



# All This Could End

*Steph Bowe*

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## **All This Could End** Steph Bowe

What's the craziest thing your mum has asked you to do?

Nina doesn't have a conventional family. Her family robs banks—even she and her twelve-year-old brother Tom are in on the act now. Sophia, Nina's mother, keeps chasing the thrill: 'Anyway, their money's insured!' she says.

After yet another move and another new school, Nina is fed up and wants things to change. This time she's made a friend she's determined to keep: Spencer loves weird words and will talk to her about almost anything. His mother has just left home with a man who looks like a body-builder vampire, and his father and sister have stopped talking.

Spencer and Nina both need each other as their families fall apart, but Nina is on the run and doesn't know if she will ever see Spencer again. Steph Bowe, author of *Girl Saves Boy*, once again explores the hearts and minds of teenagers in a novel full of drama, laughter and characters with strange and wonderful ways.

## **All This Could End Details**

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## From Reader Review All This Could End for online ebook

### Michelle says

*L'esprit de l'escalier.*

*"It's French for the feeling you get after leaving a conversation, when you think of all the witty things you should have said".*

If only I could say this concept is unfamiliar. Alas, it is not. I also quite frequently think of all the wonderful things I could have said in reviews, assignments and exams etc. I really, really hope Bowe doesn't feel there was anything which she could have said better in this, because it felt perfect.

There are some books I love because of the plot, or the characters, or the writing. And then there are the ones which I respond to on a purely emotional level. There are some authors who have managed to beautifully and perfectly combine all three of these things in such a way that I simply cannot help but love a book from the very first page. In case you hadn't already guessed, this is how I feel about All This Could End. It is incredibly difficult for me to articulate why exactly I loved this book so much, but there was just something wonderful about it.

Spencer and Nina were wonderful characters and I loved their cute, slightly awkward interactions. As dual narrators they worked incredibly well, both offering complex personalities. I really felt for both of them. They were both trying to cope with difficult families and find their place in the world. I recognised aspects of myself in both of them and this is something which always appeals to me. The emphasis on Spencer and Nina's families was also something I enjoyed about this novel. Both families were slowly falling apart and I appreciated the way Bowe portrayed how each person was trying to cope with their own grief or come to terms with and justify their actions.

I loved the structure of the novel, with its 'slice of life' segments. For me it was something new and fresh. I was intrigued about what went on in the missing months, but enjoyed seeing the changes in both characters. I felt like these were emphasised by the passing of time; sometimes things stand out more when not seen day by day. The writing was quite concise and flowed well. Although it was heavy with internal dialogue and reflection, I never felt bogged down and found myself constantly torn between needing to find out what happened and wanting to savour every sentence.

*All This Could End* was a book I responded to on an emotional level; it was a compelling, yet beautifully written novel with characters I completely fell in love with. It's a story about two people, and their families, slowly falling apart and struggling to find their way. It's also one of my favourite books of the year. I can't wait to see what else Bowe has in store for us.

*Thank you to Text Publishing for providing a copy of the book for review.*

*This review and many more can be found at Maree's Musings.*

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### Rochelle says

This is the second book by Steph Bowe that I have read, that just so happens to be her second book, and I can honestly say I am seriously impressed by her writing. This book was told from alternating POVs, Nina's and

Spencer's, and I just loved Spencer. Bowe just has this way of capturing the male lead's voice that is utterly captivating. When reading her books I find myself unable to put them down and have this compulsive need to keep reading, to see what's going to happen.

Confession: I was not completely sold on this synopsis. I mean, robbing banks? Didn't sound like a story I would like, but I adored *Girl Saves Boy* so I put this on my to-read list but it wasn't a high priority. Then Text publishing had the chance to win it on twitter and I won (Thanks so much Text Publishing) and I am so glad I did because I really enjoyed this book and now I have complete faith in Steph Bowe in giving me a story I will love and be sucked in and not want to stop reading. And I can't stress enough how great she is at writing boys.

I found Nina to be relatable and I think many readers will too, not because we know what's it's like to be in a family of criminals, but because Nina was suck in a family she didn't like and was counting down the days until she was eighteen and therefore free and could escape, and that is something a lot of teens can relate too.

