



Saving June

By Hannah Harrington

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Enter Jake Tolan, a boy with a bad attitude, a classic-rock obsession...and an unknown connection to June. When he insists on joining them, Harper's just desperate enough to let him. With his alternately charming and infuriating demeanor and his belief that music can see you through anything, he might be exactly what Harper needs. Except...Jake's keeping a secret that has the power to turn her life upside down—again.

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Editorial Review

Review

"...Harper's voice rings true, and readers looking for a mildly steamy romance (with more than a splash of alcohol, smoking and sex) won't be disappointed..." –Kirkus Book Reviews

Harper Scott's older sister, June, commits suicide two weeks shy of her high school graduation. So Harper, at sixteen, defiantly finds herself an only child while mourning her sister's death and is not kind to her divorced and grief-stricken parents. To make matters worse, Harper is the one who finds her deceased sister. But a huge unanswered question for Harper is why? June does not even leave behind a goodbye note. Meanwhile, Tyler hangs around during the wake at Harper's house. Harper ponders his connection to her late sister and investigates clues regarding June's unfulfilled dreams. This takes her on a road trip to California with her best friend, Laney, and Tyler to scatter her sister's ashes into the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, they encounter adventure among their far-flung friends and acquaintances. Just when you discover Tyler's connection to Harper's sister, the climax takes the reader on a gigantic twist. This is a work of realistic fiction. The author portrays the life of wayward teens who seek independence. Although the language may be a bit salty, it is realistic. The story also includes the theme of budding romance, with some sexual expression. SAVING JUNE should become a movie some day – it even includes a soundtrack. -- VOYA

About the Author

Hannah Harrington resides in Michigan with one dog and too many cats. When she isn't busy writing like a crazy person, she enjoys arguing about politics, watching documentaries, playing guitar (very badly), and speaking about herself in the third person. You can find her online at hannahharrington.blogspot.com, [facebook.com/hannahharrington](https://www.facebook.com/hannahharrington) and on Twitter @hharrington_.

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According to the puppy-of-the-month calendar hanging next to the phone in the kitchen, my sister June died on a Thursday, exactly nine days before her high school graduation. May's breed is the golden retriever—pictured is a whole litter of them, nestled side by side in a red wagon amid a blooming spring garden. The word *Graduation!!* is written in red inside the white square, complete with an extra exclamation point. If she'd waited less than two weeks, she would be June who died in June, but I guess she never took that into account.

The only reason I'm in the kitchen in the first place is because somehow, somewhere, someone got the idea in their head that the best way to comfort a mourning family is to present them with plated foods. Everyone has been dropping off stupid casseroles, which is totally useless, because nobody's eating anything anyway. We already have a refrigerator stocked with not only casseroles, but lasagnas, jams, homemade breads, cakes and more. Add to that the lemon meringue pie I'm holding and the Scott family could open up a restaurant out of our own kitchen. Or at the very least a well-stocked deli.

I slide the pie on top of a dish of apricot tart, then shut the refrigerator door and lean against it. One moment. All I want is one moment to myself.

"Harper?"

Not that that will be happening anytime soon.

It's weird to see Tyler in a suit. It's black, the lines of it clean and sharp, the knot of the silk tie pressed tight to his throat, uncomfortably formal.

"You look...nice," he says, finally, after what has to be the most awkward silence in all of documented history.

Part of me wants to strangle him with his dumb tie, and at the same time, I feel a little sorry for him. Which is ridiculous, considering the circumstances, but even with a year in age and nearly a foot in height on me, he looks impossibly young. A little boy playing dress-up in Daddy's clothes.

"Can I help you with something?" I say shortly. After a day of constant platitudes, a steady stream of thank-you-for-your-concern and we're-doing-our-best and it-was-a-shock-to-us-too, my patience is shot. It definitely isn't going to be extended to the guy who broke my sister's heart a few months ago.

Tyler fidgets with his tie with both hands. I always did make him nervous. I guess it's because when your girlfriend's the homecoming queen, and your girlfriend's sister is—well, me, it's hard to find common ground.

"I wanted to give you this," he says. He steps forward and presses something small and hard into my hand. "Do you know what it is? "

I glance down into my open palm. Of course I know: June's promise ring. The familiar sapphire stone embedded in white gold gleams under the kitchen light.

