

The First Time She Drowned

By Kerry Kletter

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"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*

The beautiful struggle of a girl desperate for the one relationship that has caused her the most pain

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. She attends college, forms new friendships, and even attempts to start fresh with her mother. But before long, their unhealthy relationship threatens to pull Cassie under once again. As Cassie struggles to reclaim her life, childhood memories persist and confuse, and Cassie must consider whose version of history is real, and more important, whose life she must save.

A bold, literary story about the fragile complexities of mothers and daughters and learning to love oneself, *The First Time She Drowned* reminds us that we must dive deep into our pasts if we are ever to move forward.
From the Hardcover edition.

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"*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***

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"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. Complex, affirming, and beautifully written." **--Stephanie Kuehn, author of the Morris Award-winning *Charm & Strange***

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The First Time She Drowned By Kerry Kletter Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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"One of the best books you need to know now" ***—Teen Vogue***

"[W]ill hook you from the first line." —***Bustle***

"Raw and evocative." ***—Buzzfeed***

"A stunning story of family and friendship." ***—BookRiot***

Named by ***BARNES & NOBLE Teen Blog*** and ***Paste Magazine*** "one of the best books of the year so far."

An ***ALA Booklist*** "Top 10 First Novel for Youth" selection!

About the Author
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.

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PROLOGUE

My mother wore the sun like a hat. It followed her as we did, stopping when she stopped, moving when she moved. She carried her beauty with the naiveté of someone who was born to it and thus never understood its value or the poverty of ugliness.

As children, my older brother Matthew and I were drawn to her like tides, always reaching our arms up to her, pulled to her light. If she had shadows, I did not recognize them as such. I saw her only in her most perfect form and any suggestion of coldness or unkindness was merely a reflection of me. This was the unspoken agreement I had with her, suspiciously drawn up before I was old enough to understand its cost.

Until I was a teenager, my family lived on the poor side of a wealthy town in Pennsylvania. It was a washed-out looking neighborhood where the colors of the houses were tired and peeling from neglect. Still, we had a huge backyard that stretched wide and ripe with all things wonderful to children. On its left seam it was lined with blackberry bushes whose purple juices stained our fingers as we stuffed them into jars for jam. On the right and perched tenuously on a hill as if cresting a wave of green, sat an enormous yellow boat, so old and weathered it had undoubtedly crawled its way to the shores of our yard to die. The boat was as big as our house and about as seaworthy. When I once asked my mother why we bothered to keep it, she looked not at the boat but at my father who was tooling uselessly about its deck.

"It's a fixer upper for sure," she'd said. "But maybe there's something we can salvage." She didn't sound very convincing.

If nothing else, the boat was the perfect venue for playing pirates. Every weekend, Matthew, who loved to wield his authority in being three years older, played the role of the good captain while I, in a flash of prescience, was relegated to the part of the doomed and hated buccaneer. He would order me to move here and there, serving as both actor and director of our little scenes, and I would follow his instructions dutifully

because Matthew was always better at pretending than I was.

Meanwhile, my father cleaned and fussed with the old boat, muttering and sighing as if his repetitive efforts might someday induce its spirit back to life. My brother and I would race wildly around him, as heedless of his frustrated cursing—the background noise of our childhood—as he was to our presence. For it was not for him that we played and scrambled about, maybe not even always for ourselves, but for her, the one who wore the sun like a hat, who was the sun to us. Because she mattered more. And because I sensed on some subterranean level that she needed us to, sensed that if we did not play the role of happy children, she might break like the Atlantic upon us.

Yet, for all my efforts, there were moments when I would catch my mother looking at that broken boat with the strange and startled horror of the drowning. This frightened me, and always I looked to Matthew to see if he too noticed the seas rising behind my mother’s eyes. He did not. Or if he did, he did not acknowledge it. But I saw too much. And I was never as good at pretending as Matthew was.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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With other case, little men and women like to read book The First Time She Drowned. You can choose the best book if you'd prefer reading a book. So long as we know about how is important any book The First Time She Drowned. You can add understanding and of course you can around the world by the book. Absolutely right, mainly because from book you can learn everything! From your country until foreign or abroad you will end up known. About simple matter until wonderful thing it is possible to know that. In this era, we are able to open a book or searching by internet unit. It is called e-book. You need to use it when you feel bored stiff to go to the library. Let's read.

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