



First Comes Love

By Katie Kacvinsky

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"The perfect love story to kick-start your summer reading."--Seventeen.com

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Editorial Review

Review

"Gray and Dylan are compelling characters who will appeal to readers in search of a good love story set on the brink of the post-high-school world."--*School Library Journal*

About the Author

Katie Kacvinsky worked in the entertainment industry and as a high school English teacher before deciding to write full time.

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FIRST MEET

Gray

Out of the corner of my eye, I'm watching a girl. She's on the opposite side of the courtyard from me. The sun is pounding down on her bare shoulders. Her face is pressed up against a camera, and she's squatting low to the ground. It looks like an old manual camera by the way she focuses the lens and turns a lever after every shot.

The courtyard between us is really just ample cement sidewalks converging in a circular cement center. Apparently, whoever designed the landscape of Mesa Community College, felt this cheap material would suffice for students who are here on a budget and don't deserve a luxury landscape. Ivy League schools get Corinthian columns, cobblestone promenades, and brick halls surrounded by gardens so students can read Ernest Hemingway next to granite fountains and quote Robert Frost in terraces covered with climbing vines. Community college students get cement benches and a lone cafeteria specializing in greasy doughnuts and potato wedges. It puts us in our place from day one.

My eyes are drawn back to this strange girl. You can't help but notice her—she's always roaming around outside, like she's part coyote. Sometimes she sits against a tree and writes in a notebook no bigger than the palm of her hand. Sometimes she draws on a sketchpad. Sometimes she whistles. She's always by herself. She wears the same beat-up black Adidas tennis shoes every day. I think I used to own the same pair, when I was twelve.

She wears baggy jeans, an interesting style choice since the average summer temperature in Phoenix is a hundred and ten degrees. The jeans practically slide off her bony hips, and the bottoms flap like bird's wings in the dusty wind gusts. Today her tank top is the color of the sun, a citrus yellow, and it's too small, hugging her long, slender waist. She has the curves of a beanpole. Once she caught me watching her and grinned, but I immediately looked away. I don't want to acknowledge her. I'm not looking to make friends. I just want a diversion, an object to rest my eyes on so I can zone out and wait for time to pass.

I lean against a wall of the science building, which offers a sliver of shade, and pull my baseball cap low over my forehead to block out the bright light reflecting off the pavement. I always wear a hat to class. I feel like I can hide behind it, like I have the power to shun the world simply by lowering its rim. I pretend people

can't see me and I can stare at whoever I want, mostly girls, in their skirts that fall barely below their hips, in high heels that show off their tan legs, and skintight tank tops that leave little to the imagination, which is fine with me.

I pick up my iPod and scroll through the albums until I find rap. I think music is seasonal. In the summer my taste changes. More hip hop, upbeat, fast-paced. In the winter it slows down. More acoustic and oldies. I drum my fingers against the ground and delay going to class until the last possible second. There is nothing more painful than taking math and creative writing in the middle of the summer. It's too much forced right and left brain activity to be asked of a person before noon. At least the misery comes in a concentrated dose of four weeks and not an entire semester.

My eyes wander back to this girl—now lying flat on her stomach in the middle of the sidewalk. I can feel myself glaring at her. What is she doing? Taking pictures of the stupid concrete? I watch her, baffled, and scan her lanky body. She isn't skinny like models in magazines—emaciated skinny, people who look like stick figures with big hair and makeup. She looks hyper skinny, as if she can't sit still long enough to eat a full meal. As if her secret diet is living life at a vivacious speed.

I check the time on my phone and look back at her with a frown. Of course she has to be monopolizing the one path between me and the English building. I could walk around her, but I've never seen someone photographing a sidewalk with such dedication, and I'm curious to know what's luring her to put her face inches from the ground. I stand up and take cautious steps toward her like I'm approaching a wild animal that could thrash out unexpectedly. She's sprawled out, her chest supported by her bony elbows, her hands holding the camera perfectly still. She must have heard me coming.

"Don't walk any closer," she warns. I stop a few feet away, and the wind picks up sand around us. Wisps of dirty blond hair fall free from her braid and blow in her face. I frown at her for hogging a public walkway.

