sagacity of my book goddess, Tatiana.

I've noticed that Marchetta has a tendency to slip her humor in halfway, when you're not expecting it. There you are reading all about the MC's teenage angst, and suddenly, you're blindsided by pages and pages of witty dialogue. I'm two-thirds of the way through Jellicoe Road, and I've noticed the same thing - unexpected moments of humor in the middle of some very tense situations.

And can I just say how adorable Francesca's friends were! I wasn't feeling it so much with Will, to be honest, and even though I like them as a couple, and LOVE the fact that Marchetta wasn't afraid to portray Will as an imperfect teenage boy with issues, they're still not making it onto my list of Best Couples of all time. But the friends were pure gold. I loved how Tommy was such an asshole, and he stayed an asshole through the book, but with character and heart. I love Jimmy Hailler's persistence, his tendency to make himself at home at Francesca's place, his refusal to give up on Francesca. I love Tara with her passion for causes and occasional flashes of biting humor, Justine, who is the rock that Francesca calls her, and Siobhan, who's plowing through every teenage boy in Sydney in an attempt to find The One. But Tommy and Jimmy are my absolute favorites, no question, and I can't wait for The Piper's Son. (Did I hear someone say it's out in Australia? Should I get an Australian to ship it to me? I can't wait!!!)

Melina Marchetta deserves every award she's gotten for this book, and more, for her accurate and hard-hitting portrayal of the effects of depression on a close-knit family. The fact that Mia's depression is not breaking only her, but also her husband, and children and even the extended family. Her slow climb back into a semblance of normality.

But if there was one thing that really made this book stand out for me, the sole reason it got five stars, and the reason I'll be reading it over and over, it's the friendships. I said it before, and I'll say it again, the friendships in this book are pure gold. Funny, sensitive, empathetic and supportive, these are people I wish would walk off the pages of the book and be MY friends! Why, oh why does Marchetta write so *slowly*??!

Kristin (KC) - Traveling Sister says

:::4 Stars:::

***Wipes tears* This author gets me *every time*.**

Okay, twice. She got me twice. I've read two of her books. But that only means there's more of her brilliance to enjoy...

Oh, yeahhh

Saving Francesca is a very touching and gentle read that centers not only on common themes such as family, friendship, and love—but thoroughly explores the heartaches of depression and the toll it can take on a family as a whole.

I've read many books where the narrator/main protagonist suffers a mental disorder. We get close to the disease...so close we are able to physically feel its anxiety.

But in this case, we're offered the perspective of a high school girl whose mother has fallen into the dark depths of this illness. And although we're presented with a solid picture of all sides, the focus refreshingly lies on Francesca (as well as her father and younger brother) and how she finds herself through the cloud of her mother's depression.

Tragically enough, the results on all parties involved are quite similar...

I want to go around the neighborhood saying, "We're depressed." If my mum can't get out of bed in the morning, all of us feel the same. Her silence has become ours, and it's eating us alive.

Yes, most families will crash and burn together...but they can also rise together, stronger because they've faced such weaknesses.

So Francesca may need some "saving", but she's not the only one. And I loved watching her character evolve and surpass the limitations she unknowingly places upon herself.

Much of this story takes place at a new school, consisting of mostly boys, where Francesca is attending. She misses her "popular" friends and the fact that they were the ones who did most of her thinking *for* her.

Francesca is a complex and memorable character. She pretends to be shy, but she's not. It's just easier to not have the spot light on her. However, the quirky friends she reluctantly makes at her new school may be exactly what she needs to bring her back to life.

The "romance" in this book felt more like an insinuation: Gentle, slow-to-build, but very sweet and promising. However, this is not a romance novel.

Melina Marchetta's writing absolutely astounds me. It's witty and profound, and glides with an effortless rhythm that made me stop and whisper "wow" a few times. The characters she creates are extremely unique. I found myself growing surprised by how life-like they felt.

There were some scenes that felt too vague and other areas that may have been a teensy bit dragged out — which may work well for some, depending on your preference.

As a whole, this book is a breath of fresh air—a shaky breath at times, but quite satisfying and refreshing, nonetheless!

"What is this, Grand Central Station?"

♥ ;)

Book Stats:

? **Genre/Category:** Young Adult/Contemporary

? **Romance:** Sweet and gentle

? **Characters:** Well drawn out and lovable

? **Plot:** A teenaged girl must figure how to live and find herself in the cloud of her mother's depression.

? **Writing:** Simply beautiful. Poetic and witty.

? **POV:** 1st Person: Heroine

? **Cliffhanger:** None. May be read as a standalone.

? **Next Installment:** Secondary character spin off. (5 years later)

Maggie Stiefvater says

This book came highly recommended and I have to admit I put off getting it from my library for quite awhile because I prefer stories where there are a) supernatural creatures ravaging a town, b) dead bodies and angst, or c) any combination of a & b. *SAVING FRANCESCA*, of course, has neither. But it turned out that it didn't matter. The winning characters in this novel, the story of Francesca, one of a handful of girls at a previously all-boys school, carry the novel all on their own, no dead bodies or fairies needed. At the start of the book, Francesca is an underachiever and a nonparticipant in school friendships. In sometimes hilarious, sometimes poignant moments, Francesca makes new friends in unexpected places, finds old ones, and falls in love -- and we do too, because Melina Marchetta has so skillfully drawn every character that we see everything perfectly through Francesca's eyes.

