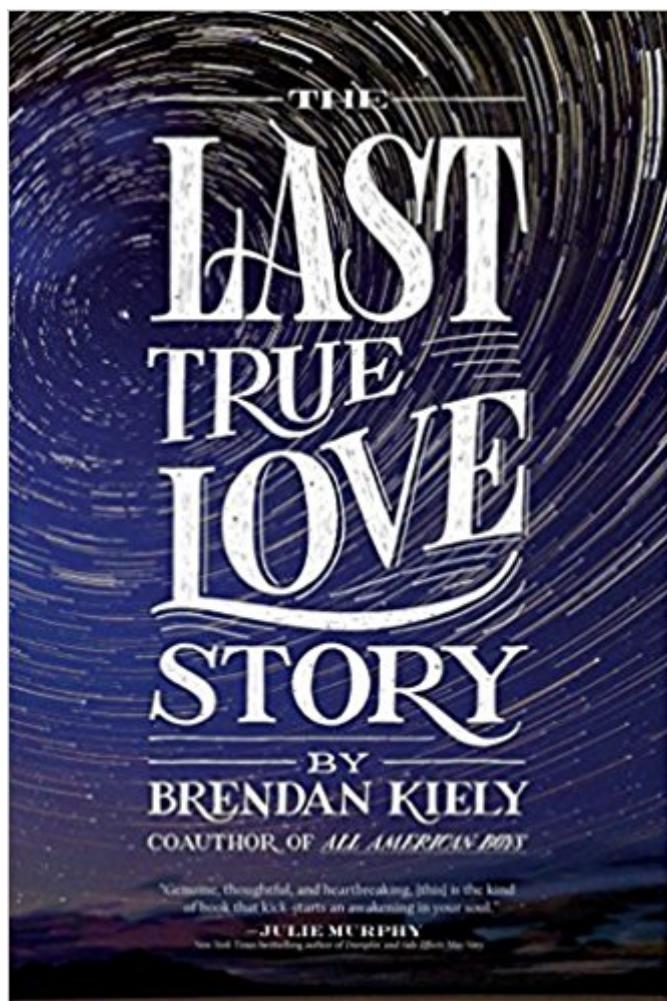


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The Last True Love Story



Synopsis

From the critically acclaimed author of *The Gospel of Winter* and the coauthor of *All American Boys* comes a cool, contemplative spin on hot summer nights and the classic teen love story as two teens embark on a cross-country journey of the heart and soul. The point of living is learning how to love. That's what Gpa says. To Hendrix and Corrina, both seventeen but otherwise alike only in their loneliness, that sounds like another line from a pop song that tries to promise kids that life doesn't actually suck. Okay, so: love. Sure. The thing about Corrina's her adoptive parents are suffocating, trying to mold her into someone acceptable, predictable, like them. She's a musician, itching for any chance to escape, become the person she really wants to be. Whoever that is. And Hendrix, he's cool. Kind of a poet. But also kind of lost. His dad is dead and his mom is married to her job. Gpa is his only real family, but he's fading fast from Alzheimer's. Looking for any way to help the man who raised him, Hendrix has made Gpa an impossible promise—that he'll get him back east to the hill where he first kissed his wife, before his illness wipes away all memory of her. One hot July night, Hendrix and Corrina decide to risk everything. They steal a car, spring Gpa from his assisted living facility, stuff Old Humper the dog into the back seat, and take off on a cross-country odyssey from LA to NY. With their parents, Gpa's doctors, and the police all hot on their heels, Hendrix and Corrina set off to discover for themselves if what Gpa says is true—that the only stories that last are love stories.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 10 Up •Teddy Hendrix is a typical teenage boy dealing with hormones, girls who won't give him the time of day, and family issues. His grandfather, Gpa, is in the throes of Alzheimer's, and his memories are quickly fading away. After getting into a fight with a popular boy at his school, Hendrix joins up with Corrina, who is equally adrift and on whom he's been crushing. She is adopted from Guatemala and finds an outlet for her loneliness and pain through music. After an emotional visit at Gpa's retirement home, Hendrix and Corrina decide to fire up his mom's car and take Gpa on one last road trip, from Los Angeles to Ithaca, NY. Along the way, the teens learn more about each other and the world and realize that sometimes the past is better left in the past and that the future is bright and vast if you have the right person on the journey. Kiely has constructed a sophisticated story about the power of love, music, and making amends. All three of the main characters are fully fleshed out and leap off the page. Corrina's struggles will resonate with many teens who are grappling with who they are in society, especially teens of color adopted into white families and those who strive to achieve their dreams. Gpa's disease is handled in a humane, nonexploitative way. The *Odyssey*-inspired plot evolves at a leisurely pace, yet it never drags, giving readers a chance to savor this special book. **VERDICT** Deeply personal and universal at the same time, Kiely's truly lovely tale should find a home in every YA collection. •Christopher Lassen, BookOps: The New York Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library

