

## Summer Lovin'

By Abigail Rodriguez

This is the story of how I lost myself to love. Every day I woke up to the same old routine of a constant heartache, the type of pain that you never thought it would be possible to feel. When it was over, all the memories flashed back. All the arguments and good times came back. Movie dates, where even the big screen could not stop us from glancing at each other. Coughing out a small giggle as we shyly looked away; realizing that moments like these were indeed our favorite. Then the bad days where he needed to know exactly where I was, no matter how honest I was. He always questioned me, leading to arguments that had me wanting to ask for forgiveness even though I was not at fault. He was tall and built well. He had caramel soft skin with the casual slicked-back hair that had the power to capture my attention. He was your typical smooth looking, handsome lover with the smile and jawline that you knew were up to no good. I wish I knew what trouble I was getting myself into when I met him.

It was the summer of '17. Senior year of high school had just ended. Summer had officially started, and I had plans with all my friends to make this the best summer ever. This was the time for all the fun we could squeeze in before the start of our college careers. I was going to attend UC Berkeley with an English major in hopes to later attend law school. My life was great, I had amazing friends, a stable family.

My friends and I decided to visit this cute dessert place in our hometown. We were living our lives and it felt great to enhance the last moments we would all have together before we went our separate ways. In a sudden flash, a direct message from Instagram would change it all. As I

chose to see the profile picture of the guy that direct messaged me, I recognized his name, Ricky Alvarez. I realized this was the guy I had a crush on freshman year! Never did I think he would ever have eyes for me, for goodness sake he had transferred schools. As I began to panic, my trembling fingers went to click “accept” as I responded to him. That’s when it began, when I signed my contract with the devil.

It was now three days into having each other on Instagram. As we started to talk, the level of excitement that rushed through the depths of my body and the blood that rushed through my cheeks, felt amazing. We just clicked. I know it’s cheesy, but there was this connection where we could easily talk to each other and that made it feel so right. At the peak of two weeks, he came around and decided to ask me on a date to see a view. A viewpoint I thought, a place where it’d be just us two and our thoughts. Getting excited to meet him, I realized I had not told my parents about us. Many emotions were now going through my head, debating on whether to tell my parents that we were going on a date or not. I just wouldn’t know how they would handle it. I imagined the screeching yells as they stared into my eyes telling me that a boy was only a distraction, that school was my purpose, that no daughter of theirs was going to bring a boy into their house. I never really had a boyfriend or boys that came around the house, so it was hard for me to grasp how they were really going to feel. Bringing up the problem to Ricky, he reassured me everything would be okay. He had a way of doing that, making me feel safe even when I knew I wouldn’t be.

Our first date was at an overlook under the shining stars that gazed upon us. The view didn’t compare to the look he gave me every time he stared into my soul, as if I were an angel, as if we were the only two people

in the world. The touch of his arm around me brought some warmth and a smile onto my face. This new feeling of safety and pleasure as he brought me closer, talking about the deep things in life as we spent hours together with no guess that I'd end up home at three in the morning. As we exchanged goodbyes and smiles, I was too embarrassed to lean in for a kiss. It was too early for that, but wow did he have me.

He squeezed me tight. "I had a good time, I hope to see you again... actually scratch that. I will be seeing you again." As I left with a smile, I could not help but be happy with not having a kiss. It ratified the moment, giving the chance that there would be a next time. I would see him again.

Our first kiss was nothing like a romance movie, but the sensation was something extraordinary in the feeling that it brought into my heart. As we reached a stop sign, we gave each other this look, like we mutually agreed about wanting this moment to happen. As our lips touched, I couldn't help thinking how right it felt. How in that moment he was the only thought in my head. The perfect kiss existed, and he was it; he was the one to ignite love into my heart.

As we came close to making it official, it was time to face my parents about us. My heart beat fast with anxiety as I thought of what to say. Every moment as I took a step into the living room in which they were watching TV, I started to panic more and more until I finally blurted out what I needed to say to them. This is how the conversation went:

"Hey, I don't know how you will both take this, but I've been talking to someone and it's getting serious. I know I've never had a boyfriend, but he makes me happy and I really want for us to happen. Please, give me your blessing. It would mean so much to us." Right after I said this, I could feel the loss of breath as my voice cracked trying to fit that in a 15- second span

because I was too nervous to hear them tell me off.

But surprisingly I got this reaction:

“Honey, we love you and want your happiness. Of course, we will give you our blessing! As long as he doesn’t hurt our princess.”

That was it. My permission to ruin my life. Well, I didn’t know it just yet, but that was my ticket.

The roller coaster after that was wild. It was your typical summer love. I met both sides of the family, being loved and welcomed by all. A new feeling that I was getting to experience, an explosion of colorful love was being spread all around me. I felt part of a household that expressed nothing but affection, kindness, and gratitude. I fit in, this was it, they were now my family. He was my family.

In that moment I realized I was in this, in this for the long shot. This boy made me happy and this sudden realization that I would be off to college did not take away the feelings I already had for him. I was indeed, IN LOVE.

I didn’t knock on wood because now I was jinxed.

Ricky was the only person I really spent time with during the summer. He knew I was going away to college soon, but I had no worries that we would be able to make this work. He already started planning trips up north and was excited to see me on my journey to college. He reassured me we had nothing to worry about, that the moments we had would continue to grow. That he was in this for the long run.

As we kept to our usual routine, day after day he’d pick me up, we’d go to his house and be with his family. Things were great, and no arguments were at play. Then, a sudden change came over Ricky. He was acting distant but still had me over. He wasn’t giving me affection but

wanted attention. Something was up, but I couldn't put my finger on what it was. As I noticed these sudden changes, I couldn't help but think he no longer loved me. Although this idea came into my head, I did not want to accept it. I chose to stay positive in hopes that it wasn't a big deal, but boy was I wrong.

As days went by and days to leave for college got closer, I chose to ignore the situation. I was killing and tearing myself apart, acting like everything was okay. When he called one afternoon, I finally built up the courage to confront him with answers I did not want to hear. I opened my mouth with a gasp of air that whispered a noise of pain that scratched through my throat:

"Ricky, why are you acting so distant?" I asked, hiding the anxiety I was feeling.

"What are you talking about? I've been going to see you, haven't I?"

"First off, it's been more a week since you last saw me, and you usually see me every two days. You have been acting weird, so just tell me what the fuck is wrong. We are supposed to be honest, so come on, talk to me!" I said anxiously.

"Do we really have to do this right now?! ... You know what, *fine!* I can't do this anymore, I'm trying to distance myself so when you're off to college we can just go our separate ways. I'm trying to save myself the time I'm going to waste in being with you and not having you here!" Ricky said angrily.

"And when did you plan to tell me this? I leave in two days! Two days, Ricky! Do you even care about me?" I asked as the tears poured onto my cheeks and I tried to contain myself.

"What do you want me to say? I don't know what to tell you," said

Ricky with no emotion.

“Wow, so that’s it? You didn’t even plan to see me before I left? You were just going to go ghost on me?! Ricky, you told me you were in this for the long run, why the sudden change? That’s not fair! Don’t you care about me?” I yelled at him.

“I don’t know what to tell you,” is all he kept repeating as I kept asking questions.

And just like that, with one lethal phone call, my heart broke piece by piece as I continued to hear the words that left me with questions and not answers. Day by day, I tried to contain myself, but all I managed to do was cry. The thought of him was something I could not control but used sleep as a way to heal. I was left with nothing, only the memories that now caused me pain. I cleaned up my tears, picked up my belongings, passed unfamiliar faces and placed my bags into room 101.

Freshman year of college was off to a great start.