



Alex As Well

Alyssa Brugman

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What do you do when everybody says you're someone you're not?

Alex wants change. Massive change. More radical than you could imagine.

Her mother is not happy, in fact she's imploding. Her dad walked out.

Alex has turned vegetarian, ditched one school, enrolled in another, thrown out her clothes. And created a new identity. An identity that changes her world.

And Alex—the other Alex—has a lot to say about it.

Alex As Well is a confronting and heartfelt story of adolescent experience—of questioning identity, discovering sexuality, navigating friendships and finding a place to belong. Alex is a strong, vulnerable, confident, shy and determined character, one you will never forget.

With the same tenderness and insight as YA stars such as John Green and David Levithan, Alyssa Brugman has crafted a knockout story about identity, sexuality and family that speaks effortlessly to a universal teen experience.

Alex As Well Details

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From Reader Review Alex As Well for online ebook

ALPHAreader says

Alex has never liked herself. She didn't like herself in kinder, so she pushed the other kids down. She hated herself at that boy's school, especially after the incident. And she hates who she is at home – having to follow mum and dad's rules, taking their damn pills.

So maybe it's time for Alex to change herself, by being herself.

Alex has never felt like herself because she's always been told that she's a boy. But she doesn't look like a boy, and she doesn't feel like a boy. But all that's about to change, because she's going to give herself permission to be exactly who she's always wanted to be. She'll start by attending a new school where she gets to wear a twirling skirt. She'll visit the Clinique counter and come away looking like a Clinique girl. She'll make girl friends at school; maybe even enter the catwalk fashion show. And she'll pay a visit to one Mr. Crockett, to see about getting her birth certificate changed. She'll flirt with a boy called Ty, make friends with girls called Sierra and Julia and fantasize about a beautiful girl called Amina.

No more medication. No more boy's school. Maybe even no more parents . . . it's time for the real Alex to have her turn.

'Alex As Well' is the new young adult novel from Australian author, Alyssa Brugman.

I became interested in this book when the blurb promised a story “questioning identity” and “discovering sexuality” – coupled with that gorgeous androgynous cover, I knew Alyssa Brugman's book was going to touch on some big issues not often explored in Australia YA, and I knew I had to read it. Brugman didn't disappoint – 'Alex As Well' is a smart, moving and confronting portrayal of a transgendered girl trapped in a boy's body.

What will suckerpunch readers right from the first page is how strong a voice Alex has. Much of the time she's speaking directly to the reader, sharing intimate details of her wrecked home life and constant conversations she has with the other 'Alex', reasoning with him or trying to quell his voice in her head. She speaks casually to the reader, inviting us into the story as a silent observer, so you'll get some great rhetoric like this:

We're just one person. Did you get that already? You guess it from the blurb, right? I put in some clues. Alex and I are the one person, but I feel like two people, and this is the problem. It's always been like that, but since I stopped taking my medication five days ago it's so totally clear that I can't be the other Alex anymore.

And what's why my dad left us.

Me.

This intimate voice draws us in to Alex right away, from the get-go we're on her side. It helps that she's got wit and snark in spades and tries to see the world with blinding optimism, despite her struggles. But this intimacy also means we get first-hand understanding of what Alex goes through everyday – her internal struggles with the two sides of Alex, and other people's reactions to her.

Putting yourself into the shoes of a transgendered youth is no mean feat, but Brugman accomplishes the

seemingly impossible. She does so by peppering Alex's narrative with memories of her youth, particularly her parents' conditioning and sexuality prompts (father encouraged wrestling, boy's toys were bought and open discussion about Alex's 'noodle' which didn't look like other boys' private parts, but was normal nonetheless). We also read other people's responses to Alex – back when she was a boy, and her fellow male pupils were clearly confused and angered by her. This, in particular, is something I never thought about with explorations of transgendered youth, but Alex discusses it openly and at length. This idea that so much of who we are is dictated by other people, simply because they're uncomfortable with the unknown. It's beautifully articulated in this passage:

Why does it matter whether I am a boy or a girl?

But it does. It really, really matters. People want to know which one you are. They want to be able to decide what you are, even when they are just walking past on the street and will never see you again. It's crazy.

Most people don't see it as a grey area. They are physically affected when there is confusion.

They are repulsed.

For me it's a very grey area. Greyitty grey. We are the Earl and Countess of Grey, Alex and I.

While 'Alex As Well' is narrated by Alex, there are short asides on the website forum of Motherhood Shared, where Alex's mum goes to vent about her son's changing attitude and the sudden appearance of a very feminine Alex. Here we learn more about Alex's 'condition' and medical history than even she knows. But the excerpts narrated, essentially, by Alex's mum in her forum-like diary are critical and fascinating. It is here that the 'greyitty grey' emerges, and readers will begin to realize that Alex may very well be an unreliable narrator . . . or perhaps a not entirely self-aware one.

True, Alex's parents handle her transition abysmally, but for all the right reasons. Initially readers may side entirely with Alex, but through Brugman's clever narration we'll slowly start to put ourselves in her parent's shoes and realize the reasons that they fear Alex's changing sexuality.

