

# Editorials

## Book to Movie Comparison: *To All the Boys I've Loved* Huma Hashmi, Staff Writer

*To All the Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han has been in the headlines for its fresh take on old clichés with the release of the Netflix adaptation this August. The story focuses on Lara Jean, a hopeless romantic who writes love letters to all the boys she has ever had a crush on. After all seven of her secret love letters get mysteriously published, her world turns upside down. Lana Condor, who stars as the lead young woman, channels her character's awkward fumbling, sweet and quiet nature perfectly. She is interesting, put together and, while not the loudest, has expressive facial expressions that perfectly encompass Lara Jean's inner monologue.

The book itself is light, simple and fun, written to appeal to a young teen audience. It is a typical teen coming-of-age novel fraught with love interests and teen drama. Lara Jean is extremely inexperienced with life: she doesn't like swearing; she is absolutely scandalized when she finds out Peter cheated on a test in seventh grade. In the movie, Condor keeps her character's civilized core while maturing her with her quiet confidence.

The trope at the center of *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* is "fake dating"—one of the most well-worn romantic conceits out there, in which circumstances conspire to lead two people to pretend to be in a relationship together, who inevitably fall in love over the course of their guile. In this case, the pair in question is a couple of 16-year-olds,

Lara Jean and Peter Kavinsky, and they start "fake-dating" each other so that Lara Jean can get over a crush and Peter can get back at his ex.

Both the book and the movie excel at actually delving into Peter and Lara Jean's interactions, wherein they get to know each other and listen intently to the stories the other shares. It's quietly intimate moments, like the scene where Peter spends time with LJ and her little sister by staying in and watching movies. They spend time together and try new things without trying to inherently change who Lara Jean is as a person. While Lara Jean goes to parties with Peter, she doesn't do anything she isn't comfortable with, and never has the dramatic make-over to turn her into the stereotypical "popular" girl that is so common in young adult media.

This movie lets Lara Jean and Peter be partners in crime, entering their fake relationship with full knowledge of what they're getting into. They sign a contract in which they make their expectations toward one another clear, and they make honesty and transparency requirements of that contract. It lends a certain amount of comfort to the reader that any character development being built up isn't going to be torn down.

In a particularly pivotal scene, Peter and Lara Jean walk into the school cafeteria in slow motion with Peter's hand stuck absurdly in Lara Jean's back pocket after they sign their "fake-dating" contract,

both knowing they are on the same team. And because their relationship is based on friendship rather than betrayal, their emotional bond and their trust are never on the line to be lost during this "relationship." That quiet assurance is what gives *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* its deeply earnest sincerity. It's what gives you permission to wholeheartedly enjoy the romance of it all, knowing its tropes and loving them nonetheless.

In many ways, this movie was in its essence what rom-coms have been in the last few decades. Of course, there were moments that I wish were included, but the movie correctly gets the tone of the books. In other ways, however, in both the book and the movie, it managed to be trailblazing—notably in its casting of an Asian-American for the romantic lead.

In the movie, just as in the books, the character of Lara Jean is half-Korean, played by Condor, who is of Vietnamese descent. While this alone is a rarity itself, others have asked why she wasn't played by Korean-American actress. But with only one production accepting an Asian lead at all, even after the novel reached acclaim, it is a step in the right direction that will hopefully open the door for more accurate and nuanced representation.

Refreshingly, there was no stereotyping of the Asian characters in the novel or the book. However, the dodgy implications of Asian characters, half or otherwise, making relationships and bonding solely

with white people or in a few cases, a black person, raise some interesting questions. Her father, her nemesis, her closest female friend and both of her active love interests are all white, with only a smattering of people of different races sprinkled in. It's interesting to note that Lara Jean does not interact at all with another Asian character not related to her in the books or the movie.

