



## Be Frank With Me: A Novel

By Julia Claiborne Johnson

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A sparkling talent makes her fiction debut with this infectious novel that combines the charming pluck of *Eloise*, the poignant psychological quirks of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and the page-turning spirit of *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*.

Reclusive literary legend M. M. “Mimi” Banning has been holed up in her Bel Air mansion for years. But after falling prey to a Bernie Madoff-style ponzi scheme, she’s flat broke. Now Mimi must write a new book for the first time in decades, and to ensure the timely delivery of her manuscript, her New York publisher sends an assistant to monitor her progress. The prickly Mimi reluctantly complies—with a few stipulations: No Ivy-Leaguers or English majors. Must drive, cook, tidy. Computer whiz. Good with kids. Quiet, discreet, sane.

When Alice Whitley arrives at the Banning mansion, she’s put to work right away—as a full-time companion to Frank, the writer’s eccentric nine-year-old, a boy with the wit of Noel Coward, the wardrobe of a 1930s movie star, and very little in common with his fellow fourth-graders.

As she slowly gets to know Frank, Alice becomes consumed with finding out who Frank’s father is, how his gorgeous “piano teacher and itinerant male role model” Xander fits into the Banning family equation—and whether Mimi will ever finish that book.

Full of heart and countless “only-in-Hollywood” moments, *Be Frank with Me* is a captivating and unconventional story of an unusual mother and son, and the intrepid young woman who finds herself irresistibly pulled into their unforgettable world.

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## Be Frank With Me: A Novel By Julia Claiborne Johnson Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

From School Library Journal

Alice, a 20-something assistant at a New York publishing house, is sent by her boss to California to look after one of his clients, M.M. Banning (aka Mimi). Thirty years earlier, at the age of 19, Banning wrote a Pulitzer Prize- and National Book Award-winning novel that continues to sell a million copies a year. As far as anyone knows, she has not written anything since, but now, having been swindled by an investment advisor, she needs money and someone to help her keep her household going while she writes another book. So Alice arrives on Mimi's doorstep in Bel Air and meets Mimi and her nine-year-old son, Frank. Frank is an old-for-his-age cinephile with an encyclopedic knowledge of old movies and a penchant for dressing like characters in those same films. Mimi is allegedly working on the promised book, but she never allows Alice to see any of it, and Alice finds herself acting as a full-time companion to Frank. Despite early misgivings, she is drawn into the rhythms of their odd family, which includes a gorgeous young man named Xander, who shows up occasionally, teaches piano to Frank, and does odd jobs around the place and whom Alice suspects might be Frank's father. **VERDICT** By turns touching, laugh-out-loud funny, thoughtful, and manic, this is a delightful novel that will appeal to teens who like their characters quirky and smart and their stories fast-paced and witty.—Sarah Flowers, formerly of Santa Clara County Library

Review

“Readers will find themselves captivated.” (People)

“Delightful. You will laugh out loud.” (Slate)

“Johnson’s magnificently poignant, funny, and wholly original debut goes beyond page-turner status. Readers will race to the next sentence. And the next. Her charming, flawed, quietly courageous characters, each wonderfully different, demand a second reading while we impatiently await the author’s second work.” (Library Journal (starred review))

“A lot of fun to be had along the way. Sit back...and enjoy the show.” (New York Times Book Review)

“Julia Claiborne Johnson ably conjures a quirky cast and a privileged California world. **BE FRANK WITH ME** is about being an outsider and the ways in which differences help others see the world in a new way. Like Frank, this offbeat story has a big heart.” (BookPage)

“Johnson’s spare, wry, Salingeresque style evokes those great oddball novels of the past and provides a charming take on the parent-of-challenged-child theme.” (Daily Mail (London))

“Frank Banning may be the most endearing scene-stealer you’ll ever meet in the pages of a book...Johnson proves it’s possible to write a comic novel that, at times, is heartbreaking.” (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

“This book has stayed with me since I turned the last page. Frank is one of the most memorable children in contemporary fiction.” (Irish Times)

“Simply delightful...A warm and friendly book, with characters you want to get to know.” (Sunday Times (London))