In a few of my recent book reviews I've been harking on this issue of LGBTQI young adult literature, or the lack thereof. I've become very aware of how little is out there for the young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community because of brilliantly insightful blog posts like this one: (<http://goo.gl/EwFU9>). Such posts make a really good point, and it's all there in the title – 'the invisible minority'. Because even a cursory glance at the current crop of popular YA books will alert you to the fact that they're all pretty homogenous, particularly in their 'boy meets girl' tropes. Forget 'girl meets girl' or 'boy meets girl', let alone the complicated examinations of Brugman's novel, which is more 'boy is actually a girl who is also attracted to other girls'.

But why is it important that the young LGBTQI community are represented in young adult literature? Well it's what I always talk about with young adult books – that they're meant to be holding a mirror up and reflecting society. Young adult literature is about making connections for young readers who find a little of themselves in these stories and take comfort from reading characters go through similar hardships and survive all the stronger for it. This is perhaps especially important for LGBTQI youth, who already have a hard enough time finding themselves represented in other aspects of society and media – last year the Australian senate voted down a same-sex marriage bill, and afterwards a Liberal senator called Cory Bernardi equated same-sex marriage to bestiality. Already this year a (now former) candidate for Bob Katter's Australian Party likened homosexuals to pedophiles and said they shouldn't be allowed to work in kindergartens. Wow, huh? What a great message to send to the LGBTQI youth community, who are already struggling with admitting their sexuality to friends and family let alone thinking about going into adulthood without the same rights as heterosexual couples. How many movies came out this year with LGBTQI characters? I really love the Mackelmore and Ryan Lewis song 'Same Love', especially for this telling lyric:

"If I was gay I would think hip-hop hates me".

Now back to that blog about 'the invisible minority', which takes a look at American transgender teenagers in particular, and gives this chilling statistic: "45% of transgendered youth will attempt suicide". That's why it's important to have stories like Alyssa Brugman's 'Alex As Well'. You know that old saying – 'you have to be the change you want to see in the world'? Well I think reading the change you want to see in the world is also important – and Alyssa Brugman's 'Alex As Well' is one of the most significant books to be coming out of 2013 for that very reason.

Amanda says

Alex As Well by Alyssa Brugman is the story of fifteen year old Alex Stringfellow. Alex was born intersexed, meaning she had both male and female sexual body parts – in Alex's case she has ovaries and a small appendage classified as a penis. Her parents were told to watch and decide, based her on behaviour, which sex they should raise her as. Her mother chose male and Alex was put on medication and hormones to suit this. The problem is, Alex has always felt like a girl, but her parents have kept her in the dark in regards to the choice they made. Now Alex is old enough to do something about it, she changes school after a nasty incident, she goes vegetarian, and she starts dressing as a girl – and she enjoys making these decisions. All of these changes cause issues with her parents, particularly her mother, but Alex is determined to do what's right for herself.

Alex As Well is an amazing story, I was really impressed with how realistic and compelling this story was – I could not put this book down. Alex is a really intelligent girl and she made for an entertaining and honest narrator, who speaks directly to the reader, as if she's telling us her story. She had so much personality that she was jumping out of the pages at me, and I just wanted her classmates to see her for how awesome she was. For as long as she can remember, there have been two voices inside her head: the male Alex and herself, the female Alex. She's now taking her life into her own hands and this upsets her mother and causes her father to walk out. I really felt for Alex, it can't have been easy always feeling alone, being told she was different to other boys and having to put up with her mother. Alex knows that usually when her mother is yelling at her, it's not even about Alex, it's about her mum and her life, and this was really sad.

Her mother was awful. She takes all of Alex's decisions as personal insults, throws tantrums and even hits Alex. We also get her point of view via posts she makes on an online mothers' forum. I know these were supposed to give us an insight into her feelings and perhaps balance the story, but I still despised her, as well as most of the mothers commenting with praise or stupid advice. But, these posts felt so realistic and they really read like an online forum or blog post, and I found them to be quite funny - particularly the conversation about it being ok to drug your kid by comparing Alex to an alcoholic who can't make decisions! I want to say I could understand where she was coming from, only I really don't want to say anything nice about such a nasty woman. I feel that she made the wrong decision, raising Alex as a boy, but I'm sure it would have been a difficult decision to make at the time (there, that was almost nice, wasn't it?)

In a way, *Alex As Well* reminded me of *Creepy & Maud*, in that some parents don't realise the responsibility they have to their children and instead treat them in despicable ways, not caring about the ramifications later in life. I was happy with the direction this story took, in that Alex made friends, got some legal advice, and handled everything in a really mature way, despite how she'd been treated.

Alex As Well is a brilliant coming of age story that deals with friendship, figuring out who you are, and

believing that you have a right to be happy. I'd recommend this to YA and adult readers.

Thank you to the lovely people at Text Publishing for my review copy.

Emily says

There was so, so many things I disliked this book.

I should have put it down after the first chapter. We're introduced to "The Alexs" at the mall. Girl Alex gets a makeover and buys some makeup then tries on some clothes. The whole time she talks to Boy Alex. It's not hard to realize at this early point that the two Alexs are the same people. In the dressing room after Girl Alex tries on some clothes, Boy Alex decides to get off on how good she looks. Should have dropped the book right then.

