

## **Everything is Changed**

By Nova Weetman  
Publisher: University of Queensland Press  
ISBN 9780702254161  
\$19.99

**SECONDARY  
BOOK OF THE  
MONTH**

*Blurb:*

If only we could all go back to the way it was before . . .

Jake and Alex. Best mates. One terrible mistake. Two lives that will never be the same.

Told in reverse, this powerful and gritty novel moves through the wreckage of a broken friendship, back to the moment when everything changed.



*Lamont Review:*

Written in reverse, we count back to moment when lifetime best friends Jake and Alex make the biggest mistake of their lives.

We see the impact gradually and learn of the cause that so markedly changes the lives of two pretty normal guys who did one thing wrong.

Nova has gotten into the minds and characters of these two beautifully and written a suspense filled story novel that is so easy to get into.

We see a great friendship ruined and the raw angst as the boys deal with their situation so differently.

This is an enthralling page turner, as well as eye opening cautionary tale, that manages to successfully tread the fine line of getting its point across but avoiding “preaching” to the audience.

A great read for those 14+ and older.

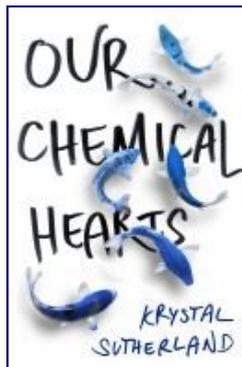
*Reviewed by Rob*

## **Our Chemical Hearts**

By Krystal Sutherland  
Publisher: Penguin  
ISBN 9780143573906  
\$19.99

### *Blurb:*

First love is an epic disaster. Henry Page has never been in love. The slo-mo, can't-eat-can't-sleep kind of love he's been hoping for just hasn't been on the cards—at least not yet. Henry's too busy trying to get into a semi-decent college and become editor of his school newspaper, a dream three years in the making. The rest of his spare time he spends with his best friends, Lola and Murray, playing video games and advising them on their own sordid love lives. Then he meets Grace Town, the elusive new girl in school, who wears oversized boys' clothing, walks with a cane, rarely seems to shower, and is hiding crushing secrets. She's hardly who Henry expected his dream girl to be, but when the two are chosen to edit the paper together, sparks fly. After all this time, Henry's about to learn firsthand just how disastrous the road to first love can be—and that sometimes it's the detours that end up mattering much more. A brilliant debut that is equal parts humour and heartbreak, Krystal Sutherland's *Our Chemical Hearts* is a potent reminder of the bittersweet bliss that is first love.



### *Lamont Review:*

This year has seen a proliferation of fantastic Australian debut YA authors and Krystal Sutherland is no exception.

She has written a classic love story without a classic ending. She deals with tragedy and the time it takes to heal broken things really beautifully with writing that makes you want to read more. Her characters have so much depth and quirkiness that you can't help but be enthralled by them.

I don't want to say too much about the story because I don't want to spoil it! The brief summary is Henry Page is newly appointed editor for the school newspaper who has never experienced real love. But this is about to change... in a big way. New to the school, Grace Town, who limps and wears boys clothes that don't fit and doesn't care about how she looks joins him as co-editor and sparks begin. But so much is broken in Grace that it is unclear if she will ever truly love again.

This was movingly well written and insightful, and I've seen some other great reviews it has received. For what my view is worth, I found Henry to be an incredible character and he was really open about sharing his feelings (at least much more open than I was as a teenage boy—which is probably a good thing). The story was compelling, however I did feel that some of the expletives used were unnecessary. Given this, it is best suited to those 15 and up.

