



Going Bovine

Libba Bray

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Can Cameron find what he's looking for?

All 16-year-old Cameron wants is to get through high school—and life in general—with a minimum of effort. It's not a lot to ask. But that's before he's given some bad news: he's sick and he's going to die. Which totally sucks. Hope arrives in the winged form of Dulcie, a loopy punk angel/possible hallucination with a bad sugar habit. She tells Cam there is a cure—if he's willing to go in search of it. With the help of a death-obsessed, video-gaming dwarf and a yard gnome, Cam sets off on the mother of all road trips through a twisted America into the heart of what matters most.

Going Bovine Details

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Author : Libba Bray

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From Reader Review Going Bovine for online ebook

Morgan F says

There will be spoilers at the end of this review. Don't worry; I'll give you plenty of notice. I just hate clickin that little spoilers box, because if the rest of the world is like me, no one will read this review because of the energy it takes to open the page.

Cameron is just your average teen guy. He's lazy, aimless, and the highlight of his day is smoking pot in the school rest room. But then the unexpected happens: he get's mad cow disease, which is fatal in every single case. The only chance that Cameron has to save his life is to undertake a mission to save the world. His companions include a punk-rock pink-haired angel, a video game obsessed dwarf with an overprotective mother, and, my personal favorite, a Nordic god in the form of a lawn gnome. It's gonna be a hell of a ride.

I loved this book. It was funny and fantastic. Cameron was typically frustrating teenage guy who needed an attitude check. I have to give it up for Libba Bray. If she's as random in real life as she was in this book, she must be a blast to be around. I found it hard to believe that this is the same author as A Great and Terrible Beauty as the two books are in no way similar.

The journey was just spectacular and I loved it all the way. I think the length of the book was perfect. Not too long as to be endless, but long enough to bring closure. Jolly good.

But, of course, the real reason I loved this book was Balder. I love that little guy. He is so frickin BA. Seriously. Every time he showed up on a page, I gave an inner happy squeal.

But, given my four-star rating, this book wasn't completely perfect, and in order to explain the reason(s) why, I'll have to reveal parts of the ending. So, unless you want to spoil the book for yourself, look away.

As a consolation, here is a picture of Balder after a long night of partying.

[image error]

That's my boy.

Okay, now. Seriously. Look away.

Reasons why I didn't give this book five stars.

1. The predictability of the ending. Was Bray going for the obvious, or do I just watch too much TV? I knew the ending almost completely. I even got some of the quotes right. I was telling people about the "its-all-a-dream-thing" before I even opened the book.
2. Cam and Dulcie. I'm sorry. That just seemed all a bit rushed. All of the sudden it was *all about Dulcie*. I just wasn't feeling it.
3. SHE FUCKIN KILLS BALDER QWI43VCa32434Q35WZqz45WES,B45W45XBV!!!!!!!!!! What is this!!! How she can do that!! I am VERY UPSET!!!! DFUDFNNCUJDS#*%vgnb*^%rBBV55B!!!! Its bad enough he wasn't introduced until the second half of the novel but then she go and kills him? NOT COOL. Viking funeral be damned.

And I totally called it about Gonzo, btw.

Stephanie says

I really loved the writing in "Going Bovine"; Libba Bray can write very well. I very much enjoyed the snarky dialogue but could have lived without the angst-y teenage BS. Cameron is not a lovable kid; he's miserable and transmits his misery page after page. His parents and sister are so unbelievably self-absorbed that I just could not connect with them or Cameron after wading through more than half of the book. I really hate not finishing a book but I had to let this one go. However, since I really liked the dialogue and the writing style, I will look for other books by Bray. Her "Beauty Queens" looks like it might be very fun!

kari says

Wow! What a wild ride! Beautiful and sad.

Cameron is leading a boring teenage life; doesn't really fit in and doesn't really seem to care. He's mostly just going through the motions of life without really thinking about what matters to him or what his future holds. Then, after having hallucinations, he's diagnosed with Mad Cow Disease and that's when things get interesting. The pieces of his memories, random thoughts from his life are scrambled with physics and philosophy, reality and alternate universes as he goes on a journey of self discovery. He learns about love, sex, friendship and what it means to really live.