First of all there was no reason for this to be in the book. None! Alex can be a transwoman and like girls. Nothing wrong with that at all. I loved that the author wanted to write about a lesbian transwoman. I've never seen that in any kind of LGBTQ fiction. However, having Alex essentially get off to herself in a dressing room makes it seem like she only enjoys being a girl for the reason of sexual gratification. Maybe the author put that scene in to show why Alex hates being called a "pervert" by her family but really, she doesn't need any reason not to like being called a "pervert".

This set up is what ruined the whole book for me. It's glaringly obvious that the author is a cisgender person. That's not a bad thing either in general but I felt she made some decisions with this book to avoid really researching the subject she wanted to write about.

Alex is intersex, it's not a bad thing for an intersex person to be trans, at all, but I felt she decided to make her character intersex to avoid subjects like gender therapy, hormone therapy, and body dysmorphia. After Alex stops taking a medication she's been taking her whole life like she starts to develop breast. Her appearance is very androgynous so she never worried too much about her looks or appearance giving her away. Her medicine was really the only thing making her a "boy" so huge trans subjects were never introduced or talked about.

I liked Alex as a character. Her internal dialogues were very deep and meaningful and she did, of course, have feelings and thoughts all trans people have. I didn't like, however, the constant separations of Alex's past gender and her current gender expressions. There was no need for it. If Alex was gender fluid it would have made more sense but mostly she just did something "boyish" and blamed Boy Alex. I would have much rather have seen Alex learn it's OK to do boyish things. One doesn't need to be strictly feminine because one is a girl. She also refers to her "noodle", her private parts, way too much. This is a huge no-no!

Alex's parents aren't very supportive of her decisions at first. I wasn't sure about this part of the book because Alex is intersex so this shouldn't have been a huge shock as it was. If the author wanted us to hate Alex's parents, she succeeded.

It took me 2 days to read this book so it didn't make me lose a chunk of time but I would encourage anyone who wants to read this book to go out and pick up something different. There are better books out there about trans and intersex people so do yourself a favor and check out one of those.

Liviania says

ALEX AS WELL is a 2013 release from Australia finally making its way to our shores. The protagonist, Alex, was raised as a boy but has recently realized that she identifies as a girl. Her gender identity is complicated by the fact that she's intersex and doesn't fit neatly into either category.

I liked that ALEX AS WELL gets beyond the usual struggle focused on in books about gender dysphoria. Alex knows she's a girl and is quite firm about it. Her struggles are more about her relationship with her parents (especially her mother), getting her birth certificate changed, enrolling in a new school and making new relationships, and finding a job. Honestly, everything but the relationship with her parents goes fairly easily for Alex, but that one thing is bad enough she deserves some easiness.

Interspersed throughout ALEX AS WELL are blog posts by Alex's mother Heather and the resulting comments. The difference between the way Alex and Heather's tellings is striking - particularly the way Heather omits details like hitting Alex with a phone in a moment of passion. By the end Heather is somewhat over the top, but I like that Alex realizes that it is abuse and she doesn't have to put up with it. No matter what anyone tells her, she's not just a selfish teenager.

I thought there was an interesting progression in the narration in ALEX AS WELL. In the beginning, she thinks about conversations with the boy Alex pretty frequently and relies on song lyrics to express her emotions. She gets less reliant on both as she becomes more comfortable with her new life.

ALEX AS WELL is a short, engaging novel with a unique heroine and plenty of humor to balance the darker family drama and one hideous instance of bullying posted on YouTube.

Lucy says

Okay. Mixed feelings about this. First things first: the author probably meant well, and there are definitely good things about this book: Alex's thoughts about gender and the conviction she had about who she was were definitely plusses. That's a part of the book that has value, and is helpful. (It's not ownvoices. Which is not a bad thing, in and of itself, but it's something you should know.)

As for the rest of it.

This book was, according to the copyright info page, "submitted as the creative component of a PhD in Communications". And oh boy, is that obvious. This book is FULL of ineffective communication. No one tells anyone anything. No one listens to Alex, and then they accuse her of not listening to them, and it's maddening. The only people who ever have proper, meaningful conversations are Alex and Mr Crockett. And thank god for Mr Crockett, he's the only character I liked 110%, and I'm glad Alex had him in her corner.

I hate Alex's mother. She fills me with visceral rage. She was a complete hypocrite who acted like the victim when really she has been abusing her daughter since birth. She forced her to take hormone replacements, even making Alex take them against her will, by CRUSHING THEM INTO HER FOOD after Alex CHOSE

to go off them (!!!!!). And then she has this bullshit blog that's included in the narrative which is basically her complaining about how hard she's trying, and how she "gave up 15 years of her life" for Alex, and how Alex is being "so difficult" - just for wanting to express her gender in the way that she feels is correct, mind you - and how "she can't even have a hobby" because when Alex was two she broke into her mother's scrapbooking cupboard and used her stamps on the furniture.