*Reviewed by Rob*

## **The Book Of Whispers**

By Kimberley Starr

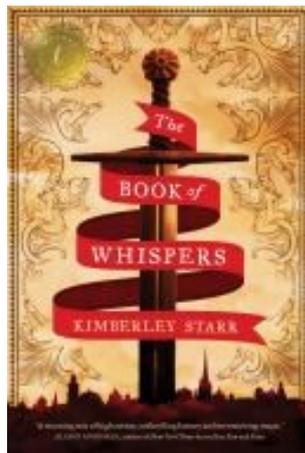
Publisher: Text Publishing

ISBN 9781925355512

\$19.99

### *Blurb:*

Tuscany, 1096 AD. Luca, young heir to the title of Conte de Falconi, sees demons. Since no one else can see them, Luca must keep quiet about what he sees, or risk another exorcism by the nefarious priest Ramberti. Luca also has dreams - dreams that sometimes predict the future. Night after night Luca sees his father murdered, and vows to stop it coming true. Even if he has to go against his father's wishes and follow him on the great pilgrimage to capture the Holy Lands. Far away in Cappadocia, Suzan has dreams too. Consigned with her mute mother to a life in an underground convent, she has a vision of a brown-haired boy riding through the desert. A boy with an ancient book that holds some inscrutable power. A boy who will take her on an adventure that will lead to places beyond both their understanding. Together, Luca and Suzan will realise their true quest - to defeat the forces of man and demon that wish to destroy the world.



### *Lamont Review:*

Taking her inspiration from the story of the People's Crusade in 1096 Brisbane author Kimberley Starr has combined medieval history with mythology and fantasy to create a compelling adventure novel that addresses contemporary issues like faith, racism, war and colonisation within the framework of a magical realism novel.

The story revolves around Luca, who follows his father, the Comte De Falconi, on Pope Urban II's crusade to the Holy Land of Jerusalem. Along the way he meets Suzan - a young woman who is more than she appears - and she helps him to unravel the mysteries of the ancient Book of Whispers that has been in his family for generations, and seems to predict a war between humans and demons.

Kimberley Starr holds a degree in Medieval Literature, and much of the research for this book was undertaken in person during travels through Istanbul and Turkey, so the result is a great leaping-off point for students and classrooms to explore the period more deeply.

The Book of Whispers is fast paced and bloody in parts, not shying away from the brutality of the period and the atrocities committed during the Crusades; but it also shrewdly challenges the reader to think about religion, extremism and tolerance - particularly in relation to a region where those topics have particular significance.

Best suited to those 14+.

*Reviewed by Lian*

## **Holding Up The Universe**

By Jennifer Niven

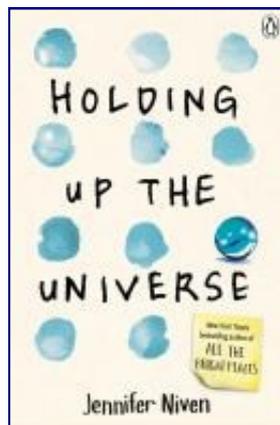
Publisher: Penguin

ISBN 9780141357058

\$19.99

*Blurb:*

Everyone thinks they know Libby Strout, the girl once dubbed 'America's Fattest Teen'. But no one's taken the time to look past her weight to get to see who she really is. Since her mum's death, she's been picking up the pieces in the privacy of her home, dealing with her heartbroken father and her own grief. Now, Libby's ready - for high school, for new friends, for love, and for every possibility life has to offer. Everyone thinks they know Jack Masselin too. Yes, he's got swagger, but he's also mastered the art of fitting in. What no one knows is that Jack has a secret- he can't recognize faces. Even his own brothers are strangers to him. He's the guy who can re-engineer and rebuild anything, but he can't understand what's going on with the inner workings of his own brain. So he tells himself to play it cool - Be charming. Be hilarious. Don't get too close to anyone. Until he meets Libby. When the two get tangled up in a cruel high school game which lands them in group counselling, Libby and Jack are both angry, and then surprised. Because the more time they spend together, the less alone they feel. Because sometimes when you meet someone, it changes the world - theirs and yours. Jennifer Niven delivers another poignant, exhilarating love story about finding that person who sees you for who you are - and seeing them right back.



*Lamont Review:*

This is a great new addition to our growing 'sick-lit' genre, although it sometimes seems that authors are now trying to uncover rarer conditions to inflict upon their poor characters.

This time we have alternating chapters from Jack who has undiagnosed prosopagnosia - the inability to recognise faces - even those closest to him. Then we have Libby who after her Mum's sudden death locked herself away to the point where she became the infamous "America's fattest teen" when her house was partially demolished to crane her out to go to hospital.

But this was three years earlier. Libby's weight has halved and she is working to reclaim her life. She tackles prejudices head on but can't believe it when the beautiful Jack seems to be really interested in her - yes in that way.

It finishes up being an amazing love story and an affirmation for positivity with Libby being the star. It is another great novel handling many current teen issues - bullying, body image, and relationships that will be loved by many aged 15+.