Cameron's wonderfully sarcastic voice is funny and honest. This book made me laugh and cry, occasionally at the same time.

This is one not to miss. Superior storytelling.

Annalisa says

Bray takes on the great Don Quixote and delivers more than a modern satire. She gives us a wild ride worthy of Alice in Wonderland and The Wizard of Oz that is not only fun and hilarious but moving and exceptionally written. This novel is a monumental undertaking and somehow Bray accomplishes it.

In the beginning, I found Cameron wholly unrelatable, but Bray is so witty and has such a way with sarcastic metaphors and sneaking in description so you see and smell and hear and feel the book without it slowing down the plot that I didn't want to stop reading even though I didn't care about Cameron who was a total loser. He's going nowhere at school. Gets fired from his job with good reason. Hates his family and they aren't too fond of his slackerness either. His only hobby seems to be to listen to music he hates so he can mock it. He's high at least once a week. Shows no hope, no responsibility, and elicits zero sympathy from me. But Bray managed to keep me interested in his story and smiling at her wit despite the f-word coming out in every sentence. (Isn't it against some social norm to say the f-word when you're talking about Disneyland?)

Just as I was getting turned off with the too modern feel (references to WTF, 'rents, things like that) in a story that didn't seem to go anywhere, Cameron develops mad-cow disease and starts his mental decline. That's when he heads out on a mission to save himself and the world. On his travels, he takes a hypochondriac dwarf, picks up a talking garden gnome, and heads toward the happiest place on earth following clues of the seemingly random with help from a punk-rock angel. Yeah, it's that whacked.

I laughed and smiled through all his misadventures that were really the adventure in disguise. The way Bray

weaved everything in his life from snow globes to cartoons into this adventure so that it was not only important but part of some grander metaphor for his life was utter genius. I am in awe of Bray's creative power. Through his whole crazy adventure, you can laugh at this story for the slapstick humor or find that deep meaningful awareness of pot talk (not that I've ever been there).

You know that feeling when you finish a book or a movie and you feel like something monumental has happened, but nothing's happened to you. All you did was watch a movie or read a book. That's how I felt when I closed this book, which is pretty amazing that Bray made me experience the book on its terms. But this book isn't for everyone. Just like you have to be in the right mood (or the right person) to appreciate Alice in Wonderland or The Wizard of Oz, you have to be there to appreciate this. For all my disdain at the swearing and my initial turn-off to the character (which ended up being necessary), for what the book accomplishes, I have to say, "Wow. That's a palindrome." (It's in the book.)

Minor Spoilers in my symbolism-happy analysis:
(view spoiler)

Favorite quotes:

- The best day of my life happened when I was five and almost died at Disney World.
- Scoring well on tests is the sort of happy thing that gets the school district the greenbacks they crave. Understanding and appreciating the material are secondary.
- I've never done acid, finding it hard to go willingly to a place that could be frightening, hellish, and totally beyond my control. A place much like high school.
- For the record, our friend Chet King has read exactly three books in his life, but I'm not sure that sitting through *The Happy Bunny Easy Reader* twice should count.
- Cross-pollination of our educational experience.
- Chet nods at me in that ages-old macho greeting: I have acknowledge your existence, peon. Do not ask for more.
- "You coming to the game, bro?" "Can't. It's against my religion... Apathy."
- Jena's ubergirl lair. No doubt any serial killer would take one look at the lavender walls covered with sensitive girl songwriter posters and dive out the window anyway.
- All hail the suburban action hero.
- Resigned, I trudge over to the register, wondering if girls can smell your total fear, like wolves or very experienced serial killers.
- I've been poked and prodded in places I'd always prided myself on keeping untouched for that one special

doctor who gives me a ring and a promise someday.

-As a coping tool, denial is severely underrated.

-He's decked out in full protective gear... like a giant medical paranoia snowman or some eccentric pop star addicted to bizarre fashion choices.