Wow. Your child is being a child and you have to raise that child. YOU POOR, PRECIOUS DANDELION. And then there is the CONSTANT misgendering, and how she accuses Alex of doing things that Alex ISN'T doing, but THE MOTHER IS, HERSELF. It's infuriating to read. I also don't understand what the point of the blog comments were. Vic's were often addressed within the blog, so, okay, I get that. But most of the others didn't seem to have a lot of point. Like Susan's. Was that a glimpse into Alex's mother's future, or what?

I know I'm probably supposed to hate Alex's mother, and that that's the point, but I just CANNOT with characters like that. I also can't with real people like that. Like, fuck's sake, pull your head out of your arse and stop shrieking long enough to listen to people when they try to talk to you, and stop making it all about yourself! GAH. The father is a more likeable character, and he tried, but not hard enough. I don't hate him, but I don't like him either. He also did not listen to Alex until the very, very end.

One more thing: in the first chapter, boy-Alex (as made distinct in the narrative: there are two Alexes, (girl-)Alex, who is the right one, and boy-Alex, who Alex has been forced to be by her parents), upon seeing (girl-)Alex in girl clothes in a changeroom at Myer, has a wank. In public. Wearing clothes that still belong to the shop. And I'm only mentioning this because no one else ever does and I don't understand its purpose within the narrative. It happens right at the start of the book, and then again when Alex is at home, which is less weird but still weird, because boy-Alex is sexually aroused by the sight of Alex as girl? Even though she IS a girl?? and it really threw me for a six. And then later, Alex, under the influence of boy-Alex, licked the ear of her friend as some kind of sick joke. Because boys do that, apparently.

And the point I'm making here is that boy-Alex was gross, and I don't see why that was necessary. The split between who Alex was and who her parents wanted her to be was perfectly understandable without the wanking (and I'm not against wanking in general, not at all, but the way it was done here was supremely bizarre and creepy) and the licking, and that really affected the way I felt about a character who was otherwise extremely sympathetic and well-written.

I'm giving three stars because this book has its worth, and I liked parts of it, and was compelled to read it in pretty much one sitting. But the mother, and the lack of communication, and the wanking and the licking and the weird af ending are things that I can't get past, and I can't say that I really enjoyed it.

amy kara says

1.5

Well, it was readable. However, I can't say that I enjoyed reading it.

Every character was so two dimensional and unlikable. I believe that Alex was supposed to be around fifteen, but she acted like she was about twelve years old. It was hard to connect to her as a protagonist, beyond feeling pity for her awful home situation. Even though it was told from her perspective, we didn't get much of her internal thoughts or feelings, outside of her (typically snarky) reactions to things happening in

her life. Honestly, it was hard to like any character, seeing as they were all constantly doing ridiculous things that it seems no one would ever do in real life.

The plot felt so random and unrealistic. Every plot point seemed to be a strange chain reaction to an impulsive action by Alex. These almost never felt grounded in reality, thereby, making the book seem unbelievable.

Additionally, for a novel whose premise is that its protagonist is intersex and does not identify with the gender assigned to her at birth, it didn't seem to want to have Alex be accepted. As a novel, its tone was quite cynical so perhaps the author was aiming to tell a realistic rather than idealized story that shows that not every trans and/or intersex person is going to be accepted for who they are. However, this realism was not achievable in my eyes due to my issues with the plot, so it instead felt like it was equating Alex's gender and intersex status to a problem in itself. Especially since there was barely an attempt to explain to the characters what was really going on. It was incredibly frustrating that the root of the negative reactions to Alex were a result of miscommunication and refusal to even try to remedy this, without explaining the lack of attempt. This allows some of the blame for her parents' views to be placed upon Alex, which leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

Lee Farnell says

I honestly feel let down by this book. It held so much potential in terms of characters and story, but it didn't deliver. Such a disappointment.

The whole book felt rushed. And with a subject like gender, identity, sexuality etc, you can't rush it because there's a lot to explain. And this book didn't really explain anything. We knew Alex was intersex and identified as a girl but her parents had made her a boy. It went into some detail on this but not enough.

The characters also seemed a bit 2D. Alex's parents were rather vile but seemed to have no reason behind it apart from the fact that Alex wanted to be a girl.

Essentially, I just wanted more. Had this book been 100-200 pages longer, with more detail and a well rounded story, it could of been phenomenal. What a shame.

Nasty Lady MJ says

To see motion in its full giffy glory [click here](#).

Introduction:

This Motion arises from another hellish reading experience by the writer of said motion. Once again, I am seeking the Book Court to remedy a horrible situation. Rather, than forgetting this POS, I wish to have the Court force this book to change its blurb so that people (like yours truly) won't get tricked into reading it and wanting to pound fictional characters as a result of this-I hear this effect is called being a Book Hulk. The only way to cure such an effect is to watch Beauty and the Beast for the five thousandth time and then complain about how Once Upon a Time made Belle an idiot. That just isn't right since it makes said reader

upset about how Belle is an idiot and how she shouldn't have sided with Team Stupid in that stupid midseason finale.

I digress.

