

LOVE AT FIRST BOOK

a short story in verse



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Sarah Tregay

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ISBN: 978-1508809722

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For coffee lovers everywhere

2014

Hopeless Romantic

I'm at the hospital hours after my shift has ended
still dressed in my candy-striper uniform
still waiting for my father to finish in surgery
and give me a ride home.

I turn the page, read the next sentence theatrically
just loud enough for Mrs. Hartford to hear.

*In vain have I struggled. It will not do.
My feelings will not be repressed.
You must allow me to tell you how ardently
I admire and love you.*

I clutch the paperback to my chest
and exhale a longing sigh.

“That Mr. Darcy,” I whisper to my patient,
“He gets me every time. How about you?”

Her only response
the softest of snores.

Love at First Sip

“The usual, Lorelei?” Ross,
my favorite barista, asks
when I plop my bag
on his counter after school
the following day.

“Mmm hmm,” I say.
“And a chocolate chip cookie.”

He places a cookie on a plate
and slides it across the counter.
He plucks a red mug from the shelf
with a little dancer’s flourish
and sashays to the espresso machine.

Soon a hot vanilla latte
topped with a swirling white heart
appears before me.

Phone Booth

I carry my cup and plate
to my very own
phone booth office.

(No one ever uses
the payphone anymore.)

Just past the hallway
that leads to the kitchen
in a little side nook,

I drop my bag
on the wooden bench
and curl up like a bug.

I balance my Mac on my lap
and press my sneakers
to the graffitied wall
my toes pointing to a heart
Brandon + Molly TLA.

This is where I write
or get lost in a paperback
remember my mother
and her red hair
(before it fell out)
and forget
that my father
doesn't have time for me.

Doctor

My father spends his days
mending other people's hearts.

He cuts them open,
sees the secrets they keep deep
down in their hearts.

It's delicate work, he tells me.
Holding someone's heart
in your hands.

I smile and nod, knowing it's true.
But wondering deep down inside
how can he stitch them up
when his own heart is broken.

Gone

If only it was
my mother's heart
that had stopped working.
Dad could have saved her.

But it was cancer.
And he couldn't.

Footsteps

I want to be a doctor, too.
All I need to do is focus on
 every step
 every grade
 everything.

Someday I will follow
in my father's footsteps
 after college
 after med school
 afterwards.

So I volunteer at the hospital
two afternoons a week
 taking patients places
 taking flowers to rooms
 taking it all in.

But sometimes I get so overwhelmed
I just need to
 forget about my GPA
 forget extracurricular activities
 forget it all.

So here in my phone booth office
in the corner of the coffee shop
 I dream of life in poetry
 dream of falling in love
 daydream.

Love at First Book

I sip my latte and let my eyes drift over
the mismatched wooden tables
the old church pews
and public school-issue chairs
that give my coffee shop that lived-in feel
that Starbucks is missing.

I take in the paintings on the gallery wall:
spaceships with octopus tentacles
Martians with gecko fingers
and a blue cheese moon.

I look over at the free bookshelf—
tell myself, *No. No more books.*
And, *No. No need to straighten them.*

That's when I see him—
a boy about my age
with a book
in his low-slung
back pocket.

Details

The book is vintage
the corner of the cover torn
the pages dog-eared
and yellowed.

The pocket is denim
faded and worn
stitched with a Levi's V
and red tabbed.

The boy is tall
his arms unadorned
well muscled
and brown.

The heat is slow
crawling warm
up my cheeks
until I look away.

Courage

The blush on my cheeks cools
and I dare to look his direction again
secretly hoping
to catch another stanza
of heart-stopping description.

But when I look up
all I see is a blur
of heather gray and denim
step out the double doors,

leaving me with déjà vu.



Book Notes

'Hopeless Romantic' quote is by
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813

Love at First Book
takes place prior to announcement
of *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee.

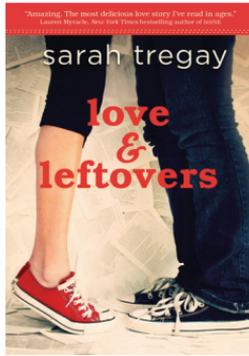


Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my critique group members and beta readers: Sandy Bayless, Diana Burbach, Danielle Chiotti, Leslie Gorin, Kristiana Gregory, Elisabeth Sharp McKetta, Grace Routh, Rachel Scott, Johnna Stein, and Elliah Terry.

Thank you to the Idaho Writers Guild for placing *Love at First Book* in their 2014 contest, and to *Writer's Digest* for the Honorable Mention in the Young Adult Fiction Category of the 2014 Writer's Digest Popular Fiction Awards. I'd also like to thank both Hunger Mountain and Katherine Applegate for naming *Love at First Book* a finalist for the 2014 Katherine Paterson Prize in Young Adult and Children's Writing and for including it in the June 2015 LOVE issue.

Also by Sarah Tregay



a novel in verse

Romantic and bittersweet, *Love and Leftovers* captures one girl's experience with family, friends, and love.

Dragged to New Hampshire for the summer, Marcie soon realizes that her mom has no plans to return to home to Idaho. As Marcie starts the year at a new school, without her ragtag group of friends called the Leftovers, a new romance heats up, but she struggles to understand what love really means.

*“A verse novel with real depth
to accompany all that white space.”*

— Kirkus Reviews

Also by Sarah Tregay



When the picture tells the story...

A sweet contemporary romance about a boy who falls in love with his best friend.

Jamie Peterson has a problem: Even though he tries to hide his feelings, everyone seems to know how he feels about Mason, and the girls in his art class are determined to get them together—even though telling the truth could ruin their friendship.

*“A breezy romance with just enough
light drama to keep its feet on the ground.”*

– Booklist