



Unexpected

Jenny Frame

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Self-made business owner Dale McGuire has always enjoyed two things in life: women and fast cars. Now in her mid thirties, she's restless and can't work out why. Then one day a ten-year-old boy turns up, claiming to be her son, and her simple ordered world turns upside down.

Rebecca Harper bears the emotional scars of her father's crimes, and now she has two rules: never let anyone get too close, and never admit weakness. Thanks to an anonymous egg donor, infertility didn't stop her from having her son Jake. Now pregnant for a second time, she's horrified when Jake brings home the woman he believes is his other mother.

When distrust turns to understanding and passion, can Dale and Rebecca, two women bound by fate, make a family neither expected?

Unexpected Details

Date : Published August 15th 2017 by Bold Strokes Books

ISBN : 9781626399426

Author : Jenny Frame

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Romance, Lgbt, Lesbian, Butch Femme, Lesbian Fiction, Glbt

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Bib says

I liked the storyline and plot a lot, but not so much on the way it is written. The book is entertaining nevertheless.

Lexxi Kitty says

I received an ARC of this book from NetGalley and Bold Strokes Books in exchange for an honest review.

For various reasons, this is a difficult review to write. Partly because I'm writing immediately after finishing the book and . . . stupid book made it difficult to see.

Title of the book is 'Unexpected'. That was definitely an unexpected result. Finding myself with wet eyes. Unexpected.

Book stars Dale McGuire and Rebecca Harper - though there are three point of views. With the third point of view that of Ashley, bitch reporter (in many many ways). All three are near the end of their third decade of life on Earth, though the only one whose age I know is Dale - 36.

There's a mix of cultures here - Dale, Scottish, and from the East end of Glasgow (which I think is supposed to imply something like the working class section or something, I don't know Glasgow), Rebecca 'Becca' Harper - English, and as Dale noted, even though Rebecca currently lives in a run down house, she's still 'posh', or upper class.

Both of the main characters, and I'm not including Ashley in 99% of this review, have 'issues' that they faced long ago, and the ramifications of those issues still haunt them. I don't want to give everything away, of course, so I'll just note that Dale is quite good at picking up women (without trying), but doesn't believe she's good enough to be in a relationship because of her past; while Rebecca can't allow herself to be in a romantic relationship because her trust was broken long ago, and the woman she was with after that couldn't stand the idea of children. And Rebecca needed children.

Which is how Rebecca and Dale meet up. They didn't bump into each other in a bar, dance floor, or the like, like Dale normally ends up meeting women, no, they meet up through a little fella named Jake. 10 year old Jake. Jake, you see, has seen how . . . poorly his mother, Rebecca, has been recently and has gone looking for help. And has turned to Dale - just turning up on her doorstep (well, at her place of work). For, you see, Dale got a little bit of extra money about 11 years ago when she donated eggs to a fertility clinic. And Jake, with his massively high IQ, had hacked the place and gotten Dale's name. The 36 year old who never thought she'd have children or deserved them has a ten year old demanding help from her.

Naturally Dale, knowing Jake's family must be worried about him, rushes him back to his house in a small village nearish (by about 20 minutes by car (ETA: actually, it might be more like an hour - if I recall the drive Dale went on)) to London. The mother she meets there, Rebecca, wants nothing to do with Dale and demands that she leave.

Dale had made a promise to Jake though and . . . well, complications ensue. Not just because of that promise, of course.

Meanwhile, in a side thread, Ash is hooked up with the daughter of an owner of a newspaper - and circulation is down. Ash is going to need to come up with a big story to justify her existence and big salary. So she's hunting around for a story and 'lucks' upon a photograph that shows Victoria Carter -the Carter story, that Ash broke, 'made her'. If she could just track Victoria down again . . . she'd be set.

And yes, the two plot lines converge . . . eventually.

Of note:

sex - occurs and is graphic.

characters - there are more people of importance than those I've already mentioned, including Sadie (next door neighbor to Rebecca), Val & Sammy (Dale's friends; along with their kid Mia), and Trent - Rebecca's lawyer and ex-lover. This is in addition to Rebecca (and Jake), Dale, and Ash (and Ash's girlfriend who I haven't named).