A Motion in this case should be granted and the following proposed blurb should be used instead:

Alex decides to whine a lot, about not being accepted as a girl. Her parents are unrealistically horrible/bonkers and talk to what most people deem as internet trolls. And apparently, lawyers can do think with only a single phone call....then why is there all that pesky appellate case law? Compared to such classics like Big Fat Disaster meets Transparent meets America's Next Top Model meets The Pregnancy Pact this is one Lifetime like book you're going to sit there and let your jaw drop too.

Statement of Facts:

See the blurb to this book (exhibit A). It is enticing. It fits perfectly with the diverse reads movement. An intersex character is something you never see in YA.

In fact, most people have no idea what intersex is and this seemingly looks like a good opportunity to educate. Which is the whole point of diverse books....duh.

Only, it doesn't educate. The reader, who knew little about intersex going in (just a quick Wiki read to familiarize her with terms and an NPR interview or two) and was interested in learning more. However, she ended up getting a big fat Lifetime movie in book form.

The book started off promising enough. Alex had just started identifying herself as a she, this would've been an interesting place to start if the book actually had flashbacks showing how Alex came to this realization.

I'll correct that for the Court, flashbacks that made sense. Not, I was depants and when everyone saw how small Alex's noodle was that's when I (Girl Alex) decided to be a girl.

On that note, what was up with Alex talking about herself in third person? I thought I was dealing with a main character who had dissociative identity disorder. It would make sense, after all, this book read like a melodrama.

And a sleazy porn too with the amount of scenes describing the main character jerking off when she looks at herself in the mirror.

I don't think that this is the sort of message intersex activists want to get out-but what do I know?

The whole book reads like this. From over the top horrible parents, to lawsuits that make very little sense* it just read like a Lifetime movie. So much, that I couldn't help but continue reading at what a train wreck it was. And when I finished...I wept for the youth of tomorrow.

Argument:

I. A MOTION TO CHANGE BLURB SHOULD BE GRANTED BECAUSE THE ELEMENTS ARE MET

The elements to having a blurb change are as followed and are met in the above case: 1)The blurb contains social value that the book does not have, 2) The blurb states the book explores issues that it does not, 3) The blurb is inconsistent with the actual story, and 4)An annoying comparison that does not exist would be better than the current blurb.

A. THE BLURB CONTAINED SOCIAL VALUE THAT ALEX AS WELL DID NOT HAVE.

Social value has a broad definition. Arguably it can be about anything, but after such classics like *Fallen* and *Hush Hush* the Book Court has defined social value in YA as followed, "Any book that discusses anything that isn't total nonsense and stupidity." Nonsense and stupidity have been defined the court in subsequent cases to be a variety of things included and not limited to the following 1) Bella Swan obsession, 2)Relevant conversations that don't involve how hot someone supposedly is, and 3) cats are never viewed as nonsense (see popularity on the internet).

Classic example of something that lacks social value.

Alex As Well would not be viewed as social value test. While on its surface, it might have interesting topics that are socially relevant total nonsense and stupidity confound it and ruin the book.

Bella Swan obsession and hot conversations can be seen in the novel. While there is not that much in terms of romance, in the book there is a lot of talk about sex (in particular jerking off to one's own boobs-not even boobs really but buds). One could make the argument that Alex is exploring her new body, however the author makes it truly feel like there are two Alex's and hearing how hot girl Alex is by boy Alex is just kind of eh.

There are no cats in this book, so unfortunately, they can not save the book either.

Intersex issues also do not really play a role in the book, even though the main character is intersex. *Alex as Well* has met the criteria of the social value element for a motion for name change.

B. ALEX AS WELL DOES NOT HIGHLIGHT THE ISSUES IT PRESENTS IN ITS BLURB.

Alex As Well meets the scope of this very narrow rule. The Book Courts have taken a very staunch view on this element. All of the issues presented in the blurb have to be presented in the work. *Alex As Well* fails on its face on this test.

Alex as Well is similar to *The Conspiracy of Us*. *The Conspiracy of Us* failed the issue test as well, since it was suppose to present its audience with a tantalizing puzzle that was similar to *The Da Vinci Code*. It wasn't. It was just another boring YA book with a stupid love triangle. *The Conspiracy of Us* was unique because at first glance the case does not look like it was going to meet the criteria of the issue element. However, the Court ruled that, "Trying to loosely cover up YA stupidity with 'issues' that really aren't relevant to the plot. Does not make them issues."

The ruling in *The Conspiracy of Us* case applies to *Alice as Well*, while the gender issues that were presented in the blurb were presented they were almost secondary. Most of the book contents could be described as one of the following things: 1) Alex getting a makeover. Yes, I know it talks about her getting rid of her closet in the blurb, but it doesn't talk about her being told she's beautiful and hot stuff by her

everyone including her boy self. 2) Alex jerking off when looking at how goorgeous she is (happens two or three times in the book, at least). 3) Alex's mom talking like a freak on the internet. I got from the blurb that there were going to be issues with the parents, but I didn't think I'd be forced to read the mother's point of view. 4) Legalities that just don't make sense. Oh, yeah it happens. And even though I know squat about Australian law, I have to think that it's probably similar enough to US family law (which I do know) where this whole book would've never fucking happened.