The first time June showed it to me, around six months ago, she was at the stove, cooking something spicy smelling in a pan while I grabbed orange juice from the fridge. She was always doing that, cooking elaborate meals, even though I almost never saw her eat any of them.

She extended her hand in a showy gesture as she said, "It belonged to his grandmother. Isn't it beautiful?" And when she just about swooned, it was all I could do not to roll my eyes so hard they fell out of my head.

"I think it's stupid," I told her. "You really want to spend the rest of your life with that jerk-off?"

"Tyler is not a jerk-off. He's sweet. He wants us to move to California together after we graduate. Maybe rent an apartment by the beach."

California. June was always talking about California and having a house by the ocean. I didn't know why she was so obsessed with someplace she'd never even been.

"Seriously, you're barely eighteen," I reminded her. "Why would you even *think* about marriage?"

June gave me a look that made it clear the age difference between us might as well be ten years instead of less than two. "You'll understand when you're older," she said. "When you fall in love."

I rolled my eyes as I drank straight from the jug, then wiped my mouth off with my sleeve. "Yeah, I'm so sure."

"What, you don't believe in true love?"

"You've met our parents, haven't you?"

Two months later, June caught her precious Tyler macking on some skanky freshman cheerleader at a car wash fundraiser meant to raise money for the band geeks. The only thing really raised was the bar for most indiscreet and stupidest way to get caught cheating on your girlfriend. Tyler was quite the class act.

A month after *that* disaster, our parents' divorce was finalized.

June and I never really talked about either of those things. It wasn't like when we were kids; we weren't best friends anymore. Hadn't been in years.

Now, even looking at the ring makes me want to throw up. I all but fling it at Tyler in my haste to not have it in my possession. "No. I don't want it. It's yours."

"It should've been hers," he insists, snatching my hand to try and force it back. "We would've gotten back together. I know we would have. It should've been hers. Keep it."

What is he doing? I want to scream, or kick him in the stomach, or something. Anything to get him away from me.

"I don't want it." My voice arches into near hysteria. What makes him think this is appropriate? It is not appropriate. It is so far from appropriate. "Okay? I don't want it. I don't."

Our reverse tug-of-war is interrupted by the approach of a stout, so-gray-it's-blue-haired woman, who pushes in front of Tyler and tugs me to her chest in a smothering embrace. She has that weird smell all old ladies seem to possess, must and cat litter and pungent perfume, and when she releases me from her death grip, holding me at arm's length, my eyes focus enough for a better look. Her clown-red lipstick and pink blush contrast sharply with her papery white skin. It's like a department store makeup counter threw up on her face.

I have no idea who she is, but I'm not surprised. An event like this in a town as small as ours has all kinds of people coming out of the woodwork. This isn't the first time today I've been cornered and accosted by someone I've never met acting like we're old friends.

"It's such a tragedy," the woman is saying now. "She was so young."

"Yes," I agree. I feel suddenly dizzy, the blood between my temples pounding at a dull roar. "So gifted!"

"Yes," I say again.

"She was a lovely girl. You would never think..." As she trails off, the wrinkles around her mouth deepen.

"The Lord does work in mysterious ways. My deepest sympathies, sweetheart."

The edges of my vision go white. "Thank you."

I can't do this. I can't do this. It feels like there's an elephant sitting on my chest.

"*There* you are."

I expect to see another stranger making a beeline for me, but instead it's my best friend, Laney. She has on a dress I've never seen before, black with a severe pencil skirt, paired with skinny heels and a silver necklace

that dips low into her cleavage. Her thick blond hair, which usually hangs to the middle of her back, is twisted and pinned to the back of her head. I wonder how she managed to take so much hair and cram it into such a neat bun.

She strides forward, her heels clicking on the linoleum, and only meets my eyes briefly before turning her attention to Tyler.

"Your mom's looking for you," she says, her hand on his arm. From the outside it would look like a friendly gesture, unless you knew, like I do, that Laney can't stand Tyler, that she thinks he's an insufferable dick.

"She is?" Tyler glances from me to Laney uncertainly, like he's weighing the odds of whether it'd be a more productive use of time to find his mother or to stay here and see if he can convince me to take the stupid ring as some token of his atonement, or whatever he thinks such an exchange would mean.

