



Not Exactly a Love Story

Audrey Couloubis

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It's 1977.

Fifteen-year old Vinnie isn't having a good year. He's recovering from the worst case of galloping acne his dermatologist's ever seen. His girl moved to California without even saying good-bye. And the ink on his parents divorce papers is barely dry, when his mom announces that they're moving from Queens to Long Island.

The silver lining in all this is that they move next door to Patsy—everyone's dream girl. Not that she'd ever notice him. But when Vinnie calls Patsy one night, it leads to a chain of anonymous midnight conversations. Under the cover of darkness, Vinnie becomes Vincenzo, Patsy's mystery caller, and the two share a side of themselves they would never reveal in daylight and develop a surprisingly real connection (despite the lies it's built on). As Vinnie gets to know Patsy in real life though, it becomes clear both identities can't survive and he'll have to find a way to hangup the phone and step into the daylight. Fraught with complications and crackling with witty dialogue, and all the angst and electricity that comes with always being just a phone wire away from the one you want, acclaimed author Audrey Couloumbis's YA debut is a smooth-talking *Cyrano* meets *Saturday Night Fever* and tells a quirky, flirty, and smart story that will appeal to fans of Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, Frank Portman's *King Dork*, Natalie Standiford's *How to Say Goodbye in Robot*, and John Green's *An Abundance of Katherines*. It's not exactly a love story . . . but it's pretty close.

Not Exactly a Love Story Details

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From Reader Review Not Exactly a Love Story for online ebook

Liam Johnstone says

I liked it. Very much in the vein of "You've Got Mail." Not one that I'd recommend unless you like that kind of thing, but it fills that hole very well.

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

Actual Rating: 3.5 stars

Despite not ever having heard anything about Couloumbis or Not Exactly a Love Story, I was intrigued. I mean, how many YA books do you hear about set in the 1970s? That's just not a popular era for historical fiction yet. At first, I wasn't too sure whether this was going to be something I would enjoy. Vinnie's narrative voice grated a bit at first and the plot does some...interesting...things, but in the end, Couloumbis won me over to her odd, unique, surprisingly sweet story.

When we meet Vinnie, his girl, the girl he's been crushing on, has moved away. His parents then announce their divorce. Vinnie doesn't take this particularly well. His previously high grades slip. He even fails gym, a feat he didn't think was actually possible. Of course, this means his gym teacher, Mr. B, has to meet with his mother about the situation. Then Mr. B and his mom start dating, marry, and move.

Vinnie immediately develops a crush on the gorgeous girl next door, whose room he can see through his window. Yes, he does peek. That's Vinnie. He imagines that she will go for him, even if he isn't a jock type. For the first day of his new school, he dresses to showcase his sweet style by wearing his rad leather pants. Mind you that this was in summer. Oh, Vinnie and his leather pants. This was one of those factors that sold the time period, and reminded me about how crazy the characters all must have looked (like photos of my parents in college). Sadly, though, Patsy, the neighbor, does not take any notice of him, focusing her attentions on the new football star, who Vinnie nicknames Biff.

Here's where things take a turn for the different: Biff obtains Patsy's number, but accidentally drops it in the locker room. Vinnie finds the number and takes it. He decides to call her at midnight, but can't bring himself to say anything. He calls back again, and fails again, now labeled a creepy breather. On the third call, she answers with acid in her voice, and he says something rude, because he feels like she's being to mean to a shy guy. The next night he calls at midnight again to apologize for what he said the previous night. Thus, a strange friendship is born.

Every night at midnight, Vinnie calls Patsy, and every night she answers, even though he is, for all intents and purposes an obscene caller. While I certainly wouldn't recommend this to anyone, it does bring something to Patsy's life and to Vinnie's that was missing before. With the anonymity they feel in the phone calls, they feel free to open up parts of themselves they generally hide from the world. The phone calls involve some humorous back-and-forth, like Patsy attempting to guess his name, which he tells her is Italian.

To add to the hilarity, Patsy begins to express some small amount in Vinnie Gold, his real life self, as well as Vincenzo, his obscene caller self. Vincenzo and Vinnie find themselves jealous of one another, and, for a while there, Vinnie looks like he's about to suffer a mental break. Though set in 1977, Not Exactly a Love

Story has a lot of application in a modern teen's life, though rather than phone calls, such an experience would happen on the internet. It's a story about the schism between how you present yourself and how you are, and finding a way to see yourself clearly.