“Hilarious, poignant and full of unexpected gems, **BE FRANK WITH ME** illuminates the strange ways

literature can parallel life, and introduces readers to one of the most charming, lovable and maddening children in fiction.” (Huffington Post)

“Witty dialogue, irresistible characters, and a touch of mystery make this sweet debut about a quirky Hollywood family an enjoyable page-turner.” (Booklist)

“The curious incident of where’d you go, Salinger.” (Kirkus Reviews)

“Julia Claiborne Johnson has struck gold in creating Frank Banning -- a one-of-a-kind exasperating, witty and endearing nine-year-old genius who functions as the beating heart of this marvelous book.” (Julie Schumacher, author of *Dear Committee Members*)

“Witty, but never cutesy. Deeply felt, but never sentimental. Peopled with deeply flawed, fully realized characters I cared about... I loved every minute I spent in Julia Claiborne Johnson’s glass house with her cast of dedicated stone-throwers. This one is special---don’t miss it.” (Joshilyn Jackson, New York Times-bestselling author of *The Opposite of Everyone*)

“There’s so much to love about this novel: the hilarious one-liners, the unforgettable characters, the unexpected moments of tenderness and all the funny, sad, poignant twists and turns this story takes. I lost myself in these pages and you will too.” (John Searles, nationally-bestselling author of *Help for the Haunted*)

“Julia Claiborne Johnson has written an effervescent gem of a novel, expertly balancing on a literary tightrope between lighthearted and heartbreaking. *BE FRANK WITH ME* is peopled by characters at once utterly unique, and entirely authentic. I may re-read this book just to spend more time with Frank.” (Laura Nicole Diamond, author of *Shelter Us: a novel*)

Beautifully written, brimming with insight, mystery, and benevolent wit, Julia Johnson had me gripped from the first chapter to the final page of *BE FRANK WITH ME*.” (Julia Sweeney, author, actress, comedienne)

“*BE FRANK WITH ME* is complex, nuanced, detailed and profound. In other words, funny, in the best, most resonant way. Read it with both eyes because it will delight both the thinky and the feely parts of your brain.” (Dave Foley, comedian and technically, an actor)

“What a charmer this book is! From the very first page, I fell hard for Frank, an adorable oddball with an amazing brain, a wardrobe to die for, and a lonely fragility that pierced my heart again and again.” (Marisa de los Santos, New York Times-bestselling author of *Love Walked In* and *The Precious One*)

From the Back Cover

A sparkling talent makes her fiction debut with this infectious novel that combines the charming pluck of *Eloise*, the poignant psychological quirks of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and the page-turning spirit of *Where’d You Go, Bernadette*.

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Andrew Drake:**

Do you have something that you enjoy such as book? The reserve lovers usually prefer to opt for book like comic, limited story and the biggest an example may be novel. Now, why not trying Be Frank With Me: A Novel that give your pleasure preference will be satisfied by reading this book. Reading behavior all over the world can be said as the opportunity for people to know world considerably better then how they react toward the world. It can't be explained constantly that reading practice only for the geeky man but for all of you who wants to possibly be success person. So , for all you who want to start studying as your good habit, you may pick Be Frank With Me: A Novel become your own personal starter.

#### **Wilma Blue:**

Do you really one of the book lovers? If so, do you ever feeling doubt if you find yourself in the book store? Make an effort to pick one book that you never know the inside because don't ascertain book by its cover may doesn't work is difficult job because you are frightened that the inside maybe not seeing that fantastic as in the outside search likes. Maybe you answer might be Be Frank With Me: A Novel why because the excellent cover that make you consider with regards to the content will not disappoint you. The inside or content is fantastic as the outside or perhaps cover. Your reading sixth sense will directly show you to pick up this book.

#### **Mary Cox:**

Many people spending their time period by playing outside having friends, fun activity with family or just watching TV the entire day. You can have new activity to pay your whole day by examining a book. Ugh, do you think reading a book can definitely hard because you have to take the book everywhere? It all right you can have the e-book, taking everywhere you want in your Smartphone. Like Be Frank With Me: A Novel which is finding the e-book version. So , try out this book? Let's see.

**John Montes:**

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