“Brendan Kiely’s writing soars off the page, ultimately landing someplace between heartwarming and heart-aching (but definitely somewhere in the heart). Here is a book about music, friendship, first and final loves, and all the blue notes in between. Indeed, *The Last True Love Story* may be exactly that. • (David Arnold, bestselling author of *Mosquitoland*) “As cool as it is tender, this poignant story about the power of love thrums with classic rock and aches with honesty. I was so moved by Hendrix’s journey and, as a brown girl who loves music, I was completely invested in Corrina—one of my new favorite characters in all of YA. Authentic and beautifully written, *The Last True Love Story* will truly capture your heart. • (Jasmine Warga, author of *My Heart And Other Black Holes*) “A beautiful, searing journey into the American heartland. This book, like an epic road trip, is full of difficult truths, great music, and deeply human companions. • (Daniel José Older, award-winning author of *Shadowshaper* and the *Bone Street Rumba* series.) “Genuine, thoughtful, and heartbreakingly honest, *The Last True Love Story* is the kind of book that kickstarts an awakening in your soul and will resonate with readers for years to come.” (Julie Murphy, New York Times Bestselling author of *Dumplin'* and *Side Effects May*

Vary) "Some authors write with their hearts first and their heads second. Some the other way around. But Brendan Kiely manages, as always, to strike a skillful and delicate balance between deep, intellectual coming-of-age and poetic, emotional drama. The Last True Love Story stands in a league of its own both in regards to the way it portrays its teenage protagonists and the way it tells the very personal, tragic story of Alzheimer's. If the point of living is learning how to love, to quote Gpa, then I think we should all start by reading Mr. Kiely's beautiful novel." (John Corey Whaley, Printz and Morris winner, National Book Award finalist, and author of *Highly Illogical Behavior*) "The Last True Love Story is a tender multi-generational story that's as much about the meaning of family as it is about falling in love. There's plenty of delightful adventure, but what I loved most about this book is its respect for moments that can be both quiet and life changing at once." (Ava Dellaira, author of *Love Letters to the Dead*) "A quirky, romantic, and satisfying story." (Publishers Weekly) "This bittersweet, sometimes humorous coming-of-age journey hits all the right notes, with its emotional language, vivid landscapes, and quirky characters." |A good fit for new adults, graduates of Joan Bauer's *Rules of the Road*, or those who enjoyed John Green's *Looking for Alaska*. (Booklist)**STARRED REVIEW** "Readers will be swept up in Kiely's musical prose as Teddy learns about love, romance, forgiveness, and reconciliation." (Kirkus Reviews, starred review) "The story seamlessly integrates family history and the present, creating a tale of love free from cheesiness. Raw, imperfect relationships will strike a chord with teenage readers. Part road trip, part romance, this story is the stuff of summer dreams.

