



Grace and the Fever

By Zan Romanoff

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Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl* meets Jenny Han's *The Summer I Turned Pretty* in this contemporary YA about what it means to be a fan—and what it means to be a friend—when your whole world is in flux.

In middle school, everyone was a Fever Dream fan. Now, a few weeks after her high school graduation, Grace Thomas sometimes feels like the only one who never moved on. She can't imagine what she'd do without the community of online fans that share her obsession. Or what her IRL friends would say if they ever found out about it.

Then, one summer night, the unthinkable happens: Grace meets her idol, Jes. What starts out as an elusive glimpse of Fever Dream's world turns into an unlikely romance, and leads her to confront dark, complex truths about herself and the realities of stardom.

From the author of *A Song to Take the World Apart*, *Grace and the Fever* is a heart-clutching reminder of what it's like to fall in love—whether it's with a boy or a boy band—and how difficult it is to figure out who you are after you've fallen out of love again.

"*Grace and The Fever* crackles with sharp cultural commentary and deep emotional resonance." —*Bitch Magazine*

"Grace and the Fever is a clear-eyed portrait of 'the girls of the internet' . . . a YA novel that does the fangirl justice." —*The Verge*

"A wise, bittersweet coming-of-age story for the thinking fangirl." —Anna Breslaw, author of *Scarlett Epstein Hates It Here*

"Super addictive." —Goldy Moldavsky, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Kill the Boy Band*

"A smart, warm, feminist ode to anyone who has ever been eighteen, made a mess of their own life, spent their late night hours on Tumblr, or loved a band so much it hurt." —Katie Coyle, author of *Vivian Apple at the End of the World*

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Editorial Review

Review

"Genuine dialogue, texts, e-mails, online posts ... bring to life this edgy and layered look at the glitz and secrets of stardom from ordinary eyes." —*Booklist*, starred review

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"Grace and the Fever is a clear-eyed portrait of 'the girls of the internet' . . . a YA novel that does the fangirl justice." —*The Verge*

"A thrilling romp through a fangirl fantasy in which everything crashes and burns and the heroine emerges stronger." —*Kirkus*

"*Grace and the Fever* reads a lot like how loving a boy band feels: you think it's cute at first and then suddenly you find yourself so enthralled that you just need more and more and you hope your family isn't too concerned because yep you are definitely obsessed. Super addictive." —Goldy Moldavsky, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Kill the Boy Band*

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"*Grace and the Fever* is a warm and thoughtful exploration of fannishness in all its multifaceted complexity, and it's a sweet-natured coming of age story too. But most of all, it's a love letter to band fandom, and all the funny, obsessive, reviled teenage girls who created it." —*Vox*

About the Author

Zan Romanoff fell in love with Hanson when she was ten and has been a boy-band fanatic and teen-idol obsessive ever since. She lives and writes in Los Angeles; this is her second novel. Visit her at zanromanoff.com or follow her on Twitter at @zanoiicon.

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Chapter One

Heyyy girl u up?

The chatbox window blinks from gray to blue, pulsing like a heartbeat. Grace taps her fingertips against the keyboard, listening to the tiny sounds they make, like raindrops hitting glass, plink plink plink. She's on ghost-mode, so if she doesn't answer, Katy won't know she's there. Even though she is.

Her laptop screen is bright white in the darkness of her room.

Curiosity gets the better of her. She types, I guess.

Ummmm okay

Haha

I just wanted to see if you were EXCITED about TOMORROW yet

I'm not even sure I'm going

I thought you said the hotel wasn't far from your house

It isn't. I'm just not sure it's gonna be, like, worth it

Like why go wait and stand around? So I can have my own blurry cell pic of Jes's hair instead of just looking at everyone else's on Tumblr?

DO IT FOR ME THOUGH

Hah sorry didn't mean to get screamy

But actually

DO IT FOR ME PLEASE

I know it won't make any difference really but I feel like you'll be able to tell if something is ~*off*~ with them

Or if all of the drama recently has just been management stirring up fake trouble

You know it's management

It's always management with them

Yeah

I'm just saying

I would go if I could

I would be there now

Standing under their windows

Serenading them w my sweet sweet songs

They'd prob call the cops on you if you did that

At least they would know I existed. Worth it.

Kidding not kidding?

Sorry I really can't sleep, I'm getting llllooooooppyyyyyy

Katy never sleeps, as far as Grace can tell. She lives on the other side of the country, three hours ahead, and in theory she's studying graphic design at NYU, but somehow she's still always logged in to chat, posting on Tumblr or Twitter, and texting Grace some new, small piece of gossip about Fever Dream. She's always ten minutes ahead of everyone else in their funny, obsessive network, because Katy's always around, and people are always telling her things.

Grace says, Me neither.

Katy writes back, being on a computer doesn't help I guess

Probs not. I'm gonna try a little harder.