Rating: 4.55

August 7 2017

Danni Mladenovic says

The copy provided by NetGalley and Bold Strokes Books Inc. in exchange for an honest review

Dale is mid thirties but stil acts like she just got out of her teen years... A magnet for women, she uses that without blinking. Is she happy living like that? Not exactly, but her past and her family issues as a burden convinced her that there is no other way for her. So one day, when a cute child named Jake appears at her door claiming to be her son, she's stunned! Surely he couldn't be! Yes, she donated her eggs after a moment of selflessness and/or stupidity, but this can't be the truth! And then she meets Jake's mom Rebecca! Stubborn and independent but in dire need of help because of her health she clashes with Dale at first, but reluctantly agrees for Dale to help with some errands. Rebecca is everything Dale wants in a woman, but is she ready to open herself completely to this woman? Moreover, is Rebecca ready to try a serious, co-parenting relationship with someone that never lasted with the same woman more that couple of nights? This is a nice book. The characters are nicely written, the plot is good. I particularly liked the development of Dale as a person and as a parent/partner. There is a beautifully written transition from a careless human being to a very responsible adult.

Kara says

“Unexpected” was very....wait for it....unexpected!

First, the cover made me think that the plot would involve an unexpected pregnancy for a lesbian, perhaps as the result of a drunken one-nighter such as with “Tats” (by Layce Gardner and Saxon Bennet). Oh, yes, the art folks certainly managed to stretch yet another cover for the audiobook. Creating art takes

talent...transferring art from one aspect ratio to another takes a special kind of talent to screw up what should be an easy task.

Secondly, this book is by Author Jenny Frame. Despite there now being six of her books on Audible, many well reviewed by GR friends, my only previous experience with her books is "Heart of the Pack" - one of the most truly awful books I've ever listened to.

So, what was most unexpected by me is the result - I really enjoyed "Unexpected". I chose to listen to this book immediately after the terrific "The Secret Pond", and it compares very well. As with "Pond", in "Unexpected", we also have two women trying to come to terms with tragedies in their past. Also as with "Pond", it takes a precocious 9yo boy to act as a human emulsifier to bring the women together and combine everyone into a family.

At 36yo, successful business owner Dale is tired of the one-night-stand bar scene and works hard to convince Becca that she has more substance than her reputation as a player. Intensely private Becca is reluctant and distrustful, but is eventually won over, in part, by Dale's endless stream of truly terrible jokes!

Why do cows wear bells? Because their horns don't work!

Oh, there's more...lots more. My RL friends are avoiding me until I tire of telling them every one of these!

Dale's desire and efforts to protect Becca and Jake are very believable, as is Becca's desire to be touched and loved again after so many years alone. Becca's former gf Trent is believable in her role, as are Dale's friends at the office. The villainess is rather over-the-top batshit crazy, even if her reason for hating Becca was finally explained. I would have liked to have seen the individual who betrayed Dale for money exposed, but despite the betrayal we get a wonderful HEA.

The narrator did a fantastic job with Scottish and upper-middle class English accents, and she really added to my enjoyment of "Unexpected". 4.5*, and once again I wish goodreads offered half-star ratings. This is much better than many books I've rated 4*, but isn't quite as stellar as most of my 5* rated books (I preferred "The Secret Pond", for example). Still, this was very enjoyable to listen to, and perhaps partly because of the unusual accents I'll probably relisten to it, so 5* for "Unexpected".

Diane Wallace says

'Netgalley ARC provided by the Publisher in exchange for my unbiased review'

Liked! i'm beginning to see a similar pattern with all of Ms.Frame's books since i started reading,there is this particular sex slogan/rhyme in all of them: 'COME ON ME'..what is this? Ms.Frame's writings has become very repetitive as of late..not trying to critique her work too much but i've realize it's becoming a habit and her book is just enjoyable to us the readers...there was so much potential with this book but the storyline miss its mark on substance plus a wider range of juicier parts..backstory and a few good supporting cast help to create a little plot twist but then there was no chemistry to talk of between the leading characters..i'm not gonna get into the premise of the book because its not important at least the synopsis tells readers a bit of it..entertaining ending

Rosi says

I had only read one book from this author, *A Royal Romance*, and due to the poorly sensation that it left in me I have passed the following books that she has written. Now, this book as piqued my curiosity mostly by the positive reviews thas is having. And although I have liked rather more than the aforementioned, it has not been completely fulfilling for my tastes. I think that the story is too sweet, sugary, even syrupy, the characters are stereotyped in excess and the resolution is incomplete. For those who look for a romantic story with a bit of drama this book might be ok.