Just as important, Couloumbis tackles the subject of divorce. Vinnie, through the course of the novel, works through his emotions about the separation of his parents. He comes to realize, in a very realistic plot arc, that just because he loves both his parents that they don't necessarily make each other happy anymore. I love that he has not just two present parents, but three, as Mr. B totally steps up. Of course, all of the parents make mistakes, but they're just so obviously a loving family.

Audrey Couloumbis' *Not Exactly a Love Story* is a quirky book, full of heart and (not so) obscene phone calls. This a great read for those who enjoy a focus on family dynamics and a bit of weirdness. Or, perhaps, for adults nostalgic for the days when kids wore leather pants to school.

Umbar says

Summary: [This will be spoiler free, but the actual review below will not]. The story is set in 1977, following a 15 year old boy called Vinnie Gold. He has a horrible case of acne, was recently left by his girlfriend and found out his parents are divorcing – so it's safe to say his life is pretty shitty at best. Very soon, his mother falls in love with Vinnie's gym teacher – Mr. B., and the trio move to Long Island. While he's incredibly upset, Vinnie finds a distraction from his problems – his super hot, super popular neighbour – Patsy. As expected, Patsy doesn't speak to the uncool Vinnie, but when by chance he comes across her number, things change. It starts with a phone call, and an accidental inappropriate comment. "Wanna fuck?" 'Not Exactly a Love Story' follows the development of Patsy's relationship with her mystery obscene caller, and Vinnie's struggle to separate his two (polar opposite) identities.

Review: [Reminder: Spoilers]. (view spoiler)

My Final Rating: 3&1/2. This story would have gotten an A if it weren't for the disregard to Vinnie's average life (that didn't always revolve around Patsy) – but don't let that stop you from reading this book. It's written so well that you can't help but love it – and personally, it's now sitting in my Amazon cart, waiting for me to ship over another fairly large amount of books at Christmas.

Rose says

Initial reaction: Very interesting story about an awkward teen growing up in the 70s who falls in love with a girl he happens to get her number and goes through a number of unfortunate mishaps along the way. I think the mystery man/stalker thing was weird, but Vinny and Patsy are characters I liked for the most part, and I thought the story had some interesting humor in spurts. I wouldn't necessarily take this story for all the comparisons it has in its blurb, but it is a decent read of its own character.

Full review:

I really didn't know what I was going into when I picked up Audrey Couloubis's "Not Exactly a Love Story". Sure, I like periodic reflections, and the fact that this story takes place in the 70s was a factor I don't usually come across in YA literature. I did find it sadly lacking in terms of setting the period (because there aren't really any cue to give you a sense of familiarity with the time), but I honestly liked the voices of the characters in this.

Vinny is a 15-year-old boy who can't seem to catch a break if his life depended on it, at least in the beginning of the story. His parents are divorcing, he breaks out with a really bad case of acne, his mother seems to jump into another relationship at the drop of a hat (let alone with his teacher), and they all move to a different place before Vinny can really make sense of things. Yet a bright spot in Vinny's life is when he becomes invested in a girl named Patsy. He happens to get her number, tries to work up his mettle to ask her out, gets marked as a "stalker" because of being incredibly nervous the first several times he tries to call her, and eventually the two end up having phone conversations at midnight each night. Patsy has no idea who Vinny is (because he doesn't tell her his name, only that his name is Italian, and that prompts Patsy to try to play guessing games with his name each time they start a conversation).

I'll admit I was weirded out about the stalker premise of this particular tale - mainly because I've seen this troupe begin and end very badly in YA works. Vinny manages to be a likable guy though, very socially awkward and just having a lot of bad deals handed to him in parts of the story. I did like him and I felt for him in his awkward moments. His interactions with Patsy are funny and sweet in spurts. I don't know how I felt about some parts of the story in the way that they were handled, though. Some parts I think really did get under my skin such as Patsy's relationship with Biff (who doesn't treat her all that well, and Vinny points this out), and the attributional "stalker" elements that were through the work (because considering the implications and interactions in that, I just didn't find them funny). In the collective measure of things though, I found it easy to go along with Vinny and Patsy's experiences, and the way they eventually come together was a nice touch.

It's not so much a deeply invested love story as it is a light tale of two different kids who find a point to bond in some interesting ways. I liked reading it, particularly since I ended up reading this twice - the ARC galley of it as well as the audiobook version - which featured a nice reading by Maxwell Glick.

