



The Friday Society

Adrienne Kress

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An action-packed tale of gowns, guys, guns—and the heroines who use them all

Set in turn of the century London, *The Friday Society* follows the stories of three very intelligent and talented young women, all of whom are assistants to powerful men: Cora, lab assistant; Michiko, Japanese fight assistant; and Nellie, magician's assistant. The three young women's lives become inexorably intertwined after a chance meeting at a ball that ends with the discovery of a murdered mystery man.

It's up to these three, in their own charming but bold way, to solve the murder—and the crimes they believe may be connected to it—without calling *too* much attention to themselves.

Set in the past but with a modern irreverent flare, this Steampunk whodunit introduces three unforgettable and very ladylike—well, relatively ladylike—heroines poised for more dangerous adventures.

The Friday Society Details

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Author : Adrienne Kress

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From Reader Review *The Friday Society* for online ebook

Liviana says

When I picked up *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY*, I wasn't expecting a ton. Steampunk is one of those subgenres that I kind of enjoy but often find overrated. I was pretty into the first chapter though, wherein Cora discovers a rich guy got himself hired for her job and deals with it through explosions. Then the book kept getting better.

Cora, Michiko, and Nellie are all assistants. It's about the best job a girl can aspire to in Edwardian London. Working in a lab got Cora off the streets. Nellie took her burlesque skills to a higher-profile job as a magician's assistant. And Michiko came to Japan to teach samurai skills, but found herself being exploited as a fight assistant because she can't speak much English. But the three girls band together after a ball, when they all stumble upon a head without a body.

Basically, *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY* takes Joss Whedon-esque dialogue, proto-feminism, and superheroes, mixes those things in a blender, then sprinkles them over a murder mystery involving grave robbing, fog, and the destruction of a beloved landmark. If there's one fault in the novel, it's that the explosions of the first chapter take a long time to show up again.

All three girls have their own skills, and they complement each other well. I liked that there wasn't much romance in *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY*. There are make-outs and hints of attractions to be played out in later books, but Cora, Michiko, and Nellie aren't girls who need a man. They're clever and determined enough to thrive in a society that deems them second-class citizens. (Probably lower in Michiko's case.)

I honestly hope that Adrienne Kress will write a sequel (or two) to *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY*. It's great fun and these are characters I'd love to hang out with again. Plus, she uses the steampunk setting well. (By which I mean: mad science!) *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY* was not only better than I expected - it would've been better than I expected if I had high hopes.

Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says

I am conflicted - that 4 might change after a few days' think. Some parts, like the girls themselves, were excellent. Witty. Funny. Other parts, like anachronistic language and the vastly under-developed romances were... not good. At all.

It was fun, it was fluffy, there were lots of explosions. Some feats of daring and sleuthing, but *The Friday Society* also felt.. overextended at times. 440 pages is respectable, but I couldn't help think that some parts were unnecessarily dragged past their due date.

So. Like I said: conflicted.

Shannon says

I want to read this book noooooooooow.

Is it just me or does it seem like there are more and more Japanese protagonists lately? And look! There's even a Japanese girl on the cover! Good for them. I'm glad they didn't white-wash the cover ... I'm looking at you, *The Immortal Rules* :<

Eden says

The girls carry this story. There's a flair to the third-person, anachronistic narration style that identifies each protagonist; it's this style that somehow distinguishes Cora (sarcastic, pragmatic) from Nellie (frank, cheerful; she's how I imagine a typical American Southerner to be like) from Michiko (dry, focused), and it's all done well. A few quotes to illustrate what I mean:

Lord White had her [Cora] put on the goggles he'd had custom made to fit her tiny ten-year-old frame, handed her the strangest-looking gun she'd ever seen, pointed it in the right direction, and told her to pull the trigger.

Just like that.

So she had. And the dummy's head in front of her had exploded into a million pieces.

"Great aim!" Lord White had laughed enthusiastically for a good five minutes after the destruction.

She had been in love with things exploding ever since.

What she didn't love was green goo.

And failure.

(p. 6)

Cora turned and looked at Nellie, who seemed surprised that the progress of her tying [Cora's corset] had been interrupted.

"Jealous?"

"It's petty. And it's not your fault. I hate seeing other girls get on with Raheem [Nellie's boss]. Especially girls my age. Women are okay, and they make fools of themselves flirtin' with him. But you... he seems to like you. And I don't want him likin' you better than he likes me. He's like a father to me, see."

Cora just stared at Nellie, who seemed perfectly relaxed and amiable.

"That's... honest."

"That's how I am. But don't worry. I know it's not your fault. And I know it's just me being all insecure and everything. I'll get over it. And I like you too much to let it bug me. Now turn around so I can tie you off."

(p. 128)

One of Callum's footmen opened the door slowly and peered around it. Callum [Michiko's boss] only had two, an older man, over sixty, and this one, a boy younger than even she was. Michiko had taken to nicknaming them "Shuu" (dried meat) and "Koukou" (baby chicken). Of course, nobody knew the meanings of the words, they just put up with her calling them that.

(p. 62)

The issue of Michiko speaking little English and thinking in Japanese also is excellently executed (*cough* Jay Kristoff's *Stormdancer* *cough*):

"Someone is in the alley to see you."

She understood most of the sentence except for "alley".

...

They stepped outside into the alley behind the row of terraced houses. Ah. So "alley" meant alley. Good to know.

