



A Bookish Affair, LOPL's romance book club, meets monthly to discuss the diverse, inclusive world of romance novels! Our May 2020 book club pick, **Talia Hibbert's *Get a Life, Chloe Brown***, is a smart, hilarious enemies-to-lovers romcom that will have you in stitches one moment and swooning the next. Club members loved its brave heroine, cinnamon roll hero, vivid supporting cast, and sensitive treatment of chronic illness and recovery from abusive relationships. If you loved Chloe and Red, try one of these readalikes. This list was compiled by Shandy (sdickinson@lakeoswego.city).

If you can't resist the "We hate each other, why are we kissing?" trope, try **Sajni Patel's *The Trouble With Hating You***. Liya Thakkar is a busy engineer with no time or patience for her parents' matchmaking schemes. When they try to surprise her with a prospective groom at a family dinner, she literally bolts...right into lawyer Jay Shah's arms. After that awkward encounter, Liya is the last person Jay wants to see when he arrives to help out a struggling engineering firm. But it won't be long before they're trading more than barbs...

The enemies-turned-lovers trope is even more fun when said enemies already happen to be married to each other. That's the premise of debut novel ***To Have and To Hoax*** by **Martha Waters**. In this clever historical rom-com, Lady Violet Grey and Lord James Audley have a whirlwind courtship and marriage, only to become estranged after the mother of all arguments. Four years later, they're still at odds, one-upping each other in an increasingly ridiculous bid for the other's attention. Will these feuding spouses find their way back to each other?

Unmarriageable by **Sonia Kamal** stands in great company among a slew of recent Jane Austen remixes -- and aren't Lizzy and Mr. Darcy the quintessential enemies-turned-lovers? Set in Pakistan at the turn of the last century, *Unmarriageable* has forward-thinking teacher Alys Binat at odds with snobbish-yet-somehow-intriguing Valentine Darsee. Meddling mothers, scandalous sisters, insufferable suitors, clueless fathers, and happily-ever-afters -- everything you love about *Pride and Prejudice* is here too.

You may know **Joanna Shupe** from her popular *Uptown Girls* series, but ***The Harlot Countess*** is a great pick from her backlist. Widowed Lady Maggie is known in some circles as the Half-Irish Harlot and in others as the wickedly clever political cartoonist Lemarc. No matter what you call her, though, Maggie can't abide Simon Barrett, Earl of Winchester -- the man who believed a vicious rumor and broke her heart. She's built a career on skewering Simon and his political cronies in the press, but he's been regretting his actions toward Maggie for years. Are they ready to risk it all on a second chance?

Did you really think I was going to make it through a Readalikes list without mentioning **Alyssa Cole**? In ***A Prince on Paper*** -- the third full-length novel in the Reluctant Royals series that began with *A Princess in Theory* -- Nya Jerami is slowly rebuilding her life after a shocking revelation from her father changes everything she thought she knew. She prefers the Princes Charming she encounters in her favorite virtual dating game, but a chance encounter on a private jet throws her into the orbit of step-prince and paparazzi darling Johan von Braunstein. Naturally, Nya can't stand him -- but it turns out there's a lot more to the Playboy Prince than meets the eye.

In ***The Unhoneymooners*** by **Christina Lauren**, Olive just has to get through her obnoxiously perfect sister's obnoxiously perfect wedding -- no easy feat, since she and best man Ethan hate each other. But when the rest of the wedding party is felled by some bad shellfish, Olive and Ethan find themselves on the perfect honeymoon. When a chance encounter with her future boss prompts Olive to tell a fib about their relationship, she and Ethan have to pretend to be lovestruck newlyweds -- and it turns out, it's not so bad...

If you liked Chloe's family -- sarcastic Dani, malaprop-spouting Evie, and grandmother Gigi, queen of one-liners -- you'll love the Wong family in **Jackie Lau's *Holidays With the Wongs*** novella series. Start with ***A Match Made for Thanksgiving***, in which the Wong parents and grandparents play matchmaker for their single offspring...at Thanksgiving dinner. What could go wrong? I'm a sucker for a big, loud, hilarious family in a romance novel, and Ah Ma's one-liners will have you laughing out loud in every scene. If you like this, there are three more novellas in the series and lots more from Jackie Lau -- family is a big theme in her books.

Speaking of family, I'd be remiss not to recommend the upcoming second book in **Talia Hibbert's Brown Sisters** series. ***Take a Hint, Dani Brown*** has forthright academic Dani on the lookout for a new friend-with-benefits -- but definitely not for love. When security guard and ex-rugby player Zaf Ansari rescues her from a botched fire drill, the dramatic moment is caught on camera and quickly goes viral. Dani's happy to play along with a fake relationship, but Zaf's gruff exterior hides a secret romantic, and he's ready to convince her that the universe might have more in store for them.

Both Red and Chloe have to overcome physical and mental health struggles, providing a great example of how sensitively romance can deal with difficult topics. In **Alisha Rai's *Hate To Want You***, ex-lovers and childhood friends Livvy Kane and Nicholas Chandler meet once a year for a one-night, no-strings-attached reunion. There's too much history between their feuding families for anything more...until Livvy moves back to town, and they begin to wonder whether there's a second chance after all. Rai's romances never shy away from depicting real characters with real problems. Livvy's lifelong battle with chronic depression and Nicholas' history of emotional abuse are unflinchingly but sensitively portrayed, and their struggles will have you rooting extra hard for their happily-ever-after.

If Red Morgan left you pining for more cinnamon roll heroes, I've got another pastry prince for you. In **Tasha L. Harrison's** ***A Taste of Her Own Medicine***, Sonja Watts has just been through a divorce. She's trying to raise her kids and start her own small business, and she definitely doesn't have time for love...especially not with the smoking hot (and several-years-younger) Atlas James. For his part, Atlas is smitten as soon as he lays eyes on Sonja -- but can he convince her to open her heart and give him a chance? Bonus: you'll love the diverse cast of supporting characters and vivid small-town setting.

Just one more cinnamon roll hero, you say? Happy to oblige! Former boxer Sam Fox from **Cat Sebastian's** ***A Gentleman Never Keeps Score*** is almost too good to be true. As the proprietor of a pub that's the beating heart of the free Black community in London, Sam's life isn't exactly easy. But friendship and family mean everything to Sam, and he'll risk life and limb to protect those he loves. He just wasn't expecting snarky loner (and reluctant softy) Hartley Sedgwick to find his way into his heart.