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Editorial Choice:

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Media type:

Book

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This summer romance makes perfect summer reading. It begins at the end of term when Em (Emerald) is looking forward to the holidays with a mix of excitement and apprehension. Her friends have behaved cruelly to another girl and though Em stood up for her, she didn't do so firmly enough to appease her conscience, and she's very aware too of how easily she herself could become the subject of her friends' spite. These worries are nothing to what happens when she arrives home to find her mother unconscious after a suicide attempt. With her mother in rehab, Em is sent to her grandma in Ireland. It's another country in more senses than one, and she soon decides to close her social media accounts for the summer, a clean break with her other life.

On her first night there, she meets a boy on the beach. Liam's background is very different to Em's, though as we later find out, their family stories are more closely linked than either of them realised. He has his own pressures to face: his dad's building company collapsed during Ireland's financial crash and his father is determined Liam will train as a Quantity Surveyor, though Liam himself dreams of studying music.

As their relationship develops, Liam and Em find that when they are together, they can both be who they really are, and the happiness and release that comes when you find someone who really gets you is the book's dominant note.

Orlagh Collins describes first love with a memorable intensity, and readers will be rapt by this story of Emerald and Liam and their summer. There are various moments when their happiness seems under threat and indeed they are revealed to be star-crossed, but in this story warring families are reconciled through their children's love and honesty. In fact, we never really feel that these two young lovers will be separated, and the story is all the better for that. Characters, setting and emotions are finely described and this is recommended reading for the romantically inclined.

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