Spence was adorable and awkward and found it hard to talk to people, and what he and his family has to go through is heart breaking and had me on the verge of tears.

I was worried about the ending. I had no idea how she was going to do this without it being incredibly unrealistic, but she pulls it off, and it's only flaw was it felt like it was cut too short and I wanted more, more, more.

This book had plenty of Nina, and plenty of Spence, but not a lot of Nina and Spence together, which I would of loved. I wanted this book to be twice the size. But that was the only flaw for me, otherwise brilliant.

All This Could End was sweet, sad, and sometimes funny. I highly recommend it to those who love YA contemporary.

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## **Jill Smith says**

Who would know that Nina doesn't have a normal family? Why would Spencer even suspect Nina of being anything other than an enchanting new girl at school? This story revolves around how Nina and Spencer keep their daily lives secret.

Nina hates the life she has. She's counting down the days until she reaches eighteen and can leave her family for good. She doesn't want to keep doing what her crazy mother wants her to do. She doesn't want her younger brother to be going through the same brainwashing. Her father is a good teacher and he loves teaching. Why does he let her mother call the shots? She literally wants them to continue to rob banks. She trains Nina and her brother to pickpocket and break and enter cars. Nina feels the strain of constantly moving towns when all she really wants to do is settle down into a normal house, with normal friends going to a normal school. She really does like Spencer but she always has to be on guard. No one can know that the family she is part of, is one step ahead of the law. She also knows they are only in this town for four months, so it's no good getting too involved with anyone.

Spencer has a normal family, school and home. His gregarious and wild friend Bridie, sticks with him through thick and thin, except when they go out and Bridie goes for the latest Base guitarist in the band. His sister Monica hasn't spoken a word in months only communicating through Conversation Hearts. His father is like a walking zombie. All happened after arguments between his mother and father and his mother leaving them to live in Fiji with a younger he-man. Then he meets Nina, and he thinks things are starting to

look up. He's shattered when she leaves one day out of the blue.

The collision course Nina and Spencer are on moves this story to the next level and makes it a real page-turner.

Steph is young herself and draws on her own experiences to write close to the bone adolescent feelings. I loved this book and will now go to read her other two books, *Boy Saves Girl* she wrote when she was fifteen, and *Night Swimming* her latest release in 2017.

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## **Eleanor says**

*His head feels foggy, heavy, and everything he sees is diaphanous.*

If there is one word I would use to describe this novel, it would be *fresh*. You know those dreamy hipstergram shots of girls with long hair, road trips and retro motels going around on Tumblr? If those could be translated into words, then you would be looking at Steph Bowe's work. I loved her debut *Girls Saves Boy* which was published when she was 16 and I've been hanging out for the sequel since. *All This Could End* doesn't disappoint. The "nowness" of the prose and the feel is bang on and I don't know if anyone has paid her a compliment for making it look so easy, but other novels have tried to do it and failed (view spoiler). Even when the conversations get wordy... I still really like it. Instead of coming off as stilted, it has the coolness of talky '80s John Hughes movies such as *The Breakfast Club*. Or like *Before Sunset*, but with teens.

This coming of age novel about a young girl counting down to the days until she is 18 and able to escape her bank robbing parents is a darker turn from her previous novel. The structure and the cohesiveness is also stronger, but with a bit more work on the traditional story-telling structure, Steph could be perfect. I find the gaps between key events within the novel very noticeable. Suddenly time has skipped in chunks to stretch from April to December and I sorely missed what was in between, especially in regards to what had actually happened with the relationship between Nina and Spencer. Because of this, I never felt fully invested in the two of them together. The side character Bridie is super awesome, but at times I felt her personality was so big and interesting it swamped the personalities of that of the more delicate Nina & Spence. Ultimately, the novel needed to pull back and concentrate on that of Spence and Nina and give the reader the reason as to why it is their dual narrative, what it is about the two of them. The epilogue is also a disappointment.

The worldly wisdom and the understanding of family dynamics is absolutely stunning, both Nina and Spencer's crumbling families achingly drawn. Nina's mum is genuinely the most realistic monster I have seen in a novel for a long time.

I truly loved this novel despite the imperfections, in the bigger sense of things the imperfections give it a sort of young charm. Eagerly waiting the third. I'm an admirer!