-Had they eaten each other in a drug-induced, hate-fueled orgy of excess—the dark side of celebrity.

-There are several Dr. A**holes who come in here every day to scribble on my chart and poke with sharp objects so they can collect points for their Sadistic Scout Badges, but so far, no Dr. X.

-The waitress takes note of his Little Person status. It's like it stalls out for a minute and she needs to reboot, but the forced smile comes back.

-Gonzo shakes his head like I'm giving him Bubonic Plague in jewelry form.

-Gonzo's revving as hard as an engine, like he doesn't know whether to be more freaked out about getting in the van with a bunch of possible serial killers or to take his chances alone on the side of a road in Godonlyknowswhere, Mississippi.

-You're guaranteed the same experience every single time. And you're having the same experience as everybody else. It cuts down on things like dissatisfaction, envy, competitiveness, longing, regret. All that bad stuff.

-I am special; special people do not die.

-I want to help you find what I've found. Here, have a key chain.

-They say it might take twenty-four hours to fix [the smoothie machine:]. That's like a lifetime!

-I think about dying every day, because I can't stop thinking about living.

-Tara looks at him like he's just said all babies should be euthanized.

-As a kind, I imagined lots of different scenarios for my life. I would be an astronaut. Maybe a cartoonist. A famous explorer or rock star. Never once did I see myself standing under the window of a house belonging to some druggie named Carbine, waiting for his yard gnome to steal his stash so I could get a cab back to a cheap motel where my friend, a neurotic, death-obsessed dwarf, was waiting for me so we could get on the road to an undefined place and a mysterious Dr. X, who would cure me of mad cow disease and stop a band of dark energy from destroying the universe.

-The world's most bada** Viking yard gnome is on the counter by the cash register using a dinner plates as a shield and a steak knife as a sword.

-I thought I was having an existential crisis, but it was nothing.

Please don't tailgate: body in trunk.

-The air smells like it's just been born.

-Here. Now This. This is it, cowboy. The whole ride. Pay attention.

-It's got enough megawatts lighting to give a space station lightbulb envy.

-It's the whole damn unfairness of it all. Like I'm just starting to understand how amazing this whole crazy ride is going to be and now it's coming to an end.

-When it comes, her kiss is like something not so much felt as found.

Vikings. Not great with subtlety.

-I realize I'm really tired. But a good tired, like I've spent all day at the beach.

-Who but the mad would choose to keep on living? In the end, aren't we all just a little crazy?

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

2 “it's not you, it's me” stars. *Going Bovine* is a comedy jam-packed with philosophy; unfortunately, the comedy aspect is a total fail in my book. There's no reason to hate this book; in fact, I absolutely understand how it could appeal to many. But only if the humor works for you.

Unfortunately, the humor style and I don't click. **Whether you like this book is entirely dependent on whether you like the humor.** I personally found the jokes more cringeworthy than funny. Yes, there are

interesting moral themes, but they're buried under humor that made me cringe far more than laugh. Great concept, poor execution.

I was surprised by my reaction to this because I really loved *Beauty Queens*. I don't know why that worked and this didn't. I suppose it's partially that while *Beauty Queens* is set up as an exaggerated fantasy world, *Going Bovine* is set in our world. It changes your expectations. This one is **so weird it's not funny**. I have so many questions about what's happening in Libba Bray's brain.

Before you pick this up, I would recommend reading the first few chapters. If you laugh, buy it. If you don't laugh, don't buy it, because you will not like the rest of the story. If anything, I thought the first few chapters were somewhat funnier than the rest.

Rebekah says

There were things I liked about this book. The first 100 pages are pre-mad cow where the reader gets a taste of Cameron, his family, and school. Things that "happen" post-mad cow hark back to pre-mad cow. Which was cool. Because everything's connected. It was fun to see how different parts of Cameron's life popped up on his adventures.