(p. 62)

It's heartwarming to see Cora bounce off Nellie's nearly irrepressible cheer, and to watch Michiko decide whether she can dedicate herself to the samurai lifestyle. And the variety of secondary characters is wonderful: Raheem shows that not all older men are insufferable or self-centred; Hayao's bubbly personality allows Michiko's softer side to peek out. Our antagonists aren't as well-developed, but we still get a thoroughly creepy vibe from Dr. Mantis and understand the true antagonist's motive for turning so evil.

As for the potential love interests: Andrew is... an interesting character, and definitely an unusual one, and Cora's reaction to him is authentic and helps to develop her own character at the same time. And the scene in which Nellie and her policeman go on a date is a refreshing departure from the now-common intense lurve-filled dates of YA.

The mystery is pieced together with cute-if-useless policemen, break-and-enters into mansions and investigations in Parliament. Throughout it all, bits of worldbuilding slide neatly into place like puzzle pieces -- Cora provides a commentary of Parliament, Nellie squees over a steam cab and Michiko rolls her eyes as her boss carries on an affair with a client. Action scenes occur in the London Tower (or "Bloody Tower") and in a tunnel used for London foot traffic.

The finish is wonderful, pulling together the best elements of the writing style, the action sequences and the ultimate feel-good interaction between our gals. This is a book I'd reread. I hope most desperately for a sequel.

**Review originally published on Pass the Chiclets.*

Giselle says

Gowns, guys, and guns, you say? Yes please! Fun is the best word for this novel. It's a blast from start to finish. We definitely get a lot of guns, and really? Who cares about the rest?

To start with what matters the most: the characters. The three girls we meet in this novel are all spunky, charismatic, and each have their own highly addictive voices. I adored each one and I had a hard time choosing a favorite, but I think I have decided on Cora. Her sarcastic nature really clicked with my own. I liked her intelligence as well and the fact that she's a scientist (ok an assistant, but she blows stuff up!). I also liked her eccentric fling with Mr. Mysterious, particularly the part where she doesn't put up with his douche-side. Not far away, we have Michiko--a samurai in training, and Nellie--glamorous magician's apprentice.

Each girl brings about a wide variety of uniqueness to the group with their special skills and talents. Ultimately, Cora, Nellie, and Michiko team up to try to free London of its newest murderer. These three wacky personalities, no matter together or apart, gives us some great antics throughout the story. Their chemistry really flows perfectly, and in the end, the best part of this book is these girls. Hands down!

Steampunk not being my strongest genre, I appreciated the more modern setting of this novel. While it's set in the 1900's, I never felt bogged down by old-school dialogue or prose. I loved how it has a steampunk flair with gadgets, corsets, and all the good stuff, but it also maintains a modern feel that works with the character's personalities so well that it still completely fits the intentioned era of the story.

Fun and unique, the plot is also pretty good, but it does veer on the side of silliness. The girls teaming up is fairly random. They meet by chance, and they decide it would be a good idea to get together and become vigilantes--in costumes of course. That's about the gist of it. The set up for this teaming is essentially the first 3/4 of the book, with a murder mystery that I found a tad predictable (not on all counts, some things are left a secret but even those aren't shocking, just a reaction of "Oh. Well ok then."), and the motivation behind it all a little unconvincing. It kind of reminds me of a classic mystery cartoon episode where you're entertained thoroughly, but it's not especially profound, storywise.

With that said, when you're in the mood for an amusing, enlivening read, this is exactly the kind of book I would recommend to you. It may not have the most complex plot, but it's got a heck of a lot of charm that you won't be able to resist!

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at [Xpresso Reads](#)

Mav says

Interest sparked by her post on creating female characters:

<http://ididntchoosethis.blogspot.de/2...>

we as authors have been writing about people we aren't for forever. We find a way to empathise, we find a way in. Female characters are no different. All they are are characters. They are people too. Instead of asking yourself, "How do I write this female soldier?" ask yourself, "How do I write this soldier? Where is she from, how was she raised, does she have a sense of humour? Is she big and tall, is she short and petite? How does her size affect her ability to fight? What is her favourite weapon, her least favourite? Why? Is she more logical than emotional? The other way around? Was she an only child and spoiled, was she the eldest of six siblings and a surrogate mother? How does that upbringing affect how she interacts with her team? etc etc and so forth." Notice how the first question gets you some kind of broad, generalised answer, likely resulting in a stereotype, and how the second version asks lots and lots of smaller questions with the goal of creating someone well rounded.

One would hope, really, that we as authors ask such detailed questions of all our characters, regardless of gender.

So let me, at long last, actually answer the original question:

"How do I write a female character?"

Write her the way you would write any other character. Give her dimension, give her strength but please also don't forget to give her weaknesses (for a totally strong nothing can beat her kind of girl is not a person, she's again a type - the polar opposite yet exactly the same as the damsel in distress).

Create a person.

Cory says

This is the first review I've written in a few months. Bear with me. For the record, I received a copy of this book for review from Dial. And I'm "internet friends" with the author. Moving on --

The Friday Society is not the first of its kind. YA steampunk's been going strong (and, please, do not make the mistake of assuming I'm using that word in a positive way) since the publication of Cassandra Clare's Clockwork Angel, the first of her Infernal Devices series. As Cassandra Clare is a well known hack of the first degree, I have not read, and have no desire to read Clockwork Angel. But to be honest, I haven't read any steampunk fiction unless what I read of The Golden Compass, the first novel of the His Dark Materials trilogy, counts as steampunk. And according to my more genre savvy friends, it does not. Nor does Howl's Moving Castle.