I had to go and immediately buy two copies for Christmas gifts. Highly, highly recommended.

wondering why all my reviews are five stars? Because I'm only reviewing my favorite books -- not every book I read. Consider a novel's presence on my Goodreads bookshelf as a hearty endorsement. I can't believe I just said "hearty." It sounds like a stew.

Simona Bartolotta says

"Why did I feel so grateful that people treated me well?"

Sometimes you stumble upon a story that is just **too much like yourself**.
This story is too much like myself.

That is why I don't know if I will ever write a review. I hope I will, but right now doing it would feel like carving the heart out of my chest.

'Am I making sense?'

'Weirdly enough, yes.'

While I struggle with myself, please, please, *please*. Go read this book.

Okay, so I had a few hours to get my act together and, while I am still *so very not* ready for a review, there are a couple of things I think you should know.

•**Marchetta's writing** may not be particularly exceptional per se, but it's like it is in the right place at the right time. It complements this story and these characters *perfectly*. Francesca's story is, and couldn't *not* be, Marchetta's territory. I think -I am sure- that no one else -not even the authors I adore the most- could have rendered it in the right way. Marchetta is the only one.

•This is a story about mental illness, yes, but it's also a story about loneliness, about growing up, about the gap between what you are, what you want to be and what the others think you are, about parents and about friends. Francesca had a sort of strained and **adversarial relationship** with her mother before the latter's illness took hold of her, and that is probably what touched me the most. How Francesca had to elaborate everything she knew about her mother to form a completely different perception of her. During this process, Marchetta's accompanies her character with such frankness and honesty and **genuineness** as I've rarely seen. I was touched. Deeply.

"She lets me trace the scar on her stomach. The scar I put there when I was born.

'It's because you were in such a hurry and I wanted to have you all to myself for just a little while longer,' she murmurs, sleepily. 'Even back then we were battling each other.'

When I grow up, I'm going to be my mother."

•**Not one of these characters is easy or uncomplicated.** Forget that. They're all so liable to be judged, that Marchetta's **lack of any judgemental attitude** appears even more amplified. It's a breath of fresh air.

So, this is what I wanted you to know. There are more things, of course. I'll do my best to keep you updated.

(I... I did write kind of a review, didn't I?)

Lola says

For the first time in I don't know how long, I got exactly what I expected from a book. For the first time, I find myself thinking that this book has a very, very accurate blurb.

Except for the last part, where it says that this is a "compelling story of romance," because, although the romance is a big part of the story indeed, it isn't entirely charming or swoon-worthy, but that's definitely something subjective.

This is my first read of 2017, so yay to that. I've started close to eleven books and only finished this one – which is the last book I started. It's a fast-read with interesting themes. The fictional St. Sebastian's school is a strong setting. I could easily imagine in my mind how infuriating it must be for the only thirty girls to attend this school to be denied what the boys have.

While I was a fan of the main character, whom I found extremely reliable and authentic, I did not especially find the other characters to be as memorable and three dimensional as her. There are quite a few characters introduced to us, and they all have their different roles to play, but most of them remain somewhat mysterious or not at all unique throughout the plot.

The mental illness theme is explored considerably well. The plot acts a bit like a mystery one, in the sense that we do not know what is wrong with Francesca's mother until the end. By that I mean that we are not revealed fully the cause to her mother's mental health collapse.

A strong three-star-rating. Boring romance and friendship, but interesting setting, powerful themes and 3D heroine.

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Chantal (Every Word A Doorway) says

4.5 stars

*Just ask how I'm feeling, I want to say. Just ask and I may tell you.
But no one does.*

Chantal read a YA contemporary? And she liked it?? *shocked face*

Melina Marchetta has become my queen of contemporary. First *On the Jellicoe Road* and now *Saving Francesca*. The woman can do no wrong. I still can't fathom how she managed to make me this in love with characters in less than 250 pages. *On the Jellicoe Road* has a significantly higher rating on GR compared to *Saving Francesca* and I can see why. ***Saving Francesca* is more understated, less dramatic and with not as much actually happening. But that's exactly why I loved it.** This book managed to evoke so many emotions in me by just being an organic story of a young girl trying to find herself.

I related to this novel so much and I don't even really understand why. I'm very different from Francesca, I don't have any friends like hers, my family dynamics aren't similar. And yet, there was something about it that made me go "Yes, exactly!" and "That's exactly how I feel!" numerous times throughout. **It takes a special kind of author to pull that off.**

Here's why I don't usually read YA contemporaries: They usually take place in some town in the US with all the little high-school cliques, popularity contests, dumb teachers and rumours ruining people's lives etc. I can't read that. **It's so fake to me.** I don't know if going to high-school in the US is actually like that, but it's certainly nothing like my high-school experience. Of course there are always exceptions (see *I'll Give You the Sun* or *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*) but in general I have started to steer clear from the genre. If you feel as I do, worry no further, *Saving Francesca* is nothing like that.

I can't believe I said it out loud. The truth doesn't set you free, you know. It makes you feel awkward and embarrassed and defenseless and red in the face and horrified and petrified and vulnerable. But free? I don't feel free. I feel like shit.