It's also really well written, witty, and funny. Sad because Mad Cow is fatal

What I didn't like? It was boring. I slogged through this book for six weeks. SIX WEEKS! I wanted to give up so many times, but I made myself finish. First because I thought it would get better. It's had a lot of star reviews and been on a lot of Top Ten 2009 Lists. I never caught on to the wonderfulness of it. It was boring. About half way through the driving force for finishing was just so that it was finished. I'd already invested in 300 pages, I couldn't give up! I kept thinking, "Harry Potter was great for proving that kids will read long books, but just because you can write 500 page novels doesn't mean you should!!!"

I think part of the reason I didn't like it was because I went in with an expectation that wasn't met and that colored the way I read the book. I thought Cameron would be an unreliable narrator in the sense that he would go on an adventure and because he had mad-cow disease the reader wouldn't know what was real and what was fake. But from the get-go it's pretty apparent that everything post-mad cow takes place in his head while he's in a coma in the hospital. And I thought that was sad. I wanted him to have a real adventure.

Overall, it wouldn't make my Top 100 List of 2009

Chelsea (chelseadolling reads) says

I really wanted to love this, but honestly this was the weirdest book I've ever read, and I once read a book where the main character could listen to Justin Timberlake's music and literally transport herself into a realistic sex scene with him. So there's that. While there were a lot of things about this book that I really liked, I feel like I really missed the point unfortunately. The talking gnome was the best part though tbh. 10/10 would read an entire book about Baldr.

Chesca says

“These are hard times. The world hurts. We live in fear and forget to walk with hope. But hope has not forgotten you. So ask it to dinner. It's probably hungry and would appreciate the invitation.”

One word to describe this book: CRUEL

It's also one of the most honest books I've ever read.

ASK ME HOW I'M FEELING RIGHT NOW.

I'm feeling everything all at once. I am bleeding light!

Libba Bray, how could you! Why would you make such a masterpiece that's both life-changing and horrifying? But, oh well, most life-changing things scare you first and keep you awake at night thinking.

“The best day of my life happened when I was five and almost died at Disney World. I'm sixteen now, so you can imagine that's left me with quite a few days of major suckage.”

Going Bovine tells the story of Cameron Smith and how his life was slowly drained out of him by mad cow disease. It's an adventure that will keep you looking for the meaning of life, serving you answers with the aid of a gnome, a dwarf, and a pink-haired, sweet-toothed angel.

I didn't expect all the things that this book contained. It was so random, literally, but the author was able to stitch up those weird things together to create so much depth, leaving a big, black hole in my chest.

I was hesitant at first to read this book because I usually don't like stories that focus on characters that would most probably die due to their disease. I still gave it a try because Libba Bray wrote it and I love her *The Diviners* series so much. The things that Cameron went through were so unpredictable. It just showed how creative the author is and that she's excellent in it.

The author's writing for this book is flawless, even though a huge amount of cussing was thrown into it to inject a certain amount of casualness. It was, in itself, filled with personality.

“Who but the mad would choose to keep on living? In the end, aren't we all just a little crazy?”

This was such a hilarious read although it tackles serious issues in life that we usually don't discuss. What would you do if you were told that you could still be saved from dying in the hands of such an incurable disease? Would you give it your all and take the risk of finding a solution to that problem? What makes life worth living? What defines happiness? Is there even a time for love if you're dying? What awaits us at the end of the road? There were just so many questions that clawed at my soul throughout the story, that by the end of it I was bursting with enlightenment (and tears).

Cameron lived a normal and ordinary life before he got sick. He had issues like most teenagers. His sister went with the popular kids who didn't like the weird ones like him, and so they didn't get along. His parents' relationship was slowly being torn apart by the affair that his father was most-probably having with his secretary, and his mother's weakness in opinions and decisions.

I could relate to Cameron in some ways and that made me feel sad. He was driven by his will, by his hope, even though the path he was taking didn't absolutely guarantee what he was seeking. Maybe, in some ways, at some points in life, we've all been like him: fueled by want and desire to reach a goal.

Meeting Dulcie somehow changed Cameron's life. It was an opportunity of tainting the night sky with bursts of fireworks. She was adorable, a bit confusing sometimes due to her indirect instructions and statements as a messenger and guide. Dulcie was a very interesting character, but among all of them, she was the one I least understood as a person due to her being mysterious.