You were warned. This review comes from a place of ignorance. Assuming that steampunk follows different rules from dystopic fiction (most YA "dystopic" fiction is not, for the love of God, dystopic, anyway) and paranormal romances, despite all of the above being speculative fiction, I will try to the best of my abilities to give this a fair go.

FYI: I am listening to this song as I write this review: Kanye West vs. The xx - Touch The Sky (Carlos Serrano Mix). Kanye's egotism in no way effected this review.

The Friday Society follows three girls: Cora -- our tough leader girl; Nellie -- our sexy, sassy girl; and Michiko -- the solemn fish out of water. It takes place in what I assume to be the standard alternate history of England's Victorian/Edwardian period -- where steam technology was popularized instead of coal. I'm under this impression because Nellie mentions traveling in a steam taxi multiple times. Other than that, I would've assumed it was just a rather creepy English setting in which the Brits seemed slightly off, but no more than usual.

We're given two chapters to introduce each character before we get to the actual plot. Unlike my attention span deprived peers, I'm a fan of set up. I like droolishly long plotless movies like The Graduate and American Beauty. I like character studies. There, I said it. Granted, I don't like boring shit like Twilight and Beautiful Creatures and Shiver where there's no actual character study -- just pages and pages of navel gazing wangst and purple prose and emo poetry -- but I don't mind a good bit of set up.

But this is the problem -- the entire book feels like set up for some awesomely awesome adventure that has the potential to blow your mind into a million different pieces. It's 400-plus-pages of something that could be THE NEXT BIG THING if only the plot would wake up and get, I don't know, interesting.

Yes, The Graduate takes a million years for young, virginal Ben to finally get into Mrs. Robinson's pants. But this is the thing -- we know he's going to get into her pants. That is just set up for the actual movie. And movies back then were different. Do you actually think something as god awfully boring as Citizen Kane or Casablanca (which I actually like) would get made in this day and age? No. This generation is too ADHD to give two fucks about slow, contemplative, thoughtful movies. They (meaning we, not me) watch shit like Transformers and Battleship Earth. God awful crap that makes me wish I'd had the common sense to spontaneously abort myself before I had the displeasure to be born into a generation that let The Dark of the Moon (what the fuck? it rips off of one of the greatest albums of all time and it can't even get the goddamn title right) become one of the highest grossing movies of all time.

But I digress. Have you seen The Prestige? It's one of Christopher Nolan's lesser known movies, right in front of The Following. Yes, I've actually seen every single movie Nolan's made except for Batman Begins. Anyway, the plot of The Prestige is simple -- revenge. That's it. Revenge. Magician #1 killed Magician #2's wife so #2 is going to fuck over #1 even if it kills him and destroys his soul by destroying #1's life. It's a tragic, under-appreciated movie filled with the usual Nolan-isms (dead girlfriends, women in refrigerators, complicated plot twists and turns and the nonsensical story arrangement that us Nolan fans love). Unfortunately, Edward Norton's The Illusionist (not a bad movie, but it was ruined by the rather bland Jessica Biel), came out that very same year, confusing witless audiences and making a general mess of the success it could have been.

Stick with me. There's a point in here. Somewhere.

The plot of any good movie (or book) can usually be summed up with one word. And it is most often the exact opposite of the character's fatal flaw. I have hammered on and on in my reviews about fatal flaws. Here's a quick summary: A fatal flaw is what a character has to overcome in order to succeed and further the plot. Aang -- childishness, Eragon -- being a loser (I kid), Riddick -- being a douchebag, Ripley -- caring too much. You get the point.

But here's the problem with The Friday Society. There isn't really one word to sum up the entire plot. In fact, the two girls on the left side of the cover don't even have real, fleshed out arcs. Yes, you heard me. The brunette -- Cora -- the main featured character on the cover -- does not have an interesting plot line. Well, at least she has one. It's something about duality and sexism and classism. I'll get back to it later. Nellie does not. I wish I could describe what her plotline was, but honestly, it's just not coming to me right now. Probably because it doesn't exist, but who knows? I could be wrong, right?

Nah.

I bet you're thinking "But what about the Asian chick on the right? She's interesting, isn't she?"

And the answer to that question would be --

YES!

SHE IS!

SHE IS SO MUCH MORE DAMN INTERESTING THAN THOSE OTHER TWO GIRLS I WISH THIS ENTIRE NOVEL WOULD BE ABOUT THE BADASSNESS THAT IS MICHIKO AND NOT BORING WHITE GIRL #1 AND BORING WHITE GIRL #2.

Okay, okay, Cora isn't that boring. She's kind of like a blander Rachel Bernstein, from the Animorphs. And I love Rachel, despite her Tobias obsession (I will never forgive you for that KA Applegate (MarcoxRachel ONTF!)). Rachel was a badass of the first degree. She was THE badass of the nineties. More so than Buffy or Sabrina or the countless other blonde action chicks that would later spawn up to show that gurl powah could be sexah AND empower-wang. Rachel was fucking awesome and to see Cora come so close to that awesomeness was rather disappointing.

And Nellie.

Nellie.

Sigh.

Well, Nellie could be played by Scarlett Johansson if this ever became a movie. That tells you all you need to know about her character. She's hot. She's got a few good lines. And I'd probably -- yeah, you don't want to hear that.

