

## Mary Poser: *Butterflies and White Lies* as Bollywood comes to Nashville

### Angel A

Angel's Leap (Aug 21, 2017)

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*A romance with unexpected twists, complicated layers, and tense near misses, Mary Poser is a gratifying trip.*

Angel A's *Mary Poser* is a heartfelt, pistol-shot-paced intercultural romance set in Nashville.

A compliant pastor's daughter and social worker, twenty-three-year-old Mary finds her life unexpectedly veering off course—first figuratively, when she meets a film director, Simha Das; soon after, also literally, when the car she is driving plummets over a bridge.

The story speeds along, aided in part by demonstrated knowledge of Nashville specifics—its list of restaurants, street names, and landmarks could make it double as a travel guide. It thoroughly negotiates the city and the narrative's turns.

Thought-provoking Rumi quotes come at the beginning of each chapter; they slow and deepen the galloping novel, reflecting Mary's progressive personal growth as well as the growth of her love for Simha. He is both a romantic interest and, refreshingly, a concerned friend; he refuses to give up on her, even when her former boyfriend, Jason, re-enters her life. Mary learning to trust her inner voice is just as pivotal to the plot as the romance is.

While the main characters are fully and compellingly drawn, some minor characters are flat by comparison, including stereotypical "good ol' boys" at the bar. Mary's Aunt Sara is a welcome addition; she is an independent woman with an unusual career as a lepidopterist.

The story clearly communicates affection for the South, and elements of it confront the troubling intolerance that is deeply ingrained there. Mary's family's religious beliefs are scrutinized for their political, sexual, and racial prejudice, personalizing all of the issues. These examinations are an unexpected but welcome aspect to this atypical romance.

Prose is efficient, if long on country dialogue—*g*'s are frequently dropped, and characters are overly fond of colloquialisms. The rapid pace and consumable story line hold attention, though, and maintained interest offsets these distractions, even if readers may be left longing for more careful language and evocative details.

Zippering car trips are highlighted by sign markers; they are rarely embellished with snapshots of the passing scenery. Still, with its unconventional romantic pairing, unanticipated revelations about Mary, and the intense humanity revealed in Simha as a caring friend and potential lover, the book is ultimately a satisfying read.

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DREMA DRUDGE (June 13, 2018)

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