In the movie, it felt that Lara Jean was living the experiences of a white girl, and she just happened to be Asian while doing it. By isolating the Song sisters and not giving them any link to a non-white cultural frame, it is an easier book and movie for the masses to digest. I don't think Asian women's stories are obligated to always include other Asian people, but *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* goes almost into a wish-fulfillment mode by making Lara Jean Asian-American while only having easily-digestible facts about her that indicate her ethnicity and culture. As a story, it is not obligated to include other Asians characters, especially as love interests, but when we keep seeing this trope, even from Asian creators, we should be able to question it.

While there is valid criticism of both the movie and the book, both overall were fun and light portrayals of a sweet modern romance, in which Asian-American girls got to see themselves as protagonists, too.

## Plant Blindness

By Rebecca Dowdy, Opinion Editor, and Emma Fry, Staff Writer

There is a disease on Meredith's campus that has long gripped students. It is not a late summer flu nor the midterm blues. It is instead what Dr. Swab, a Meredith professor of botany, calls plant blindness. The term describes how people are too often oblivious to the splendor of nature that surrounds them. A student could walk by a magnolia tree in full bloom and not notice a single flower. It is an affliction "that must be defeated," proclaimed Swab, shaking her fist at the sky. So amidst the chaotic energy that thrums through campus at the start of the semester, take the time to discover the wealth of plant diversity here at Meredith, and perhaps you'll

be inspired to take part in its care and growth.

In our walking tour of the hidden plants of Meredith college, Dr. Swab named off plant after plant, giving us snippets of their stories. Over here was the native plant garden, tucked between SMB and Ledford, with its Kentucky Coffeetree. People used to grind up and boil its seeds to make a coffee-like substance, hence the name. Over there, diagonal from the chapel, was the legacy garden that survived multiple renovations and existed long before SMB was ever built. Dr. Swab pointed out the Sequoia in front of Harris and its speckled, white bark. She gushed over the

tall grasses planted in parking lots and the Live Oak between Harris and Joyner and the Crepe Myrtles that line the sidewalks behind SMB. The campus through her eyes was practically bursting with life.

And any plant enthusiast you talk to at Meredith seems equally taken by the rich plant life there is to find. Jackie Law, one such plant enthusiast, will make easy chatter about the food grown in the Three Sisters Community Garden, tucked behind Witherspoon. She pointed out to us the Malabar spinach, Tulsi basil, and Bitter melon, all ripe and ready for the taking. She described how, over the years, students had seen the garden and were inspired to

get involved. They had collaborated on projects with Angels for the Environment, harvested crops for Meredith Supported Agriculture, or simply volunteered some of their spare time to tend to the garden. It appears that once you start seeing the plants around you, it is hard not to be affected.

So once the tempo of classes starts increasing, remember: take a breath and look around you. Plant blindness is a choice, and you never know what botanical wonder might brighten your day or fill your stomach!

## Continued from page 3

The Movement, Little Stranger & Elephant Convoy  
The Pour House Music Hall- 8:00pm

Wednesday, September 19th, 2018  
Diamond Creek  
Booth Amphitheater at Regency Park -

Cary, NC 5:45pm  
Supersuckers  
The Pour House Music Hall -8:00pm

Thursday, September 20th, 2018  
Old Crow Medicine Show  
Booth Amphitheater at Regency Park -  
Cary, NC 7:00pm

North Carolina Symphony: Joshua Bell  
Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts - Meymandi Concert Hall  
Raleigh, NC 7:30pm.

Friday, September 21st, 2018  
Something More, Centerfolds & Nominee

Imurj -Raleigh, NC 7:30pm

Tickets at The Pour House can be found at <https://www.thepourhousemusicall.com/ticketing>  
Get all other tickets at [https://www.ticketmaster.com/?dma\\_id=366](https://www.ticketmaster.com/?dma_id=366)

## STAFF

Sarah Kiser, Editor-in-Chief. Mimi Mays, Associate Editor.

Caroline Garrett, A&E Editor. Abby Ojeda, Features Editor. Rebecca Dowdy, Opinion Editor. Micah Clark, Cartoonist. Cro Owens, Social Media Coordinator.

Staff Writers: Hannah Flood, Huma Hashmi, Oliva Slack, Molly Perry, Kathleen Daly, Emma Fry.