



Semi-Charmed Life

Nora Zelevansky

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In Nora Zelevansky's hilarious debut, *Semi-Charmed Life*, an Upper West Side naïf, Beatrice Bernstein, gets swept up in the seemingly magical life of socialite Veruca Pfeffernoose, while ghost writing her blog. Veruca's glitteringly opulent world soon seduces Beatrice away from her own insular, arty family with a promise of fancy parties, travel outside Manhattan (for once) and one desperately cute guy. But when her new glitzy lifestyle starts to take on dark undertones, Beatrice has to decide who she is—once and for all. With her own magical touch, Zelevansky deftly explores the world of rarified Manhattan in this sparkling modern fairy tale of first love, finding one's voice and growing up.

Semi-Charmed Life Details

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Author : Nora Zelevansky

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From Reader Review *Semi-Charmed Life* for online ebook

Laura says

This book was fun, quirky and placed you into the misunderstood and mysterious world of an NYC socialite. It was smartly written and clever in its revelation of the cult of celebrity. A must read! Bravo to Zelevansky as her debut novel. Looking forward to what the author writes next...

Shanna says

I received an ARC through my organization, in advance of a free reading program at our local library.

This fun summer read is best compared to a more intelligent, art world Gossip Girl with a dash of magical realism. Nora is definitely going to be an author to watch!

Thb says

Great fun. Quick read. Couldn't put the book down. Loved the way the author was able to create a satirical tone without being sardonic. It was light and fun and adorable. A great read for any age. Can't wait to read Zelevansky's next one!

Khelsey Jackson says

Beatrice Bernstein is sick of her sheltered life and wants a change. She wants to make her own choices like an adult. Her senior year of college because she would be living in off campus housing with her best friend Dolly. Her new places turned out to be below her expectations, she is forced to take Veruca Pfeffernoose's offer. She would be ghost writing for the socialite's blog and in exchange she would be living in Veruca's extravagant loft. Writing Veruca's blog also means Beatrice has to follow Veruca - to parties, the spa, art exhibits, to London, Paris, then Rio, etc. It seems like an awesome deal, but when Beatrice discovers that she'd been duped by someone she trusted, she learns to stand up for herself.

I loved this book. I won't lie it did take me a while to get into it, but when I did I loved it. Beatrice is interesting character because of her silly thoughts but the other characters also drew me in because of their unusual personalities. Beatrice's artsy and naive family, her very helpful best friend Dolly, strange dorm mates like Goth Girl and Hormone Guy, Veruca and her posse, and dreamy boy toy, Ben. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS BOOK. If you really read it, then you'll love it like I did!

Suzanne Palmieri says

A delightful, magical romp. Those who loved Eloise as a child will fall in love with this story. Head over heels in love!

Giselle says

What started out as adventurous and New York *chic*, this quickly turned into a bizarre magical contemporary. When you include an overwhelming quantity of references that went way over my head, *Semi-Charmed Life* ended up being an exceptionally tedious and confusing read.

I absolutely adore New York City. I visited a year ago and I was dazzled by the lifestyle and how it seems to be in its own world. Since, I've come to love books set in the Big Apple. I can revive the energy I felt walking the streets, hear the strangely refreshing noise of people living lives like no other, re-experience the city that never sleeps. It's what compelled me to initially pick this book up, and I was especially pleased with how much the NYC setting came alive. Hence, at the beginning I was actually quite enchanted by it all, staying convinced that I was truly going to enjoy it.

