



The Story of Us

Barbara Elsborg

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Two boys. One love. Ten summers.

Are you okay?

The first words Zed says to Caspian, and the first time someone has cared about the answer. On a hot summer's day, the lives of two boys are changed forever. A rebel and a risk taker, Caspian doesn't give a damn for the consequences. Studious and obedient, Zed is the good boy who is never good enough.

The two couldn't be more different, but there's one thing they share, a need to belong to someone who understands them, someone who cares. Their friendship goes deeper than either can possibly imagine. They're young, in love, and planning their future when an act of betrayal tears them apart.

Fate deals its hand. Seasons pass. Zed's words follow Caspian through pain, fear and into the darkest of places. Friendships can last a lifetime, even when the world conspires to crush them. But this is more than friendship. This is love and they're not going to let it slip through their fingers.

Warning

The Story of Us is a tale of love and survival, and the triumph of good over evil against the odds. It's a new adult contemporary romance that deals with family and social issues. There is violence and cruelty to children but not sexual assault. The story has sexual situations, dark elements and suspense. The events and locations are a mixture of real and fictional. The characters are fictional.

The Story of Us Details

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From Reader Review The Story of Us for online ebook

Elsbeth says

I'm at a loss of words... BE really put me through the wringer emotionally. I love when authors are able to do that.

Mannnnnnn. My heart breaks when I realise how many kids are unfortunate enough to be born and raised by despicable parents. The abuse these boys had to go through. It's a miracle there was a happy bone left.

This was truly **their story**. Their story towards their so deserved HEA.

During the book you get the idea Zed is given the roughest upbringing by being hit around. Yes it's absolutely awful but later on Caspian dealt with the ultimate betrayal. It was horrifying. How do you come back from that?

You come back from that by wonderful people like Henry and Jonas!!! Everyone needs a Henry and Jonas in their lives. They were absolutely life savers. I wanna live with them.

I loved Zed. He was such a sweet soul. But my true love lies with Caspian. I loved that after what he endured and let me tell you that was unbearable, he still was that funny guy. I love his kind of humor. His inappropriate comments had me in stitches all the times. The "love you's at inappropriate places" were hysterical.

Caspian had told him he loved him while he was taking a piss in the bathroom, and then he burped "I love you".

Four was yelled out at the top of a cliff scattering a flock of birds and freaking out a couple out walking.

Five was written in the sand along with I love your arse. Zed had to kick that part out.

Six was laid out in stones and shells along with I love your cock. He had to kick that out too.

"I love you too. I love sticking my fingers up your arse."

I'm not really going say much more plotwise cause you really have to take this rollercoaster yourself. Have tissues by hand.

I know this review is a mess but that's because I'm a mess. Excuse-moi

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Christine says

Where do I begin?

Where did these boys get such strength at such a young age? I was constantly broken and put back together while reading this story.

And angry!! Boy was I angry. I wanted to reach through the pages and break some necks!

This was a story full of despair, heartbreak, betrayal, loyalty, joy, love and healing.

I cried and laughed in equal measure.

This book will forever have a place in my heart.

It's one of my best reads and has taken it's place on my favorites list. It was perfect.

It's one thing to have a character described by the author...hair color, height, weight etc...

But there is nothing I love more than seeing a character through another characters eyes.

It's more real for me.

I feel like I could draw Zed to perfection just from the details Caspian provided me with. I could paint his soul and get it right.

Zed was smart, kind and fierce with his love.

Caspian was a hoot! Funny, confident, wanted to live life on his terms and also had a love for Zed that could not be shaken.

And I am so thankful for Jonas and Henri.

They were so needed. They were the ray of hope in such a sick cruel world.

And Ms Barbara also brought the steam with this book?. I mean these boys got filthy!

I'm trying to think of other magical things to say but it's so hard when you love a book this much.

This will definitely be a re-read for me ♥?

Wendy says

I love this author. I have read many of her books and I have plenty of them in paperback in my bookcase. So the moment I heard about this one...I knew I had to read it....no question about it !!

Then I started this one, and within a few pagesI wanted to close my book and throw my Kindle out of the window...

I know this book has a trigger alert...but I am still gonna give out my own warning. This book deals with physical, psychological and emotional child abuse... and it damn near **broke my black little heart !!!**

There were some moments I even considered not finishing it because it hurt...

I have heard this author being referred to, as the "**queen of angst**" and I've got to say, that she really stuck to that title with this one !!

I myself am actually a sucker for angsty books, so I knew I just had to suck it up and keep on keeping on. I love book that make me "**feel**" and since this one gave me an overdose of "**feels**"...I have to give it **5 stars**.

I don't want to go into the storyline too much, because I really don't want to spoiler it, so I am gonna keep this short.

Zed and Caspian meet one summer, when both are around 15 years old. They click instantly and form a deep bond, one that goes beyond friendship even. Both have horrible home lives in their own way....and both can't wait to be old enough to leave...

When things go from bad to worse, they decide they no longer want to wait until they are old enough to leave. But some things are just not meant to be and sometimes the people closest to you, are the ones who will betray you the most...

Years pass, but these boys, who slowly grow into men...they never forget, especially each other. It was love in the truest form...