We're introduced to Cora first. She's a lab assistant for an ingenious opium addict. We're shown that she's a badass because she goes into an opium den to save her boss from... something. See, this scene has the potential to be really cool. But it isn't. I just don't feel Cora coming through. She's a watered down badass.

She's also kind of insecure about her place in society. One moment, she's uncomfortable about being a super rich guys assistant. The next, she's not. See, her boss rescued her from being a street rat or a prostitute, or something. It's not really elaborated on. And that's what could've made her interesting. More backstory. Conflict. Maybe more guilt about leaving her fellow street rats behind to become child sex slaves. I don't know. It was all very... weak.

Cora is also the only girl with a love interest. Well, kind of. Nellie gets one too, but she doesn't get any action. Not that Cora does either. Sure, she talks about maybe, kind of, having sex. Maybe. It's all kind of alluded to and danced around. Remember this for later.

Cora's love interest, Andrew, is interesting. Underdeveloped, yes, but interesting. The duality plot line surrounding him could have been a good short story but it is not enough for an entire plot line. I don't even know how it ties into the rest of the book.

Nellie is... um... yeah. Well, we know that she's a magician's assistant. She used to be a burlesque performer. That's about it. Her plot line is about... well, I don't really know. She meets a cute guy. Other things happen. I don't really know what flaws she has to overcome. At least Cora has the pretense of a fatal flaw. Nellie does not, unless being a guy magnet is a flaw? She also has an Irish accent. And she likes to hug. A lot.

So, what is the main plot of the book? Someone is murdered. There's a mystery. Blah. Snore. ZZZZZ. What's that? I fell asleep. I'm sorry. That's how captivating I found the plot. Not quite as bad as the plot of the Inkheart sequels (fuck you Cornelia Funke for ruining one of my favorite childhood stories by giving it not one, but TWO sequels that are HORRIBLE), but still pretty boring. It's about on par with Men in Black. Can you imagine that as a novel? Yes, it's a pretty movie, and the acting is great, but on paper, it'd be pretty damn

dull.

There's a generic bad guy. A generic group of bad guy thugs. A big reveal scene. A dramatic fight scene. Heroes refusing to kill. Join me! All of the things I hate about mystery/fantasy/action/adventure novels. If you were a villain, would you really spend twenty minutes explaining your big evil scheme to a group of teenage girls right before you planned kill them? I wouldn't. I'd just kill them. Kill them dead. And then I'd let my thugs ravish their dead bodies because when you're evil, you just don't give a fuck. I suppose that's why Kanye West could never be a legitimate villain in a superhero movie. I mean, can you imagine him opposite the Joker as Lex Luthor in a Batman/Superman movie?

"Now hold on Superman, imma let you finish dying, but my boy the Joker's deathray is the greatest deathray of all time and it's gonna blow your mind like yeezy, huh. And when we kill you, we gonna get that hoe Lois and... etc... etc... "

Hmm... nevermind. I can actually see that. Moving on.

So, yes, the main plot is completely unoriginal and boring.

And I see you asking, yet again, "But Cory, why did you give this three stars if you've done nothing but complain?"

And here is my answer to you -- because I like complaining. Would you actually read my reviews if I didn't complain? No, you wouldn't, because you people don't like reading positive mindless fluff filled GIF reviews (I like those, by the way) by people who only like weird books no one else reads. You like reading my rants. You like my digressions and my cussing and my whining. You expect me to hate every single book I read. So stop complaining. No one is forcing you to read this.

Now, for the *gasp* positive section of this review. Skip the next few paragraphs if you're allergic to positivity. I'll see you misanthropic baby hating puppy eaters on the other side of the rainbow in grouch land.

An open letter to Michiko:

Dear Michiko,

You are the best part of this book. When you first appeared, I was unsure of your character. I thought you'd be the token Asian, devoid of personality traits and flaws. Boy, was I wrong. Adrienne Kress, the author of this book, actually seemed to know what she was doing. She did motherfucking research for god sake! She knows the difference between kun and san and sama, something millions of Japanophile idiots still can't get down. It's like the bulk of her Japanese research didn't come from Wikipedia! That's an odd notion, isn't it? Not using Wikipedia as a main source for cultural research.

It's almost like Kress wanted you to be the star of this novel, but was too unsure of herself to have you feature as the title character. You are the only character with a fatal flaw, a plot line, an arc, a fully fleshed out character arc -- and interesting companions. You were the only character who's chapters I never skimmed. Your first scenes were interesting. Your doubt in yourself was convincing. I believed that you were a warrior, a true samurai.

And I love that you reject this to find yourself. To realize that it's okay to have fears -- to have emotions.

Kress, if you're reading this letter to your character, rewrite this novel. Do it for me. Tell it solely from Michiko's POV. Write the novel that Stormdancer wanted to be. The series that The Legend of Korra wanted to be.

Yours,
Cory

PS -- Give Michiko a love interest that sits in the background. I like a well done romance. I like sex. There, I said it. I. Like. Sex. A tasteful romantic plotline, like that of... um... I'm coming up short, but I'm sure they exist. That, or someone her age who speaks her language so I'm not left wondering why you didn't make her Chinese or Indian every time Nellie and Cora start speaking English so she can participate in their conversations. Because the English colonized parts of India and China. Meaning that the likely hood of someone Chinese or Indian speaking English would be greater. You do know that, right YA readers?

Why do I bother? I keep forgetting that we're the Transformers/Kanye generation.