Overall score: 3/5

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from the publisher Random House BFYR.

Super Ninja says

Yes, this is completely different from everything else I've ever read. Yes, this is for teens. Yes, this was completely cheesy. But despite that, I absolutely loved this book. I was in the mood for a light, fluffy, cheesy book and that was exactly what I got.

🐸?

Short summary: a young teen boy, Vinny, anonymously calls Patsy, his dream girl living next door. This leads to him to calling daily and they have late night conversations and they develop a real connection, all the while Patsy still has no idea who really is on the other end of that call. Patsy knows that they go to the same school and that he's Italian so she starts to try and guess his thing each night with one guess.



I really enjoyed watching their friendship blossom and listening to all of their quirky midnight conversations. This book also had a nice message about family. I loved the short chapters, which helped the reading pace move along nicely.



My overall rating: ?????

Lori says

This is difficult for me to rate. I'm going with 2.5 stars for now. This book wasn't bad but it was very hard for me to get through. It was slow with characters that were just okay. In fact, I think the biggest problem with this book was that everything was just ok. I had no real strong pull towards the characters, the story, the romance, the family, or the outcome. It took me almost a month to read. But it wasn't bad. And that's really all I've got right now.

I will say that it posed an interesting question. Vinnie, the 15 year old main character, liked a girl but didn't know how to talk to her. So he called her on the phone late at night. It turned into a prank call. When he wanted to apologize, he didn't know how. So when he called again, it was the same awkward conversation. He kept wanting to apologize, but couldn't. So he created a character he could play when he talked to her. And the calls continued. They got more personal. He became Vinnie by day, boy who attends the same school as the girl he likes but doesn't talk to, and Vincenzo by night, the mystery guy on the phone who the girl talks to about personal stuff and who she wants to meet in real life. The question, how to combine the two images she has of these guys into one guy that she'll still like? That part was a little bit interesting to think about. But otherwise, I wasn't invested. I wish I had liked Vinnie more. He was just dull and seemed to be playing the part of a high school boy rather than actually feeling like one.

I wish I had more to say, but it's probably better that I don't. I just wasn't a fan. I had hoped for more and it just didn't deliver. I give Not Exactly a Love Story 2.5 stars.

Jazzy says

Okay... that was cute in a really weird way. Not memorable but kinda fun while it lasted! our mc is so very awkward and relatable tho.

Cara says

Vinnie is not having a good year, and he keeps messing up. He doesn't mean to make things harder for himself, but it keeps happening. First his parents split up, and then his mom starts dating someone new. This results in Vinnie moving to a new school with a new set of problems.

Patsy is one of the popular girls at school, and she is also Vinnie's neighbor. She doesn't seem to notice him at first. Vinnie finds her unlisted number and calls her late one night. It doesn't go very well. He comes across as an obscene caller. He eventually manages to smooth things over and the phone calls become a nightly occurrence. Only Vinnie has never told Patsy who he is. Then, in real life, Vinnie starts hanging out with Patsy. Patsy seems torn between real Vinnie and phone Vinnie. Vinnie himself needs to decide how to tell Patsy his secret without losing what he has.

This book is set in the 1970s. That is important because there are no cell phones, caller ID, or any other way to tell who is calling.

Vinnie is completely safe making his nightly phone calls to Patsy.

Overall this was a solid read. The story moves at a good pace, and the characters are believable. I liked that Vinnie was a nice guy that just kept screwing up. We've all had those periods in our lives where we just can't pull it together. It was also refreshing to read a book about a relationship from the guy's perspective.

Tressa says

I stopped listening to **Not Exactly a Love Story** when Vinnie called Patsy. I did not like how he blamed her for his own actions. I lost all respect for Vinnie and did not want to continue listening to a story about him.

Claire - The Coffeeholic Bookworm says

Late night anonymous phone calls, nerdy guy has a bad case of acne, girl next door rejects him, story set in late 1970s.. Sounds like a recipe for a good romantic read... But this is Not Exactly A Love Story and it's really a great one.

