
AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT



Jenna Guillaume on *You Were Made for Me*

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sixteen-year-old Katie Camilleri can't believe she's accidentally created a teenage boy. A boy six-feet tall with floppy hair and eyes like the sky on a clear summer's day. A boy whose lips taste like cookie dough and whose skin smells like springtime. A boy completely devoted to Katie. But silly musings and kitchen antics with her best friend, Libby, have definitely taken a whimsical twist into something bigger than Katie could have ever daydreamed. Turns out the consequences of fumbling a human being into existence are rather complicated. More importantly, does Guy, the golden Adonis Katie's created, like her because he wants to, or because he has to? And will he be Katie's very first kiss?

From the author of *What I Like About Me* comes a hilarious feminist twist on a classic narrative, loaded with laughs, mishaps, and plenty of pop-culture callbacks.

Q: How was working on this book different than *What I Like About Me*? Was it similar in any way?

A: When I was writing *What I Like About Me*, the only person I had to answer to was myself. I wrote it on and

off for a few years. *You Were Made for Me* was a whole different beast—I had deadlines and publishers and a much shorter timeframe! In terms of the story, it drifted away from complete realism with the introduction of the character of Guy, and so I had to figure out how to make him work while still making the story feel as natural as possible.

Q: How did your love for pop culture and rom-com movies inspire this story?

A: I was initially inspired by *Weird Science* and the idea that we don't often get to see female desire depicted in the way teen boy feelings are explored in that movie. I also wanted to play with the idea of the perfect rom-com hero and all the tropes that go along with that, and the fact that in real life the grand gestures aren't always the ones that are most meaningful. The singing scene was a direct homage to *10 Things I Hate About You*, of course!

Q: For readers who are familiar with the cult classic *Weird Science*, how did you approach writing *Katie's* story as a more modern and feminist take on the film?

A: *Weird Science* is about two teen boys who create their perfect woman. It's pretty sexist—even though she's smart and brilliant, she's literally there to serve them and fulfil their desires. I wanted to take that idea and completely flip it, empowering the female gaze and female desire, while also giving the object of that desire a path towards agency.

Q: Who or what inspired *Katie's* character? Why did you choose to make *Katie* an artist?

A: *Katie* isn't me, but there are aspects of her that are inspired by my own feelings and experiences. First and foremost—all her crushes and her burning desire to be kissed! It was something that absolutely dominated my teen years and so I wanted to have fun with that with her. As for being an artist, that was partly because I wanted to bring art and science together in *Katie* and *Libby* to create the magic of *Guy*, and partly because I

wanted to explore the paralyzing nature of perfectionism that I feel so keenly in my own creative process.

Q: *Are there similarities or differences between Katie's journey to self-love and Maisie Martin's in What I Like About Me?*

A: Katie and Maisie are pretty different, although both of them have intense crushes, bullies, and crises of confidence—and ultimately their journeys lead them to the realization that internal validation (i.e. self-love and self-compassion) is more important than whatever else is happening on the outside. For Maisie, her story was more about her body and how she feels in it, while for Katie, the focus is more on her art and how she treats other people and herself in turn.

Q: *How did you decide to differentiate between Katie's and Libby's narration throughout the story using different fonts?*

A: Libby's voice—her “editor” notes—came immediately as I started writing and made me really excited. I love her, and I really adore the interactions between her and Katie. They were the most fun to write. As soon as I realized the dual voices would be a part of the story—although not the whole story, as this is ultimately Katie's narrative (Libby has her own that I love but that is not my place to write)—I knew I had to differentiate them visually. I used different fonts for my own sanity as much as anything else!

Q: *If you could tell this story from another character's point of view, whose would you choose and why?*

A: I think Libby has a fascinating story to tell, but as I said before, it's not my place to tell it (even though I created her—but a POV character is a whole different thing). I actually think Theo's point of view would be really interesting. He has his own feelings and desires, and Guy totally turns his life upside down and impacts his own sense of self-worth to a degree. I think it'd be really interesting to unpack all of that. Plus, Theo is just such a sweetheart. I love that even when he has his own stuff happening in his head, he puts it aside to be there for Katie and also for Guy—he's really emotionally intelligent.