I'll let you know if I end up in Santa Monica tomorrow

FOR ME

For me and every other feverish dreamer who can't be there because of the awful laws of time and space

Do it for us

Please

The chatbox blinks again: navy and white, dark and blank.

I'll let you know, Grace sends, and closes the laptop before she can see if there's a response.

Her room is too dark, is the problem, but the computer is too bright when it's open. Her phone is facedown on her bed so she can't check it for messages. Not that she's expecting any.

Lianne texted her this morning, what are you up to, and Grace wrote back, Idkkkkkk dude maybe nothing? and then didn't hear anything, and assumed that was because nothing was happening.

Then a few hours ago a picture of Lianne and their other best friend, Cara, popped up on Snapchat: the two of them out at some party, flushed and laughing. If they were going to invite her, they would have at this point. She glares at the phone even though it's not its fault that no one is texting her to explain.

A restless wind is rattling the windowpanes, blowing strange and dry and hot. Beyond the glass the palm trees are shivering, their fronds clicking and rustling like bones, or teeth.

Grace gets up and rests her hand on the windowsill, peering out through the curtains. The moon overhead is white, bright and heavy and full. She watches a lone black car crawl up her quiet street. Probably a neighbor coming home late from some other party. Apparently everyone's at a party tonight but her.

The wind picks up force. Instead of blowing everything back and forth, it whistles straight, high and sweet, like a song winding through the trees and the street. Grace touches the bottom of the window and starts to pull it up, but it whines in protest and she stops. There's just enough space for a breeze to wash through, raising goose bumps on her skin.

Usually she loves the quiet familiarity of her room, but something about the wind makes it seem stifling. Instead of feeling sheltered, Grace looks from wall to wall to wall and thinks, Am I trapped? She's so used to the idea that her friends will come over and pull her along on one of their adventures. If they stop doing that, will she just spend the rest of her life in here, alone?

The idea unsettles Grace so much that she acts without thinking: pulls a long-sleeved shirt on over her tank top and slips her feet into a pair of Converse. It's easy to shuffle downstairs and out the back door, which is light and quiet when she closes it.

This is the first time in all eighteen years of her life that Grace has ever snuck out of her mother's house.

The night feels enormous around her, emptied of everything but wind and sound and moonlight. Even her yard seems mysterious. The pool gleams darkly, water lap, lap, lapping against its edges.

She goes around to the front of the house, but the street is empty and suburban and still. Grace feels a little silly: she's just being self-indulgent and dramatic, probably, imagining something out here calling to her, like she's special, like the night and the air mean something. What does she think she's doing, anyway? There's nowhere for her to go, not really. Her car is here, but her keys are still inside the house, and what, is she going to drive to In-N-Out and get a hamburger? She can do that during the day.

She can walk around the neighborhood during the day, too, but it feels different now. Expansive. Illicit. Enticing.

The wind decides for her: it sings up the street and toward the cul-de-sac a few blocks up. Grace lets it push her legs out in front of her and follows its path.

Everything looks different this late or this early. She blinks at the few lit-up windows in the houses, trying to picture who's sitting and reading, and what people are watching in the glow of their screen-blue cocoons.

The black car is parked in the cul-de-sac, at the farthest edge of the curve where there's no house, just hedge. On the other side of that wall of ficus leaves is Blue Bell Park, where Grace and her neighbors used to play when they were kids. None of them hang out together anymore, but Grace knows if they did, it would probably be on this side of the hedge, now, where the leaves enclose you and the neighbors can't be too nosy. This is where the neighborhood kids come to get high once they aren't kids anymore.

Whoever's here now isn't doing that, though. Even Grace recognizes the difference between the sweet skunk of weed smoke and the ashy tar of a cigarette. The car's driver is the one smoking, sitting on the hood, a snapback pulled brim-down over his eyes even though it's been dark out for hours.

Grace's worn sneakers are almost silent on the summer-softened asphalt, but he's hair-trigger: rabbit nervous, rabbit fast. He whips his head around as she starts up the curve of the cul-de-sac, flicking the hat's brim up to get a better look and then tilting it back down again in a breath.

He's not fast enough to stop her from seeing.

And recognizing him.

Grace almost can't believe she didn't glean it from the slope of his shoulders and the curve of his fingers around the cigarette. She's seen them thousands, probably millions, of times, in photographs and drawings, grainy performance videos, and television commercials for headphones and, when she was younger, in torn-out magazine pages plastered all over her bedroom walls. She was talking to Katy about him just a few minutes ago.

Jes Holloway is sitting and smoking on the hood of his car, in the embrace of her cul-de-sac, and her neighborhood, and this strange, restless night.

For a second the world turns white with her shock, like just looking at him has run her through with lightning. It takes her a moment to get her breath back. She expects to feel like she's burning, but instead she's electrified. She can't tell what's crackling, her skin or the air on it.