At least Michiko isn't a Chinese samurai and there aren't motherfucking pandas in London. If you get those references, you are awesome.

PPS -- Readers, this girl ran away from home to escape an arranged marriage, trained illegally with a samurai, and lived with geisha, all before running away to England to further her training while upstaging her boss at every turn skill wise. Need I say more. She's a BAMF.

PPPS -- Hayao is awesome too.

Okay baby eating puppy haters -- I mean, puppy eating baby haters -- I'm done. You can unshield your eyes.

At first, I thought this novel would be like A Great and Terrible Beauty, the first book in the Gemma Doyle Trilogy. Not really. While Gemma Doyle reads like a YA novel, both in tone, content, and character, The Friday Society reads more like Upper MG. And that's not a bad thing, I guess. But I was expecting something more mature. The juvenile voice hurt this novel. The writing isn't bad, but I didn't believe any of the girls were older than fourteen. I mean, I'm eighteen. Not less than a year ago, I was seventeen. I know what seventeen-year-old girls sound like. And they think about sex. A lot. Well, my sixteen-year-old female friends do, anyway. That is a joke, by the way. Though it's true.

These girls sound like Judy Blume protagonists. And, as I said before, that's not a bad thing. It's just not good. A well placed curse word does not change that fact.

I suppose I could go on for a bit longer, but I don't really have anything else to say. And it's 11:59 AM. I'm seeing Skyfall tomorrow. Good night readers. Hope you enjoyed this review. And do read the book when it comes out. Despite my negativity, it's a lot more enjoyable than most YA crap out there right now.

And just because I was harsh does not mean this book isn't worth the read. I did give it three stars. That, from me, is not, I repeat, NOT BAD. It'd be a good Christmas gift for your preteen nieces/nephews. It's certainly something I'd buy for my thirteen-year-old sister.

3.25 stars. Not bad, but it could be so much better.

This review is also posted here: <http://www.thebooklantern.com/2012/11...>

Cassandra Phoenix says

ETA: this book and I were done when Michiko started talking about samurai fighting in masks. Ninja fight in masks. A samurai would never dishonor him/herself by taking on an opponent with their face covered up. I am disappointed in every way in this book and the academic rigor of the author -- and the copyeditor! Who let this get published?

Like, omigod, I didn't know they had Valley Girls in 19th-Century steampunk alterna-London!

(or, if you want me to believe in the authenticity of the era in which you are writing, research your goddamn vernacular. I don't like being thrown out of a story by a misplaced anachronistic idiom.)

Exhibit A, page 68: "But the fact was, she did look charming. She looked smokin'."

NO. No, no, a thousand times no. Goggles and dirigibles do not excuse poor research into the era about which you are writing. Nobody in Edwardian London said "okay". Nobody in Edwardian London referred to things as "super hot" or "smokin'." If I were a Young Adult reader I would be insulted that the writer thought I was so stupid they could get away with this and go find some actual steampunk with some actual writing acumen, like Gail Carriger's novels. Not some cutesy Powerpuff-Girls-with-brass-fittings abomination like this. As an adult reader, I'm insulted, but also fascinated, like I'm watching a slow motion train wreck. I keep reading, waiting for the moment where the book turns into an Edwardian version of Charlie's Angels.

A book like this is a fine example of genre bandwagon-jumping. It's a YA novel with a girl-power theme (although all these girls are very dependent on their male benefactors) in a steampunk setting. It could have been great. I will own that the writing is technically correct. But the portrayal of the subject matter is awful, insulting to the intelligence of the reader, and insulting to the genre.

Also, as a point of information, Japan had a long and noble tradition of female samurai. Tomoe Gozen, for instance. Which the author would have known if they had **DONE THEIR FUCKING RESEARCH.**

TheBookSmugglers says

Originally reviewed on The Book Smugglers

And then there was an explosion.

London, the year 1900. Three smart, savvy, very different young women are struggling to make their way in the world. Cora, a clever girl from the streets, has been taken in by the brilliant (if eccentric) scientist and inventor Lord White, for whom she works as a private secretary and lab assistant. Since being hired, Cora has become quite adept at putting things together and taking them apart, and has developed a fondness for explosions and experiments. Her position as Lord White's secretary and right-arm woman, however, means she never really has the freedom or power to do as she so wishes, and more often than not she finds herself babysitting his lordship, instead of getting the respect she craves and deserves.

Former burlesque girl Nellie is the beautiful and charismatic assistant to the Great Raheem - a renowned magician, who Nellie lives with and sees as a father figure. The combination of Raheem's mysterious aura and skill with illusions, plus Nellie's natural beauty, showmanship, and trained flexibility/escape-artist talent make the two a formidable team.

Michiko is one of the most talented fighters London has ever seen - a young girl who trained (illegally) to become a samurai, Michiko found herself drawn to adventure and the unknown. When Sir Callum Fielding-Shaw offered Michiko a new life away from Japan as his fighting and training assistant, she took the plunge and left her home behind for Britain - a decision that she starts to regret when Callum turns out to be a completely disrespectful idiotic ass. Unfortunately, she's stuck with him as she can barely speak and understand English and has no other friends or kin in London.

Cora, Nellie and Michiko are brought together when a mysterious figure begins killing people under cover of the London fog, with a sinister larger plan to tear the city apart. A mystery complete with secret societies, underground passageways, and rich and powerful citizens, Cora, Nellie and Michiko and their particular blend of skills are London's only hope.