Gonzo, the dwarf, was quite entertaining. He had OCD, which was basically induced by his mom. He had to make sure that anything he ate or used was sanitized well enough based on his mom's standards. Balder, the yard gnome who claimed to be a god cursed, was also very amusing. The way he talked was very formal, and he spoke of his identity and where he came from firmly and surely, neglecting people's doubts about him.

“She never utters a sound even when she's crying, and that makes me a little sad. Doesn't seem right. When you cry, people should hear you. The world should stop.”

Every scenario in the trip that went well was something, I supposed, equaled to pain in Cameron's reality. He was falling further to the bottom the closer he reached the end of the road. It was terrifying, but real. It was both hopeful and hopeless.

In the end, it was all about appreciating the life each person was given. It was about looking back at every turn made and not regretting any of them. Going Bovine is an honest story confronting the lies we tell ourselves. It's eye-opening and heart-shattering.

This read is highly recommended and everyone should read it!

~Tina~ says

Going Bovine is one of those really cool books that you didn't know existed till it's in your hands and your madly flipping the pages to find out what's going on. Now this is a book that has so much meaning, so much heart, so much soul, but with a twisted witty humor to entertain every page of this masterpiece.

This book was a really trip and a half! I didn't know where Cameron's hallucinations start and where his reality ended. The lines are very fuzzy, but the adventure getting there was amazing!

The characters are sarcastically-crazy-fun and extremely colorful! The writing is truly Exceptional, and the plot is so bizarre you don't want it to ever end!

Going Bovine is hilarious, sweet, sad, unique and simply brilliant!

Anything I say isn't going to do this book justice, so I'm just going to say that if you want to experience a book that is out of the world, then **Going Bovine** is a absolute must read!

Snotchocheez says

Somewhat apt analogy here: Libba Bray hanging out with the stoners and miscreants in the high school bathroom, some with little more on their mind than escaping the mundane world by getting high and wadding up the the institutional cheap-ass paper towels, getting them wet and hurling the gluey muck at the ceiling, while Libba's there doing the same, but through her cannabis fug is intent on recreating a Dale Chihuly-esque Bellagio Hotel-like thing of beauty, transforming the splatfest into something gorgeous.

Going Bovine, Ms. Bray's 470+ page attempt to tackle the mysteries of life (or something), is not exactly "high art", but there's lots here to admire. For some (including yours truly) maybe *too* much. More than a few times I found myself rolling my eyes at its madhouse lunacy (evoking the feelings I got from *Ready Player One*) yet throughout I couldn't help but marvel at the creativity on display.

Cameron (our narrator) is well on the way to loserhood, often hanging out in the stoners bathroom at Calhoun High (in Texas) to forget that he's the polar opposite of his popular twin sister and the center of opprobrium to his parents. A particularly wicked smoke session ends badly, with Cameron hallucinating "fire giants" hell-bent on infernal destruction. Bad pot? Turns out, no. In the hospital he's diagnosed with advanced stages of Creutzfeldt-Jakob (aka Mad Cow Disease). He's visited by a pink-haired punk-rock angel named Dulcie and encourages him to take a road trip with his asthmatic, probably hypochondriac dwarf hospital roommate named Gonzo and find the elusive "Dr. X" to save his life.

Thus begins the Bray seemingly-stoned-splatfest where she wheels out the smörgasbord of projectiles: Bad-ass Nordic garden gnomes, snow globes, a bowling alley church of perpetual happiness (and unlimited 300 games and holy nachos), Buddha Burgers, Inuit pop stars, New Orleans jazz legends, string theory (and wormhole, and alternate reality) physicists, Schrödinger's Cat, Shithenge (not to be confused with the non-fecal stone version), corporate branding gone amok, reality TV, The Happiest Place On Earth...ad (seemingly) infinitum. Oh, yeah, can't forget Bray's glue: a healthy splodge of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

Yikes! It's tough to imagine all this splatted disparate arcana actually cohering into a work of art. I'll be the first to admit there are plenty of missteps on display here, but I've not been as consistently (if guiltily) fascinated by an author's imagination in quite a while.