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## **Jacinta Butterworth says**

I'm a big fan of Steph Bowe's blog *Hey! Teenager of the Year* ([www.stephbowe.com](http://www.stephbowe.com)), which is about all

things YA, and have been looking forward to the release of *All This Could End* since I read her debut novel in 2010.

Steph Bowe has a talent for creating charming and original characters with a lot of heart. In *All This Could End* Nina, a seventeen-year-old who is struggling to come to terms with her bank-robbing family, moves to a new town where she develops feelings for Spencer, one of her classmates. Spencer is shy but smart — his love of strange words like *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (a German word that means coming to terms with the past) is quite endearing — and Nina soon decides she's finally met a friend she wants to keep.

In *All This Could End* Steph Bowe expertly conveys how it feels to be a teenager — I especially loved Spencer's description of the summer holidays. He says, "Everyone hangs out over the summer holidays but you're not really friends when you get back to school. It's like a different world. Whatever happens in the summer is nobody's real life, even though it's what everybody lives for."

Despite the many strengths of the book, there were times I found it frustrating. I loved Nina and Spencer's first kiss, but the development of their relationship from that point on was skimmed over. I didn't feel like I was given the chance to become invested in their relationship, which was a little disappointing because this is a character-driven book and the romance between Nina and Spencer is central to the plot.

As I was reading I found myself constantly questioning the execution of the premise. There was just something unbelievable about the way Nina's family of professional bank robbers committed their crimes and justified their actions. Steph Bowe's descriptions of how Nina's family robbed banks and why they chose to do it never felt 'real', which was a shame because this made it difficult for me to relate to Nina's thought process at times.

The dialogue was also a little uneven. There were moments when I felt Steph Bowe perfectly captured the way teenagers speak and interact, and other times when the dialogue felt so forced I was pulled out of the scene completely. Spencer's light-hearted comments during the climatic robbery scene struck me as particularly off.

Overall, *All This Could End* was an enjoyable sophomore novel, but I much preferred Steph Bowe's debut *Girl Saves Boy*. With that said, I can't wait to see what she writes next because she brings something unique and fiercely smart to contemporary Australian YA. Steph Bowe is definitely one to watch.

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## **ALPHAreader says**

Some parents help their kids with math homework. Most have spouted parental proverbs like "Mind your Ps and Qs" or "Respect your elders."

This is not the way of the Pretty family.

For Nina and her little brother Tom, homework is pickpocketing for big bucks. Motherly maxims include "Trust no one" and "Scout the place."

Because the Pretty family are bank-robbers. Old-school, hold-em-up style bank-robbers. Nina is, unwillingly, following in her mother's footsteps and has been robbing since she was twelve-years-old and able to spray-paint surveillance cameras. Now that's Tom's job, and Nina is deemed old enough to wield a gun alongside her mother and father.

But while Tom is still thrilled by the life of crime and has no qualms with moving town every four months or so, Nina is decidedly sick of it all. She plans to escape from her parents' criminality, just as soon as she's old enough.

In the meantime, her father has taken a new teaching job and the family are moving once again. Except this time something changes. Nina meets Birdie and Spencer – two completely opposite best friends who draw Nina into their orbit. Birdie is extravagant and fearless, with a serious penchant for bassists. Spence is a shy word-enthusiast, who can talk to Nina about absolutely everything – including his parents' crumbling marriage.

But Spencer's father is also the local bank manager.

And this life of crime just got a whole lot more complicated.

'All This Could End' is the new novel from Australian young adult author, Steph Bowe.

This novel has one of the most suckering beginnings of any book; "*Nina Pretty holds the gun to the boy's head, her other arm around his neck. Her balaclava itches.*" Of course I was captivated from that line onwards, and Steph Bowe delivered on a first-chapter cliff-hanger with a rather fun and quirky contemporary novel.

Spence and Nina alternate in point-of-view chapters, which backtrack from the moment of a bank-robbery that's suddenly veered off course to their first meeting. In Nina's chapters we also get carried back to the beginning of her crime-sprees, when she was just twelve-years-old.