Then... strange writing in her notebook starts to appear and disappear. (What is this book supposed to be? O_O). Then, constant parties with extreme detailing keeps putting me to sleep. Then, talk of tatamis, and beef negimaki, and rogan gosh, and ryokan, and Mark Rothko, and caipirinhas, and remarks that go like: *"[...] preach-to-the-choir debates about neo-postmodernism in a postmodern age or the revival of modernism in an antimodernist millenium or ever Fairway belly lox versus Zabar's nova" ...*blinks*...* Dude! What am I reading here? I so did not go to Harvard! Name dropping after name dropping, reference after reference; nothing from my generation, and definitely not things a simple small-town Canadian girl in her 20s would know of. Since they would come in bursts I kept hoping it was just to give a feel of NYC, where people can be more elite and talk about fried sopaipillas and Proust studies, unfortunately it never let up and halted my enjoyment of this novel exponentially.

Another big factor in my displeasure of this novel is the writing style the author adopted. Written in a third person omniscient point of view, it's extremely hard to get a feel of who the characters truly are. It's not a perspective I have ever really enjoyed as it keeps the characters' thoughts and the emotions of the story at arm's length, detached. Think of it like someone who is telling someone else's story, not letting it be an experience. This is purely a factor of individual taste, some readers may really like this type of telling, but I, for one, am unable to get captured by a story told in this manner.

What starts as a contemporary read suddenly turns on the strange side when mysterious messages start to appear, and simple lofts suddenly become luxurious first class accommodations. I was not expecting anything supernatural from this novel. It caught me off guard and I'm not convinced it really fits in the story. It may give it a magical flair, but it remains off-putting. It's like *Gossip Girl* meets the *Encyclopedia*, meets cameos of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*.

There is one positive thing I can mention about this book: The characters are fabulous. Regardless of being kept at arm's length, I enjoyed the personalities that run through these pages with their exotic natures. There are a lot of names to keep track of, but the ones that are prominent have made this enjoyable enough that, despite having so much trouble getting through the story, I never quit, though at times I really wanted to.

With that said, I think this book calls for a certain readership. An older generation who loves perpetual references and an over the top lavish lifestyle (and vocabulary) may just be the perfect audience for this

novel.

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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](#)

Stephanie Cowart says

I received a copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley.

I absolutely loved this book! I didn't want to put it down. It was just so fun and hilarious!

Beatrice is so excited to start her senior year of college and live in off campus housing. She has a great family - an older sister and very loving parents - but they can be a bit smothering at times. They've never been anywhere outside of New York (even though they are internationally recognized art dealers) and Beatrice is ready for some independence.

The housing situation isn't what she expected at all. Instead of a loft apartment, her digs seem to be in the smelly, moldy basement. Enter Veruca Pffeffermoose. She is the socialite who has decided to attend Beatrice's school (who knows why and really who cares? She's Veruca Pffeffermoose!) Beatrice meets her at a party and suddenly Veruca is willing to open her large and decadent apartment to her. All Beatrice has to do is ghost write her blog. She's in to art this season and she needs Beatrice to chronicle her foray into the art scene in New York. Beatrice is skeptical at first but realizes that she's good at this and the parties and friends and travel etc. are lots of fun. She's getting to do more than she ever dreamed. And of course, there's this guy....

This book was so fun! I loved Beatrice and all her adventures with Veruca and company. There was a bit of a mystery through out the book which kept me wondering and interested. The ending was neatly wrapped but not cliché. The descriptions of Veruca and her clothes and surroundings etc. kept me chuckling. It was all just too much (in a good way!)

This is a really great summer read. Highly recommended!

Emily Easter says

Supremely entertaining and imaginative... I loved it! You can't help but get wrapped up in Beatrice's world, and it's a place I didn't want to leave. Highly recommend!

Angie says

You know that scene in *The Sweetest Thing* when their apartment is full of all of their neighbors, firemen, cops, and they all break into song? That's what *Semi-Charmed Life* reminded me of. Not that anything like that happens. It just had that same kind of random humor. It also felt like a State Farm insurance commercial, since things just appear out of nowhere! Needless to say, this book was super weird. And it works!

