Clarion Review

General

De La Sole
Lisa Dempsey
978-1-4184-7522-2
Three Stars (out of Five)

Dempsey's *De La Sole* outlines a freewheeling almost-love-story between a heroine who's too cute and a hero who's too shy — complicated by an inconvenient boyfriend with a taste for jazzy-shoes a couple of foul-mouthed thugs and some friends who don't know when to back off.

Can Tim oust Doug and take his place in Jane's affections? Can Jane claim her inner rebel and become the woman she's always dreamed of being? Will Mike and Trish ever stop giving them a hard time? And what's up with Doug's shoes anyway?

An ill-guided attempt to answer these questions leads to mayhem kidnapping as tough a cast of characters as you'd ever hope to meet — and a dance-opportunity that might make or break these alliances once and for all.

Dempsey's first novel touches on themes of love friendship and family without taking any of them too seriously or going the expected predictable pathos-ridden route. This slim volume is a quick and easy read and would be appropriate for young people were it not for an excess of appalling language. The linguistic choices Dempsey makes are relatively character-appropriate but actually seem to stand in the way of deeper character development at times. While the reader finds it easy to identify with hapless Tim or too-cute Jane — or even their erstwhile friends the tough and savvy Trish and the dim beefcake Marc — their characterization would benefit from expansion and greater depth. This holds doubly true for the 'villains' of Dempsey's book who seem to rely on invective and ethnicity for distinguishing characteristics.

Wending their way through several bars — seedy and respectable; straight lesbian and 'jazzy'; inviting and threatening — the characters ultimately discover aspects of themselves the reader would never have guessed at and end up more self-aware and able to make stronger choices. Jane goes from being "…ludicrously cute. If Jane were a dessert she would have been strawberry shortcake: sweet blonde-and-white and filled with berries" to a more evolved state of rebellion and even bitterness. The ever-earnest Tim even manages to overcome himself and

discover “what most people go a lifetime without realizing: The majority of the rules you learn in life are wrong false heinous and evil.”

On the whole *Da La Sole* manages to pack a lot of action an ongoing philosophy and a cast of memorable characters into a quick-and-easy one hundred pages. A considerable accomplishment indeed.