The story about the Pretty family of bank-robbers is a great hook. And the old-school, hold-up style is explained rather eloquently by Nina's mother, Sophia;

*'A bank hold-up is outdated. It's almost quaint! It was happening in the eighties. It's something they think only desperate, unprepared people do. Bank theft is all online stuff now,' Sophia had lectured them a few weeks earlier, through a mouthful of parmigiana made by Paul. She waved her fork about to emphasise her point. 'Has the element of surprise every time.'*

This also goes a long way to hinting at Sophia's entire outlook on her crime-life, which began when she was a child herself. Sophia has rose-tinted glasses when it comes to the criminality aspect of bank-robbing, she treats it like a bizarre hobby full of retro nostalgia. She burns through their stolen money too quickly, and revels in the adrenaline rush.

And as much as this is a novel centred on a quirky 'bank-robbing' plot, the real heart of 'All This Could End' stems from the family dramas playing out between Spence and Nina.

For Spence, it's coming to terms with his parent's clearly fraught marriage that's on the brink. He has a best friend called Birdie, who's all eclectic-larger-than-life awesomeness, but for the real heart-to-hearts he grows to rely on Nina and they develop this lovely, blossoming bond.

For Nina, it's this feeling like her family is suffocating her and she needs to break away – to stand on her own two feet. There's a hint of 'Running on Empty' with this aspect of Nina's home life, and I found it really intriguing that although she's talking about feeling smothered by her crime family, this feeling of needing to break away from the nest is one many young readers will relate to.

*Right now Nina feels as if happiness is just a story people tell, rather than something that actually happens. Because it's not happening for her.*

If I have any complaints about the book, it's that Bowe occasionally strays into 'show, don't tell' territory and there were some revelations that I felt I could have got to myself, without her laying them out for me;

*It didn't occur to her until years later that someone who was truly good, who truly loved her children, would not put them in such a situation. But then again, it's a miracle Nina ever reached a place in her mind where she could realise that at all.*

This is a charmingly quirky novel about family, criminality and independence.

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### **Alicia says**

I decided to read this book because the blurb looked really interesting and the prologue hooked me in. This comes under the category of my choice. I loved this book because the family drama is not something most kids go through so it's something different; I mean, how many families rob banks together under the peer pressure of the parent? Nina has had enough because she hates the look of terror on the faces of the customers, hates being scared of the cops showing up on their doorstep and hates that she has to be so guarded around Spencer. I'm really glad that the conflict in the story resolved the way it did; good on Tom, Nina's brother, for going to the police. Nina's mum didn't have any right to put her family through the stress of robbing banks when they really don't want to.

My favourite quote from the book was in the part of the novel where Spencer was accidentally shot in the leg by Tom because of Nina's psychotic mother, the police were outside and Nina said, "I will give up my freedom if he gets to a hospital." It shows Nina's caring personality and she will live through the consequences of what her family has done, maybe even prison, if it means her best friend stays alive. The family drama of the mother making her family rob banks was really thought provoking because it made me realize how lucky I am that my parents don't put me through that and how uncomplicated my life really is. Uncommon criminals really do know how to hide in plain sight. But the most interesting character for me was Spencer, the boy that Nina meets at her current high school. He's shy, quiet, nerdy, yet best friends with the most popular girl in school, Bridie, and knows lots of quirky words.

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### **Amanda says**

All This Could End is Aussie author, Steph Bowe's, sophomore novel. Set on the north-east coast of Australia, the story revolves around sixteen year old Nina Pretty and seventeen year old Spencer Jack. Nina, her parents, and her younger brother, Tom, have moved house again, in the wake of their last bank robbery. Nina starts at a local private school, Evandale College, and it's there she meets new friends Bridie and Spencer. Spencer's biggest fear in life is that people will finally discover that he was born without a pinkie toe and the fact that his family is slowly falling apart. Both Nina and Spencer think themselves awkward, but they're actually really similar and a perfect match.

I've been so excited to read All This Could End by Steph Bowe, it's no secret that I LOVE Australian contemporary YA. I've also been keen to see what Steph would come up with after Girl Saves Boy and I have to say I think All This Could End is streets ahead.