Semi-Charmed Life starts with Beatrice finally getting her own place. Unfortunately, it's not the loft apartment she was expecting. Instead, she's in the basement, in a janitor's closet turned tiny, bug ridden apartment. It's a nightmare. But soon, she gets an offer that she can't refuse. A socialite wants Beatrice to

shadow her and write her blog! Living accommodations, wardrobe, and travel included! Bea gets swept up in this wild life, alienates her friends and family, and ultimately realizes that some things are too good to be true.

So, under all of the bizarre happenings, and weird humor, there's a really good New Adult story buried here. *Semi-Charmed Life* is all about Bea trying to figure out who she is, who she wants to be, and what she wants to do. She just knows that she doesn't want to live with her parents anymore and maybe be a substitute teacher. But her ghostwriter gig opens up a whole new world for her. This middle part of the book was my favorite, since the humor gets dampened down a bit and really focuses on Bea's discoveries about herself and those around her.

Then there was a twist! It was so random and out of nowhere, but I found that I liked it! Normally, this kind of thing would turn me off, but it fit the oddness of the overall story. It's a kind of mystery, investigative journalism type thing and Bea has to put all of the pieces together with help from unexpected sources. It was just really weird, but wrapped up well.

I wound up liking *Semi-Charmed Life* a lot more than I thought I was based on those opening chapters. The beginning is super ridiculous and felt like a parody of Manhattan high society, but super over-the-top. It levels out as it goes along, with just a few jokes scattered throughout. The humor didn't always work for me, but I can't deny that this was a fun and unique read.

Read more of my reviews at [Pinkindle Reads & Reviews](#).

Preet says

Happy fourth you wonderful people! What better way than to bring in the day with a little New York socialite fun, right? *Semi-Charmed Life* was such a fun read! Though it took a bit of time to get properly started for me, I loved being thrown into the New York posh life while still being an outsider. I will always be a hardcore West coast/California lover, but after hearing so much about New York life it's like you're walking the streets with Beatrice as she tries to figure out life.

I was actually surprised to end up really liking Beatrice. At the beginning I really thought I wouldn't, but her personality is so likable that I loved being in her head. Though I do think her tangents at times were a little long to the point I kind of skimmed through them, I enjoyed being able to see her train of thought to events. I really liked that she was just as lost in life even if at first glance it would seem she has everything together. Zelevansky also writes a nice group of side characters throughout the story that definitely kept me reading. Veruca was kind for the most part, but always had that somewhat controlling undercurrent that kept me wary of her. Ben is so adorable that I really couldn't wait to see his shirtless bod with Beatrice in non-shirtless situations. (Get that head out of the gutter, gosh.) I also continually imagined him with a stake like Buffy... Yeah, I know you're intrigued.

My only real issue with the book was the slight magical touch in the story. It kind of threw the story off for me at times because I'd start contemplating what was behind events instead of the story. It isn't anything that ruins the book, but I don't really think it added much for me so I could've lived without it.

Not only is Nora Zelevansky's *Semi-Charmed Life* that perfect summer read to whisk you away to trips you've only dreamed about, but it's also about finding and being true to who you are. I look forward to seeing

more by Zelevansky in the future because she's definitely made me a fan. Thanks to NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for providing me a copy for review.

Soundtrack:

Runaway - Mat Kearny

When Did Your Heart Go Missing - Rooney

Beat of My Own Song - Meme

Where You're Coming From - Matt and Kim

Fox says

I won this book through the first-reads program.

Semi-Charmed Life is Nora Zelevansky's authorial debut, and also a novel that she wrote during NaNoWriMo if I'm not mistaken. The book is a well-done satire on how obsessed we are as a culture with the concepts and trappings on fame, and how hollow a pursuit it truly can be. Wrapped up in all of this commentary is a dash of magical realism, well placed humor, and an air of mystery. That's quite a lot for a first novel to contain.

Personally, I found the book a bit difficult. Primarily, I think that's more my problem than it is a reflection on the book. Not being too engaged in the TMZ culture the book is talking about, some of the references were lost on me and I think a fair bit of that humor missed me. I felt a bit late to the party, but I can think of a few friends of mine who would be caught right in the middle of it all.

