

Ep 481 SB Only If You're Lucky Review

Welcome to Shelf Bytes, a short form, spoiler free review series

Tamara: Welcome to Shelf Bytes, a short form, spoiler free review series featured here on the Shelf Addiction podcast. I am your resident reviewer and host, Tamara. I will feed your shelf addiction by sharing my bite sized book and audiobook reviews. I know that the space on your coveted bookshelves is limited. In a few minutes, you'll know my opinion on whether you should be adding today's title to your collection or if you should borrow it or pass on reading it altogether. If you love long form book chats, check out the Shelf addiction podcast feed, available wherever you're hearing this episode.

This audiobook was provided to me in exchange for an honest review

Let's begin today. I am reviewing only if you're lucky. Written by Stacy Willingham narrated by Carissa Vacker published on January 16, 2024 by Macmillan Audio. The unabridged audiobook runtime is 10 hours and 17 minutes before I dive in. Thank you to Macmillan Audio for providing me access to this audiobook in exchange for an honest review. First up, the summarized synopsis. Margot, a shy college student, is drawn to the bold and magnetic Lucy Sharp, who invites her to live in an off campus house with two other girls. Margot finally emerges from her shell after the death of her best friend and becomes close to Lucy. However, in their sophomore year, a fraternity boy is murdered and Lucy disappears without a trace trigger warning for language, drinking, assault, and college hazing. I decided to listen to this audiobook because I

listened to both a flickr in the dark and all the dangerous things, also written by Stacey Willingham, and I enjoyed them both. I think I enjoyed all the dangerous things the most. That earned a four star rating from me. Plus, I've listened to several audiobooks with Carissa Vacker as the narrator, and I also enjoy her narration. Put these two things together and I thought this would be a hit for me. Now was it?

There aren't really any likable characters for me in this book

Let's break it down. Let's talk about the things that I liked first. I really liked that I did not have the final reveal figured out. I had half, but the other half was a surprise to me and I didn't see it coming exactly. And I really enjoy when that can happen because I usually can guess it a lot of the times, so the author always gets extra bonus points if I can't do it. I also like that there aren't really any likable characters for me. It's not necessary to like the characters to get enjoyment out of them. And I'm good with that because sometimes it tells a better story when no one is likable and no one is the perfect character, no one is the good quote, unquote character. All of these characters are kind of gray in their reasonings for doing things and how they go about doing things. So they're morally gray. some things are bad, but that doesn't make them bad people necessarily. And I think that is something that is a strong theme in this book. So sometimes regular, decent people do really bad things, and kind of this is the fallout of that, as well as some people are just bad. And that is also in this book as well.

I tend to like unreliable characters as a theme or a plot device

I also tend to like unreliable characters as a theme or a plot device. And I think that Willingham has successfully done that here. I think that Marco and Lucy are both pretty unlikable and unreliable. And for some people, that's a miss. They don't like that. But I thought it was really helpful to the story because it kept you in this neutral place. You know what I mean? So you didn't really root for either of them in a specific way, because it was really just a story, unfolding. And these people are taking place and living in this story. And to get through that, to kind of sort out what happened and figure out how we got to a, to z, it doesn't require you to like them or be reliable on their stories, because there are two sides to every story, and it all comes out in the end, which is the best part of it.

I do like that there was character growth in this book

I do like that there was some character growth here for our, main character, Margot. There was definitely a lot of character growth in her second year of college versus the first year, where she was pretty depressed for most of it. As the synopsis indicates, she lost her friend and she struggled that first year. After she meets Lucy, she kind of gets out of her box, and she grows in leaps and bounds, especially when they have to figure out what happened. They start digging into who's lying about certain things. Why are they lying? What's going on? And she gets really smart really quickly when she needs to. And I like that about the character. Now, what things did I dislike? I felt that the book was a little ya feeling, and by ya feeling, I mean, while these are college age women, the freshman, when she was a freshman, Margot, I think, was 17 at the beginning. And even though some hard things are happening in her sophomore year, it still felt ya. And I don't know how that's possible for something that has a lot of some hard things happening, but it still felt young. It's like, in some ways, Margot was really delusional