I felt for Nina so much. Her mother, Sophia, led a life of crime with her father when she was a little girl so it's no surprise that once she was married to Paul and had kids, the couple would turn to robbing banks. They choose small banks and conduct very carefully planned robberies. Once Nina reached twelve years of age,

Sophia told her it was time to help them and since then Nina has continued participating in her parents' capers. Nina is lonely and just wants a more normal life. She wants to be able to stay in one place and not have to leave behind houses, friends, and memories. The one thing that keeps her sane is joining the local library of whichever suburb they move to, and immersing herself in books that allow her to forget her messy life. She's a collector of random facts, they also act as a distraction for her.

Spencer was so endearing, he always feels awkward and his only friend is Bridie. Despite being quite a wordsmith he feels as though he never knows what to say to other people, until he meets Nina. When they spend time together, each of them find they're able to talk openly and honestly, both revealing secrets and fears. They both consider themselves awkward and weird so it was nice to see them strike up a bond and enjoy each other's company.

From the very beginning I kept asking myself what sort of parents would force their children to rob banks? But, it really didn't seem that implausible, and Nina's parents came across as realistic, particularly Sophia who was so loud and opinionated. She has plenty of reasons to justify why they live the lives they lead, Nina has heard them all a dozen times before, and all she wants to do is turn eighteen and walk away.

The book begins in December with Nina and her family robbing a bank and Nina discovers she is holding a gun to Spencer's head. The story then skips back to April, when they first met, and it was intriguing to follow their story and find out how they get to the situation in the bank. I found the resolution surprising, I didn't see it coming at all, and I thought the ending was well done, it wasn't forced or too happily-ever-after.

I often find it hard to justify why I love contemporary YA, usually it's just an emotional connection to the characters and their stories and that's what I felt with this book. I found myself thinking about the characters even when I wasn't reading and long after I finished the book.

All This Could End is a fantastic story about love, life, and learning it's ok to want more out for yourself. All fans of YA contemp should read this book!

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

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### **rachel says**

*All This Could End* was an interesting, quick but ultimately forgettable read.

The premise could have been so fascinating, especially for someone like myself who studies criminology and is fascinated by criminal psychology. I wanted Nina's family dynamics, particularly what led to them turning to their life of crime, to play a central role in the story. While her family was definitely important, there was nothing unique or nuanced about the dynamics. In fact, Nina felt like a teenager who could have struggled with not agreeing with her family's dedication to pretty much anything: being non-religious in a religious family, being nerdy/introverted in a sport/extroverted family, etc. It was a real let down.

I did love bumbly, awkward Spencer but... something was missing.

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### **Jemilla says**

not that great but not terrible

## Trisha says

This worked very well for me. I engaged totally with the two main characters and found the first person present tense effective, giving it immediacy.

Great tension, great interactions between Nina and Spencer and well-rounded secondary characters. There was quirk, humour and the right amount of poignancy and sadness without sentimentality or cliché.

Best of all, the resolution was satisfying and believable. Although more kissing would have made me happier.

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## Melanie says

See more reviews at [YA Midnight Reads](#)

\*\*\*3.5 stars\*\*\*

**This book was given to me by Text Publishing. No bribes, money of other treats were given for compensation. Thank you Text Publishing!**

All This Could End was a fantastic contemporary novel by Steph Bowe who was just a teenager when she wrote this book. Her first novel, *Girl Saves Boy* was written at the age of 14, that is just one year older than me! This promising piece of art captured me at the first page.

My thoughts of what the ratings were as I read the book:

Prologue: Fantastic. 4.5 stars

Middle: Eh, uneven in many aspects and the characters were a bit iffy. 3.5 stars

Epilogue: It was supposed to be a passionate, touching ending to tear one's heart but had a tang of irrational humour. 3-3.5 stars

Nina's family isn't what you'd call...normal. Her family robs banks and moves houses on a frequent basis. However, Nina wants to get out of this mess, away from the spontaneous drama, but she needs to wait until she is eighteen. Meet Spencer; awkward, shy and a ruined family. Yet when Spencer and Nina are thrown together, something grows, but maybe will never bloom.

