



L.E. DELANO



Blue

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*gaze publishing*

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*This book is dedicated to the Swoon Squad—  
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SOMETIME AROUND 350 BC, King Philip II of Macedon decided to invade Greece, and was mostly successful until he set his sights on the kingdom of Sparta. Philip decided to give the Spartans a chance to avoid bloodshed and lay down their arms before he conquered them, so he sent out a message that read: “You are advised to submit without further delay, for if I bring my army into your land I will destroy your farms, slay your people, and raze your city.”

The Spartans replied with only one word.

“If.”

And based on the power and implied message of that one word (and the Spartans’ well-known reputations), Philip decided the Spartans weren’t worth the risk, and he left them alone.

“If” is a word with the power to alter destiny. So many lives have been decided by two little letters.

*If only she’d taken that job instead of this one. If we just hadn’t decided to go out that day. If he’d only told her he loved her. If the baby had lived.*

If only my mother hadn’t named me Blue.



She thought it was pretty, maybe even a little mystical. Instead, it turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. One little turn of events has completely demolished my life. One split second mistake has completely altered the trajectory of my world, and sent it tilting on its axis. I was born Blue and I'll stay blue as I drown in it all. It's so goddamn unfair.

I draw back my fist and punch the side of the slide.

"Ow! Dammit!"

I cup my hand inside the other one, blowing on them both. They were stinging bad enough before I decided to punch a hard piece of frozen plastic. The backs of my knuckles look raw, but my whole hand is bright red so it's kind of hard to tell how much damage has been done.

I trace the line on the slide wall with my finger in disbelief. It's definitely a crack. I cracked the slide when I punched it.

"I cracked it? Are you kidding me?" I say, shaking my hand out. "Un-be-freaking-lievable."

"Not really. It's simple physics."

I turn with a start and the movement jolts me free, sending me hurtling down the slide and right into the legs of the guy standing at the bottom. He jumps back, but not before I nail him in the knee with my boot.

"Oof!"

"Sorry!" I look up from my seat on the bottom of the slide, and he rubs his knee. "What the hell are you doing?" I demand. "Why are you spying on me?"

"I wasn't spying. I was here first." He smiles at me, even though I tagged his knee pretty hard. "And I came over because you looked like you hurt yourself."

I flex my fingers and look back up at the top of the slide. "Hurts like a bitch."

"You okay?"

“Yeah. What do you mean ‘you were here first?’” I glare at him. He’s still smiling at me, though.

He gestures toward the other side of the playground. “I was just sitting under the big plastic frog canopy, minding my own business. Here, you dropped this.”

He brushes the snow off my phone and holds it out. We both look down as it vibrates in his hand and three new notifications light up the screen.

OMG Did you hear about Maya

Maya’s back tomorrow

Heads up - Maya’s  
coming back

“Thanks,” I mumble, yanking it away.

I shove the phone down in my pocket and try not to look like I want to throw up when I do. I really do. Why is he here? I didn’t come to the playground in the middle of winter so I could socialize. I wanted to be alone in my misery.

He tilts his head to the slide. “Better get a move on before they arrest you for vandalism.”

“Right.” I actually have gloves in my pocket that I wasn’t wearing because I stupidly can’t stop checking my phone. I pull the right one over my sore hand. “You live around here?”

“You think I drive all over town in the freezing cold just to hang out at empty playgrounds? I live on Willow Court. On the cul-de-sac.”

“I don’t know what you do. I don’t know you.” I’m aware I’m being bitchy. And he’s still smiling.

“That’s because I’m new,” he says. He sticks his hand out at me, like we’re becoming best friends or something.

“Devon Guthrie. Moved here from Florida in December. I think we might be going to the same school.”

“I can’t shake your hand.”

He gives me a sympathetic look. “You’re sure it’s not broken?”

I shrug. “And I don’t go to Upper Merion,” I say. “I go to a charter school—”

“Audubon Academy,” he completes for me. “I think I saw you before Christmas break. We stopped by to get the paperwork. That’s why I walked over to you—I thought I recognized you. Are you a senior?”

“Junior.”

“Me, too.”

“Oh. Well, it’s a good school,” I say awkwardly, cramming my gloved hands in my pocket. “I have to go.”

“Not without telling me a name, I hope. It’d be nice to scream it in the halls tomorrow instead of ‘Hey you.’”

He smiles again, and his teeth look really white in the darkness of the winter night. He pulls his beanie down tighter over a mop of unruly blonde hair.

“Blue.” I say, as he looks at me blankly. “My name is Blue.”

“First or last?”

“It’s my first name.” I wave off his confused look. “My mom was in her crystals and aromatherapy stage back then. The last name is Mancini.”

“Blue.” He repeats. “I like it.” He points off to the parking lot by the playground, to an old-model powder-blue Volkswagen Bug. “I can give you a ride. I would imagine your butt is frozen into a semi-circle shape after forty minutes of laying on a slide in single-digit temps.”

“Wait—you were watching me that whole time?”

“No. I was doing some thinking of my own. But I did notice when you showed up because you almost walked off the top of the platform up there looking at your phone. Whatever you saw must have you pretty upset.”

I close my eyes, mortified. Did he see me crying? Cursing? Talking to myself? I’m not about to get into the whole shitfest that is my life with a guy who hangs out at playgrounds.

“Sorry.” He raises his hands, palms out. “I don’t need to know your business.”

“It’s just—” I don’t want him to know my business. But if he’s going to Audubon, he’ll hear it all tomorrow morning. “I’ve kind of got a life situation going on. Sorry if I’m not at my friendliest.”

“Life.” He lets out a sigh. “Sucks sometimes. Still better than the alternative.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

For a moment, we just stand there in the quiet, with the snow falling down, looking at the ground and lost in our own thoughts. Finally, he speaks.

“So . . . you want that ride?”

“I’ll walk. Thanks anyway.”

He nods, readjusts his hat, and starts walking toward his car. “Sorry if I ruined your alone time,” he calls back over his shoulder. “I wasn’t creeping on you.”

“It’s okay,” I call back. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“See you.”

I stuff my hands in my pockets and start walking, out the gate of the playground and onto the sidewalk. The phone vibrates again and I pull it out to look at the newest text.

Maya’s coming back tomorrow

What are u gonna do

What am I gonna do? How about call out sick until graduation? Hide under a desk? I want to laugh but I also want to throw my phone as hard as I can. And some weird part of me wants to get in Devon's car and tell him to drive until we're a hundred miles from here.

I look over my shoulder to make sure he's not following me, and he's not. He's just standing there by his car, arms folded, looking at me and yup—still smiling.

I don't smile back. I walk home alone in the cold, knowing I have to face tomorrow. Maybe I'll get lucky and everyone will fixate on the new guy.

A girl can hope, can't she?