This isn't the story of beautiful people going on crazy adventures and falling in love with similarly flawless people along the way. It's a simple story of a girl whose mother doesn't get out of bed one morning. A story about a girl who is lost, flawed, trying to find her way. **Francesca makes mistakes**, she isn't always the nicest person around, but she is so kind at heart. Her narration was perfection: sarcastic, witty, at times melancholy, but most of all, very touching. **She is such a believable character and someone you can root for completely. A bit of a smart-ass and so strong-minded, her development was wonderful to watch.**

I miss the Stella girls telling me what I am. That I'm sweet and placid and accommodating and loyal and nonthreatening and good to have around. And Mia. I want her to say, "Frankie, you're silly, you're lazy, you're talented, you're passionate, you're restrained, you're blossoming, you're contrary."

I want to be an adjective again. But I'm a noun.

A nothing. A nobody. A no one.

And then there are Francesca's friends. I think the last time I loved a friend group this much and wanted to be part of it so badly was while reading *The Raven Cycle*. **They are all fleshed-out and realistic, with strong personalities that jump off the page and make you feel like you actually know them, like you could just call them up one evening when you're feeling down and they'd come over and watch Netflix on the couch with you.**

So I ring Justine Kalinsky and I say, "It's Francesca Spinelli," and she says, "Francesca, you've got to stop using last names. How are you doing?" and I say "I feel like shit", and I don't know how it happens, but by eight o'clock that night I'm lying next to her on the couch with Siobhan and Tara and we're eating junk food and watching a Keanu movie. And I want to stay on that couch for the rest of my life.

With YA always being so focused on romance, this band of misfits was wonderfully refreshing. **There is some romance and it is very cute, but it never takes the upper hand and always stays completely realistic.**

The family dynamics was another thing I loved about this book. **The novel sheds some light on how it is to grow up with a parent who is mentally ill and portrays the struggles the entire family has to go through.** It shows the utter powerlessness you as a child or partner or friend or parent have over the situation. Depression doesn't just affect one family member, it affects everyone around you.

The depression belongs to all of us. I think of the family down the road whose mother was having a baby and they went around the neighborhood saying, "We're pregnant." I want to go around the neighborhood saying, "We're depressed." If my mum can't get out of bed in the morning, all of us feel the same. Her silence has become ours, and it's eating us alive.

And despite all this, the novel somehow manages to never become too heavy or sentimental.

Melina Marchetta's prose is phenomenal. **Her style is beautiful and flows brilliantly and her dialogues are witty and laugh-out-loud funny.** Her writing instills in me a sense of familiarity that I only have with very few other authors.

Overall, this is what *Saving Francesca* is not: dramatic, suspenseful, mind-blowing, new OTP material. But here is what it *is*.

It is honest.

It is funny.

It is sad.

And it is so moving.

This is the kind of book I want every teenager to read. It is short and sweet but also packs a punch. I recommend it to everyone, even to those who don't usually read the genre.

And as for me, I feel a little less lonely than before I started the book.

"I just want it to go back to the way it was."

"It'll never go back to the way it was, Frankie. But you have to make sure it goes forward."

Shannon says

This book made me remember why I tend to only read fantasy: everyday life is just so ... *tedious*. I realize that I am in a very tiny minority when it comes to disliking this book, and it always makes me feel like I'm missing something when I don't like a book or series lauded as incredible. I have to wonder if perhaps this type of book just isn't for me though, and that because of the way I grew up and the environment I was raised in I just won't ever be able to relate to something like this.

For most of this book I felt bored and disconnected. I couldn't empathize with any of the characters and I didn't really like Francesca. I thought she was a spineless brat for most of the book, and I understood why nobody really liked her in the beginning.

Francesca is dealing with her mother's depression and also with starting a new school year at a recently female integrated all boys school. **On the subject of depression;** I had a particularly hard time relating to the struggle Francesca goes through with her family. Not to get all "after school special" up in here, but I have personally dealt with depression. Stemming from an injury/illness/medication, I've been through those days where I'd lay in bed and wonder what's the point of getting up. I'd sleep for 10 to 12 hours and then just stare at the ceiling for another hour or two. I wouldn't shower, I wouldn't eat, and I dropped my classes at school. I didn't even feel like reading, and that's when I realized I really had a problem.

That's the thing though, I realized I had a problem and I worked to fix it. I know every person is different, but I didn't appreciate the fact that Francesca's mother only starts to get better when her family

decides to give a damn. (view spoiler) Now, I'm not ignorant and I know depression can sometimes be sudden, especially after trauma, but that doesn't mean I understand or can relate to it. **I believe that people find strength from within and use their support group to bolster their reserves, not the other way around**, so this whole plot point just didn't sit well with me.