Well. I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I started *The Friday Society* - there have been a rash of pseudo-steampunk YA books that try to ape Victorian speech and dress, and to be perfectly honest I haven't been very impressed with the recent releases in this overpopulated subgenre. *The Friday Society*, however, is earnestly, refreshingly different. Instead of pretending at steampunk, making poor attempts at historical speech and dialect, *The Friday Society* has a completely modern voice - the girls think and speak (for the most part) in modern vernacular, and have undeniably modern sensibilities. While the book is set in 1900 London - and I know firsthand that Adrienne Kress did extensive research into the city setting at the turn of the century, down to the underground tunnels and such - it makes no attempts at Victoriana. While this was a jarring revelation in the early part of the book, I kind of grew to like it. It worked - and I appreciate something that is so brazenly, unapologetically modern.[1. As I was telling Ana in an email, *The Friday Society* is kinda like a reverse Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*: historical period (complete with cool costumes and sets), modern vernacular.]

I think part of the reason this conceit is so successful is because of the strength of *The Friday Society*'s female characters. I loved that Cora, Nellie and Michiko are completely different characters, that they are all strong and intelligent young women (albeit in different ways), and most importantly *they are all friends and get along with each other*. So often in this particular genre, we see a lone heroine that falls in love with one person (or two people), that may possibly have a sidekick that *might* be female, but often is defined by her relationships with the men. Not so in *The Friday Society* - these women are friends first, they have each others' backs, and while there are hints at romance for two characters, the romance here really takes place between the girls as they become friends and a secret society of kickass heroes.

Speaking of the romance angle, I love that there isn't any trite romantic happily ever after crap in which each of the heroines stumbles across a super hot dream dude. While Nellie has a romantic interest, this interest is thoroughly on the backburner and hasn't quite been developed (fodder for future books, perhaps). Meanwhile, Cora has a tryst with another character, who acts like a complete douche - the best part about this is that Cora realizes that this guy is a huge jerk and not worth her time, instead of being turned on by his jerkiness. THANK YOU. Also, I am so very relieved that none of the girls are in love with their bosses. THANK YOU AGAIN.

Other things that worked: *The Friday Society* showcases a diverse cast, as Michiko is Japanese, and Raheem is Persian and remains close to his fellow immigrants. While we don't really get to explore Raheem's

character too deeply, we do spend a lot of time with Michiko, who is a convincing, wonderful character.[2. If we're picking favorites, Michiko is easily my favorite of the three, and I absolutely love her character arc as she deals with an abusive and asshole of an employer, she bonds with a young boy as his teacher, and she finally feels worthy of a particular gift bestowed upon her early in the book.] I love that Michiko does NOT think in dialect, nor does she translate Japanese words into English in her head (for the most part, with only a few exceptions) - such translations are a huge pet peeve and so very irritating because *no one thinks like that*. Case in point, one of my favorite sections of the book:

"Someone is in the alley to see you."

She understood most of the sentence except for "alley." [...] She stood up and followed Koukou out into the dark narrow hallway and down the servants' staircase to the delivery entrance. They stepped outside into the alley behind the row of terraced houses. Ah. So "alley" meant alley. Good to know.

Good, right?

These praises said, there were some issues with the style that weren't particularly to my taste - choppy sentences, perfunctory statements, the tendency to start chapters and sections with "And then [fill in the blank]." I should note that these stylistic choices are all very consistent throughout the book, and probably work for other people - they simply aren't my favorite. The story itself is a little loose and could probably have been honed and slimmed down; similarly, the villain and the villain's motivations could have been more convincing and better developed.[3. As is, *The Friday Society's* resolution feels very much like a Scooby Doo kind of mystery gotcha.]

All these things said, I enjoyed *The Friday Society* thoroughly, and I sincerely hope that there are more adventures for Cora, Nellie and Michiko in the future. Recommended.

Sherwood Smith says

I would have adored this book had I been the age of the intended audience--teen. It's a romp of a story, featuring three girls, all of whom are assistants to men, in a Hollywood-backdrop London during a vague handwave at the nineteenth century. The existence of "cavorite", a new element with anti-gravitic features, permits flying ships, plus there are goggles and laboratories and steam-powered carriages.

Cora, the street girl turned lab assistant, Nellie, the burlesque dancer turned magician's assistant, and Michiko, the Japanese girl who studied with samurai until brought to London to teach self-defense, meet one night over the discovery of a dead body. They then proceed to get drunk, go back home, deal with their own issues as clues (and bodies) pile up. When they find one another again, the stakes are higher; they form a team and take action.

The best bits in the book were the action sequences, and again, the voice, though unrepentantly modern (and with no ear whatsoever for accent), is fun. The girls fight, climb, swing, and splash with gusto. One of the villains was exasperatingly obvious to this old reader, but the other was a surprise, and the whole story quite enjoyable.

Megan says

A cover alone can draw a reader into a book. Of course, everyone says to not judge a book by its cover, but how can you resist with *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY*? It has three very strong-looking girls from different backgrounds, including a person of color. And while the story inside isn't exactly what I was expecting – and unexpectedly was filled with anachronisms galore – I found myself really enjoying the ride. With a few minor reservations.

GIRL POWER

This is the reason you should read this book. The main reason. The biggest reason I am going to harp about this book to everyone who will listen.

