



First French Kiss: and other traumas

By Adam Bagdasarian

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Growing up male - funny, touching, and as unexpected as life itself!

This collection of finely crafted stories from the acclaimed author of *Forgotten Fire* zeros in on the moments of comic confusion and tender transformation that make up one boy's wild ride through childhood and adolescence. Whether it's struggling up a godforsaken mountain with other miserable campers, tossing aside all scruples to scramble to the top of the school social heap, searching for the true path to romantic love, or trying to meet the expectations of a father whose high standards seem impossible to live up to - these funny and affecting tales of triumph, humiliation, love, loss, competitive kissing, and laxatives will touch readers and have them laughing out loud as Will, a boy with an overactive imagination, grapples with "what it takes to be a man" and "what kind of man will I become?"

First Serial *Seventeen Magazine*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Fledgling author Adam Bagdasarian surprisingly follows up his grim, highly lauded first novel *Forgotten Fire* with a series of humorous, autobiographical sketches about his childhood and adolescence from ages 5 to 20. Bagdasarian is at his funniest when commenting on the trials and torments of puberty, especially when it comes to the opposite sex. In the title story, sixth-grader "Will" (the thinly disguised author) discovers that French kissing doesn't just happen: "I tried to find a way to kiss her and breathe at the same time, but no matter where I turned my head, her nose was always there." And in "Going Steady" Will realizes that dating a seventh-grade girl is going to require diplomacy when she "handed me a small white stuffed unicorn with silver glitter on its horn ... as though it were a baseball signed by Willie Mays, and I took it as though it were a poison apple." Beyond dating drama, Bagdasarian's teen self also explores the idea of old age and death. In "A Short Life," he melodramatically fantasizes a lump on his head is a tumor and he will probably die before seeing Europe, and in the more serious "My Tutor," he is moved to tears by an aged geometry teacher who can no longer remember, let alone teach, familiar proofs. By turns witty, ridiculous, and poignant (the stories about Bagdasarian's much beloved father are among the more touching pieces) *First French Kiss* is a short, sweet collection that teenagers of all ages will read with pleasure and recognition. (Ages 13 and older) --

Jennifer Hubert

From Publishers Weekly

This volume of brief, sparely wrought stories encapsulates significant moments during a boy's youth. Writing alternately in the voice of the boy, Will, and in third person, Bagdasarian (*Forgotten Fire*) poignantly re-creates universal "traumas," both minor and major. Some vignettes are humorous, such as Will's account of his disappointingly unromantic first make-out session, his memory of being Scotch-taped by his older brother and his explanation of how he became one of the "popular boys" at age 10. Other scenes, more somber in tone, evoke Will's recurring fears and expanding knowledge of mortality. The narrator's obsession with the aging process, eloquently expressed in "Time" ("His heart was sick with sorrow and nostalgia and grief and the knowledge that even this moment was doomed to pass"), foreshadows the death of Will's father. Although the entries are not arranged in chronological order, readers will perceive Will's steady forward movement. And if the shifts between first and third person don't enhance the storytelling, the narrative is nonetheless evocative in its entwinement of childlike candor with adult wisdom. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up-Memories of childhood and adolescence are revealed through stories told by Will as he grapples with karate lessons and school-yard fights, and dreams of being a writer. A hilarious account of a first kiss unfolds through the refreshing voice of a delightfully honest sixth grader. Stories flash back to the age of 5 and forward to the age of 20 with a fair amount of time devoted to the wondrous, yet tortured, years in between. A story about the ambivalence of going steady in seventh grade describes "Linda" as someone who "-was looking for someone to love much as a boa constrictor looks for a small pig or owl to swallow." The account of the day Will's brother leaves for college is a touching piece with a hint of sadness. The last stories involve the protagonist's famous songwriter father, who is portrayed as larger-than-life, loving yet critical; his death marks Will's transition from boy to man. Well-developed characters and amusing insights into some universal experiences make this title a rewarding choice.

Vicki Reutter, Cazenovia High School, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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