Francesca's new school life had such a soap opera-like feel to it; the catty girls, the awkward and dickhead boys, the mean teachers - it just all felt so contrived. I will never in my life understand why people put up with bitchy girls and bullies. This is probably a product of the environment I grew up in though, since I actually loved school and didn't have *major* problems with anyone. This whole book centers around the concept of self and fitting in and the like, and it was just another instance of me not "getting" it. **Francesca is constantly looking for acceptance and I felt like the message here was the same one that was being implied in regards to her mother's condition; that you need other people in order to be happy.**

On top of all of this we're forced to tag along with Francesca throughout her day. We get to sit with her through meals, walk with her through the halls of her school, go to class, eat lunch in the cafeteria, ride the bus. There's a time to imbue realism into a story, and then there's a time to dial it back. **Maybe it's just me, but I'm not interested in reading about the daily minutiae of a teenager's life.**

Another thing that bothered me were all the pop-culture references. **It wasn't just that they were dated, but that they were so obscure and random that it made me think that Marchetta was just trying to up her credibility with teenagers, but by doing so she actually made it woefully clear that she's out of touch.** At the time this book was written, 2003, I was only about 4 years older than the characters so I remember what was popular back then. It definitely wasn't *discmans* and *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*. I realize that this is set in Australia, and if it's anything like Canada, it's quite possible that something old in the United States is new there. I don't think they're 10 years behind though.

This whole book was just too melodramatic and unbelievable for me to really enjoy. I think it takes a really special piece of realistic fiction to draw me in though, so I'm not entirely surprised that I didn't like this. I can see the appeal, but it's just not for me. I know she also writes fantasy, so I'm going to give Finnikin of the Rock a chance, and hopefully then I'll get to experience what everyone else does when they read her books.

Kat Kennedy says

There is this cute, bouncing red tomato bopping around GoodReads singing the praises of Melina Marchetta.

I'll admit that I ignored the Tomato because my therapist said that it wasn't normal for fruit to recommend books to people. I accepted this advice because I'd already read Marchetta's *Looking for Alibrandi* and I hadn't enjoyed it.

I couldn't understand people's fascination with it, actually. Nobody in my class at school liked *Looking for Alibrandi* and I thought for awhile that maybe it was because we actually went to an Australian high school and nobody wanted to read a book pretty much depicting their own existence.

Which is what Marchetta does because I went to school with pretty much every high school character she's ever written. Also - The Butcher's paper? Yes, I can totally relate with my own hatred of Butcher's paper.

The point I'm trying to make is that, this tomato? You should totally, totally always listen to this tomato. The tomato is right. You are wrong. All hail the tomato.

Okay - onto my review.

Never before have I wished I could give a book more than five stars. I'd give this book seventy BAZILLION stars if it would just be my friend.

Francesca rocked my world. She had me at Butcher's paper. She won me over completely. I loved this book, I loved the story, I loved the characters.

If you haven't read this, not that that's a problem because I feel like the last person in the world to jump on the Marchetta bandwagon, then please do.

I cried while reading this book. I can't believe I actually cried like... real tears (as opposed to the FAKE kind!)

So overall, I highly recommend.

Arlene says

It's a weird smile, but it reaches his eyes and I bottle it. And I put it in my ammo pack that's kept right next to my soul and Justine's spirit and Siobham's hope and Tara's passions. Because if I'm going to wake up one morning and not be able to get out of bed, I'm going to need everything I've got to fight this disease that could be sleeping inside of me.

After reading **Saving Francesca** by Melina Marchetta I'm convinced that this author can write a 500 page book about the different brands of toilet paper and I'd be glued to every page and every single word she has to share. I love this author's writing, and I'm going to make it a point to read a couple more of her books before the year is out, including *The Piper's Son* and *On the Jellicoe Road*. Marchetta is a master of her craft and I'm enchanted by her skill and ability to draw the reader into her story and make them want to travel with her characters and feel every emotion they are experiencing.

Saving Francesca is a poignant, character driven story filled with humor and heartfelt moments that kept me turning the pages until I reluctantly stumbled upon the conclusion. What a beautiful novel that will stay on my mind because I became attached to the characters immediately upon meeting them.

This is more than a story about St. Sebastian's boy's academy becoming coed and Francesca and several other girls having the misfortune of trying to infuse themselves in the school. This book deals with depression, family issues, social pressures and a girl's attempt to find the strength to keep her family together and her life in tact. It's about love, friendship and finding the will to continue when everything around you makes you just want to curl up and hide from the world. I loved it and I'll be reading Francesca's story over and over again.

There were moments I laughed out loud, giggled like a goof and other times my eyes got misty and my heart felt a tug. When a story pulls me in so many emotional directions, but leaves me with a sense of hope, I

know something was done right. I loved this book and I hope others will give it a try and get to know Francesca and walk in her shoes. Great book that shouldn't be missed.

Favorite Quotes

I can't believe I said it out loud. The truth doesn't set you free, you know. It makes you feel awkward and embarrassed and defenseless and red in the face and horrified and petrified and vulnerable. But free? I don't feel free. I feel like shit.

I came, I mucked around. Thus I did not learn.

Do something that scares you everyday.

Ten years from now...

Will you have played your part?

Will you have carved your mark?

What are you thinking?

I'm thinking a lot of things, but they will require too much honesty and I don't think I can take that at the moment.

I was born seventeen years ago. Do you think people have noticed that I'm around? Francesca said. Will replies, I notice when you're not. Does that count?

Did he just insult me? Francesca asks Justine. Yes, but the tragedy is that he thinks he's paying you a compliment.

You go shake your foundations, Will. I think it's about time I saved myself.

