

Sunkissed

Kasie West

Reviewed by: Elisabeth Suarez, 15

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Sunkissed is a light-hearted romance story about a 17-year-old girl named Avery who is dragged to a remote family summer camp by her parents for two months. Avery's best friend has recently betrayed her by going behind her back and kissing her boyfriend, so Avery is in a bad mood. Her 15-year-old sister, Lauren, an energetic video blogger, is not making things any better, by constantly complaining about the camp's lack of Wi-Fi. When Avery is just about to give up on fun for the next few months, she meets camp staff member Brooks, a charming and good-looking guitar player. They make a deal that Avery will help him write songs for a band competition in exchange for Brooks helping her explore her interests. She has always liked music, but has a horrible fear of being on stage and singing in front of others.

Avery and her sister befriend other staff members and the others apart of Brooks band. The only problem is, staff aren't supposed to fraternize with campers, which means sneaking around. As the summer goes on, Avery comes to appreciate being away from the drama at home, and starts to learn more about herself. When the band sadly falls apart, Brooks asks Avery to step in as the vocalist when they compete in the festival. How will she overcome her biggest fear? Will she finally discover who she wants to be?

Sunkissed can be compared to an innocent version of Dirty Dancing. The book is easy to read and the characters are effortlessly connectable. Avery's struggles with discovering pastimes she enjoys and figuring out who she is before college is very relatable. Her self-discovery journey was pleasant in contrast with the romance. Brooks was a decent love interest, but the book didn't give him as much depth as I would have hoped. My favorite part of the book was Avery and her sister's relationship. It reminded me of my sister. Avery and Lauren were very different, and sometimes disagreed, but they ultimately loved each other no matter what. Avery is very protective and supportive of Lauren.

The one thing I didn't enjoy about the novel was the drama with Avery's back-stabbing friend and her ex-boyfriend. It was most times unneeded, though it did add to Avery's anxiety. There was a good amount of fluff and cliches, but as is with most romance novels. Overall, the book was great for summer with themes of family, romance, music, adventure, and growth. I recommend this book for readers over the age of fourteen.

Recommended Titles:

Zigzag by Ellen Wittlinger

The Summer I Turned Pretty by Jenny Han

Listen to Your Heart by Katie West

Kisses and Croissants by Anne-Sophie Jouhanneau