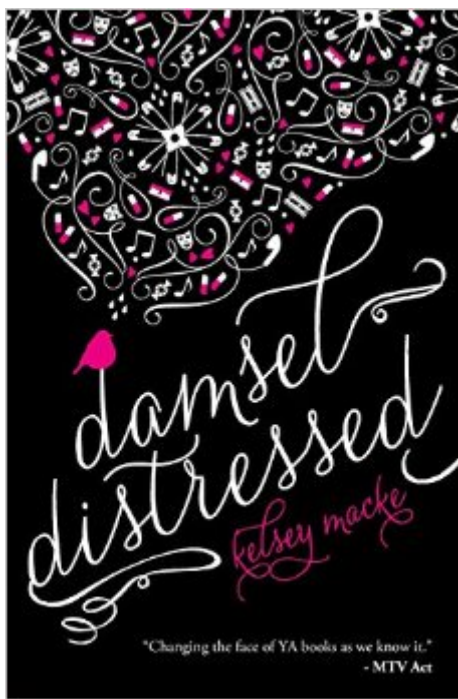


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# Damsel Distressed



## Synopsis

Hot girls get the fairy tales. No one cares about the stepsisters' story. Those girls don't get a sweet little ending; they get a lifetime of longing. Imogen Keegen has never had a happily ever after--in fact, she doesn't think they are possible. Ever since her mother's death seven years ago, Imogen has pulled herself in and out of therapy. When Imogen's new stepsister, Ella Cinder, moves in down the hall, Imogen begins losing grip on the pieces she's been trying to hold together. The only things that gave her solace--the theatre, cheese fries, and her best friend, Grant--aren't enough to save her from her pain this time. While Imogen is enjoying her moment in the spotlight after the high school musical, the journal pages containing her darkest thoughts get put on display. Now, Imogen must resign herself to be crushed under the ever-increasing weight of her pain, or finally accept the starring role in her own life story. And maybe even find herself a happily ever after.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (56 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #920,199 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #103 in Books > Teens >

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Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Emotions & Feelings

Age Range: 12 - 14 years

Grade Level: 7 - 9

## Customer Reviews

This was my first contemporary retelling and Kelsey Macke did an excellent job with it. Think Cinderella, but Cinderella is the evil, manipulative one who is trying to make her stepsister's life miserable. Imogen was not an easy character to like at times, mainly because of all her insecurities. But it is precisely that reason that made her all the more relatable. She is overweight and severely depressed. She also cuts herself at times. I am not sure how the author did it, but one scene where

Imogen cut herself was just so chilling and so real. I used to binge eat, much like Imogen. And when I say binge eat, I mean that I would go through the drive-thru of three different fast food restaurant, buy tons of food, and eat until I was sick. Imogen was the same way. The descriptions of her emotions while doing this and the fact that she ignored all the fast food wrappers and didn't even really taste the food . . . it brought back a lot of memories. Kelsey Macke got everything right. And maybe that's why it was hard to like her. She was so relatable that it made me uncomfortable. I do think she grew a lot throughout the book and part of that was due to her working in the theatre. Grant is Imogen's boyfriend (and secret love interest, of course) and he was always there for her. There were times when I disliked him as well, because of how he treated Imogen. It wasn't bad; again, it was just realistic. Imogen is lying in her bed and can't move because she's so depressed and he is upset because he doesn't think she is even trying to get better. I could feel Imogen's sadness because I have felt that way myself. I know she wanted to get better; she just didn't know how.

I was quite doubtful when I signed up to read and review *Damsel Distressed*, but if there's anything you should get from this review is that you should read this book. You don't even have to read what else I have to say. Just read the book. I mostly took this on as a whim. *Damsel Distressed* was being published by Spencer Hill Contemporary, which pretty much published YA books from some of my favorite authors. And it also helped that the book references fairytales, specifically Cinderella. I hesitantly took a blind leap of faith, and Kelsey Macke did not fail me. There are 37 chapters, and in between some of them are 12 illustrations by Jessica Nickerson and 12 songs by Wedding Day Rain (Kelsey Macke's band with her husband - "Man that girl can sing). I previewed the illustrations and songs on the website before reading the book, and I will admit that I found them interesting, but not something I would consider revisiting. BUT. BUT when I started reading the novel and seeing the illustrations and listening to the songs within the context they were made for, it felt like such a life-changing thing. It was a beautiful marriage of different art forms, and I would surely love to go through the whole thing again. If they turned this book into a movie, they should use the exact same soundtrack! Putting together a novel, artwork, and a soundtrack is not so revolutionary. I've seen it done. But *Damsel Distressed* simply blew my mind. It's like having some eggs, flour, sugar, milk, and chocolate chips - basically different ingredients - and Kelsey Macke whipped them all up into one perfectly delicious chocolate chip cookie. Can you imagine that perfect cookie? Fresh from the oven and moist and chocolatey. (Is anyone else hungry? I bet Imogen would be proud of my food reference.

Damsel Distressed was all I ever expected to be and much much more. There was snark and banter and swoons and tears, but most of all, there was heart. In fact there was so much of it that my own heart was filled to the brim. A reversed fairytale retelling of Cinderella, Damsel Distressed explored the story of the 'ugly step sister' who in this case was our female lead, Imogen Keegan. Imogen thinks that a happily ever after for a broken, overweight girl like her is impossible. She's meant to be behind the sound booth not center stage of a theatre performance. Her prince charming best friend, Grant, won't ever fall for her the way she has with him. She'll never live up to her princess step sister, Ella Cinder, who is perfect and gorgeous (not to mention evil). Life is a constant struggle for her as she deals with these harsh realities, as well as the death of her mother and the absence of her father. I felt for Imogen so much. The thoughts and feelings her character conveyed stunned me and moved me- they were so honest and heartbreaking. Imogen's insecurities about being heavy-set which were something I especially shared with her. At almost 160 lbs, some people might say I'm only slightly overweight compared to Imogen's 200 lbs, but when you're the oddball among your petite friends and when your own family likes to remind you about how your voracious appetite and addiction to sweets is getting you bigger, confidence doesn't come easy. You start to wonder if being chubby is the reason why you're so unpopular or why you've never had a boyfriend. Like Imogen, I rarely had the luxury of feeling pretty.

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