

Leslie's Voice

Susan Hanafee

BookBaby (2024)

ISBN: 978-1732489493

Reviewed by Amanda Caswell for Reader Views (10/2024)

5*- Ambition, Sexual Politics, and Corporate Takeovers

“Leslie's Voice” by Susan Hanafee is a powerful novel that hurls its readers into the high-stakes world of corporate America, where power plays, personal relations, and professional ambitions tie. Leslie Elliott is at the center of this story, an efficient public relations expert who struggles through her professional life under the newly appointed CEO, Brad Stewart. What begins as a deliberate, calculated professional move by Leslie soon becomes a battle of supremacy, both in the boardroom and in her personal life.

From the very outset, Hanafee sets in the reader's mind the tone for a fast-paced heavy story through a simple yet powerful opening scene: a vague message from Brad-"See me"-immediately raises the tension and heralds the beginning of a very complicated power play between Leslie and her boss. As Leslie enters Brad's office, she is immediately struck by subtle changes that suggest Brad's desire for control—his removal of personal, human touches in favor of symbols of corporate domination. For those who have ever worked in the corporate world, this scene will make your skin crawl with familiarity.

Leslie is a very relatable character. Successful and with her new boss instilling much trust in her abilities, she struggles with insecurity and doubt, further exacerbated by the subtle, yet pervasive, sexual advances of Brad. Her imposter syndrome, coupled with her struggle to find her voice as a woman striving to be assertive in a male-dominated world of affairs, Leslie's quest forms one of the core themes of the novel. In this light, the title “Leslie's Voice” reflects an inner struggle consistent with challenges faced by women in their struggle for equal treatment in the corporate world.

Conversely, Brad Stewart is introduced as nothing but a full-blown alpha male; arresting in his charm, ambition, and ruthlessness. He views people, including women, as tools for advancing his cause, an aspect which readily shows in the way he approaches Leslie. His character personifies that predator in corporate leadership, for which the ethical lines always blur in achieving power and personal satisfaction.

Hanafee has fully exposed Leslie's personal life, adding emotional depth to the story. Her chaotic home life is juxtaposed with the sexual tension of the situation with Brad, making for a perfect storm that has Leslie stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Where the novel tends to succeed best is in exposing a "boy's club" type of situation in corporate America, where women are constantly forced to put up with inappropriate comments, sexual

advances, and professional underestimation. Certainly, Brad's compliments about Leslie's appearance, in addition to his condescending attitude toward her, strike a very familiar chord regarding what women are forced to endure from men in male-dominated industries. Simply put, this story is incredibly relatable, sometimes jarringly so.

“Leslie's Voice” moves along at a brisk clip replete with corporate intrigue to keep readers interested. The dialogue is breezy and Hanafee walks the tightrope between professional maneuvering and personal drama with ease. As the plot unravels, so do the stakes, especially for Leslie, who finds herself in a web of ambition, sexual politics, and corporate takeovers.

Overall, “Leslie's Voice” by Susan Hanafee is an incisive and sharp exploration into the gender dynamics of the corporate world, covered in a bundle of intrigue, drama, and personal growth. Hanafee does an admirable job portraying a strong yet vulnerable female protagonist, and readers will find themselves in Leslie's corner as she finds her voice in a world intended to silence her. This story will appeal to readers who enjoy contemporary fiction with strong female characters and corporate drama.

reader Views

Literary Awards Program Scoresheet

2024-2025 Awards Season

Book: Leslie's Voice

SCORING (1=Totally Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Totally Agree)

| | |
|---|--------------|
| VOICE/POINT OF VIEW (POV) | SCORE |
| CONSISTENCY: Does the narrative voice stay consistent throughout the story? | 5 |
| APPROPRIATENESS: Is the chosen POV appropriate and effective for the story being told? | 5 |
| FLOW OF THE BOOK/PLOT | SCORE |
| ENGAGEMENT: Does the sequence of events engage the reader from the beginning? | 5 |
| PACING: Is the story's pacing appropriate, maintaining reader interest throughout? | 5 |
| CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT | SCORE |
| DEPTH: Do the main characters exhibit depth and complexity? | 5 |
| RELATABILITY: Are the characters relatable or understandable to the reader? | 5 |
| EDITING AND PROOFING | SCORE |
| QUALITY: How professional and polished is the editing, free from errors and inconsistencies? | 5 |
| CLARITY: Does the editing enhance the clarity and readability of the text? | 5 |
| GRAMMAR | SCORE |
| CHARACTER CONSISTENCY: Is the use of grammar consistent with the characters' backgrounds? | 5 |
| NARRATIVE FLOW: Does the grammar support the narrative flow? | 5 |
| PRESENTATION | SCORE |
| READABILITY: The chosen font and text size make the text easy to read. | 5 |
| AESTHETIC APPEAL: Does the overall presentation enhance the reading experience? | 5 |
| RELEVANCE | SCORE |
| GENRE EXPECTATIONS: How well does the book adhere to its genre's expectations? | 5 |
| CULTURAL/SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE: Does the book offer relevant cultural or social commentary? | 5 |
| BOOK COVER | SCORE |
| GENRE APPROPRIATENESS: Is the cover design appropriate for the book's | 5 |

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|---|--------------|
| genre? | |
| VISUAL APPEAL: Does the cover have a strong visual appeal that attracts readers? | 5 |
| THEME | SCORE |
| CLARITY: Are the themes of the story clearly presented? | 5 |
| RELEVANCE: How relevant are the themes to the intended audience? | 5 |
| CONFLICT | SCORE |
| RESOLUTION: Was the primary conflict resolved by the end of the book (this could be either a satisfactory resolution or a cliffhanger enticing the reader to continue a series). | 5 |
| CONTRIBUTION: How well does the conflict contribute to the plot and character development? | 5 |
| AVERAGE RATING: | 5 |

COMMENTS FOR THE AUTHOR (from the reviewer, if noted):

I absolutely loved this book and have had similar experiences in my own career. Thank you for writing such a wonderful book with a powerful message.

NOTE: *Receiving a review and scoresheet from us does not constitute an award. Finalists and winners will be revealed in the Spring of 2025 (typically the first part of March).*

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