A main character ditches her controlling, demanding, drunk love interest and finishes the novel without a boyfriend. In YA, it's super refreshing, especially because in the majority of YA novels, the girl will take him back or, even worse, will think that a boy demanding sex and kissing her without her consent or getting drunk and trying to grab her is ROMANTIC. Ms. Kress, thank you for doing the logical thing and presenting a heroine who is strong without needing a boy to complete her, especially when the boy is quite frankly crazy.

On top of this, our heroines do not need boys to help them. They are strong and take matters onto their own shoulders in an era where modesty, subservience, and loyalty to their male caretakers wasn't only expected but frankly demanded. Cora, Nellie, and Michiko are some of the fiercest, most determined girls in 2012's YA offerings, and in this YA debut, we are treated to three girls who blew the boys out of the water in their quest to prove their worth, their skills, and their strength of mind.

Despite their differences – intelligent, powerful inventor Cora; giddy and hyper magician's assistant Nellie; strong-willed and quiet former Samurai student Michiko – they make a wonderful team. And their cast of characters around them for the most part is well thought out, even if there are SO many characters that several get lost.

VICTORIAN STEAMPUNK WITHOUT THE VICTORIAN STEAMPUNK

Even though I quite frankly loved the characters in this, there were some other issues that need to be mentioned – particularly the fact that this was pitched as a Victorian-era steampunk novel when in fact the steampunk aspects got lost. Of course there were mentions of steampunk devices and other anachronisms you expect to see in novels of this sort. The problem was that, for a steampunk novel, the details that I desired were never there, only found in brief mentions. What's the point of a steampunk novel without the steampunk goodness?

Another issue I had was the dialogue. Instead of going for a traditional Victorian-era way of speaking, we end up with three girls that sound like they could be from now – a Cockney girl, a Cockney girl pretending to be a prim and proper Englishwoman, and a Japanese girl that speaks about much English as I speak Japanese (note – have I told you that my minor from college is Japanese?). While this is nice to read, it doesn't really pull you into the time period, once again losing the time.

CUTE, ACTION-PACKED, AND EXPLOSIVE

Looking past the anachronisms and wonderful kick butt girl power, *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY* has a lot going for it. It's action-packed, fast-paced for being almost 450 pages long, and EXPLOSIVE. Like seriously, things blow up, there is a serial killer, evil scientists, grave robbing, and magic. I could easily overlook the timeline flaws when I was served a heaping platter of fun on a bun.

So am I recommending that you go and pick up a copy of *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY* right now? Yes. Now. This book might have flaws, but it is going to go down as one of my favorite reads of early 2013 most likely, even if I wish maybe it had stayed true to the time period.

VERDICT: A story with amazing YA heroines kicking butt and kicking bad love interests to the curb automatically is awesome. Pair it with explosions, adorkableness, and intrigue, and you have a winner. *THE FRIDAY SOCIETY* wins. Period.

♥♥♥♥ - FOUR HEARTS

Mitch says

The Friday Society totally reminds me of this Will Smith movie I once saw as a kid, *Wild Wild West*. It was stupid and silly and 'won' a bunch of Razzies, but it was still mildly entertaining the first time through. Just not the second. Or the third. Or, well, you get my point.

This book is the same way, intentionally stupid and intentionally silly - actually, if I had to pick one word to describe this, that word would be gimmicky. Because there are a lot of gimmicks involved, like how the first line of each chapter introducing a new point of view (plus the first line of the first chapter of Part 4) is the same damn sentence, "and then there was an explosion." Neat, huh? Well, maybe at first, then it gets awkward. Or the ridiculous chapter titles. (Example: Just Your Average Turn-of-the-Century Slumber Party with a Dead Body. You Know How It Is. Or: And What Has Cora Been Up to This Whole Time? . . .) I mean, I appreciate dumb fun just as much as the next guy, and this book is definitely dumb fun, but the writing gives me the impression Adrienne Kress went out of her way to emphasize the dumb in dumb fun, like in a groan worthy bad joke kind of way. So yeah, I'll go ha ha (in a really nonenthusiastic way) and then eh like I would after any other lame joke.

Beyond the cheesy writing, the plot moves really slowly and actually feels kind of bloated. Maybe it's a side effect of me rolling my eyes a lot during this, but I never really got into the story - the first few chapters introducing Cora are probably the high point of the book and it all goes downhill from there. There are a bunch of random murders and thefts which the girls decide to investigate; turns out those crimes are the portents of a much larger diabolical scheme. And yet, I never really felt any sense of urgency, but really, how could I if they're playing kissing games with a corpse? By the time the important stuff actually comes around, the plot is just so cartoonish that I wouldn't have cared if the villain had won, because, you know what, cartoon logic dictates that the villain will bumble around and snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. And that's exactly what happens, the villain gives a predictable rambling speech and loses in a way more befitting of an *Austin Powers* mashup than a serious book.

And that's the inherent contradiction with *The Friday Society* - it doesn't know what it wants to be. Is it a spoof of the steampunk genre? Or a serious work of fiction? Because Cora, Nellie, and Michiko are serious characters, you don't write a Lord's assistant struggling to abandon her poor orphan past, a magician's assistant grateful to leave the burlesque business, and a fight expert's assistant trying to make something of herself in a foreign country with all these complicated themes and not expect me to treat this as a serious book. And I actually really liked how each of these three characters were introduced and then developed, how Kress managed the alternating points of view, and how Michiko as this foreigner who knows very little English was handled. Yet at the same time, the over the top silliness of much of what happens in this book completely negated my interest in the girls' story.