Favorite Scenes

Thomas, Jimmy, Justine, Francesca are on the bus and Tuba Guy Francois boards. Thomas makes things happen for Justine. I loved this guy!!!

Francesca rids the cabin of evil spirits with her hip hopping and chanting but before she does, she stops Will from entering and tells him "Nonbelievers are barred" Why did that make me crack up???

Thomas, Jimmy, Justine, Tara, Siohban wait for Francesca at her home as her dad drives out to Woy Woy to bring her back home. What an awesome group of friends.

Cassy says

This review is headed down memory lane. Consider yourself warned.

In chemistry class during my senior year of high school, I learned my trio of guy friends had a code name for me, which was...wait for it...The Cheese. I certainly mulled over that discovery for days. I suppose I should have been flattered (and maybe worried) that they talked about me enough to warrant a nickname. Yet I was primarily concerned with their choice. Why, oh why, did it have to be The Cheese? *Do I eat my string cheese*

too conspicuously during lunch break? Do they see me riding the school bus, which is known as the big cheese? Do they think I am cheesy in my expressions and behavior? Do I smell like brie?!!?

Even with nine years of hindsight, it still confounds me. But whatever. I realize my friends had no malicious intent and their selection was most likely random. Nowadays, I am troubled by a different “why.” Why did I spend so much time and emotional energy fretting over that? If I found out my work colleagues have a secret name for me (oh, please let it not be “bitch”), it would probably bother me a little at first. Then I’d get over it. I just don’t care what people think of me anymore. Okay, that’s a lie. I still care, too much in fact, but it’s less than I did as a teenager. Even that smidgen of freedom makes it disproportionately easier to function in this world.

Saving Francesca reminded me of all this so brilliantly. When Frankie and her friends learn the boys have code names for them --Slut Spice, Bitch Spice, Stupid Spice, and Butch Spice--and then frantically try to match each girl to their name, my brain screamed, “THE CHEESE!” And the book had several moments like this for me, when something in the book forcefully evoked my high school experience. For instance, looking up and being baffled as to how you and your childhood best friend ended up in different cliques. In my case, I ended up in the IB/AP nerdy, goody-two-shoes, which disallowed speaking to my old friend with the religious, goody-two-shoes because, of course, we were like soooo different.

Nowadays, although I bow down to Marchetta’s skill in channeling the voice and mindset of a teenager, I have different needs and expectations as a reader. Hence it only received three stars. If I’d read this book in high school (or even middle school), it would have been a no-brainer five stars. Thirteen-year-old Cassy wanted books that empathized.

Will you indulge me for one more flashback?

After calling my big sister to come pick me up early from the homecoming dance during junior year, I ended up leaning up against my bedroom door and bawling. Wondering how I could have been standing in the middle of a gym packed with sequined, giggling classmates and still felt so alone. If I feel Francis’ pain today, back then I would have *swam* in it. I can picture myself squeezing this book to my chest as I cried and cried that night. Muttering, “You get it, Francesca, I know you do.”

Arianna◆*SteamyReadsBlog*◆ says

4 Stars!!

Melina Marchetta is a new author for me so I didn’t know what to expect reading this novel. I haven’t read many YA novels, but I can say “*Saving Francesca*” was very different from all the YA I’ve read so far. “*Saving Francesca*” is a moving story about family, friendship, love, growing-up, finding yourself and also about depression. The story is told entirely from Francesca’s POV, our 16 years old heroine, a girl who’s struggling with her ‘new reality’.

She’s one of the new 30 girls at St. Sebastian School, a predominantly all-boys school, that has recently opened its doors to girls for the first time ever. Francesca doesn’t feel very lucky being at St Sebastian. She’s having a tough time. She lost her old friends and she’s doesn’t have any at this new school. The boys are not very welcome with her and with the others girls. They are very sexist and they don’t want to welcome them

in any way. Our heroine's 'world' is shattered when one morning her very active mother who expects Francesca to change the world, doesn't want/can't get out of bed. She's suffering from depression and Francesca doesn't know what to do with herself, with her little brother or with her father.

She feels lost and lonely. She doesn't know anymore who she is, feeling depressed herself. Her mother's depression affects her entirely family and Francesca only wants to save her family, but first she needs to save herself.

Honestly, I never expected to like this novel as much as I did. After the first chapters I thought this will be another boring YA. Well, I'm glad to say I wasn't bored for one moment. "*Saving Francesca*" was a fantastic, engaging, captivating read and I devoured it from start to finish. This novel has everything. It's funny, it's emotional, it also has some romance and many interesting topics very well covered.

This novel it's one of the best character-driven story I've read so far. Melina Marchetta did a fantastic job creating Francesca's character. Her development is pure and simple stellar. She's a lovable character from the start. She made me be invested in the story. I felt for her at times, I sympathize with her at some point, I smiled or grinned with her and with her new friends and I totally can say she's a character I would like to meet in RL. She felt real and so relatable. She's genuinely a good person. She loves her family and all she wants is to save them. Her determination and her strength are admirable. She's just 16 years old, but at times I felt I was reading about a grown-up. She was really mature at times. Her relationship with her brother was lovely. I really felt how much she loves him, wanting to protect him and being there for him when everything around them collapse.

