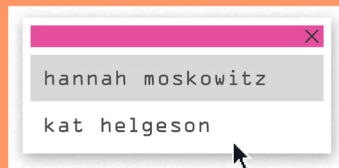


gena

finn



Co-authors Hannah Moskowitz and Kat Helgeson discuss how they met and their inspiration for *Gena/Finn*.

kat: Hannah and I first met in the fall of 2011.

hannah: I was just starting my junior year of college and had recently become obsessed with a certain TV show. And nobody I knew in real life watched it.

Sent at 1:35 AM on Wednesday

kat: My friends had been telling me for months, “you need to watch this show, Kat!”

Sent at 1:36 AM on Wednesday

hannah: I had JUST finished organizing my Queer as Folk fanfic collection too. And then all of a sudden I had this new fandom and it was all I could think about. Zoning off in class writing my favorite lines from the show over and over at the top of my notes. I—like Gena in the book—actually started watching the show BECAUSE of fanfic about it. I stumbled on a fic from it completely by accident, then started reading a few more, and finally decided, “Okay, I need to actually watch this so I’ll have some idea of context here.” Turns out some of the things I’d assumed about the show were very not correct. But by then it was too late.

Sent at 1:38 AM on Wednesday

kat: That’s so funny, because I had seen about three seasons’ worth (in one weekend) before I sought out the fandom. And I actually remember telling myself at one point, “do not go looking for fanfic. You know what’s going to happen. You aren’t going to be able to stop once you start!”

hannah: That reminds me of how, when I decided I was going to start writing some, I told myself “Okay, no first names. If it goes so far as people wanting to know your name, you have to pull out.” Because I was really scared of being discovered because I already had books out. So basically neither of us has any self control.

Sent at 1:42 AM on Wednesday

kat: There was this community that was hosting a thing where you could leave prompts for fic you wanted to see, and if you were lucky, another writer would be inspired by your idea and write it for you.

Sent at 1:44 AM on Wednesday

hannah: And I’d been writing a lot and then Kat appeared out of nowhere and wrote one of my prompts. And just NAILED it. Not that I knew she was Kat then. No first names!

kat: So then Hannah courteously responded with a fic for one of my prompts, and I reacted more or less the way Finn reacts to Gena’s fic in the book—except I didn’t draw her anything, because in actuality I am a terrible artist.

Sent at 1:48 AM on Wednesday

hannah: And we went back and forth with that for a while. We really responded well to each other’s stuff. Similar writing styles, similar interests, same favorite characters. So we started doing more stuff just the two of us. And somewhere around there I told her who I was. And she totally thought I was making it up.

kat: I didn’t think you were making it up!

hannah: She so did. We had to Skype to prove it. And now we Skype all the time. At that point we were already working together so much that it didn’t change anything about our writing relationship, but I think it did make her believe me more when I would tell her how good her stuff was and how she could write and sell a book if she wanted to.

Sent at 1:51 AM on Wednesday

kat: That's absolutely true. Everyone in fandom is pretty supportive about each other's work, but yeah, that turned Hannah into someone with actual knowledge and experience saying I had some chops. That was pretty cool.

hannah: And then I ended up in Chicago for a publishing thing so we met up, and in the space of that one weekend we were together, our relationship really changed. She stopped being her username and started being Kat.

kat: That was insane! Weren't we originally planning to just meet for dinner the first night or some thing? And on the basis of that we ended up spending the entire weekend together.

Sent at 1:56 AM on Wednesday

hannah: And then it was time for me to write another book and it was really hard for me to think about anything but us at that point in time. So I told her maybe I was just going to write our story, and she was the one who figured out what should have been totally obvious to me—that that was the book we were supposed to write together. So we did! It's not totally autobiographical, obviously—like Kat said, she can't draw worth crap—but it really is our story at its core.

Sent at 1:58 AM on Wednesday

kat: Writing this book was one of the most surreal experiences of my life. I tell people about it and they don't believe me. We finished the first draft in about two weeks, and we did most of it at ridiculous hours of the day.

Sent at 1:59 AM on Wednesday

hannah: And for a collaboration it was weirdly independent, because we just wrote our chapters and sent them to each other when we had stuff that wasn't between our two characters. And when it was conversations with Gena and Finn, those were done live, through emails and gchats, so it's not as if I knew ahead of time what she was going to say. We were just responding to each other as independent writers, just like we had way back when. Because we already knew we could do that.

Sent at 2:00 AM on Wednesday

kat: It got intense, though. There's a part in the book where Gena and Finn aren't getting along, and I wrote this really harsh email to Gena. I was crying when I sent that. I was like, I'm so sorry about this.

hannah: I think the way that we wrote it combined with the way that we met is going to make it authentic to the pretty astronomical number of teenagers who have formed important and real relationships online, which is something that most YA still ignores.

kat: It's already been amazing to me how many people have reached out on social media to say something like this happened to them too.

hannah: Totally.

kat: Which brings us up to date, I think. Do you want to watch a show or something?

hannah: Duh. We stopped last night at Season 22 Episode 12.

kat: Cool.



Gena/Finn

by Hannah Moskowitz and Kat Helgeson

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