The jokes that I did get were unanimously hilarious. In particular the line about Jackson Pollock was great, and some of the jabs at both the Goth culture and poetry culture were great. I think if the book had been more focused on literary figures and the like I would have had an easier time of it. Actually, Fifty Shades of Louisa May comes to mind, though these books are leagues apart.

The writing was solid, though bit too reference heavy for my taste. The actual story was well done, and once I passed the 73 page mark the book really began to flow for me as a reader. I enjoyed the fact that she took a magical realism approach to the book, and would actual push to emphasise that aspect of it next time around. The no-holds barred approach to the fantastic element reminded me of Jonathan Carroll's sheer *weirdness*, though as a first novel, the writing lacked some of the confidence needed to truly pull off something of Carroll's stature.

All in all, I did enjoy the book and am curious to see what happens next. Nora Zelevansky is an author that I'm hoping to see more of, and I'm hoping will keep up the irreverent air shown in this first novel. Now, if only I could conjure up a Veruca for my own life!

Kelli says

Very impressive first novel. I very much enjoyed her quick-witted writing style and the magical elements of the story. Looking forward to the next one!

Thalia says

Read the review on my blog:
<http://thaliasbooks.tumblr.com/post/2...>

Amy says

There are some things I just do not understand about people. For instance, why are there Kardashians? Why do we allow them to exist outside of their home? Why do we allow those Jersey Shore cretins to make more money than an entire platoon of troops? Why do people watch crap like that on television?

It isn't that Nora Zelevansky answers those questions in *Semi-Charmed Life*, but she does get to the essence of why we so willingly follow these idiots off cliffs: fame, fortune and free swag.

College senior Beatrice Bernstein finds herself caught up in the whirlwind known as Veruca Pfeffernoise, a blonde socialite (think Paris Hilton, another parasite whose fame is beyond all rational thought) who hires Beatrice to ghost write a blog detailing Veruca's high flying lifestyle. Of course Beatrice falls in thrall with private planes, facials and Balenciaga bags. She even finds herself copping Veruca's attitude.

To the unknowing onlooker, Beatrice might easily have been the crew's queen bee. She was now a fully indoctrinated member of Veruca's gang. In observing the media princess so closely she had unconsciously picked up some habits, including the socialite's coy crinkling of the nose whenever she was digging in her heels. She'd also perfected the blank stare, which Veruca - and now Beatrice - used to avoid communicating an actual opinion, perhaps about a given reality TV star or gossip columnist.

Yes, poor Beatrice. all of that free designer footwear and top shelf champagne is like the serpent in the Garden of Eden: nothing good can come of it. Beatrice compromises her credo, not to mention warps her moral compass. She ditches friends and family, while coveting Veruca's hot boyfriend Ben.

Can Beatrice be saved?

Well, of course she can. What might have made this a better book is if she COULDN'T. But ... just because this is predictable does not mean it is not enjoyable. There are a few zigs when you think Zelevansky will zag, and Beatrice is someone we really do want to rescue. We can't leave her with Veruca and her pals, aka the Axis of Evil.

Zelevansky take us around the world with Beatrice, Veruca and their hangers-on, and we can understand why Beatrice cannot resist the pull of Veruca's orbit. Yes, you easily can predict the outcome. But this is a fun, escapist book that might even cause you to question the popularity of real-life Verucas. If we are so stupid as to condone their fame, can we blame them? Or ourselves?

This review is published on cupcake's book cupboard. @VivaAmaRisata
Thanks to NetGalley for the preview.

Amy says

I hadn't imagined I would love this book as much as I did--I feared it would be one of those oh-another-spoiled New York chick (ala HBO's Girls which, um, I know means I'm not hip, but really, why should I care?). But Zelevansky's Beatrice is in all of us, and watching her face down the lure of the sheen inspires.