Nomes says

me + this book = fail.

I made it to page 93 and still wasn't feeling it. I think it was just a touch too random and there were so many tangents from the main story-line that I wasn't engaged enough.

Also, the quirky anecdotes and asides just didn't do anything for me. Perhaps as an Aussie I just have a different sense of humour and found it too hard to relate?

Once I started doing the skimming thing (I was trying to zoom ahead and see if I could stumble across the plot, somewhere, hidden in there...) I just decided to move on altogether.

it is a unique book and very much loved ~ just not for me.

On a side note: I am kind of proud of myself for giving up on books I'm not into lately. I used to hang in there gritting my teeth until the bitter end. Kind of liberating, allowing myself to ditch a book that doesn't match me :)

Shannon says

This book was funny, sad, and thought-provoking. I have to say this is probably one of the best teen books I've read in a while. And I agree with what Bray's husband said in his review; "this is one of the funniest books I've ever read, and will break your heart at the same time. "

The beginning starts off with Cameron in High School. He's an outcast and is pretty apathetic about life. Then he starts to have hallucinations and loses control of his body at times. His parents think he's doing drugs and acting out but after numerous test they find out he has Mad Cow disease, which is fatal.

Cameron is visited by a strange girl named Dulcie and is told he has to go on a quest to save the world. He leaves the hospital and takes another patient and high school student, Gonzo, with him. They then embark on a crazy road trip in order to save the world.

It's hard to really divulge any more of the plot without revealing many of the surprising twists and turns that the story takes. I think some people might find it odd that it's pretty easy to understand what's really going on early in the story. I don't think the secret was supposed to be kept from the reader, otherwise it would have been hidden better. Honestly, it just made the story all the more poignant knowing what was actually going on.

I really enjoyed this book, especially Balder! I'm curious now to see how Bray's other books compare, even though they're in a completely different genre. I'm definitely going to have to keep an eye out for any books she writes in the future as well.

Kat Kennedy says

Okay, here's my review:

It started out good although very reminiscent of a modern-day Holden Caulfield.

Then it went really psychedelic.

Then I finished it and found something else to read.

Great concept - just kind of average execution.

Melissa says

Well....I enjoyed the first chapter.

In all, the book was quite slow paced (480 freaking pages of it) and entirely predictable. The tone drove me

absolutely insane. It sounded as if Bray was trying too hard to make her character witty and sarcastic. So instead of using the "Less is more" technique, Bray succeeded in creating a character that thinks they are incredibly funny and witty, when in reality, was extremely irritating.

I will admit that the concept of the book was original. But, sadly, poorly executed. After about halfway through or so I just wanted it to be over. Bray just kept finding new ways to keep dragging the book on and on and on forever.

Now, I am giving this book 2.5 (I rounded it down) stars instead of the oh so dreaded 1 star because I enjoyed the first chapter, it had a few funny lines and Bray did bring up some philosophical points that enabled me to see where she wanted to take the book. I had potential to be something great, but when writing a book like this one must tread carefully so as to not pass the line between charming quirky and annoying quirky.

Rad says

I really thought that I would love this book. It sounded like it was going to be funny, and sweet, and warm, and all kinds of great. But I think this is a rare case of just Too Much Shit. I could only get to page 120-something before I started skimming to the end, which was, well, not to my liking. It seems like the ending kind of negates all the crazy stuff that happens in the book. All of it! What's the point, then, of having all the crazy in there?

I don't know. Too much, too soon, and for me, it got old real quick.

AND THE TERM 'RENTS IS USED. That is my least favorite slang word of all time.

Barry says

I'm biased, of course. Libba's not just my client, she's my wife. But this is one of the funniest books I've ever read, and will break your heart at the same time.

She wrote the first draft of this book in one month, for a workshop organized by Cynthia Leitich Smith. It just poured out of her, and I knew it was something special when she'd talk about it with this little gleam in her eye.

Fans of the Gemma books may not initially think this is for them, but I think the romance, the humor, the quirk that is Libba shines through here just as much as it did in those books.