"You're blocking the sidewalk," I say. My throat's dry and my voice comes out raw and scratchy. She slowly turns her neck to face me and her eyes are intense on mine, serious in her mission.

"You'll scare them away," she whispers, and motions with her eyes. I look down at the empty path. There isn't a single movement in the distance. I stare back at her with concern. Maybe she's schizophrenic. Maybe the desert heat has fried her brain (at least the logical side) and she's hallucinating. I lift my foot to back up, but then I glance down and realize only a few inches away from this girl's head are two pale green geckos. They're facing each other as if they're talking.

I keep still and watch her turn the camera lens with delicate precision. She presses a button and I hear a subtle click.

"Got it," she says. She stands up and brushes the sand off her jeans. She's taller than I thought, only a few inches shorter than I am, and I'm six foot three.

"It's hard to get those buggers to sit still," she says. She smiles and her light brown eyes meet mine. "Definitely camera-shy."

I study her. She must be from out of town. My guess is the Midwest or out east.

"You're not from around here, are you?" I look at her skin, covered in freckles but paler than native Arizonians', who acquire enough daily sun to give their melanin a year-round stain of tan.

"What makes you say that?" she asks, and squints up at me.

Because you're acting nuts.

"You don't see many locals sacrificing their bodies on hot cement to get a close-up shot of geckos," I tell her. "They're everywhere."

She looks at the ground for more lizards. "They're so friendly. They always play tag around my feet." She places a black cap over the camera lens. "I'm visiting for the summer," she says, in answer to my question. I raise my eyebrows. Normally I'd be gone at this point. Small talk isn't my thing. But this girl is becoming more bizarre by the minute.

"You moved to Phoenix for the *summer*?" I ask, and she smiles at my shock. Most people flee the desert this time of year, unless you like feeling your skin bake or you enjoy spending your days inside a cool refrigerator commonly referred to as air conditioning.

"I've always wanted to see the desert," she says, and raises her chin. "What are you doing after class?" My mouth drops open at her assertiveness. Does she actually think I walked over to talk to her? Doesn't she realize she was just blocking my way?

"Uhm," I stammer. My daily routine is the same: eat lunch, play video games, strum my guitar, lift weights, try to figure out my life. Stay out of my parents' way. Work part-time at Video Hutch.

"Could you give me a ride home?" she asks.

I stall and pretend to check something on my phone while I think of an excuse.

"I rode the bus over from Scottsdale, and it took two hours to get here," she adds.

My mouth drops open with shock *again*. Who moves to Phoenix without a car? A weird jean-wearing, ride-mooching girl, that's who.

"You live in Phoenix without a car?"

"No, I have one," she tells me. "I just prefer riding the bus. I can see more of the city that way. But today you can be my tour guide."

I frown at her for presuming I have nothing better to do this afternoon than drag her around town. I mean, it's true, but it's rude of her to assume it. Besides, any normal person wouldn't be this forward with a stranger. And who actually enjoys riding a city bus? It's like a ghetto on wheels.

"You don't know me," I warn her. "My idea of fun could be scorpion breeding."

She searches my face for a long time and finally smiles. "I've seen you around. You don't do much, just sit in the shade and tap your fingers on the ground and listen to music. Sometimes you play air guitar," she adds. "You look pretty bored most of the time, like you're half asleep. But you seem harmless enough. And you're cute."

I stare back at her. So she *has* noticed me noticing her. And according to her I come off as boring and harmless. I wonder if that's how all women perceive me. Well, at least she threw cute in there.

"I can meet you here in an hour," I hear myself say. I wish I could catch the words and reel them back in my mouth to safely store away in my Shut the Hell Up You Idiot file. What am I going to do with her? But before I can take the offer back, she nods.

"Perfect. I'll finish my courtyard collage." I look around at the dried grass, the cement benches, the scrawny trees and dusty ground. She's going to spend an hour photographing this eyesore? I sigh and head toward the English building, already contemplating an escape plan.

Dylan

I sit down on the dry, prickly grass and watch him curiously as he dives inside the English building like he's running for cover.