"Of course she is," Laney says glibly, drawing him toward the doorway to the dining room. She's definitely lying; I can tell by the mannered, lofty tilt in her speech. That's the voice she uses with her father—one that takes extra care to be as articulate and practiced as possible. It's completely different from her normal tone.

As soon as Laney and Tyler disappear from sight, the woman, whom I still can't place, starts up her nattering again with renewed vigor. "Tell me, how is the family coping? Oh, your *poor* mother—"

And just like that, Laney's back, sans Tyler. She sets a hand on the woman's elbow, steers her toward the doorway.

"You should go talk to her," she suggests with a feigned earnestness most Emmy winners can only dream of.

The woman considers. "Do you think?"

"Absolutely. She'd *love* to see you. In fact, I'll come with you."

This is why I love Laney: she always has my back. We've been best friends since we were alphabetically seated next to each other in second grade. Scott and Sterling. She's the coolest person I know; she wears vintage clothes all the time and can quote lines from old fiftiesera screwball romantic comedies and just about any rap song by heart, and she doesn't care what anyone thinks. The best thing about her is that she thinks I'm awesome, too. It's harder than you think, to find someone who truly believes in your unequivocal, unconditional awesomeness, especially when you're like me: unspectacular in every way.

As they walk away arm in arm, Laney glances over her shoulder at me, and I shoot her the most grateful look I can manage. She returns it with a strained smile and hurries herself and the woman into the crowded dining room, where I hear muted conversation and the clatter of dinner-ware. If I follow, I'll be mobbed by scores of relatives and acquaintances and total strangers, all pressing to exchange pleasantries and share their condolences. And I'll have to look them in the eye and say thank you and silently wonder how many of them blame me for not seeing the signs.

"The signs." It makes it sound like June walked around with the words *I Am Going to Kill Myself* written over her head in bright buzzing neon. If only. Maybe then—

No. I cut off that train of thought before it can go any further. Another wave of panic rises in my chest, so I lean my hands heavily against the kitchen counter to stop it, press into the edge until it cuts angry red lines

into my palms. If I can just get through this hour, this afternoon, this horrible, horrible day, then maybe...maybe I can fall apart then. Later. But not now.

Air. What I need is air. This house, all of these people, they're suffocating. Before anyone else can come into the kitchen and trap me in another conversation, I slip out the back door leading to the yard and close it behind me as quietly as possible.

I sit down on the porch steps, my black dress tangling around my legs, and drop my head into my hands. I've never felt so exhausted in my life, which I suppose isn't such a shock considering I can't have slept more than ten hours in the past five days. I close my eyes and take a deep breath, and then another, and then hold the next one until my chest burns so badly I think it might burst.

When I inhale again, I breathe in the humid early-summer air, dirt and dew and—something else. A hint of smoke. My eyes open, and when I turn my head slightly to my left, I see someone, a boy, standing against the side of the house.

Apparently getting a moment to myself just isn't in the cards today.

I scratch at my itchy calves as I give him a cool onceover. He's taller than me by a good half a head, and he looks lean and hard. Compact. His messy, light brown hair sticks out in all directions, like he's hacked at it on his own with a pair of scissors. In the dark. He's got a lit cigarette in one hand and the other stuck in the front pocket of his baggy black jeans. Unlike every other male I've seen today, he's not wearing a suit—just the jeans and a button-down, sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and a crooked tie in a shade of black that doesn't quite match his shirt.

I notice his eyes, partly because they're a startling green, and partly because he's staring at me intently. He seems familiar, like someone I've maybe seen around at school. It's hard to be sure. All of the faces I've seen over the past few days have swirled into an unrecognizable blur.

"So you're the little sister," he says. It's more of a sneer than anything else.

"That would be me." I watch as he brings the cigarette to his lips. "Can I bum one?"

The request must catch him off guard, because for a few seconds he just blinks at me in surprise, but then he digs into his back pocket and shakes a cigarette out of the pack. He slides it into his mouth and lights it before extending it toward me. When I walk over and take it from him by the tip, I hold it between my index finger and middle finger, like a normal person, while the boy pinches his between his index finger and thumb, the way you would hold a joint. Not that I've ever smoked a joint, but I've seen enough people do it to know how it's done.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brandon Huff:

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than ever. Yeah, it is very fortunate for yourself. The book makes you much more confident because you can know almost everything by the book. So, let us make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

Marie Avis:

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Benjamin Herrera:

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Jamie Norman:

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