Carly says

I enjoyed this read, no angst and quite a sweet romance. I loved the plot and the characters although not sure about the selfish Ash as there wasn't much depth to her character, you got an understanding as to why she was viscous to Becca even though it was undeserved, but why she was as selfish and viscous to other women I wasn't sure of her reasoning. I also would have liked Dale to have discovered who the leak was within her work force. A sweet romance.

CLo says

Another great one by Frame 4.5*

I love Jenny Frame books and its easy to see why she is a favortie with this book. Dale and Becca are from two different sides of the track but the paths they have walked are very similiar. All the characters are great and do support and even progress the main story without stealing the spotlight. I did feel Ash's part if the story was underplayed and felt like I was waiting for the shoe to drop the entire time and didn't really get the closure I was hoping or looking for with that line. Maybe that would have taken away or maybe there will more about in the future. Honestly the character I wanted to know more about when all was done was Nika...she has such a small role but for some reason her story stuck with me. Anyway, thats why the 4.5 rating but really it is easily a 5 and any fan of Frame will love it...i think...hope...maybe. Ah doesn't matter cause I did :)

Pin says

I am surprised how much I liked *Unexpected*. It is the fifth published book by Jenny Frame, and she has really grown as an author and storyteller. She remains true to herself and continues to write in her style (butch-femme relationship dynamics, vivid imagination, strong happily ever afters...), but her writing is more mature and confident than before, with all elements done quite properly. The main and secondary characters are very good, the plot is interesting and really holds one's interest all through. Only one thing about the plot was a bit of a let down for me -- not all subplots were resolved entirely (bribed Mike, used Nika, user and main villain Ashley). This is just a minor flaw and the story has not lost anything important, but I like to have all loose ends nicely wrapped up.

I recommend this book, and am looking forward to the next book by the author.

4.25 stars

Aug 12, 2017

ARC provided by publisher via NetGalley

Pippa says

4.5 stars

Dale McGuire built up her car-repair business from scratch. Now that it is a thriving business, and she has had her fill of fast cars and fast women, she's looking for something a bit more permanent in her personal life. When Jake, a ten-year-old boy, turns up one day claiming to be her son, Dale's world changes in a day.

Jake's mum, Rebecca Harper, is stunned to find that her brilliant son has found his birth mother. On the run from the world after escaping from her father's crimes, Rebecca is terrified of losing her son to his egg donor parent. Bound by their connection to Jake, both women struggle with the aftermath of the revelation, and their possible attraction.

This is a really unusual story. I really liked the unexpected plotline. Frame uses this to great advantage, while pulling in more standard romantic fiction tropes to ground the story into something eminently relatable. It is cleverly written and conceived.

Dale is a classic working-class lesbian who loves working with her hands. Smart and capable, she's built a business from scratch and works with her best friends. She has enough swagger to catch the eye of any woman she wants, but is bored by it all, and knows she is missing something.

Rebecca is more complex in some ways. Her middle-class upbringing is full of privilege, and she has managed to deal with most of the trauma inflicted on her by a criminal father and a fall from grace for the whole family. The fact that she is still in hiding is an indication of how much is still to come, in terms of plot.

Jake is an interesting creation. Most kids of that age are often not well written, and Jake is better fleshed-out than most. His brilliance excuses his higher knowledge in some areas, and his lack of social skills excuses social faux pas that would normally be difficult to come to terms with for an audience. It's quite a clever mix, but he never overtakes the main relationship in the book.

The romantic elements were all in place, and there was a nice build up between the two main characters, although there wasn't a huge amount of heat. Being a bit picky, I'd perhaps like a bit more build up in this case, to overcome the difficulties they both had at the start, and I'd give Dale a few more flaws, as she comes across as a little too perfect at times.