So, yes, it meets the issue test. Ba da bing, ba da bung! Happy now.

C. ALEX AS WELL'S BLURB IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE REST OF THE STORY WHERE YOU SAY POPPYCOCK FIVE MILLION BILLION TIMES.

The Motion to Change Blurb should be granted because Alex As Well blurb makes it sound like it's an intelligent novel that grapples on real issues, rather than a wannabe Lifetime movie starring Tory Spelling's less attractive and less talented long lost half sibling (a.k.a. whoever the Disney Channel rejected) .

The element must be met by having something so outrageous happen in contrast to the verb that you want to say poppycock.

Alex as Well meets this test. The book is filled with melodrama, instead of being thoughtful. Most notably is the way the legal proceedings and the reactions of Alex's friends and family were handled.

The blogger states that she knows nothing about Australian family law (again). However, it does feel odd to her that a couple of phone calls and with the mere word of a sullen teenager that the state would take the teen away from her home. This isn't South Park and Alex is not Eric Cartman therefore it doesn't make sense. Arguably you can make the case that because her birth certificate was changed against her will at the ripe old age of six months that she is being abused. But...

Excuse me while I go laugh.

Or maybe I shouldn't be laughing if this is accurate. Maybe I should be scared for Australians-parents and kids. Is it really that easy to take away your kids? Here in America it's a very drawn out, long, process full of case assessments, court hearings, the works.

The only time kids get taken away as fast as Alex was, if there's actual danger to the kid and it's obvious that they could be injured. And a lot of times, we're too late (see the case of one Bella Swan).

The reason why? Legally speaking, taking someone's kids away from them is akin to the death penalty in civil law (or at least that's how my family law prof talked it up). So, I really don't see Alex being able to ditch the 'rental units as fast as she did.

And let's not talk about the getting hauled to the funny farm business either...

All I have to say, is it's very difficult to get someone committed in the US because you're holding them against their will. And I doubt they'd have internet access. Surely, it would be similar in Australia?

But then again, what do I know? Except that I found this whole thing ridiculous and meeting the outrageous test necessary to meet the requirements of the element.

D. ALEX AS WELL WOULD BE BETTER IF IT WAS COMPARED TO TWILIGHT, THE HUNGER GAMES, THE BIBLE, ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK, MEETS THE JETSONS.

Think of the most ridiculous blurb you can (see above) if it sounds better than what you've currently got then you meet this test.

And boy do we meet it. I feel like some Twilight might've given the book sparkle it lacked from Clinique products that it mentions every five pages (I use Clinique too, but I don't think it's the next best friend just over priced foundation and great smelling perfume). The Hunger Games thing could've killed off the unnecessary annoying characters. God could've smote some annoying characters as well, so that's a plus for being compared to The Bible. Orange is the New Black could've added dimension to the gender aspects on the story and actually made it (you know) good. And anything's better if it has the Jetsons in it. So there, element met. Game. Set. Match.

Prayer of Relief:

The court has a duty to change Alex As Well's blurb. The blurb meets all the necessary elements for a Motion to Change Blurb to be granted. If it's not met, then this was really a waste of two thousand plus words.

Overall Rating:

If I'm doing any sort of a motion for a review. You should know it's an automatic fail.

*I know nothing about Australian law, but I'm guessing it would be similar enough to US law since they are both Common Law based systems to where it would probably take more than thirty seconds for a parent to lose their custodial rights to a child.

Ashley says

"What do you do when everybody says you're someone you're not? Alex wants change. Massive change. More radical than you could imagine. Her mother is not happy, in fact she's imploding. Her dad walked out. Alex has turned vegetarian, ditched one school, enrolled in another, thrown out her clothes. And created a new identity. An identity that changes her world."

This book could've been amazing. Except it wasn't. Alex was born intersex, except she doesn't know that. She thinks she is transgender and has decided to live her life as a girl and not as a boy anymore. That is great and I have zero problems with that. However, that's about as good as this book gets. Alex enrolled at a new school without even letting her parents know. She complains about not being accepted as girl but she never has a conversation with her parents about it. The lack of communication adds to the insanity that already exists in the parents, making them completely awful. The mother turns to the Internet for help and basically talks to other crazies and one sane person. Picture the worst person you know; they would've made better parents than Alex's.

Then there is Alex always referring to herself and himself. She talks like there is two people and has conversations with her "male side". It's written like she suffers from a multiple personality disorder. She also has anger issues, according to her flash backs.

This book had a lot of potential for the intersex and trans community. Instead it was poorly written and felt way too rushed to explain anything as to how Alex came to realize her sexuality and gender identity.

haley says

DNF at page 133.

I'm more than halfway done through this fairly short book, but you know what? I don't have the patience to continue reading. I have way too many other books to be reading, and since I need to return Alex As Well to my library, I'm DNFing.

I am so disappointed by this, because books about transgender and/or intersex people are so important, and there are so few of them. But I didn't like this very much. First of all, there are so many misunderstandings between Alex and her parents that could have been resolved if only SHE TALKED TO THEM! It irritated me so much! Communication is key. Also, Alex herself is kinda strange and I don't really like her. The two Alexes thing really confused me. And I cannot stand Alex's mom, she is horrible and selfish, but she's sort of a one-dimensional antagonist.