Once I began reading, I fell in love with Nina, she is a cogent, strong character whom has a complicated life that can be related to. You can feel Nina's eagerness and longing to leave her messed up life for something different and new as well as her clear thoughts that are rational and intriguing to read about. Spencer is shy and unsure, those are unlikable characteristics, however, when Steph Bowe incorporates it, Spencer is your handsome, desirable guy. I loved his uncertain-ness, the way Spencer tries to communicate without the awkward parts is simply hilarious and enjoyable.

I feel like the prologue was what shined in this book. Short sentences, beautiful ways of showing off Steph's techniques to create such emotions like shock, bewilderment and excitement. I felt conflicted, really about the way she structured the scene to make me feel understanding and unknowing alternatively.

As the story began, I was pulverised with these descriptions of Nina's family. It felt more forced than casual, I wanted a better flow like the prologue, so the beginning disappointed me. I can think of several other unique ways to describe and paint the image of a character than just bomb it down immediately.

Another issue I had with this book was the dialogue. It wasn't balanced. There were places where there was so much dialogue, I felt like I was reading a play manuscript, then other times, I felt like I was an observer with no ears. It was rather painful, to speak the truth. Moreover, I wanted more depth. Actually, it NEEDED more depth, constantly, I felt like there were gaps in the book, missing parts to make the book feel wholly and worthy of more stars. For instance, the action scenes were rather peaceful occasionally. I had to re-read to make sure I was actually reading a combat.

Overall, I enjoyed this book. For a young adult/teen, Steph Bowe certainly has a handful of tricks up her sleeve and I cannot wait to see more of it in the future. Although, there were quite some flaws, All This Could End touched my heart and will shock readers with twists and turns.

Recommended for contemporary lovers of Pushing the Limits By Katie McGarry and several more drama/romances!

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### **evelyn hugo's #1 fan says**

one of my all time favourite books, i love this so much <3

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### **Nomes says**

Some fact-ish stuff:

All This could end is narrated by both Nina and Spencer, in alternating POVs.

There is a love story.

And bank robbery's. With guns and stuff.

And intriguing family secrets, and sad family secrets, and secret secrets as well.

It's about families and friendships and wanting and hoping and dreaming and growing up. And everythin complicated in between.

Steph Bowe's second novel is an absolute breath of fresh air. Despite the original and delicious premise (a family of bank robbers) All This Could End is much more of a character driven than plot driven novel, . And this is where Bowe shines. Her characters are brimming with life and insecurities and intelligence and hope and just the perfect amount of truth and charm.

The other thing I loved about this book is that it is this gorgeous blend of the real and the slightly surreal. This book is so grounded in real life, yet has the whimsiest\* touches of creative licence. While reading I was reminded of a post Steph Bowe wrote where she talks about her 'love of the slightly ridiculous'.

"I don't think ridiculous and genuine have to be mutually exclusive, or that literary fiction has the monopoly on affecting and brilliant stories. I think as long as there are characters the reader can empathise with, a ridiculous plotline will work (and some degree of self-awareness and irony helps)."

This quote really stood out to me when I first read the post (as a reader, I completely concur), and afterwards while reading *All This Could End*. *All This Could End* isn't all that ridiculous, at all, it's completely genuine and the characters are grounded and perfectly relate-able and achey. But. There are these perfectly delightful little anecdotes, memories and idiosyncrasies that just make the reader smile. It lifts the story and gives it this charming and fun edge.

This is the kind of book you sink into and savour the vibe and small moments. It's narration is often full of internal dialogue. Fast-paced, it is not. I found it so easy to engage with both Nina and Spencer, but at times wished there was a bit more of a tug in the plot, that little bit of something that would keep me sitting a little bit tighter, keep me a little more glued to the pages.

Most of all, this book is just full of soul with the right dash of whimsy. It's also the teensiest bit surprising, teetering on the edge of certain heartbreak, the climax and resolution and little mysteries unknown and revealing themselves at just the right moments.

It has it's own utterly unique heartbeat. It's the kind of book that, when placed in the right set of hands, turns out to be a perfect kindred spirit kind of book.

I have mentioned before how I so love Text publishing and a lot of the books they are bringing to readers. *All This Could End* is another gem of theirs and I would be so pleased to see this book picked up by international publishing houses. For those in Australia, this is not to be missed out on.

