



Detached: I Hope All of Your Flowers Turn into Beautiful People

Tanner Lutheran

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Both self-aware and sweetly transgressive, Lutheran's novel brings new life to the road-trip romance.

Zachary Byrd is a man with a van. All he needs is a plan. Tanner Lutheran's *Detached: I Hope All of Your Flowers Turn Into Beautiful People* is the long, unspooling story of the road trip that comes to define Zach's life path. Packed with lush descriptions and quirky characters, *Detached* is a leisurely novel that conjures the aimless quest of young adulthood.

Zach's road trip is guided only by his intuition and the hand of fate, which leads him on a weird, wild goose chase through the American South. His internal journey is equally important. Zach's inner monologue is balanced with rich descriptions of Atlanta's bricks and chrome: "A polyphase circuit of memories and plans met at a single terminal, and I projected the combined energy into a visual list of scenarios on the back of my eyelids." Such dreamy images test the boundaries of reality: How much is real, and how much imagined? Though an unreliable narrator, Zach is a terrific storyteller. His journey seems random and unplanned, and that's kind of the point.

As Zach searches—for what, he's not sure—his visions and impressions grow increasingly strange. Once he meets Astrid, a lovely, quirky girl who sees the beauty in everything around her, he's hooked. She's more intoxicating than the prescription pills he takes: "Her irises, a kaleidoscope of blue, slowly reeled me in." The more Zach sees of Astrid, the more he loves her. But he's also got a weird blind spot when it comes to her unhappiness. She's never without a pack of cigarettes, a backpack of tallboys, and a sad story.

Their attraction is undeniable, though after a few kisses, Astrid's reluctance to move in a more physical direction seems strange. Her character hits its stride and stays there, and so does Zach's; their mutual inability to grow and develop frustrates them both. Although *Detached* reaches for a few familiar romantic tropes, its underlying message is dark, even creepy at times. It's an existential romance, without a sense of renewal or hope.

Zach and Astrid's relationship, flavored with Romeo and Juliet imagery, is richly described. Lutheran has a flair for description, and portions of the novel read more like a prose poem than a straight narrative. Nothing is exempt from description. At times, it seems like no noun escapes modification. The abundance of adjectives can choke the narrative at times, distracting from its emotional content.

Detached is an artistic, vivid debut novel. Both self-aware and sweetly transgressive, it brings new life to the road-trip romance.

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