



Awaken

By Katie Kacvinsky

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Maddie lives in a world where everything is done on the computer. Whether it's to go to school or on a date, people don't venture out of their home. There's really no need. For the most part, Maddie's okay with the solitary, digital life—until she meets Justin. Justin likes being with people. He enjoys the physical closeness of face-to-face interactions. People aren't meant to be alone, he tells her.

Suddenly, Maddie feels something awakening inside her—a feeling that maybe there is a different, better way to live. But with society and her parents telling her otherwise, Maddie is going to have to learn to stand up for herself if she wants to change the path her life is taking.

In this not-so-brave new world, two young people struggle to carve out their own space.

This ebook includes a sample chapter of MIDDLE GROUND.

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Awaken By Katie Kacvinsky Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #526415 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-05-23
- Released on: 2011-05-02
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"Fans of Oliver's Delirium will appreciate this story of a girl subverting social strictures through forbidden relationships, but the wild chase scenes and richly developed characters make it a sure sell across the board."--BCCB "This book could not have been more perfect."—Kaci Carpenter, teen YALSA reviewer

About the Author

Katie Kacvinsky worked as a model and as a high school English teacher before deciding to write full time. She currently lives in Corvallis, Oregon. The trees in Oregon were the inspiration for her story. *Awaken* is her debut novel.

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May 7, 2060

My mom gave me an old leather-bound journal for my seventeenth birthday. At first the blank pages surprised me, as if the story inside was lost or had slipped out. She explained sometimes the story is supposed to be missing because it's still waiting to be written. Leave it to my mom to give me something from the past to use in the future.

They don't make paper books anymore—it's illegal to chop down real trees. They still grow in some parts of the world, but I've never seen one. Most cities have switched to synthetic trees, and people prefer them to the living ones. Synthetic trees come shipped to your house in any size you want, so you don't have to wait fifteen years for them to grow. Now you shop online and choose your desired size and height, and in days you have a full-grown tree in your yard, cemented into the ground and supported with steel beams anchored into the base. Instant. Simple. No fuss.

Synthetic trees never die. They don't wither in the fall. You don't have a mess of leaves and needles to sweep up. They're fireproof. They don't cause allergies. And they're always perfectly green (constantlygreen.com has the best synthetic tree selection, according to my mom). The leaves can fade a little from the sun, but you just spray-paint them green again. During Halloween, people spray-paint the leaves on their trees yellow, orange, and red. It's the colors leaves used to turn before they fell to the ground. My mom said she can remember seeing the fall colors when she was young. She said it was the most beautiful time of the year. It's hard to imagine anything becoming beautiful as it dies. Then again, it's hard to imagine much that Mom insists used to "be."

When trees were dying off in fires and overharvested, books were the first to go. These days books are downloaded digitally and you

can order any book you want to be uploaded into your Bookbag in seconds, which I convert onto my Zipfeed. It reads the words out loud to me on my computer. Simple. Convenient. I know how to read, of course. We learn it in Digital School 2. I still read my chat messages on my phone. But it was proven that audio learning is a faster way to retain information, according to some Ph.D. researchers who studied rats in a cage. By observing rats they figured out the best way for humans to learn. Some politician thought this theory sounded glamorous, so they changed a law that changed the world. That's why I listen to almost all of my books.

I didn't escape the chore of using my eyes to read. Mom still enforces it. She saved all her old novels and stores them in these wooden cabinets with glass doors called bookshelves. Every year she hands down a few of her favorites to me. I have a collection slowly building in my bedroom. I have to admit, I like the look of them. I also like to escape inside their world, tucked behind their colorful spines. It forces me to fully invest my mind into what I'm doing, not just my ears or my eyes. I think barricading them behind glass is a little obsessive, but Mom says the paper in books will yellow if they're exposed to air. Just like the leaves on the trees that couldn't survive in this world. Hey, if you can't acclimate, you disintegrate. I learned that in Digital School 3.

So, you can imagine my surprise when my mom gave me a blank book. I rarely see a book with print in it, and now a blank one—what a waste. No wonder we killed all the trees. And I'm supposed to write in this thing. Longhand. It's this form of writing using ink on paper. It's so slow! It makes me laugh watching people do it in old movies. It hasn't been used in twenty years. We learn it in school, but it's simulated on our flatscreens. Only specialty online stores sell ink pens, but leave it to my mom to invest in this historic item. "Madeline," she told me, "it's good for you to write down your thoughts. It's therapeutic because it forces you to slow down and think about life."