\* so I invented a word, what of it? ;)

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## Reynje says

### 3.5 stars

Once again, Text has crushed it with the gorgeous (and relevant) cover art - though you may have to take my word for it that it's much more lovely in person than in a Goodreads thumbnail.

The Pretty family are bank robbers, in the old-fashioned balaclava-wearing, gun-toting, vault-emptying style of heists. They move from town to town, never staying long in one place, lead by the Pretty matriarch: the mercurial and restless Sophia. Nina and her younger brother Tom were born into a life of crime and duplicity, but Nina is counting the days until she can legally flee the nest and live on her own terms. Nina is increasingly uncomfortable with her mother's twisted moral code masquerading as Robin Hood style philanthropy, yet she's also aware that she's complicit in Sophia's criminal agenda. The whole family is. And family, according to Sophia, is everything.

Bowe takes an attention-grabbing concept (bank robbing family and their life on the road) and anchors it firmly in a deconstruction of dysfunctional families. The story switches back and forth between Nina and Spencer, both of whom are dealing with complicated home lives. Nina, craving the normalcy of life off the lam, and Spencer, navigating the emotional fallout of a family tragedy, both feel like outsiders in their own way. Nina has never been able to build real friendships; Spencer is awkward and a bit of a loner, besides his best friend Bridie. When their paths cross, Bowe sets in motion a chain of events that – we know from the prologue – will end in disaster.

Bowe uses third person omniscient narration, and as such it's her authorial voice that comes across most

clearly. *All This Could End* is quirky, dryly humorous and a little bit tongue-in-cheek without belittling the concerns of her teenage characters. Because where Bowe excels is in writing authentic, believable characters attempting to navigate their transition into the adult world. The on-the-cusp sensation of adolescence is captured beautifully, with all the soul-searching and questioning of identity it entails, without waxing angsty. Nina and Spencer find in each other someone they can open up to – to an extent; Nina at least has secrets she can't reveal.

While the two main characters develop a relationship, romance is not a substantial part of the plot. Bowe shows the burgeoning closeness between Nina and Spencer, the tentative nature of their attraction and a few endearingly awkward moments as they manoeuvre towards each other, while remaining firmly focused on what this means for Nina and the choices she will have to make.

*All This Could End* is fundamentally about the relationship between Nina and Sophia (and between Sophia and the family as a whole), and how it alters as Nina begins to comprehend the extent of her mother's solipsism. Bowe handles the complexity and ambiguity of Sophia's character well, and Nina's confusion over whether her mother is a bad person or not is developed throughout the course of the novel. Sophia has an ability to justify her actions and obscure her selfishness that plausibly explains Nina's difficulty in resisting her mother. While Nina initially seems somewhat passive, outwardly complying with her mother's whims and actions, it's clear to see how this is necessitated by Sophia's manipulative nature. By choosing to wait it out until she's eighteen, Nina is also picking her battles, opting for what seems to be the most failsafe method of escaping her mother's hold.

The missing piece here is Paul, Nina's father. While Nina, Sophia and (to a lesser extent) Tom's motivations and actions are clear and well explored in the novel, Paul's reasons for adopting, pursuing and raising children in a life of crime with his wife remain vague. Bowe references Paul's love for Sophia, and makes a passing comment on his upbringing, but this never feels sufficient to substantiate his choices. Sophia's abuse of her role as a parent goes a long way to explain her influence over her children; yet Paul's willing participation in Sophia's schemes is the weak link in the story. It's hard not to ask at least once while reading the novel why he's never resisted or questioned their lifestyle.

The pacing of the novel, while understandable in terms of the plot, is uneven and I would have liked to have seen some aspects of the story expanded on. Bowe lingers over certain scenes, then truncates periods of several months. I get this: Bowe is establishing her characters before thrusting them into the climax – but I felt some development of the story was abbreviated for the sake of the finale and extended epilogue. I might have felt more for that epilogue had I been able to spend more time with Spencer and Nina's relationship as it progressed, and how they subsequently grew as individuals.

That said, *All This Could End* was a refreshing take on familiar themes. Bowe appreciates and writes knowledgeably about the experience of being a teenager, with a slightly offbeat, conversational charm, a balance of humour and sensitivity. Definitely one to watch.

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