



2018

Relative Strangers

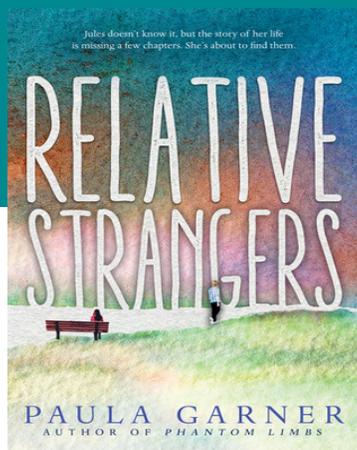
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Book Review

Relative Strangers

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Illustrator

Reviewer

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Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

Pages

359

Year

2018

Publisher

Candlewick Press

ISBN

9780763694692

High school senior Jules lives with her ex-addict mother and wishes for the perfect, close-knit families she sees her friends having. She discovers that she lived in foster care for a while when she was a baby. Feeling betrayed by her mother and longing to know more about her “other” family, she reaches out to Luke Margolis, her foster brother. As Jules gets closer with the Margolises, she finds herself struggling with romantic feelings for Luke. She can’t decide if she wants him to be her brother or her boyfriend, and her confusing feelings cause problems. Jules also comes to terms with the reasons why her mother was unable to care for her for that short time and learns more about her father and her mother’s relationship and determination to make things right. Ultimately, Jules is able to move on from Luke and have a relatively normal sibling relationship with him. She also patches things up with her mother and experiences a newfound love and respect for her upbringing and her little family.

This book does a few things well and a few things just okay. The relationship and scenes between Jules and her mother are really beautiful for the most part, and the story arc of Jules learning more about her mother’s past and the reasons why she did what she did is inspiring and heartwarming. Most of the scenes with Jules and her two best friends are also pretty sweet, and contain a relatable message about friendships changing after high school. The relationship with Luke is a bit weird, since Luke was her foster brother but only for a short time when Jules can’t remember. Because of his brotherly affection for her, Jules falls for him, but knows she can’t be with him. This story arc feels awkward and uncomfortable, and readers should take care to avoid this book if such ideas make them uncomfortable as well. Readers should also be aware that there is some homosexuality and glorifying of alcohol and drug use. Overall, this book has some good qualities and good characters, but is not a must-read.

*Contains severe language and moderate sexual content.