I feel guilty writing on this paper, staining something with words when maybe it's their emptiness, the fact that they're unscathed, that's more interesting than anything I have to say. My life is far from remarkable. Sadly, it's the other extreme. It is predictable. Controlled. Mandated. Paved out for me in a trail I'm forced to follow.

Why should I take the time to write down my thoughts when no one else can even read them? I'm used to millions of people having access to everything about me. I'm used to a fountain of feedback and comments trailing every entry I type, every thought I expose. That makes me feel justified. It shows that people genuinely care about me. It reminds me that I'm real and I exist. Why try to hide it all in a book? Besides, there are no secrets. Sooner or later, the truth always leaks out. That's one thing I've learned in this life.

I pulled a sweatshirt over my head, and just as I opened my bedroom door, I was distracted by a red light flashing on my computer.

I was running late, but the glow of the light caught my attention and held me in place like a net. I programmed my screen to flash different colors depending on who was calling. I knew red could only mean one person. I sat down and tapped the light with my finger and a single white sentence dissolved on the screen.

Are you going to be there tonight?

I read Justin's question and bit my lips together. My mind told me to say no. That answer would please my father. He trained me to squeeze my thoughts through a filter so my decisions came out acceptable and obedient. But lately it was making me feel weak, like my mind wasn't really mine anymore, just a program to manipulate.

That's why this time, I was tempted to say yes.

I met Justin two months ago on TutorPage—it's a live chatroom

for students to get help on homework assignments. We were both stuck on writing a thesis sentence for our literary analysis paper, a requirement in Digital School 4. Since the tutor was being swarmed with questions and Justin and I had the same problem, we figured it out together. I remember him writing the oddest comment that day. He wrote, "Two brains are better than one." It was strange because you can go through all of DS-4 without even looking at another person, let alone working with someone. One of the perks to a digital life is it forces you to be independent.

Justin and I coordinated to study two days a week together and then he started sending me invites to face-to-face tutor sessions held in downtown Corvallis. When he assured me the groups were small, but could be helpful, I still dreaded the idea of meeting him in public. I'm used to the security of living behind my online profiles and the clip art advertisements I create to define me. I can be whoever I want to be in that world. I can be funny, deep, pensive, eccentric. I can be the best version of myself. Better yet, an exaggeration of the best version of myself. I can make all the right decisions.

I can delete my flaws by pressing a button.

In the real world anything can happen. It's like stepping onto an icy surface—you have to adjust your footing or you'll slip and fall. Your movements become rigid and unsure because behind all the fancy gadgets and all that digital armor, you realize you're just flesh and bones.

I stared back at the screen where his words floated patiently and a strange feeling, like a shot of adrenaline, pushed through my blood. I knew I had to meet him tonight. Intuition works closely alongside fate, like they're business partners working together to alter the course of your life.

I spoke my answer out loud and my voice was automatically converted into a digital message.

I decided maybe was the best response, just in case I lost my

nerve. I hit send and a second later he responded.

Life is too short to say maybe.

I narrowed my eyes at the screen. Why was he pushing this? Why couldn't he let me be noncommittal and leave me alone about it?

Why are you going out of your way to meet me? I asked.

Why are you going out of your way to avoid it?

I've been grounded for a while. I hesitated before I hit send. I'd never opened up to Justin about my personal life. We always kept our relationship safe—bobbing just on the surface.

A while? As in a few weeks? he asked.

I laughed, but it came out sounding flat and humorless. Try two and a half years, I thought. I decided he didn't need to know this detail. It's easy to delete the truth when you live behind your own permanent censor.

Something like that, I said.

What did you do?

I have a rebellious streak.

That's a little vague, he said.

I frowned at the screen. I'm not going to dish out my life story to an online stranger.

Then I think it's about time we meet, he said.

I bit my nails when this sentence appeared. I focused on the words. They sounded so simple. But just when I believed something was simple, there was always more lurking underneath.

I'll be there, I said, and hit send before I could change my mind.

I hopped out of the chair, grabbed my soccer cleats, and ran downstairs to the kitchen. Dad glanced at me from the table where he was reading the news on our wall screen. My mom sat next to him, r...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Moore:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book called Awaken? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time with your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have other opinion?

Kevin Hardy:

This Awaken book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. This particular Awaken without we

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Kimberly Moore:

That reserve can make you to feel relax. This kind of book Awaken was bright colored and of course has pictures around. As we know that book Awaken has many kinds or genre. Start from kids until teenagers. For example Naruto or Detective Conan you can read and feel that you are the character on there. Therefore not at all of book usually are make you bored, any it offers up you feel happy, fun and loosen up. Try to choose the best book for yourself and try to like reading that will.

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