The story it's angsty, yes, but it's that kind of angst I enjoy. It's not overwhelming, so the story has just the perfect amount of drama. The dialogue was witty and engaging and I loved the cute moments between the girls as much I as loved all the sweet moments between Francesca and a certain boy. Also the interactions between Francesca and her family felt real to me. They were sweet and at times intense and emotional.

Francesca's friends are endearing characters as well. They all are so adorable. I liked how different they are from each other, how they interacted with each other, how real they felt. All of them are characters you will want to meet in RL and to be friends with.

"*Saving Francesca*" it's not really a romance. It's more a YA/realistic fiction novel, so don't expect much romance. IMO the story has the perfect amount of romance (which btw it's very gentle and sweet). After all, it's a YA novel.

All in all, "*Saving Francesca*" was a great YA novel (one of the best I've read so far) with endearing, well developed characters, captivating storyline and engaging writing.

If you like YA novels, I totally recommend this one!

may 🌸 says

i cant believe i 3 starred this on my first read. im blocking @ fetus may she knew nothing

~~~~~

*Reread and buddy read* with this cupcake

i literally forgot everything that takes place in this book but i still HAVE TO READ PIPER'S SON SO here we are

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### ?★Tinja★ A Court of Pizza and Laziness says

THIS BOOK!!!! AAAHHH THIS BOOK ??

I loved, loved it so much! To me it was such a powerful and emotional read. I cried a couple times, I was just really feeling for Francesca. I was feeling WITH Francesca. One of the best things to me in this book was the gang; Justine, Tara, Siobhan, Jimmy, Thomas. Such wonderful, beautiful friendships I can't even ?

The thing is, I don't like emotionally heavy books and this book really wasn't. I mean it kind of was but it was so, so humorous! I can't remember how many times I cracked up! And I loved the audiobook. The narrator was great, I looved her Aussie accent. I'll definitely re-read this one. If anyone knows similar books like this, please please send recommendations!!!!

AMAZING!!! GAHHH I TRY TO CALM DOWN NOW

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### Tatiana says

#### Updated 6/29/2016

Nobody writes friendships and dialogue quite like Melina Marchetta.  
Weird attitude towards anti-depressants though.

#### Updated 8/16/12

So, two years later after my original reading of *Saving Francesca* and I am removing a star. I've been claiming for a long time that this novel was my favorite by Marchetta, but it's not true any more. Let's see where my rereading of the entire Marchetta catalog leads me, however at this point I am certain I now prefer her fantasies. Truly, her later novels are simply better.

#### Original review

Within just a few days (and books) Melina Marchetta has become one of my favorite YA writers. Just like my other favorite author E. Lockhart, she writes about teens and she knows what she is talking about, unlike some YA authors who should not be named.

Let's take *Saving Francesca*. The story is set in *St. Sebastian* - a not so long ago all-male school that just recently turned co-ed. You might expect this book to be quite a romp - this school at first appears to be a paradise for girls with male to female ratio of 25 to 1. But Marchetta knows better. *St. Sebastian* is a deeply sexist place where girls are either completely ignored or viewed as sexual objects. Neither are the boys portrayed as suave sex gods (as seems to be the trend these days). They are quite obnoxious, sometimes infuriating and stinky creatures with (maybe) some redeeming qualities.

Francesca Spinelli is one of the "lucky" 30 girls. She is having a tough time. She doesn't have any friends in her new school and acquiring new girl friends out of so few is not easy. Plus, her mother, the rock of her

family, suddenly succumbs to an acute depression.

Saving Francesca is about Francesca's journey to find her strength and save herself from despair, to find friendships in the most unexpected places and maybe love.

The book covers all familiar topics from Marchetta's other novels. It is about mothers and daughters, friendships, finding strength in yourself. It is full of humor and honest emotion. It is funny and it is heartbreaking.

I enjoyed every sentence of it.

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### **Emily May says**

Between the beautiful Edward Cullens and the sexy Salvatore brothers of today's young adult literature, it's easy to see why teenage girls think they're doing something wrong when all they get is Rob with the mullet who likes to fart and swear in the classroom. That's what I like so much about this book... it's not a story of beautiful, unrealistic people or the abnormally brave and self-sacrificing. This is the most honest depiction of school, boys and family for a teenager that I have ever read.

The description promised something that I have read a million times over, the good old high school novel about guy troubles with a bit of homelife worries thrown in. But Melina Marchetta takes a simple, exhausted idea and uses her excellent writing and multi-faceted characters to create something unique, entertaining and completely moving. I wouldn't have bothered with this book if it hadn't been for Tatiana's recommendation and I am now extremely glad for it. This is the first Melina Marchetta book I've read and it definitely won't be the last.

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### **Kim says**

The people who know me around here, know that I have a hard time expressing my feelings about books I like. Well... No wait, I'm sorry, this is all wrong because I don't like this book.

*I love it.* Every single word on every single page.

This was the first time that I didn't want to finish a book because I had so much fun reading it. I felt really happy and really sad at the same time when I turned the last page.

Many many thanks to all the Bookers who recommended this book to me. I'm sure I would never have read this if you guys hadn't told me about it. Thank you Olivia, for ordering it so I could take it home with me. I really appreciate your kindness.