about people's motives and how they could do things and about her own engagement with things. But on the flip side, when she had to get really smart about something and think on her feet, she was able to do it. So maybe it's because all the bad things were kind of off the page. I haven't exactly figured out why I felt like it felt ya, but it just did. To me, it felt young. It was told from a young point of view, not a very mature point of view. That's it. I also did not like the pacing. I felt that it was a little slower than my preference. I do like high speed reads where I can just binge it in two days. And this wasn't the case here. I had to pace it out a long amount of time. I think it took me almost a week to finish this just because the pacing was slow. I think if I had to officially say how the pacing was, it was like slow to medium, right? And I have read books that were medium paced and still got enjoyment out of them. But I think that the pacing being slow took away from the story. I feel like there were things that the author could have done to make the action happen faster, get to what's happening faster. It took a lot of dredging through to get to the juicy part of the story.

Krista Vacker did an excellent job with the narrator voice

Now let's dive into the narrator part of things. I think Krista Vacker did an excellent job, as she always does. She's really good know flexing her voice so you can tell the different women when they are speaking to each other, because there are four women in this story that share space, so when they're talking to each other, you have to tell the difference when you're having conversation and conversing back and forth. And Carissa was able to do that without any confusion. Also, when there were men speaking, she was able to flex her voice, a little bit, and we could tell the difference there. Not that she was using this deep tenor voice or anything, but she added just enough inflection or something that just made it easy to tell who was speaking. Which I appreciate that

sometimes can be a problem when there are a lot of characters with a lot of dialogue, but it didn't seem to be a problem here at all. So I definitely recommend Chris of actors narration. I was able to listen at 1.5 speed and I had zero problems. I enjoyed it a lot. I think that if you like to listen at two X speed on the regular, you won't have any problems here either. I think if I were to listen at two x speed, I could have enjoyed it as well, but I was trying to pay attention to a lot of little details. So 1.5 x is what I ended up doing.

Let's jump to the rating. I rated this book three out of five stars

Let's jump to the rating. So how did I rate? Only if you're lucky. I rated it three out of five stars. Three out of five is a good rating for me. If you've been around, then you know that it's really middle of the road. I didn't love it. I didn't dislike it. It was good, right? It, qualifies as a good read. While I like the book, the three star rating reflects the problems. You know, I read the other books by Stacey Willingham, and I believe I enjoyed those a little more. I will recommend this book for those that like stories that take place on college campuses. Young adult type stories with a lot of drama, unreliable characters, and stories where the characters aren't likable either. If you are into fraternities or sororities, I think this might be a fun read for you because you get a little bit of that frat life blended in. And we all know this drama. We hear about fraternities and sororities, so it's a little bit of that in there. Of course. A murder to be solved. Should you add this to your digital or physical shelf, or should you borrow it from the library or a friend, or should you skip it? I think it's a toss up. Totally, 100%. Borrow this from your library, borrow it from a friend if it's available, if they're willing to lend it, but also if you have a spare audible credit lying around. I, do think this is a book that is worthy of the credit. It's a good listen. If you're not into audiobooks, you can always pick up the ebook

version or even the paperback version. I do think it's worth it. It's a very interesting story. If you're cool with slower paced books, if you have no problem with that, I think you will enjoy this a little bit more than I did. So give it a try. We are at the end, you guys. Let me know how you rated this book. Share your thoughts on this title or today's episode by answering my question or poll directly on Spotify. If you're listening on Spotify, you can share with me your feedback, thoughts or questions with the tap of your screen.

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Tamara: That's it for today's shelf bite.

Tamara: If you enjoyed today's episode, please like and share it with your bookish friends to reach out to me. You can find me pretty much everywhere at shelf addiction. until next time, happy reading. Take care of yourselves. Bye, guys.

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Tamara: Thanks for tuning in.