Jes shifts nervously under the weight of her gaze. He flicks his cigarette twice, brings it up to take a drag, and then lets it fall again, unsmoked. He pulls the hat up to rake a hand through his hair. There's a split second where he hesitates, and decides. When he puts the hat back on, its brim is backward, his face exposed to the night.

His shoulders uncurl and his spine straightens.

He steals another glance at her, but this time, he lets her see that he's looking.

All of Grace's friends would call her quiet. She would say so herself, even. She doesn't start conversations. Seeing Jes, though, makes her feel like she's on familiar ground all of a sudden: on the track, at the block, about to push off and run. His presence is like a starter's pistol. She's shot through with adrenaline; it makes her feel like a different person. One who knows instantly that there's nothing to do but go.

"Sorry," Grace calls. Her voice quavers. Maybe it gets lost in the wind. She wants to take it back but she can't make herself stop talking. "I didn't mean to sneak up on you."

“It’s a public street, I guess.” His voice is low and rough and familiar, something she’s heard just as many times as she’s seen his face. She fell asleep to Fever Dream’s first album for a whole year after it came out; she’s drifted off in front of YouTube videos of the boys goofing off on tour buses and compilations of their press junkets on so many lonely, idle nights.

She feels crazy with boldness. Jes watches her step off the sidewalk and cross toward him. He doesn’t ask her not to.

“You want one?” he asks instead, holding the pack of cigarettes out to her.

He’s just as handsome as he is in all of those pictures, dark-skinned and beautiful, fine-boned and thin, with eyelashes so long that the moonlight casts shadows through them onto his cheeks. There’s something about seeing him in the flesh, with no cameras and no stage and no paparazzi, not even his bandmates around, that makes him seem oddly compact, like gravity is working harder on him than everything else in the world. It has to strain to hold all of his beauty and his brightness together in one slender frame.

“Sure,” Grace says before she can think better of it.

So this is going to be a night full of firsts.

This is something she knows from screens, too: filter end between her lips, lean forward so he can flick life into a lighter and catch the cigarette’s tip. She inhales and holds the smoke in her mouth for a few seconds before breathing it out. There. Easy.

As her brain starts to catch up to what’s happening, puzzle pieces begin to click themselves into place. Jes grew up around here, originally, before his family moved out to Georgia, where he met the rest of the Fever Dream boys. It’s something she knows and forgets, because it seems so impossible that Jes, Jes Holloway, could have been just another kid from Canoga Park if they’d stayed.

If his father hadn’t taken them to the South, she might have known him and gone to school with him. She might be used to watching him smoke down the block from her house. She might have known him and yet never found out the details she has now: that he’s a bad sleeper, has nightmares; that he likes to eat whole oranges for breakfast; that his first kiss was a girl named Charlotte and his first crush was a girl named Lily; that when he sings, his voice becomes the only thing that can make the spinning world stand still.

She takes another drag from the cigarette and lets the smoke trickle down her throat. Immediately she coughs it all back out again, startled.

Jes laughs. "Sorry," he says. "I forgot to warn you that I smoke the black lung stuff. It's a lot if you're used to, like"--he gives Grace an assessing look--"Parliament Lights."

"I don't smoke much," Grace says. Actually, she smokes never.

"Oh. Special occasion?"

"Not really. I guess it just--it just seemed like the thing."

"I get that." A breeze blows by them, stirring the smoke from his cigarette and the ends of her hair. He says, "It's a weird night. I forgot about these winds. What are they called? Santa something?"

Grace shakes her head.

"Santa Anas," Jes says.

He reads a lot on tour, Grace thinks. She reads a lot about him being on tour. She wonders if he knows the names of the winds for everywhere they travel, or if he learned it when he was living here and carries it around with him, somehow, still.

"So, are you visiting?" she asks.

Part of her thinks that it's dishonest not to tell him that she knows who he is, but she can't bear to break the spell between them, or test whatever magic brought him here to sit through the night with her. With her, like he's just as ordinary as she is.

"I lived here when I was little," Jes says. "We're in LA for a few days, me and .??. some friends. I wanted to see the old neighborhood."

“This is barely LA.”

“That’s why I got here so late,” Jes says. “Forgot how long the drive was.”

He smiles sideways at her through the darkness.

He’s never been Grace’s favorite of the Fever boys--she loved Solly first, and then because of Solly she loved Land. Jes always seemed too obvious. Even girls who didn’t care about Fever Dream knew he was the most beautiful one.

Now, a few feet from him, Grace has to admit to herself that she seriously underestimated the sheer physical force of that kind of beauty, especially combined with the pull of his charm. It acts like a beacon, tugging her closer--or maybe like a lighthouse, warning her away from a craggy corner of the shore.

She asks, “Is it the same as you remember it?”

Jes looks around, considering. “Not really,” he says. “It seems .??. smaller.”

“It is small.”

“You grew up here?”

“Down the block. I’m leaving for college in the fall, though.”

“Getting the hell out of Dodge.”

Users Review

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