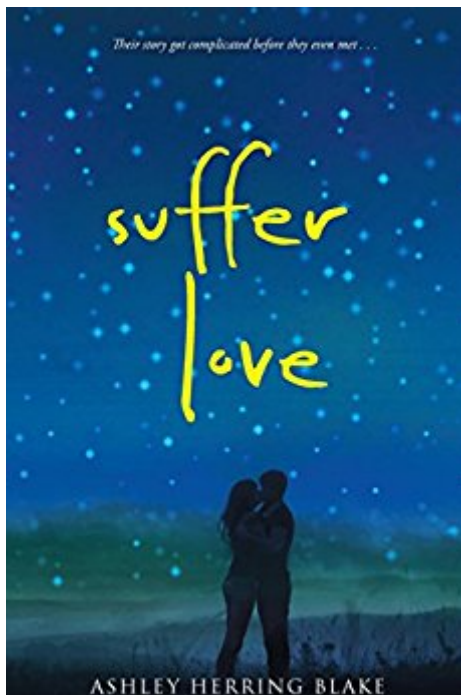


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Suffer Love



Synopsis

Sam Bennett falls for Hadley St. Clair before he knows her last name. When Sam finds out she is that St. Clair, daughter of the man who destroyed Sam's family, he has a choice: follow his heart or tell the truth about the scandal that links their families. Funny and passionate, *Suffer Love* is a story about first love, family dysfunction, and the fickle hand of fate.

Book Information

File Size: 4723 KB

Print Length: 357 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (May 3, 2016)

Publication Date: May 3, 2016

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B011H55N9O

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #471,396 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #53

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Marriage & Divorce #111 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Marriage & Divorce #620 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Dating & Sex

Customer Reviews

A Conversation with Ashley Herring Blake The author of *Suffer Love* talks about her childhood rock star Disney dreams, love of really great ghost stories, and the inspiration behind her romantic debut novel.

Did you always want to become a writer? I've always loved writing and reading, but I cycled through a lot of potential careers before settling on writing. As a kid, I wanted to be a marine biologist, a singer for Disney, and a teacher. I did become a teacher and had barely started

that career when I decided to pursue writing with gusto. What did you read when you were a kid? Anne of Green Gables and the Baby-Sitters Club series were definite favorites. I also read a lot of Judy Blume and Sweet Valley High. I had a penchant for ghost stories as well, and Mary Downing Hahn's *Wait Till Helen Comes* remains one of my favorite books ever.

How often do you write? It depends. If I'm drafting a new book, I like to write every day until I have the first draft finished. Every now and then I'll skip a day, but if I miss too many, I lose the momentum of what's happening with my characters. After I complete a draft, I usually take a week or two before diving back into revision. Truthfully, I have a hard time going too long without working on something, whether planning, drafting, or revising. Me without a project in mind equals major anxiety! Where do you write? I like writing at home if I can, and I have a little office nook that's perfect for writing. I also love writing surrounded by books, so I'll write on the couch near my largest bookshelf a lot. Every now and then, I venture into coffeeshops.

What inspired you to write *Suffer Love*? There were a few ideas that really fascinated me when I started *Suffer Love*. One, I was intrigued by how teens dealt with family trauma, particularly infidelity. Two, I was interested in exploring what happens when one tells a lie with good intentions. I loved diving into both of those emotional realms with Sam and Hadley. What is your favorite book that you have not written? Oh, wow, I have so many. But I'd have to say Jandy Nelson's *The Sky Is Everywhere*. That book is super-special to me—it's one that helped me see that I wanted to write contemporary YA and it really helped me through a difficult time of loss. Such a beautiful book.

Are you working on anything new now? I am! I have another book, *How to Make a Wish*, coming out with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 2017, and I'm also in the middle of drafting another contemporary YA.

"In *Romeo and Juliet*, the stars didn't cross. They collided." That's a line from *SUFFER LOVE* that perfectly sums it up, and that will stick with me for a long time (disclaimer: I was typing that from memory, so it might not be **exactly** as it is in the novel). This stunning contemporary YA romance is told from the POVs of Hadley and Sam, two teens from dysfunctional families whose relationship, as the tagline says, was complicated before they ever met. The official description leaves out exactly

how it's complicated, but it's not hard to guess (and gets revealed pretty early on), so I don't think it's a spoiler. Hadley's family is still reeling from her father's recent affair with an unknown woman, with her parents in marriage counseling and her doing her best to keep pretending everything's okay. Meanwhile, Sam and his little sister move into town after their father left them because of their mom's infidelity - and Sam knows exactly who the Other Man is. He's instantly attracted to Hadley and somewhat thrilled when he's paired with her for a Shakespeare assignment... until he learns her last name and realizes that the Other Man was her dad. Holy moly, there's no way this can end well... especially since Sam can't bring himself to tell Hadley what's going on. This dramatic irony creates a simmering tension throughout the whole story, which follows Hadley and Sam's emotional struggles with life, their families, and each other. While their romance is at the heart of the story, it's just one piece of a profound exploration of the characters' lives - how each of them handles the difficult realities they live in. Both characters are wonderfully written with voices that feel genuine and relatable, yet are very distinct from each other. Sometimes strong, sometimes vulnerable, sometimes cautious, sometimes impulsive - complex people in complex situations, making choices that aren't always the best ones, but ring true. I found myself instantly pulled in and tore through the whole thing in about two days (at one point staying up far too late, but no regrets!). I loved that this is something of an unconventional romance, with characters who aren't your typical romantic leads. Hadley's gained a reputation around school for being a tease, since one of the ways she copes with her parents' relationship falling apart is by seeking comfort and escape in the arms of boys. The novel aims to blast apart the stigma surrounding girls who like to hook up by exploring Hadley's motivations and emotions, as well as showing how she deals with the subsequent slut-shaming. Sam, meanwhile, is simultaneously older than his years and a confused teen. With his dad gone and his mom somewhat absent, he's taken it upon himself to act as his little sister's surrogate parent. Yet he's still a kid himself, and the tension between the two sides of him help create an interesting and multifaceted personality. Also worth noting is that I loved the role that Sam's little sister (Livy) played - the sibling relationship between her and Sam, the developing friendship between her and Hadley, her own feelings and confusion around her parents' split. This was a book that gave me ALL THE FEELS and left me somewhat stunned at the end, like "whoa, that was awesome, and I don't know whether to smile or weep or smile-weep or WHAT!" The stars collided, love was suffered, and the complicated got even more complicated. And I loved every moment.