I am so disappointed. But, I may try this again sometime. Maybe I'll have better luck a second time.

Veiledhorizon says

This is an enjoyable story about an intersex person,Alex. She finds herself to be a girl but she has both male and female parts. This story revolves around her finding herself and her relationship with her family. I would say it wasn't much of a happy ending but the ending was still good. Alex did get what she wanted in the end.

This story was also funny-with Alex, saying funny things here and there.(I laughed aloud in class HAHA) I also admired her for stepping up to her parents. Though I must add,her relationship with her parents is like a broken thread, I still enjoyed reading this book. I could tell that they all had a difficult time.

I love how this story deals with the issues of being an intersex person. It's something I've never read before and I would recommend it to everyone.(it is high time more people read about diverse books like these)

There were two qualms I had with this book though-one being that this book was really short(I feel that in that way, the relationship between Alex and his parents could have been discussed more thoroughly) and the other being that the writing was rather simple.It could have been better in my opinion. But, I would still recommend this book. It is a topic everyone needs to know more about.

Jillyn says

It's time to get a little bit personal here on my blog. Regular readers of my reviews know that I am happily taken by a girl named Emily, who sometimes graces this blog with her own book reviews. What most of you don't know, is that Emily has struggled with gender identity issues for a long, long time. It is because of her and the charming cover, I admit, that I picked up Alex as Well. Though of course I acknowledge that this

book is one of fiction, I do believe it has helped me process some things about the way Emily thinks and feels, and for that reason among others I am so, so happy that I requested this title.

Alex, the 15 year old protagonist of this story, explains in the book that she has "two selves". This can be a kind of hard concept to wrap around, but because she has torn feelings about who she really is as a person, she finds that it is easier to associate "girl Alex" and "boy Alex" as two different people in her head. As voices, if you will. Alex was born "intersex", and these gender ideas clash and fight often with one another.

Though Emily is biologically female through and through, she also uses this way of speaking about her inner conflicts. She has a girl voice, Emily, and a boy voice, Devin. I was very confused and conflicted at first, when Emily spoke of these "voices" so to speak, because I had never heard of something like that before. I was nervous and scared for both her and myself and what it meant for us as a couple.

Because I was used to this way of thinking, it was easier for me to follow Alex's internal conversations and honestly, it made me feel.... Like Emily and I aren't alone. I connected with this form of narration from the very get-go, and it is definitely unique. This is the first book that I have personally ever encountered that uses two voices from the same person beyond just the idea of a conscience. Another unique concept of this book is that the chapters are sprinkled with blog posts from her mother on what it is like to raise someone who is intersex.

Speaking of her mother, let's talk about characters for a bit. I hated and loved them. I mean this in the best way. The author wanted me to hate and love them, and she got her wish. Each of the characters was unique and had depth, and unfortunately they were all believable. Her mother, for example. I was left with SO MANY FEELINGS. I will refrain from spoilers, but Alex's views made me hate her. Then her blog posts helped me to understand her a bit more, but still with hatred. And then at the end I felt kind of sorry for her but also still angry and heartbroken. I didn't know how to feel. Alex is an amazing character. She's complex and unapologetically true to herself, despite the shitstorm by which she's surrounded. She's fierce and often snarky and hilarious, but sometimes she broke my heart. I was cheering her on from the beginning to the end, and she isn't a character that I will soon forget, nor do I want to forget her. I also really liked how she connected her life to the music she was listening to at the time, I thought it to be a nice touch.

The synopsis (at least on Goodreads) describes this book as "heartbreaking and droll in equal measures" and I feel like this perfectly describes it. I was left emotionally exhausted from this book, and though I finished it ages ago, I am still thinking about it. It's a roller coaster that's gritty, real, and well executed. This is the first book that I have read from Alyssa Brugman and I sincerely hope it is not the last. You will feel lows when you see the bullying, the drama, and the awful people that Alex must encounter. You will feel highs when Alex comes into herself, when she feels beautiful, and when her life seems to be looking up for the better. And, if you are like me, you will make an inhuman noise when you find yourself out of pages when you are still having these intense feelings. (It's not a cliffhanger ending. It's not quite so dramatic. More like a hillhanger. That's a word now. Tell your friends.)

And, if by some chance the author is reading this, I would love to read more about Alex. Just sayin'. And while I have your attention, I would personally like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for creating a story that touched me on such a personal level, and that helped to open a better dialog between my girlfriend and I. Who would have thought that one little young adult novel could do so much?

I recommend this book to anyone who loves LGBT themed young adult, contemporary YA, or books dealing with disorders, mental issues, or identity issues. Thank you so much to Netgalley and Henry Holt and Co. (BYR) for a copy in exchange for my honest review.

This review can also be found on my blog, Bitches n Prose.

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

In this day and age, very few topics are more important than intersex and/or transgender children. The world is changing right now and diverse books will certainly help us reach a positive outcome. Aside from being a beautiful book, *Alex as Well* is also a step in the right direction. I can't remember any other recent YA books about intersex teens, and we can't deny the necessity.