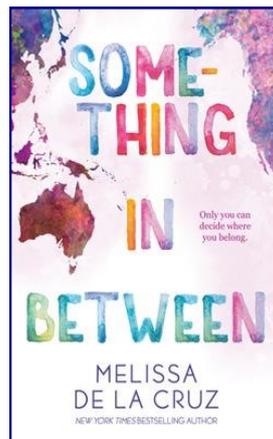
*Reviewed by Rob*

## **Something In Between**

By Melissa De La Cruz  
Publisher: Harlequin Teen  
ISBN 9781489211019  
\$19.99

### *Blurb:*

From the No.1 New York Times bestselling author of many critically acclaimed and award-winning novels for readers of all ages comes a thought-provoking and timely novel about immigration, family, friendship, and finding out where you belong. Jasmine de los Santos has always done what's expected of her. Pretty and popular, she's studied hard, made her Filipino immigrant parents proud, and is ready to reap the rewards in the form of a full college scholarship. And then everything shatters. A national scholar award invitation compels her parents to reveal the truth: their visas expired years ago. Her entire family is illegal. That means no scholarships, maybe no college at all, and the very real threat of deportation. But Jasmine won't give up. Because when the rules you lived by no longer apply, the only thing to do is make up your own.



### *Lamont Review:*

Melissa De La Cruz is a proven and undoubtedly accomplished writer, normally known in the fantasy and paranormal genres. This is wonderfully different! It looks at the life of Jasmine, a high achieving Filipino immigrant making her way through high school in America. She captains the school champion cheerleading squad, is school valedictorian and receives a prestigious national scholarship. But her life unravels when her parents tell her that her family is in the USA illegally. Will they actually be deported?

This book has so much feeling, including a teenage romance with the son of wealthy, anti-immigration congressman. It tackles issues of politics, minority groups, first love and friendships particularly well. I loved the characters, and their relationships. It is quite a lengthy book but well worth the read, and is certainly an eye opener on the struggles of immigrants for a teenage audience.

A great, well-written contemporary story that will best suit 14+ girls.

*Reviewed by Rob*

## **Cell 7**

By Kerry Drewery

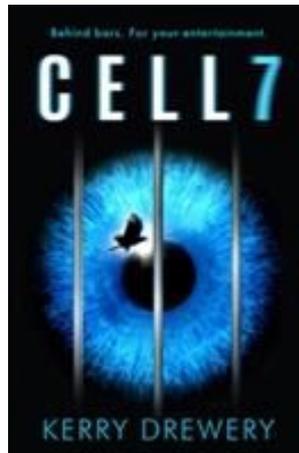
Publisher: Hotkey

ISBN 9781471405594

\$19.99

### *Blurb:*

A world where justice and the fate of those accused of murder is decided by the public, but has moved on from the Roman Gladiator 'thumbs up or thumbs down' public vote, to a public vote by telephone. If you are voted innocent you are set free; if you are voted guilty you are committed to death by electric chair. Those awaiting their sentence reside in ever decreasing cells, getting smaller each day, until Day 7 and Cell 7, where they hear their fate... Sixteen year old Martha has confessed to killing a famous celebrity. But has she done it? And if not, why has she claimed the murder? Perhaps she wants to show up the flawed and brutal system by sacrificing herself in the hope of a better world....



### *Lamont Review:*

Martha Honeydew is 16 and accused of murdering a celebrity TV presenter. She was found with the gun in her hand and admitted she killed him. Now she must wait to be executed in 7 days...

This is a story about a society that has taken 'eye for an eye' to a whole new level. A society that no longer has a judge and jury system, or even a court system. A television production company has purchased the rights to control the life and death decisions via a voting system that the public pays for each time they vote. They get to watch the accused in their cells and the voting decision is final. The execution is shown live on TV. But what if they have accused the wrong person?

I found this book so hard to put down. The characters are wonderful and the story is intriguing but also horrifying. Is it possible for us to lose our sense of justice and fair play? Can we so easily be manipulated by newspapers and television shows that we can no longer think for ourselves? Are big corporations and rich celebrities above the law because they have money and power? This book raises so many questions and would allow for some amazing class discussions. There is occasional swearing but given the circumstances Martha finds herself in this is in context.

Highly recommended for year 9 and up.

*Reviewed by Michelle*