

Book Review: Main Characters
By Bobby Palmer

Thanks to NetGalley and Kathleen Quinlan at Little, Brown and Company for this advance reader's copy, in exchange for an honest review. "Main Characters" is scheduled for release on June 30, 2026.

The promo for this novel states, "This is a love story, told by everyone *but* the main characters." And that's my biggest issue with the story. I'd rather hear from the main characters.

The setting is London. Clara, who wants to be a film director, and Seb, an actor who doesn't really know what he wants to do, meet. And the attraction is magnetic.

The narrative then follows the couple over the course of a decade or so, but it does so from the perspective of family, friends, or any old person on the street. For example, when Clara and Seb argue over lunch at a restaurant, the entire scene is revealed through the eyes of a woman at an adjacent table. And when they leave, their interaction outside the restaurant comes from the point of view of a male smoker on the street.

It's an interesting concept, writing from all the various points of view in the couple's lives, but it left me empty. I want to know more about Clara and Seb, and there's no way a woman at an adjacent table can offer that. More importantly, that woman's perspective comes across exactly the same as the smoker on the street. And a section called The New Neighbor seems more about the neighbor than Clara or Seb.

These are two people (Clara and Seb) who have a lot of dynamics going on in their lives, but I found it hard to care about either of them since I never really got a sense of who they are. And because the varying perspectives are never repeated (i.e., we only hear from the woman at the adjacent restaurant table, or the smoker on the street, once), their perceptions become a one-

time shot in the dark. With dozens of these perspectives over the course of the novel, they lose their meaning.

Without giving anything away, I would rather have seen the narrative take the approach of a film *Clara releases* toward the end of the novel, where the two main characters alternate telling their side of the relationship. That would have been infinitely better.

Sorry I can't be more positive, but just two stars for "Main Characters." I would much rather have heard directly from those main characters.