

10 Reasons Not to Fall in Love

Walucia Gand

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Gand's impressive talent for descriptive writing drives this story of two unbearable teens who fall in love.

10 Reasons Not to Fall in Love, by Walucia Gand, is a romance about two unlikeable teenagers and the undeniable attraction they feel for one another. The basic story is one that has been told many times before. There is, however, an undeniable appeal to the idea of two fairly despicable youths learning to be better people through the love they find for one another.

Elizabeth Blackburn has no interest in the rich, snotty students who attend the private high school she has just transferred to. She is there on scholarship, and is determined to go to Harvard on scholarship as well. Vincent Richardson is handsome, brilliant, popular, and bored. None of the students, certainly none of the girls, interest him in the least. Elizabeth's rude behavior and lack of interest in him are intriguing, and he quickly becomes infatuated with her, declaring his affection in front of the whole school. Her refusal and the ten reasons she gives him as to why they can never date become an irresistible challenge for Vincent.

10 Reasons Not to Fall in Love is clear and well laid out, and Vincent's determination to overcome each of Elizabeth's ten reasons serves to drive the story forward at an enjoyable pace. Gand has a talent for writing descriptions that are elegant, simple, and a genuine pleasure to read, such as, "The winter sun had already set. The moonless sky above was pitch black, its darkness stretching uninterrupted across the world like a seamless expanse of possibility."

The characters' behavior is erratic and often violent. Vincent is all ego; it is difficult to like him or to see his infatuation with Elizabeth as anything more than a desire to prove that there is nothing and no one he can't have. Elizabeth is cruel, judgmental, and certain of her own superiority. Though it is very possible for such negative characters to be compelling, these two have little depth.

The supporting characters are equally superficial. Elizabeth makes friends with a girl named Annie who is dishonest and manipulative. When the two have an argument, Annie declares both her hate and her need for the friendship: "I hate you. ... You're so warm and independent and amazing," she murmured. "Every time I see you, I feel all ugly inside. Hey," she suddenly said, looking up to search Elizabeth's eyes, "can I really trust you to be my friend forever?" While such conflicted emotions are certainly plausible, the straightforward expression of them does not feel authentic.

10 Reasons Not to Fall in Love is a familiar story, but the author's impressive talent for descriptive writing and her ability to craft a clear story line allow the narrative to be enjoyable.

CATHERINE THURESON (September 23, 2014)

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