

Book Reviews

Long Story Short by Serena Kaylor



In Long Story Short, Serena Kaylor's debut novel published in 2022, Kaylor tells the story of Beatrice Quinn's summer trying to be a normal teenager at the Connecticut Shakespearean Summer Academy in her pursuit to get permission from her parents to study mathematics at Oxford University. Out of her element buried in books and mathematics, she spends six weeks making friends with the theater kids and enemies of the popular kids, and finds navigating friend relationships more complicated, and fulfilling, than expected.

This story is a cute, though a bit cliché, take on a contemporary teenage experience, showing how a shy teenager can navigate themselves, their boundary-pushing families, their goals, friendships, and relationships. There is a classic enemies-become-lovers theme, with typical teenage reactions and unhealthy behaviors, but Kaylor does an excellent job of balances that out with, in my view, the more important relationships of the story; the friendships that Beatrice makes throughout her time at the summer camp, and the relationship Beatrice has with herself. It conveys a traditional teen experience, while allowing lots of room for the character to step outside of her comfort zone to help discover who she is more holistically and grow further into who she is becoming.

In addition to Beatrice's self-growth and discovery, the heart of the story lies in the friendships she makes at the summer camp. These friendships are the first real friends Beatrice

has made, as she was always homeschooled and shy before this camp. Kaylor does a lovely job fleshing out the characters, their dialogue, their stories, and their relatable relationships with each other to show meaningful connections and friendships. The characters are well-developed, and though they make mistakes (as all teenagers do), throughout the novel you can't help but root for the endearing Beatrice and her friends and feel like you're going along her journey of self-growth with her.

The story is a sweet and cute representation of teenage friendships and self-discovery and shows warm and healthy ways to develop meaningful relationships. While a bit cliché, and a bit problematic in Beatrice's relationship with her parents, this is a cute and heart-warming story on stepping outside your comfort zone to grow, and to find your greater identity and your people.

References

Kaylor, S. (2022). *Long story short: Love isn't by the (text)book*. Wednesday Books.

Good Reads. (n.d.) *Long story short*. <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/57034751-long-story-short>