It's well-known that parents are scarce in YA literature. Either they're dead, or they're absent, or they're

around but strangely invisible. It's understandable; YA is about teens, and it's hard to put teens front and center if their parents are continually barging in and trying to take charge. So many YA stories deal with this by simply removing the parents, or shifting them to the background. To be clear, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that approach. One of the main audiences of YA is, in fact, teenagers, and it makes total sense that they'd want to read stories about characters their age, not about their parents. I find absolutely no fault with authors who would rather focus on their teen characters and keep adults mostly out of the mix. However, I'm a little bit backwards. I was one of those teens who read a lot of adult literature, and now I'm an adult who reads a lot of YA. As such, I've always been drawn to stories that feature both perspectives, the adult and the teen. I find it fascinating to explore where they clash, where they overlap, where the gap in years of life experience is an asset and where it's a hindrance. *Suffer Love* is one of those rare YA books that, while remaining solidly YA, really digs in and explores those questions. Sam and Hadley, the two teen narrators, are both dealing with the fallout of their parents' infidelity. One family has already split apart, the other is trying to stay together but finding it a challenge. One narrator knows the sordid details of their parents' affair, the other does not. Both are struggling to redefine their relationships with their parents and families, while still working through lingering feelings of anger and betrayal. The parents in both families are well-drawn, fully realized characters, but even when they're not on the page, their presence is felt. *Suffer Love* doesn't shy away from asking hard questions about the relationships between parents and teens, the mistakes both sides can make, and how both parties can move forward after being shaken to their core. But much as I loved the way *Suffer Love* is a story about parents and kids and the particular hurting and healing that occurs within families, it's about more than that. It's about first love, and grief, and friendship. It's about two people in pain finding each other and realizing that they can heal better together than they can apart. It's about loyalty, and secrets, and trying to make a good decision when all of the choices available to you are bad. Sam and Hadley both felt like real people to me as I read. The alternating points of view were never confusing, with each having their own distinct voice and purpose. The side characters never felt peripheral either, and each had their own moments to shine, particularly Sam's best friend Ajay (my favorite character) and Sam's younger sister, Livy. *Suffer Love* is one of those books where you just want to hang out with several of the characters after the book ends, and maybe give a few of them hugs,

not just because they need one, but also because you feel so connected to them. The prose is lush and gorgeous but never gets overly flowery, and is infused with plenty of humor, as well as a hefty dose of Shakespearean references (including quite a few nods to my favorite Shakespeare play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, from which *Suffer Love* gets its title). It's one of those books that strikes the perfect balance between lovely writing and compulsive readability, and I found that once the pages started turning, they didn't stop. *Suffer Love* is a beautiful, emotional story of grief and healing, of trust and friendship, of heartbreak and first love. It is about romance, and family, and the lengths a person will go to for the people they love. If you already love contemporary YA, or haven't tried it yet and are searching for just the right book to get your feet wet, Ashley Herring Blake's *Suffer Love* is a riveting and poignant debut, and I can't wait to read what she writes next.

Now I love a good YA contemporary more than the next person probably. Honestly I'd say it was my favorite genre because I've read so much of it and I love them all mostly and this one is no different. It's adorable, it's emotional, it has conflict and fun, I loved it. Hadley and Sam are a couple with drama, lots of it, most of it was family drama and I can really relate. Their parents had made so major mistakes and both of them are trying to go through life as normal when nothing is normal anymore. I loved a real look at family drama in a novel because it's a real life problem. I think everybody has these problems honestly because parents are people and no one is perfect. It was refreshing to see it done well I guess. Then they got together and Sam is lying to Hadley and doesn't know how to tell her the truth and for the longest figures he just shouldn't. I adored Sam. He is a white male but he wasn't horrible like most are written in YA and it made the book fun to read. I love Ajay, his best friend. He turned out to be the best character. Hadley was dealing with bullying too and that made me slightly upset because it could have been handled better than ignore it. Her friend was super judgmental and I felt that could also have been corrected instead of Hadley acting like the bad guy. Sometimes kissing a guy is just that and acting like she's a super slut is really gross, especially if it's coming from someone you are close too. The ending was mostly okay, but I understand why it ended the way it did. Overall I really enjoyed this book. It was refreshing to get into a light hearted story, even though it wasn't always and sometimes I found myself with tears in my eyes it left me feeling good at the end. Those are always my favorite books, the ones that leave you with a light hearted happy feeling and this one is definitely worth the read.

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