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We Are All Made of Molecules

Aylea Stephens

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Title: We Are All Made of Molecules  
Author: Susin Nielsen  
Reviewer: Aylea Stephens  
Publisher: Wendy Lamb Books  
Publication Year: 2015  
ISBN: 9780553496864  
Number of Pages: 256  
Interest Level: Young Adult  
Rating: Dependable  

Review

Stewart always wanted a sister, but it doesn’t look like things are going to work out for him when he and his dad moves in with his dad’s girlfriend and her teenage daughter. Stewart’s mom died only a few years ago from cancer, and Ashley’s dad recently came out as gay and is living behind the house. Stewart is also going to move from his school to the regular high school where being small and intelligent isn’t as acceptable as it was at his school for geniuses. Ashley worries about how “Spewart” will influence her friends and success on the social ladder, especially with her interest in Jared. When things with Jared get uncomfortable and the family is struggling to deal with their new life, Ashley and Stewart learn that even though everyone is different, everyone is also the same because we are all made of molecules.

The narrative voice is interesting and the concept of blended families who have come from difficult situations is interesting, but it is hard to know what the audience is for this book. The biggest problem with the book is the characters feel very young. It seems like they should be in a middle grade book, but there are content issues that make it inappropriate for younger audiences. The voice is light-hearted, but rape comes up twice, there is bullying, and a hate crime towards Ashley’s gay dad. All of these are quickly dealt with and forgotten. Many of these things are used as plot devices and are not handled well. Ashley is selfish and shallow with few things to redeem her. Some of the emotions are realistically shown, like how much Ashley struggles with her dad leaving their family and announcing that he is gay. It has strength in the narrative voice and the emotions of the characters, but its tone contrasting with the content will make older teenagers less likely to read it and younger teenagers not want to read its content.

*Contains rape, hate crimes, mild language, same-sex attraction, a character taking compromising pictures without the consent of another character.*