Q: *What would you imagine happens next for Guy?*

A: I left this pretty open and vague deliberately—Guy's existence is a mystery, and so it made sense to me that what happens next would be somewhat of a mystery too. I'd love readers to imagine what comes next for him for themselves and figure out what feels right for them. That being said, I think it would definitely involve lots of experiencing and learning and eating and finding his own individual path that's for him alone and not for anyone else.

Q: *If you were creating the perfect guy in your kitchen, what would he be like?*

A: Hahaha! What a question. It's hard to say, because ultimately, as I explore in the book, I think your idea of what's “perfect” and what you actually need are totally different things. I mean, I've been with my husband since high school, and he is far from perfect (in fact, he irritates me frequently), but something about our dynamic obviously works!

But hey, just for fun—it'd probably be a combination of the seven members of BTS.

Q: *Are you team Guy, Theo, or Declan Bell Jones?*

A: For Katie, I am team exactly who she ends up with in the book. In life, I am Team Theo and Team Guy and them getting happy endings they deserve. Declan Bell Jones is the worst. You're not supposed to dislike your own characters, are you? Whoops.

Q: *How did you decide to have Libby come out as asexual and aromantic?*

A: Since this book was about exploring female desire, it felt important to include different experiences of it—including the lack of it. Just as I wanted to show that it's normal and good for Katie to have all the sexual and romantic feelings she has (and she has SO MANY), I also wanted to reiterate it's normal and good to not have them, too. When we meet Libby, she's still figuring it all out, and Guy upending her and Katie's lives and friendship kind of forces Libby to deal with things she's been ignoring.

Q: *What do you like most about writing for young adults?*

A: There are so many big feelings and firsts and journeys of discovery when you're a teen that just make for really great stories. It's not easy being a teen, and it

makes me so happy when a reader tells me something I've written has made them laugh or feel seen. Books were a vital part of navigating my own teen years, and I hope my books can help others even in a small way.

Q: How has your experience writing for *BuzzFeed* and *Girlfriend Life Hacks* influenced your YA novels?

A: *Girlfriend* is a major Australian teen publication, and I spent years talking to girls and reading their messages and emails and letters. It really shaped my passion for the audience and also my understanding of the things that mattered to them. More than anything, it cemented my desire to explore and place value on self-love above anything else. Every girl I ever talked to just wanted to be seen and heard and reassured. As for *BuzzFeed*, I think it really helped to develop my voice, and gave me a deeper understanding of the types of stories and moments people respond to.

Q: What do you hope readers take away from *You Were Made for Me*?

A: The most important thing is that they have fun. I hope it makes them laugh and maybe even swoon a little. If it makes them feel like their feelings and desires, whatever form they may take, are okay and normal, that's even better. And if it leads them to reflect on things like perfectionism, and friendship, and non-toxic masculinity, and being kind to themselves and others—well, that's icing on an already delicious cake.

Q: What's next for you?

I am currently working on another Young Adult novel—a modern twist on a Jane Austen classic that explores fame and fandom and friendship and first love (look at all the Fs I give!). I'm also learning screenwriting and hope to adapt my books for the screen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenna Guillaume was the editor-at-large for *BuzzFeed* Australia, where she wrote about very important things like pop culture, identity, feminism, social media, and Chris Hemsworth's biceps. Previously, she spent more than half a decade in the features department of *Girlfriend* magazine, editing the sealed section (yes, all those questions are real), and writing about everything from bullying and body image to bad kisses and boy bands. She was also a contributor to *Girlfriend Life Hacks*, an essential guide to navigating a girl's completely-awkward-but-totally-awesome teen years. She lives in Australia.

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