My photography class has taught me two crucial lessons about life. First, become an avid people watcher. It's amazing the truth people expose when they think nobody's looking. Two, look for beauty where it isn't obvious. Try to see life through a creative lens. I love this challenge. Anyone can see what's right in front of them, but it's subtle beauty, the kind that takes time to discover, that you have to uncover and dust off, that catches my eye. I find things with cracks and flaws and textures so much more interesting than something polished and perfect and pristine. It's the same way with people.

I've taken my professor's advice and every day after class I people watch for one hour and collect observations. A camera's a lot like a journal: it can store feelings and emotions and stories if you take the time to record them. That's when I noticed this guy. It's easy to overlook him; his back is always molded to the side of the building like he's part statue. I almost doubted he was alive until one day when our eyes accidentally crossed paths. Even from across the courtyard, I could see they were a striking blue, the color of a late-afternoon sky (up close they're even more impressive—they can hold you hostage). But there's an edge to them that was more startling than the color. Instead of seeing, they were repelling. Deflecting. I tried smiling at him, but he didn't grin back at me. He didn't even nod—he just turned away like I had rudely stumbled into his line of vision.

He tries to blend in, which only makes him stand out to me. In the last two weeks, I've made a couple of observations:

1. He never smiles. *Ever*. I've seen him nod to people who pass him on the sidewalk. He talks on his phone sometimes, and texts. He doesn't frown either. He's just emotionless. Numb. As if something's missing. Why doesn't this kid smile? Do his mouth muscles not work? Does he have braces? A gaping overbite? It's become my mission to make him smile—it's like trying to chip through a layer of ice to see if something's moving and flowing and alive underneath.
2. He avoids people. This suggests a few theories—he's aloof, he's antisocial, or he has a contagious skin rash that he's afraid to spread. Or, the mostly likely scenario, he *chooses* to be alone. I think there's a reason he prefers solitude over people, and I'm determined to figure out why. For me, life is one long expedition in search of the answers to *why*.
3. He's cute, but not in a typical way. He's not one of the pretty boys that litter Phoenix like glittery ornaments. No tattoos, no spiky hair or muscle tank tops or shirts unbuttoned halfway down to expose bronzed skin and sun-streaked chest hair. This guy mostly wears gym shorts and baseball T-shirts and flip-flops. That's one thing we have in common. He's not trying to impress anyone. He may not be Mr. Approachable, but at least he's real.
4. Music is his thing. It's always on. He zones out to it. And he always wears a hat. It's like he hides behind it, as if he's trying to escape or shut out the world.

I unzip my backpack and pull out my inspiration log (a hand-size journal I carry everywhere). I flip through the pages until I find my list of *oughtas*—weekly goals I assign to myself. In the year I've been making

them, I've seen every single one through. This week's goal is Make a Friend. I squint out at the bright concrete and watch two girls walk through the courtyard, their high-heeled shoes clicking noisily on the sandy pavement. They glance in my direction and take in my jeans and my tennis shoes and I can almost hear the fashion police sirens wailing in the distance.

Make a Friend. This challenge is no easy feat, but I've been holding my own secret audition—listening to people's conversations and studying their mannerisms and waiting for someone intriguing to come along.

I look back at the English building and smile, because now I'm convinced.

This guy is perfect.

On the surface he might be callused, but looking through a creative lens, I see layers and textures. He reminds me of a folding chair, closed in and waiting to be shoved in a storage closet. I'm determined to see him unfold.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ruth Ward:

Do you have favorite book? When you have, what is your favorite's book? E-book is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each book has different aim or goal; it means that e-book has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They are reading whatever they consider because their hobby is usually reading a book. What about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, person feel need book if they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you will want this First Comes Love.

Ismael Roop:

The particular book First Comes Love has a lot associated with on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was compiled by the very famous author. The writer makes some research previous to write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you will get the point easily after reading this book.

Mary Infante:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the ocean world or hanging out with good friends is thing that usually you could have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not feeling tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition info. Even you love First Comes Love, you could enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh seriously its mind hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

Liza Serrano:

In this period of time globalization it is important to someone to get information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The fitness of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of recommendations to get information example: internet, paper, book, and soon. You will see that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. Typically the book that recommended for your requirements is First Comes Love this book consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This book was represented how do the world has grown up. The dialect styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. The actual writer made some research when he makes this book. That is why this book appropriate all of you.

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