Recommended. (School Library Connection)* "A sophisticated story about the power of love, music, and making amends. Deeply personal and universal at the same time, Kiely's truly lovely tale should find a home in every YA collection." (School Library Journal, starred review)** STARRED REVIEW ** "poetic, lovely, and profound" |Satisfying and full of longing, the book features deep feelings, full hearts, and heartbreak. It speaks to the importance of forging connections and the power of story to capture memories and meaning. (VOYA)

I'm a huge fan of young adult literature. 4 out of 5 books that I read are written for younger audiences, but honestly, they're my favorite books to read, perhaps because so many of them really touch on real life issues. The Last True Love Story is a story about just that: love. But it's not the story you might expect. Yes, a young romance does blossom between Teddy (Hendrix) and Corrina. But to me, the true love story is the one that exists between Teddy and his ailing

grandfather, Gpa, and Gpa and his late wife. Anyone who has known and loved someone diagnosed with Alzheimer's knows what a devastating and cruel disease it can be. It steals everything most precious to the individual; memories, recognition, a sense of awareness. And it steals the person away from his or her loved ones. In *The Last True Love Story*, Teddy breaks Gpa out of his assisted living facility to embark on a cross-country road trip with Corrina in an attempt to help Gpa relive his memories of Gma one last time. This is a moving and deeply personal book, one that fans of young adult literature and I think particularly fans of John Green, will enjoy and appreciate.

What a beautiful story of love across the generations! Kiely deftly captures the complexities of love from various perspectives in life in prose that is both elegant and accessible. The three main characters, the teenagers Hendrix and Corrina and the grandfather GPA, are all well-developed as the novel moves towards a satisfying conclusion. Though written for young adults, as an adult I found the novel an enjoyable and emotionally satisfying read which I am recommending to friends of all ages!

The third brilliant work from a new master. Keily captures adolescence better than anyone since Salinger. If you haven't read his first two works then you're cheating yourself.

Well written. Loved the premise of trying to fulfill a grandpa's last request.

One of the first things that caught my eye was the back cover of this book. David Arnold, author of *Mosquitoland* was quoted as saying, "Brendan Kiely's writing soars off the page" and I thought to myself, oh yea? Well, we'll see. Well, I did see, and I am mightily impressed. This book had me from the very first page and I never wanted to put it down. The struggles of the young, coming to terms with who we are, how we fit in...it's all here. The struggles of the elderly is a predominant theme also. As Gpa (our elderly character) struggles with his increasingly failing memory, his grandson struggles too, as he comes to grips with how his life is changing, how his one connection to the unknown figure of his father, is fading quickly. His family circle is diminishing and he feels scared and alone. Enter Corrina, a seemingly self assured musician who has struggles of her own. They undertake a trip across the country to bring Gpa back to where he first lived with his beloved wife in the hopes he can capture those magical moments before they disappear forever. This book of becoming, of acceptance and the dawning awareness of the young when they discover the world is a big place and there is much going on beyond their own scope and vision is an exceptional read. I

was drawn in immediately and loved each character. Their flaws made them so real and relatable. I think this could easily be adapted for the big screen! I've seen some reviews that say to leave this book for the youngsters. I just can't agree with that. There are lots of insights and honestly, I liked being reminded of what it felt like to be a confused teenager, even if just for a little while. This is the perfect book for a teenager's summer reading list. *I would say 14 and up.

I applaud the author for the gentle love sprinkled throughout the book. The characters are well-rounded; the subject matter compelling; and the handling of each person's weakness and strength is masterful. I love the road-trip theme; I don't remember when I last saw it done so well. The young woman's ability to choose music to fit mood is entertaining, and the way she and the young man resolve small problems before they became large is worth emulating. The grandfather is presented with such compassion and understanding as to be memorable. The young man's struggle to follow adult rules yet make his own is sweetly done. In summary, "The Last True Love Story," by Brendan Kiely, is a book to be kept and re-read for the lessons hidden between the lines. What do we keep of our life? What memories? Which people? Do we hold on to anger or do we let it go? And how far do we go to help the ones we love? Heavy questions in a light-hearted book: an excellent combination!

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