I'm really looking forward to reading *The Piper's Son* but I'm going to wait just a few days before I devour that book. Because I already know I won't be able to stop once I read the first page.

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## **Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says**

**My thoughts after reread** : My *WHAT?* My *THOUGHTS?* Are you kidding me? Do I look like I'm able to think?

Francesca. Tara. Will. Jimmy. Luca. Mia. Bob the builder. *Tom*. You ruined me for life, you know that?

**Dysfunctional. Hysterical. *Bastards*.  
Endearing. Unforgettable. *Real*.**

➔ I didn't know **anything** about how fantastic realistic fiction could be before meeting these characters a year ago.

Saving Francesca is so... *clever* - nothing feels forced, and it becomes magical when I feel as if everything is relatable to me, even when really, it isn't - it *shouldn't*. And yet, I have much to say about trying to fit in. I have much to say about growing up in a crazy family that I wouldn't change for the life of me. I have much to say about the importance of friendship and being true to yourself. **I'm sure you have, too.**

**" I agree with Thomas," Tara Finke says.**

**Thomas Mackee looks horrified. "Don't."**

**"Don't what?"**

**"Don't agree with me." He looks around at his friends, and with his finger twirling around his head, he makes the "she's cuckoo" sign."**

Oh, Thomas. You little shit. ~~I really need to reread The Piper's Son.~~

**Original review : September 2014**

***Do you know this book? Have you read this book? Why haven't you read this book? Please read this book.***

Seriously, you have to read it. It's freaking awesome.

**That's just life.**

I'm always wary when I open a contemporary book. Too much pretending. It could seem to be easier to write a book which deals with normal stuff, but I really think that's in fact the exact opposite. I mean, there is a freedom in fantasy that you just can't use in contemporary. When a character acts like a fool in a paranormal book, I'm actually pretty clement.

But in a book which is supposed to picture the real life?

I'm like, "*Who does that?*"

So when I began *Saving Francesca*, I didn't expect anything.  
I was just, "*What's this title? Is that an Italian tale?*"

And here I am : **This book turned my brain upside down.**

As I said, ~~yeah, I know, repeat, repeat~~, this book is just life. Unlike many characters in young adult, these are **believable**. Because **no**, teenagers aren't *that* awesome. Maybe we haven't the same men in France, but I rarely see a eight-pack man in real life. And in *High-School*? Let me laugh. Sorry writers, but in real life we are **flawed**. Stressed. Definitely not that confident.

These characters aren't perfect. **I loved them.**

Let's begin with **Francesca**. She doesn't know who she is. Thanks to her old friends, she used to think it was better if people didn't notice her. In the beginning of the book, she hides all the time. From class mates, from her mother, from herself. And let's be clear, **seeing her opening and taking risks is fucking great..** Because that girl, who wants to seem shy? She's a smart-ass. She's funny and strong-minded. She's the sister you want and the friend you would choose. She's real. Realistic. Actually, she changes her personality to fit in. What could be more realistic for a teenager? *Of course* teenagers do that. Even if we put a "rebel label" on ourselves, we are always trying to fit in when we're in High-school. *What were you?*

**It was so refreshing to listen to Francesca's voice.** I actually stopped many times to say "Exactly!" out loud (to be frank, I said "Exactement!").

Here : "*I'd read fantasy if they had simple names like Jane and Bob from Wagga,*" I said. "*Why does it have to be Tehrana and Bihaad from the World of Sceehina?*" So true.

And here : "*We have a massive debate about which Buffy season was the best and an Angel versus Riley versus Spike dispute (...)*." Obviously on Team Spike, by the way. Are there *really* other teams? Just Kidding. Almost.

Annnd here : "*I once heard one of the girls say that he had the voice of a sex god, but because I've never really heard what a sex god sounds like, I can't verify that.*" Damn. I've said it before.

Now what can I say about the love interest, **Will**?

No, he doesn't have a eight-pack.

No, he doesn't *stare* and *smirk* and *chuckle* all the freaking time. And thank you very much, **he doesn't glare.**

You know, he's just your best friend. Your first love. Your brother. He's flawed, he doesn't know how to react sometimes. He makes mistakes, he's afraid of the future, confused. **He's cute.**

"*I was born seventeen years ago,*" I tell him. "*Do you think people have noticed that I'm around?*"  
"*I notice when you're not. Does that count?*"

Francesca hangs out with a bunch of friends in San Sebastian's. I didn't expect such a great portrayal of actual people. Like Francesca, they hide under a shell but I found them really interesting, especially **Siobhan**. Writers often fail to move beyond stereotypes when they deal with the 'slut issue'. That's pretty fair, and it's enough rare to be pointed at.

**Oh, I almost forgot.** We have real boys here.

*"These guys fart a lot as well. I'm not saying that girls don't. We just aren't as passionate about them."*  
Believe me, true boys here. I'm a teacher. I know.

This book made me laugh, and it made me cry as well. I don't usually cry when I read. Just look at my "OMG I cried" shelf. There's less than 10 books. I never expect to cry when I read a young-adult book. But, you know, **it just happened**. I was there, laughing at a stupid joke Thomas made and suddenly I was crying. Dealing with depression is really complicated, and rarely well done. Authors often offer us a bunch of generalities with the happily ever after pack. That's not the case here. Be careful, I'm not saying it ends bad. I'm not even saying how it ends. No. But Melina Marchetta succeed in moving me, giving me knots in my stomach. I **care** about Francesca. About her family. About her friends. That's not a very common occurrence.

Our journey stops here. Read this book.**Now.**