So I'll just say I liked *The Friday Society*, it wasn't entirely unenjoyable. But I wouldn't read the sequel and I would never reread this book because this kind of foolishness is only palatable in small doses.

J.M. Frey says

I had the very good luck to read an advance of this fun adventure steampunk novel. If you love manners, murder, mayhem, mystery, and some really kick-ass heroines, you're going to love this book. Step aside boys, the girls are doin' for themselves!

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

First things first: *The Friday Society* is a turn-of-the-century almost-steampunk (I'll get to the 'almost' part later) that is exciting, funny and has a large number of unique, interesting characters. The idea of three intelligent young girls teaming up to solve crimes may have been used and abused far too many times, but the Victorian setting meant a new context that could have provided the necessary freshness. Unfortunately, it made things much worse instead.

Cora, Nellie and Michiko don't have much in common, except that they're all intelligent and very competent. Cora is an assistant to Lord White, a politician and an inventor. She's interested in science and spends most of her time keeping his Lordship away from the opium dens. Nellie is the gorgeous assistant of Great Raheem, an accomplished and well-respected magician. She is very girly, but also very athletically gifted. Michiko came from Japan to work with a British self-defense instructor, wanting to escape from the parents that wanted to marry her off and her samurai teacher who refused to present her with a katana. She doesn't speak much English and she's constantly yelled at and beaten by her employer.

What turned *The Friday Society* from a fun fluffy read to a complete disaster was Kress' carelessness or nonchalance towards the language. I am baffled by her constant use of modern colloquialisms in this book. I was ready to disregard the far too modern worldview of her heroines, the (unbelievably) liberal and progressive society, but language use is where I draw the line. I don't think that 'smokin' hot' was used to describe an attractive individual over a hundred years ago, and somehow I doubt that the word 'awesome' was used in every other sentence either. Aside from the steam-powered gadgets, steampunk should attempt to recreate an era, and that is largely done through language. Authors should either know how to do this, or not write steampunk at all.

It is a shame that Adrienne Kress didn't do a better job with era- appropriate language. I was almost ready to

forgive some of it, but then a character would say something so obviously from the 21st century, and it would make my blood boil.

I wasn't entirely unhappy with the abovementioned steam-powered gadgets. Cora *is* an inventor after all, and she had a few (very entertaining) aces up her sleeve. There were dirigibles, steam cabs, night vision goggles and other interesting things, and while they weren't exactly described in detail, they at least worked well with the plot.

In this case, my two-star rating doesn't mean anything other than 'I had no idea how to rate this book'. There were things I truly enjoyed, humor and characters most of all, but in the end, even that wasn't enough. Gail Carriger may not be much of a plotter, but no one can object to her language use or her ability to re-create the atmosphere of the Victorian era. Adrienne Kress, on the other hand, should write books in which characters can like, say 'like' as many times as they want.

Jess says

The Friday Society is a prime example of a killer concept being slain by mediocre writing and lazy execution. I desperately wanted what the tagline said I'd get: "An action-packed tale of gowns, guys, guns and the heroines who use them all." Instead, *The Friday Society* turned out to be a snooze filled, exposition fest with dull characters, telegraphed plot twists and an unintelligible plot.

Set in 1900, *The Friday Society* follows three extraordinary young women - Nellie, Cora, and Michiko - who are all assistants to powerful men in London society. By chance, the girls meet at a party where a murder occurs and become involved with the crime. Soon, they realize the murder is part of a bigger plot that will threaten all of London and that they must use their talents together to stop it.

If you're expecting this book to, you know, actually be set in 1900 and in a steampunk environment, you grabbed the wrong one off the shelf. The first thing I noticed about *The Friday Society* was the anachronisms. Good Lord, the *anachronisms*. They were so bad, I almost had to drop the book 30 pages in because it was annoying me so much. I get that this is supposed to be a bit of irreverent look at the steampunk genre, but Adrienne Kress didn't even try with her setting. Everything about this book screamed lazy, lazy, lazy. If you're going to write a period book - even a stupid, silly book - do your research and actually *write a period book*.

The plot was no winner either. It took 100 pages to even get to the murder mentioned on the jacket and then, when things were looking interesting, the plot went and got itself derailed on an asinine, drunk slumber party between the three mains and didn't pick back up again for another 50 pages. The villain came from a total left field - not in a good way - and got her very own ridiculous monologue section to explain her weak motivations to destroy London. There was a lot of fat in this book that could've been trimmed (the drunk slumber party being my number one choice), subplots that should've been cut entirely (yes, I'm looking at you, Mr. Harris, ughhh), and exposition that should've edited out. *The Friday Society* lagged when it could've been a breakneck adventure.

And then there were the ladies, who should've been the life of the novel. None of the three stood out to me as characters I should remember at all. I frequently got Cora and Nellie confused, especially in group scenes, and Michiko, who ended up being my favorite, got the shaft when the girls were together. Did no one stop and say, "Hey, d'you think it's problematic that our PoC main character doesn't speak English, speaks about 20 words per group scene, and then is otherwise ignored while the two white girls chat?" during the course of getting this book ready for publication? Blegh.

I had to force myself to finish and I dreaded picking it up during my lunch break. This is not a fun book if you can't look past the info dumping and anachronistic style. If you want a book about a group of ladies being awesome, there are plenty of other, better choices out there besides *The Friday Society*.