This was an easy book to read, and the different plot line kept it interesting all the way through. The resolution was a little quick, and more could have been developed toward the end here, but it is well resolved and works within the context of the romance. I really enjoyed it, and highly recommend it as a romance.

Luce says

4.5 Stars rounding up to 5 stars.

A really good, pleasant romance, Jenny Frame style. You've got your single Femme, Rebecca, a mother of a gifted 10 yr old son and she is pregnant with her second. Fiercely independent and private which leads to problems when her pregnancy is not going smoothly. Then you have your Butch, Dale. A player who has become weary of her lifestyle. I feel that Dale isn't Frame's typical Butch - a bit softer maybe? All the MC's are very likable, except for the villain of course. I also loved Jake, scarily genius but still a 10yr old if not younger socially.

Funny, it was one those books that I read over half in one sitting. Then I forced myself to slow down and not rush through it. I will warn you *everything* is very predictable. But it didn't matter to me. I enjoyed the book. Frame has become one of my favorite authors who's books I enjoy rereading. I'm looking forward to her next book, "Charming the Vicar" with the Vicar, Bridget from Courting the Countess.

Alealea says

I was hooked at 5%. The story was full of promises. Interesting main and secondary characters, a beginning who reminded me of the tv-show Once upon a time with a bright and cute ten-year-old kid popping up and saying "Luke I'm your father" ... Oups, wrong story, let me rewind, ... and saying "Your are my mom !" .

Nice beginning.

Then it goes slowly downhill because after being introduced, most secondary characters become mere figurants, including the kid.

And the two main seem to repeat the same conversation, over and over, in their heads, with each other, and sometimes a passerby. This gets tiresome to hear, the "Trust me, I will take care of you"/"I can't, it's not you it's me, okay, but I really can't".

The story could have been way much more if there wasn't such an imbalance with those two.

But Dale is stuck in the prince in shining armor persona while Becca has the unlucky pick to be the princess in need of savior. Despite many "No way, I can do it myself", she gave in.

Conclusion ? It's a fairy tale, sweet if you like some unidimensional characters going through the motions to reach HEA.

It's a 2.5 for me and I rounded it up to 3 stars because I'm in awe with Nicola Victoria Vincent voice (except for the love scenes which despite her efforts sounded more ridiculous than anything, I wish we had the possibility to skip them over easily in an audio version...)

Lex Kent says

I was going to make some corny joke about how unexpected this book was, but I will save you all from that. I have read almost all of Frame's books, and they have been really up and down for me. It almost feels like Frame has been trying to find her perfect zone as a writer, but had not quite gotten there yet. Well, that is until now. For me, this was by far Frame's best book yet.

This is a sweet, family-style romance. While the chemistry was not jumping off the pages at you, it was such a feel good romance that I didn't mind. I was absolutely sucked into the story from page one, and enjoyed every second of it.

There are two main characters Dale and Becca. Both characters have flaws, but there is valid reasons for them. They are really likeable characters especially Dale. At times Dale was almost too good to be true, but I was so caught up in this fairy tale type romance, I didn't care. There also were a few kid characters in this book. I think Frame does a good job of writing kids in lesfic. She did well in *Courting the Countess*, and again in this book.

My only small complaint, the crazy ex storyline, I didn't like. You are in the POV of an awful women named Ash. It does not take up too much of the book, thank goodness. I know Frame did this for a little excitement, but I was enjoying the romance and didn't want this to interfere. Luckily, the way the conflict occurred, was handled well. I could feel a sigh of relief come out of me. It did not ruin the book and I am so grateful.

This is easy to recommend to sweet romance fans. I have a feeling a lot of people are really going to like this one. As I said above, I believe this is Frame's best by far. I look forward to reading more books of hers like this.

An ARC was given to me by BSB for a honest review.

Kath says

I absolutely loved this audiobook, not only because of narrator did such an amazing job. It's a heartwarming book about two souls finding each other.

Heinerway says

This was a sweet romance, with one of the most likeable main character I've ever found. Definitely one of the best books by Jenny Frame, if not the best.