*For more of my reviews, please visit:*

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## **karen says**

"i was born seventeen years ago," i tell him. "do you think people have noticed that i'm around?"

"i notice when you're not. does that count?"

seriously - that is barf-in-your-mouth sweet (in a good way) and part of why i love this marchetta gal. she writes boys you wish you had dated when you were sixteen. not now - now i would see through a line like that in a heartbeat, but at sixteen? hook line and sinker, man. put the apple schnapps away, boy, you will not be needing it tonight.

(full disclosure - this is a post-goodreads-party DBR.)

(just a little D, but enough to make my syntax awkward, is the excuse)

yeah, i can understand the melina marchetta hype now. i can see why all the ladies are loving all over her. and while i think *jellicoe road* is a much more profound and moving book, just because the scope of it is about four times bigger than this one, this book has got some moves all its own. and i am officially hooked and will read every last word of hers. soon.

marchetta's strength is in her characters. they are never one-dimensional, even if they are only background players. she writes with a depth that eludes a lot of contemporary authors, even those whose audience is intended to be older and more discriminating. she shines a light on all the nooks and crannies that make up a personality, but nothing ever seems forced, everything is "just so". she is a dream-writer, what i have been looking for.

can i just be human here?? not a book "reviewer??" eerrrrggghgghhhh. that is how she makes me feel. and that's in response to all of it: why can't i write like her? why can't i have friends like this?? why is my life full of shit i can't handle but her characters overcome sensibly and with an excellent support system? why? why? why? because it is all wholly realistic and attainable, i just don't have it. and i am full of envy, even though

these characters kind of go through some shitty times. i want to be capable like abby lockhart. instead i am short of temper and i just shut down into silent distant mode. there is a lot i could learn from these books.

she doesn't write the ideal - these aren't brady bunch characters, but they are just that much better than me. they have reserves of strength that i maybe used to have but lost along with my youthful metabolism.

wow - when i am D, my reviews become more about me than usual. i should probably conclude this before i start sobbing on your shoulder about the one that got away and the stuffed animals they burned when i had smallpox or whatever.

this is a huge "should have" book for me and now it would be wiser if i went to lie down and stop typing before i get too 'motional.

come to my blog!

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## Lily ?? says

I don't know how I could have read this book *twice* and given it anything less than five stars, because **Saving Francesca is very clearly a five-star book**, and my past self obviously had no appreciation for its level of brilliance (or was influenced by the cover, but still).

To sum May & Lily's br up: caps locks were abused, feelings were felt, **tears were shed**. (rtc)

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Yes, I'm reading *Saving Francesca* for the third time, whilst stressing out about reading ARCs and writing reviews, but I have three (3) very good reasons (!!!):

- 1) It's a beautiful book.
- 2) My average rating will go up and ~~my friends~~ people will stop roasting me for being a critical reader.
- 3) Thomas, The Piper's Son.

❁ **buddy reread** with Illumimay

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## **Eh?Eh! says**

Thank you, Tommy! VD forever!!! ;)

I think I used to pursue only fantasy books because I thought I had to read about magic in order to have those magical transporting feelings, you might know the ones, like when Mathilda knocks over the glass with her mind and in the end stays with Miss Honey; like when Bran desperately reaches out with the crystal sword to cut the first blooming spray from the Midsummer tree; or how about when Amberle looks back at Wil and as he screams she reaches out to the Ellcrys and begins to transform; and especially like when Jenny Waynest jumps over the parapet to rise up on wings of pearl...ahh.

My reading life has had some changes and painful realizations over the past several years. Fantasy hasn't been able to cut it for me for a long time. I'm slowly, slowly coming to terms with the undeniable fact that high-minded literature and much of non-fiction are too high above my mind for me to grasp like they should be grasped (echoes of VirJohn!). It's been easier to admit that I still enjoy YA books; the high-minded peers through its pince-nez to sneer at me while YA joyfully launches itself into my arms. And an odd book-related lack that I've been having trouble identifying, an absence of transport and ecstatic imagination, is now pinned down: I'd been lamenting that I can't seem to find books that make me gaze at nothing dreamily and come back to myself feeling...better, maybe happier or calmer, hopeful. I may have been stubbornly clinging to the misconception that only reading about magic-magic can produce the magic-y sense.

I love this book. I got the magic-y feeling on page 103. No, not the mention of Colin Firth, I don't have a Pavlovian drool reflex at the sight of his name. Without spells or witchery, I was with Francesca with tears in her eyes and her misfit friends in front of a tv knowing that I was recognized and accepted...Marchetta is amazing. The only thing I didn't like was how neatly just about everything wrapped up towards the end, with people speechifying emotionally in a way that's too perfect to be real. Perfect and joltingly false.

It seems to be a mother-daughter story and fitting in at school, but that's too limited a description. It's family, "growing up," friendship, and love. It's funny. I was 'killing myself laughing' and despite that phrase getting repeated repeatedly I never tired of it. I'm eager to read more Marchetta and run after this rainbow's end of magic without magic.

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