Vinnie fell for her new neighbor, Patsy when he and his family moved, and she had always intrigued him ever since. When his parents divorced and his PE teacher became his mom's new husband, Vinnie thought he would never regain his composure and would never gain friends, either. But when he set his eyes on Patsy, he knew he had to know everything about her and get close to her. Problem was, he was too self-conscious of his acne-infested face and cowardice. There's only one way to get to know her, and that's by pretending to be someone else. He finally got the guts to call her late at night when someone dropped her phone number. And soon, Vincenzo Gold materialized and conquered Patsy's heart. But who would she chose in the end - her nerdy and shy classmate Vinnie, or super confident but obscene late night caller Vincenzo?

If you are a fan of Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor and Park* and John Green's *Abundance of Katherines*, then this book might just be right up your alley. It's such a pleasure reading this book, it brought back memories of my high school, when all I ever had to communicate was a rotary phone and a bunch of love letters written anonymously and signed, from your secret admirer. Gosh, this book reminded me what it was like to fall so hard at a young age, with all the warm fuzzy feelings fluttering in my belly.

Don't be fooled by the title of this super cute coming of age story, because I am telling you, this got all the feels that only romantic novels could bring you. It is *Almost a Love Story* and I can't wait for you all to read it.

A highly recommended read!

Reving says

Not Exactly a Love Story was a quick and fun read, filled with down-to-earth and believable characters,

perfect for a guy or girl, looking for a good, solid story. Vinnie is dealing with a lot: his parents' divorce, his mom's remarriage to his gym teacher, a move from Queens to Long Island and The Girl Next Door. Vinnie's got a crush of sorts, and while at first, he hardly ever speaks to Patsy face-to-face, he is calling her and talking to her every night at midnight. He won't tell her who he is, but they talk anyway, hiding behind his anonymity, he can say anything he wants, without fear of rejection, and so can Patsy.

I loved the way the characters were honest about their self-doubt. No character was a caricature, nor were the parents unreal monsters, like they are in so many YA books. They are just real people. I think this simple, touching coming-of-age book will be easy to recommend to many.

Book Concierge says

When 15-year-old Vinnie's parents divorce he tries to be supportive of each of them. But he's having a bad year: he has a raging case of acne, the girl he's secretly loved for two years moved to California without so much as a goodbye, his dog died, he got mugged and he's failing gym. Could things get worse? Of course they could. His mother has a conference with the gym teacher, Mr B ... and then another meeting ... and then dinner. Now, suddenly they've married and they're moving to Long Island for Mr B's new job. On the plus side, they now live next door to Patsy – every boy's ideal “girl next door” – though, of course, she's dating the new football star and way too cool to talk to Vinnie. Or is she? A late-night phone call becomes a daily ritual, and the two begin to really confide in one another, though Vinnie remains anonymous.

This is a nice YA coming-of-age novel. Vinnie and Patsy are believable teenagers, though I did have to remind myself that it's set in 1977 (i.e. before caller ID). Their developing relationship is sweet and shows that getting to know someone well is far more important than looks or physical attraction. The way in which Couloumbis has this anonymous friendship continue (and finally resolves it) is a little unrealistic. Also, while I get that the focus is on Vinnie and Patsy, the adults are really stereotypical and thinly drawn.

Ann says

Vinnie is his own Cyrano de Bergerac. Feeling awkward with an acute case of acne and recently displaced from Queens to Long Island when his mother divorces his dad and marries his gym teacher (!), Vinnie falls for Patsy, the girl next door--everybody's dream girl. He acts cool and somewhat aloof around her in school, but after an initial obscene phone call (!) to her bedroom one night, he continues to call her every night at midnight and they talk anonymously and truthfully. Because Patsy has heart, she falls for the boy who listens to her deepest thoughts (and family problems). She calls him Vincenzo; he disguises his voice, but she thinks he might be the boy next door, even though he acts shallow and jerky in person. That's the main thrust of the story, and I think teens will like it. But Vinnie's family relations rang the most true to me. Couloumbis has a knack for creating exceptional families, ever since her first book, the Newbery Honor winner *Getting Near to Baby*. Vinnie developing a rapport with his jock step-dad was more touching to me than the school romance.

PS Couloumbis' most touching note in the book comes on the back flap of the dust-jacket where she tells how she met her deceased but in no way forgotten husband Akila when she hailed the taxi he was driving down Broadway. Vinnie's dad is a taxi driver and aspiring actor; and he's altogether likable.

Dani Paige says

Don't worry if you can't get a girl to talk to you, because you just need to anonymously call her at midnight every night for months and wear her down!

Lindsey E says

I did not like this at all.