Eric says

As I plow through this sludge, I'm reminded of a favorite quote, which I think is from Charles Ives, "Awards are the badges of mediocrity." I am becoming cynical and distrustful of any work, fiction or otherwise, that wins any award.

I don't read a metric tonne of YA, I like much of it, and this book looked interesting. The cover, title, and

premise of this novel intrigued me; but since I insist on doing idiotic things, like reading forwards, after I return home from the library, I should have known better. I found the writers mocking and limp satiric voice off-putting, not nearly so in the teenage protagonist, but still...satire needs to be leavened with wit, truth and sympathy, all of which are almost completely lacking in this book.

Yet, I am plowing on, at nearly the half way point, the book is just a chore to read. I will put up with language, sex, violence, anything, as long as it is integral to the story, it's development or morality - in this case it seems to have been the product of (perhaps an attempt at) shock value, or maybe pseudo-realism, and ultimately comes off as cheap writing. Also the book is full of modern cliches about everything - the wise African American, Jazz loving, record store owner; the detached, fitness obsessed, morally obtuse, overly logical father; the ditsy, liberal arts Mom; the shallow, weight obsessed, mocking cheer-leader sister; the Texan, Christian, high school hypocrites. Blah, blah, blah.

The protagonist is unlikable, which is fine for a start, but after 100 pages I wished him to go away, especially since the novel is all first person narrative. Also, as someone who was a nerdy teenager, not too long ago, he just didn't seem real - I remember what it was like to be 16 and on the outside, not caring about much, but still there was something very manufactured about him, and his world. It didn't ring very true - the writing is very good (in spite of my comment above about choices of language), the author, Libba Bray, knows how to write; but the story just didn't jive very well. All of the irony and Don Quixote references were slathered on far too thickly for my taste and showed an inability to create a plot of originality or value - as a result the story didn't generate any longing for more, for beauty, or for the character to triumph. It is basically a modern anthem to a sort of Nietzsche-ian despair and a plummet into narcissism, disguised as wisdom. Plus it didn't help that the works major conceit is transparent, I am 99% sure I know how the book will end, and peeking at the other reviews here confirms my suspicions. The bulk of the narrative, the whole peripatetic voyage is too much, all the time, small doses, honey please. The humor is cruel and un-truthful, and the topics of attack are frankly easy in our current culture. She takes on materialism - oh no, not that, no one's ever done that before; and mega-corporations, oh, no, not that, not like the mega-corporation that's publishing this tripe. Please. Here other targets are equally easy - and in fact she has neither a consistent philosophy or moral vision for the work so far - what she likes is lauded, what she dis-likes is condemned, hypocrisy is the main theme - and since hypocrisy is the ne plus ultra of modern sins - so what? She reveals throughout the book her own hypocrisy...at any rate...

If you want a dark window into our culture - with little literary or redemptive value, you might like this book - otherwise, don't waste your time or money. I have rarely been moved to write such a scathing review, but the waste of talent that this book represents and the awards it garnered demanded it. I'm highly suspicious that it was the meaninglessness and nastiness of this work that prompted the awards - how else to explain the awards with its lack of merit, originality, or vision.

Angela says

Ummm I don't fully know what to say about this book. It has such an interesting concept, but I don't know if lived up to its full potential. Cameron is such a quirky and fun MC... And really Going Bovine is just that as well, quirky and fun. Something just didn't click with me though.

Madeline says

This book starts out like any typical YA novel - our narrator is Cameron, a sixteen-year-old kid who is

dealing with the typical family issues, going to a typical high school, and having typical sixteen-year-old problems and thoughts. We get through about sixty pages of this, so Libba Bray can set up Cameron's personality and situation, and then BAM. She flips everything on its head, and suddenly the book takes a U-turn into Crazyville.

Cameron is diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, better known as mad cow disease. The disease will slowly eat away at his brain until he dies. There is no treatment, no cure. So Cameron's in the hospital, trying to deal with the fact that he's going to die very soon, when he is visited by a punk-rock, pink-haired angel who tells him that he's been given a mission. Cameron has to find a Dr. X, who accidentally opened a wormhole and released dark energy into the world. If Cameron can find Dr. X in time, he'll be cured.

