

Kiss Kill Vanish

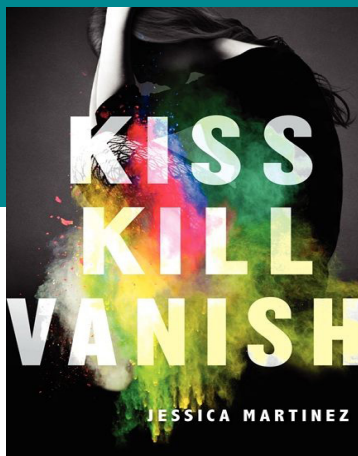
Giselle Davis

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Davis, Giselle () "Kiss Kill Vanish," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 40 : Iss. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol40/iss2/2>

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Book Review

Kiss Kill Vanish

Author

Jessica Martinez

Illustrator

Reviewer

Giselle Davis

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

432

Year

2014

Publisher

Katherine Tegen Books

ISBN

9780062274496

Valentina is happy living with her family in Florida and falling in love with her father's employee, Emilio. Then she sees her father order Emilio to kill a man—and Emilio does it. Horrified, Valentina escapes to Montreal with no money and no plan. Changing her name, she gets a job as a model for Lucien, an aspiring artist. Lucien (and his brother Marcel) are not easy to be around, but she is desperate. One night, Emilio finds her and explains that her father is the ruler of a large drug cartel in South America. The two plan to run away together once his family is safe. The next day, Lucien is found dead in a supposed suicide. Valentina is shocked, and Marcel turns to her for support. The two grow to be friends, and when Emilio puts off their departure, Marcel offers to take her to him in Florida. Valentina discovers that Emilio is not who he says he is, and through clever planning, she and Marcel ruin both his plans for her father and her father's cartel.

This is a well-written novel with an interesting plot and compelling characters. Martinez does an excellent job of portraying Valentina's internal struggle between wanting to trust Emilio while learning more about his motives. Valentina's growing relationship with Marcel is also well done, taking its time to go from a general hatred to friendship and eventually the beginnings of love. Marcel is a standout character, with complex struggles and mistakes that make him feel very human. Every event feels intentional and important to the story later on; Emilio's identity is very well hidden, and his reveal is extremely tense. Where the book seems to struggle the most is in the characterization of Valentina's family. Her sisters feel very one-dimensional compared to the other characters, and her father doesn't have enough time to truly feel intimidating. Overall, the book has a unique perspective on crime and morality that isn't found in many other young adult novels.

*Contains mild language, moderate violence, mild sexual content, and mild drug abuse.