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The First Time She Drowned



Synopsis

The beautiful struggle of a girl desperate for the one relationship that has caused her the most pain. In "one of the most lyrical novels I've ever read. Haunting and exquisite." —Nicola Yoon, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Everything, Everything* and *The Sun is Also a Star* —Cassie O'Malley has spent the past two and a half years in a mental institution--dumped there by her mother, against her will. Now, at 18, Cassie emancipates herself, determined to start over and reclaim her life. But when the unhealthy mother-daughter relationship that defined Cassie's childhood and adolescence threatens to pull her under once again, Cassie must decide: whose version of history is the truth, and whose life must she save? TEEN VOGUE listed as "One of the best books you need to know now." PASTE MAGAZINE lists it as "one of their most anticipated debuts of 2016" and as "one of the best books of the year so far." ALA BOOKLIST names it to their "Top 10 First Novels for Youth" list. Included in B&N Teen Blog's Best Young Adult Books of 2016. More praise for *The First Time She Drowned*: "Lyrical, emotional...resonant." —Entertainment Weekly "Beautiful and passionate . . . [Kletter is] a writer of great distinction and infinite promise." —Pat Conroy, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Prince of Tides* and *South of Broad*. . . An incredible read. Be warned though —you will want to read Cassie's story, start to finish, in one sitting. And then you will want to race to put it in the hands (and hearts) of everyone you know and love." —Jennifer Niven, New York Times bestselling author of *All the Bright Places* "The First Time She Drowned" is an exquisite and masterful dive, a brave exploration into the complexities of family, and the saving grace of friendship. Kletter's writing is hypnotic, her characters alive, her story tragic, beautiful, hopeful. Simply put, this book is stunning." —David Arnold, critically acclaimed author of *Mosquitoland* and *Kids of Appetite* "[A] beautiful, gut-wrenching ache of a story. If you are at all interested in books, this is required reading." —Becky Albertalli, author of the Morris Award-winning *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* "The best writers are able to tell the most difficult stories with the most empathy, and that's just what Kletter does in this haunting debut about a girl lost in the depths of her family's secrets and shame. Complex, affirming, and beautifully written." —Stephanie Kuehn, author of the Morris Award-winning *Charm & Strange* "Gorgeous, sumptuously lyrical, luminous —a feast for lovers of language." —*The First Time She Drowned* singlehandedly shatters every argument that YA books aren't fit fare for adults." —Jeff Zentner, author of *The Serpent King*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for *The First Time She Drowned*: "Lyrical, emotional...resonant." ["Entertainment Weekly, MUST LIST"](#) "Beautiful and passionate . . . [Kletter is] a writer of great distinction and infinite promise." ["Pat Conroy, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Prince of Tides* and *South of Broad*"](#) Kerry Kletter ["The First Time She Drowned is the kind of book I love best"](#) "a lovely and haunting keep-you-up-all-night heart-wrencher that is both beautiful and raw, painful and uplifting. It's utterly amazing. An incredible read. Be warned though you will want to read Cassie's story, start to finish, in one sitting. And then you will want to race to put it in the hands (and hearts) of everyone you know and love."

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Kerry Kletter has had a lifelong passion for story. She holds a degree in literature and has an extensive background in theater, having appeared in film, television, and onstage. When not writing, Kerry can be found surfing, running, working with animals, or singing loudly in her car while stuck in LA traffic. A native of Ridgewood, New Jersey, Kerry now lives in Santa Monica, California, with her partner, screenwriter David Zorn. *The First Time She Drowned* is her debut novel. Follow her on Twitter @kkletter.

I wish I could write the eddies and currents of emotion the way Kletter can. This is, on the surface, a story of a teenage girl who has been damaged almost beyond redemption by her narcissistic sociopath of a mother. It's told in waves, alternating between flashbacks to her dysfunctional childhood and a present in which she's released from the mental hospital where her family discarded her and is able to try to live a "normal" life in college. But Cassie is far from a normal girl, and until she fully faces the ugly truth of her past, she may never learn to swim through it and out the other side. Kletter does an amazing job making Cassie somehow sympathetic, even as Cassie does (almost) everything she can to sabotage herself. She also drags us under the terrible riptide of

abuse and neglect that made Cassie this way, forcing us to experience the paradox of Cassie longing for her mother's love even as she recognizes that her mother is the person most likely to drown her--permanently.

Earlier this year, I read Joan Didion's masterpiece, *THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING*. When I set that down, I resigned myself to it being a very long time before I next encountered another writer who so thoroughly held language in her thrall. I didn't have to wait long. In fact, I found her in the very next book I read, *THE FIRST TIME SHE DROWNED*. This is a gorgeous, sumptuously lyrical, luminous book. I read it like it was a fire and I'd just been pulled from a frozen lake. It's a feast for lovers of language. The descriptions in it made me feel like I was experiencing the world for the first time. To this day, as a writer, I'll open this book at random to remind myself of the possibilities of the word. This book singlehandedly shatters every argument that YA books aren't fit fare for adults. It treats young readers with perfect respect for their considerable intellects. And it doesn't just treat young people as the intellectual peers of adults; it treats them as emotional peers. It tackles difficult issues like mental illness, love, and dying with the same darkly lyrical grace and elegance as the book's prose. Kerry Kletter is a peerless writer and you have never read a YA book like this one. It has the air of a classic. Flawless.

This novel is captivating and brilliantly written. The language flows like poetry and I find myself re-reading sentences that paint such a clear picture of the inner turmoil in Cassie's mind. I struggled with wanting to read quickly to get to the end of the story and wanting to read slowly to capture and absorb all of the intricacies of the language. So, I'll read it again. And probably again. Because it's that beautiful. I already can't wait to read Kletter's next novel. She's a writer I will follow!

The First Time She Drowned is absorbing and frightening in its subject but lyrically drawn and ultimately offers hope. Kerry Kletter has written a book for Young Adults, but I suggest that it is equally appropriate for readers of any age who love stories and words, who appreciate intelligence and eloquence. It's a book I will recommend to my book group (we are all seniors) because it tells a timeless and poignant story with the depth of a classic. Bravo, Kerry Kletter *The First Time She Drowned*

I finished this book a week ago and still find myself thinking about Cassie, the main character. Such a beautifully written book about a very powerful, emotional topic. The role our parents play in our

lives and our sense of self-worth is so clearly demonstrated in the story and I find myself questioning the influences in my own life as a result of reading this. Kletter is an incredible author and I'm anxiously awaiting her next novel!

This read like a fascinating, real case study of being raised by a mentally ill mother when the daughter doesn't know she is one sick woman. I was drawn into the truth of their emotions and the beauty of the telling in the first paragraph. I cannot wait to read another story by Kletter. Excellent read!

This weekend I read *The First Time She Drowned*. I was waiting for Spring Break, but I gave in. Actually, I read it in two nights during those stolen moments when the house is quiet and everyone is asleep and time stands still, or so it seems until morning. Kerry Kletter's story is so strong and so alive, you lose yourself in the writing and join her world completely. Sentences become images and characters are people you feel you've met and want to know more about. This is true writing and storytelling. It is an honor and pleasure to have experienced this debut novel.

I very rarely write reviews of books on , yet I feel so moved by this book that I could not not write one. *The First Time She Drowned* is haunting and painful and horribly raw, and written so beautifully that I found often myself rereading sentences and paragraphs over and over again trying to soak up the honesty and emotion of the prose. This book will be a friend to anyone who has ever been lost in the sorrow of abuse, and will open the eyes of anyone who has ever been near to such a person. Thank you, Kerry Kletter, for writing this book.

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