And thus begins the most awesome road trip ever, in which Cameron breaks out of the hospital, assisted by a hypochondriac dwarf named Gonzo, and tries to find Dr. X while also fighting off fire giants and a dark wizard. There's banter, pop-culture references, lots of quotes from a made-up movie that's certainly not *Star Wars*, drag queens, drinking, cults, music, parallel universes, sex, and a lawn gnome that's actually the Norse god Balder. It's all amazing and scary and dramatic and, because this is Libba Bray we're talking about, fucking hilarious. It's intense, too - without giving away the ending, I'll just say that it's one of those endings where I finished the book and had to go sit somewhere quiet for a few minutes, and do nothing except think about the story. There's a twist ending, but I guessed it so easily and so quickly that I almost suspect it's not *supposed* to be that big of a surprise. I think the point isn't that we're not supposed to guess the twist; I think the point is that we guess it, but still spend the entire story hoping that we're wrong. (sorry I can't get into any more detail without spoiling the ending - read it the book, and then we'll talk about it.)

"Maybe there's a heaven, like they say, a place where everything we've ever done is noted and recorded, weighed on the big karma scales. Maybe not. Maybe this whole thing is just a giant experiment run by aliens who find our human hijinks amusing. Or maybe we're an abandoned project started by a deity who checked out a long time ago, but we're still hard-wired to believe, to try to make meaning out of the seemingly random. Maybe we're all part of the same unconscious stew, dreaming the same dream, hoping the same hopes, needing the same connection, trying to find it, missing, trying again - each of us playing our parts in the others' plotlines, just one big ball of human yarn tangled up together. Maybe this is it."

Thomas says

Sixteen year old Cameron Smith confidently states that the best day of his entire life was when he was a toddler and his family visited Disney Land. During that day he almost got himself killed in a freak drowning accident. Already it is evident of Cameron's mindset, or the teenage group he fits into: the lazy, jaded, underachievers that dwell within the restrooms of high school smoking pot. Things can't seem to get any worse until Cameron learns he has contracted Mad Cow Disease and that his death is inevitable. After his immediate hospitalization a drug-induced hallucination appears by his bedside and persuades him to find a cure and save the world from evil fire giants. The remainder of the book details his adventures, including punk cow angels, New Orleans greatest musicians, Slurpee machines gone wild, and a talking yard gnome. Throughout his exciting endeavor Cameron learns what truly separates simply existing and living life to the fullest.

Whether it was the fact that I was busy achieving this book's theme (living life) or that the plot seemed to drag, it took me quite a long time to finish this novel. What stood out to me the most but failed to impress me was the seemingly endless middle portion of the book where Cameron goes on the crazy adventure. Bray does a good job of communicating the fact that Cameron's brain is deteriorating - yet I never felt a connection to the character at all. Which is strange because I am an adolescent male.

The main highlight of *Going Bovine* was its humorous events. There were moments I found myself laughing out loud due to the sheer hilarity of occurrences taking place. There were also quite a few allusions to various individuals and objects, however, because of the book's intended age group I'm fairly certain that many teenagers will not understand the references and will be left scratching their heads in confusion.

Another good aspect of *Going Bovine* was its central theme or the idea that Bray is trying to communicate throughout the story: living life to the fullest and not letting yourself simply exist. The theme was stuck into almost every situation Cameron found himself in, so even the most uneducated teen could understand what the book is about. Sadly, Cameron's little fantasy that was taking place inside his mind didn't enthrall me at all - by the middle of the book I was rapidly flipping the pages not because I couldn't wait to see what was happening, but because I wanted to get it over with. A little note to the side is that the last few pages were actually extraordinary, it was one of the few moments I found myself emotionally connecting to the story and characters. Overall I would only recommend this to people that don't have a to-read list containing a large amount of books because *Going Bovine* will take you a while to finish and by the end you may be wondering why you bothered to read it in the first place (although it wasn't that horrible).

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