Alex was born with intersex condition, anatomically both female and male. Her parents were advised to watch her carefully and make an informed decision about her gender later on, but in their wish to have a normal child, they decided to treat her as a boy from the start. This was, as it later turned out, a much premature decision that ultimately led to a bitter divorce and a lot of pain and insecurity for Alex.

Short blog entries written by Alex's mom (and the accompanying comments) were inserted between the chapters and they were the only thing that truly bothered me about this book. As one of the most important characters, Alex's mom needed more nuance, but instead I felt that she was almost cartoonishly selfish and mean. I really felt that some struggle on her part would have added significantly to the story.

On the other hand, I thought that Alex's voice was poignant and occasionally funny. I really felt her pain, but I admired her bravery as well. She was portrayed as a truly extraordinary 15-year-old with a strong sense of self, even if said 'self' is actually two people in a single body.

Alex as well is a beautiful book; not free of flaws, but free of anything that couldn't easily be forgiven. It's a valuable book that raises awareness and increases sensitivity to those that are in any way different. I highly recommend it.

Bogi Takács says

I read this book for two different reasons:

1. I am trying to read one intersex-themed book a month
2. For Week 1 of the #readproud challenge

This is a book with a teen protagonist who is both trans and intersex! Who is made to take hormones! I am so glad this kind of representation exists in YA fiction - right?

Right?

....Sadly no. This is a very misinformed take on both being trans and intersex, on many counts.

The author was not very clear on the difference between being trans and intersex, so don't expect a subtle portrayal. I don't think any trans and/or intersex people were consulted. At least part of the book was inspired

by the discredited, pseudoscientific theory of autogynephilia (not named as such, but it was very apparent in the protagonist's actions and what the author assumed about an intersex trans person's thought processes). The author also seemed to confuse being intersex with multiplicity to some degree: the protagonist had a 'male self' and a 'female self', who were in mental dialog. I am not saying this is impossible; there are intersex people who are also multiple (though most of them probably not in this way), but to present this kind of mental configuration as something that happens when one is intersex - and then also tie it to taking hormones - is extremely misleading as far as I'm concerned.

It was interesting to see that the protagonist had a family member with mental illness (not named, but it looked like narcissistic personality disorder?), but this was again a very unsubtle and IMO caricaturistic portrayal, not to mention this person was the main antagonist.

The author also seemed to both discuss the protagonist's privates quite a lot, but at the same time not give much information about the particular intersex variation she had (named as androgen insensitivity syndrome; I am assuming partial androgen insensitivity syndrome). Of course this can be justified by the participant herself not knowing, but seeing as her mother was also a PoV character (through her blog entries), it came across as if the author was only interested in being intersex as a plot device, the less examined the better. The same held true for the hormones, etc.

There was also a considerable amount of casual racism and ethnocentrism in the book, including a truly offensive random remark about Eastern Europeans (gee, thanks) and the inevitable token Black character to fend off criticisms on a race axis. This character was also the 'exotic' love interest, similar to other trans YA books by white authors, like Parrotfish.

I did not dislike everything about *Alex As Well*! I very much enjoyed the edgy, diffident tone of voice (though the author tried to undermine it here and there), and the blog posts and comments threads between chapters were much better done than in some other YA books; the commenters immediately took shape in my head as distinct characters. There were also important points about not tolerating abuse from your family members, somewhat mangled in the rather rushed plot. Overall this book left me clutching my head.

Disclosure as per my reviews policy: I got this book from the Iowa City Public Library and back there it went.

Kristen Cansler says

Alex As Well was a rollercoaster that I did not want to get off of. It blew me away and rendered me speechless. While reading, my mind was constantly churning a million thoughts about Alex, gender identity, and the effects that our parents can have on us and us on them. There are so many elements woven into the very fabric of this story. I'm in awe of Alyssa Brugman.

Usually whenever I'm blown away by a book, I'll gush and post a million gifs. But it would feel silly to do that for *Alex As Well*. It deserves **more**. It's beyond complex and thought provoking. There were times that I laughed along with Alex. There were tears. And there was even a fair amount of frustration for Alex and his situation. I finished reading this book weeks ago, and I still think about Alex. Alex isn't just a character. Alex is the androgynous face in the crowd that you wonder about. Alex is that classmate that gets relentlessly teased. Alex is someone you probably know. Alex wasn't a character for me; Alex was real. And that made *Alex As Well* a little heartbreaking, too.

The way that Alyssa Brugman writes this story really is mind blowing. It was so realistic. Alex's mother made me so angry. I won't mention much because *spoilers*. But I absolutely hated her. I felt like she was just a horrible person through and through. Her concerns were with herself and not her child. Alex was facing monumental challenges, and the mother was only concerned with how it was affecting her, not Alex. Ugh.

I don't think you could find a better coming of age story that deals with such complex issues. Readers of all ages will find *Alex As Well* to be a thought provoking rollercoaster of emotions. I'm so glad that I read it.

**I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review with no compensation.