This book cut open my chest, took my heart out, ripped it into pieces, sowed it back together and put it back in !! How is that for a visual :P

If you are a fan of **angsty** books and a sucker for **young** and "**true love**", then you should definitely give this one a shot. I am so glad I did... **I highly recommend !!!**

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My reviews are posted on DirtyBooksObsession

Christelle says

****5++ stars**** because I felt so much...

"Two boys. One love. Ten summers." This summarizes the story of Caspian and Zed, a story that hooked me right from the start and made me feel so many emotions. It moved me to no end.

Caspian and Zed are two teenagers (14 and 15 yo), living in the same small English town, both with different backgrounds, with different struggles to grow up into adulthood, with different personalities. One summer afternoon, their path crosses and from there, I witnessed a beautiful journey over the spade of 10 years.

I'm fan of Barbara Elsborg's writing, whether it's MF or MM romances, whether it's contemporary or fantasy. Not so much of New Adults MM romances nor of stories that are on such a long period. Therefore, I was not sure this would work for me and to my delight and surprise, this is my favorite book from this author and among the best read I had. Much more angst with less banter and less steam (but still enough and placed at the right time of this journey) than the previous books I read from her, but with an intensity that struck me a lot.

Right from the start, I was enthralled by the story of Caspian and Zed and by these two endearing characters. I felt with them : their hope, their dreams, their fears, their despair, their pain, their distrust, their longing, their frustrations, their uncertainties, their joys, their love. I laughed with them, I got anxious with them, I battled along with them.

I loved following them through their life, with all the up and down that came their way by fate or by their actions, their growing love for each other and the bond they created with Jason and Henry, two fantastic secondary characters. And I couldn't be happier for their HEA, an HEA that perfectly fitted them and that they both deserved.

Barbara Elsborg gave me a wonderful and emotional fiction, nicely woven with real events and issues (with the right balance for me, avoiding the "black and white" stands that could sometimes annoy me and never reaching the point where the piling of fictional angst turns into dramalala for me).

I wish I could write how I felt about Caspian and Zed, their story, their journey but I have no word great enough for that. Suffice to say that it's now on my "to reread" shelf, that I give more than well deserved 5 stars, that I couldn't put down this book even though I was sometimes overwhelmed.

Dear Barbara Elsborg, thank you so much for this story.

Adam says

DNF

If I could use one word to describe this book up until the point I read it, it would be 'overkill.'

I've read many angst-filled books. The ones I have enjoyed the most, and the ones that have made their way on to my favourites shelf, have been those that flowed naturally.

It's those ones that tugged at my heartstrings, and made me root for the MCs to get their happy ever after, making the heartbreak and pain worth it.

In 'The Story of Us,' one unrealistic scenario after another is thrown at Zed and Caspian. I found I didn't care about whether the boys found their happy ending with each new dramatic turn.

I decided to call it quits when I rolled my eyes at what was supposed to be a pivotal moment between the MCs, in the midst of yet another crisis.

]Also, an observation: there are quite a few Muslim secondary characters in this book, yet not a single one of them was redeemable. I'm a gay man with Muslim friends who grew up in Toronto, a city with a sizeable

population of Muslims. My experiences just don't mesh with the author's portrayal, though perhaps her experiences have been different.

Again, I think it was a case of overkill.

I decided to put this book down because I just didn't care enough about the MCs to look past the over-dramatization.

But I'm clearly in the minority, so I might be missing something. Your mileage may vary.

Jan says

**** 4.5 Stars ****

I adore this story so much.

The plot was such a breeze of fresh air told in a very irresistible and engaging voice!

The author brought the characters very close to me.

Zed and Caspian were adorable.

Secondary characters were also strong enough to make me care for them.

The angst, oh... sweet angst. Gotta love me some drama.

My highlight is hands down the transformation Caspian's personality suffered, from a careless and confident boy to a broken one, soul crushed and self worth wise heavily shaken. So well crafted.

I do have some criticism though:

.) The way Islamism was portrayed left me very uncomfortable, only showing them as bad guys.

.) A trope I don't appreciate, insta-love.

.) Zed's skills. Talent is surely a must, but to be a great musician I believe the person needs practicing, A LOT, hours and hours daily. So, a mesh of talent, dedication and hard work. However, Zed could only play at school, since he was forbidden to play by his father. Therefore, I found this bit a bit weak.

Despite all that, I had the most gorgeous time whilst reading this and I am turning a blind eye for all that because none of the mentioned points above were enough to ruin this for me.

Cutting to the chase, The Story of Us took me to places and that's why I'm rounding it up to 5*.

Katerina says

I was very lucky and had the great honor to read this beautiful and moving book early. It is emotional and has left a deep impression. Weeks later, both main characters are still in my thoughts. Although a lot of very fateful events happened, in the end remains a very positive mood in my mind, which is well captured in the cover picture of this book.

I LOVED Zed and Caspian and their story that touched my heart very deeply. And I'm looking forward to reading this book again very soon. The story is intense. The end is well deserved. Once I started, I couldn't put this amazing book out of my hands. It has so much relation to current events that move us all very much. Everyone will have personal experiences with it and have their very own feelings about it.

A book that made it immediately among my favorites and that will accompany me for a long time.

Highly recommended.

And by the way, the picture at the top is actually related to the story ;)

Lena♥Ribka says

3.5 stars

It was my first book by *Barbara Elsborg* but I dare to say she writes plot driven novels. **A LOT of things happen, a LOT of twists.** The author doesn't waste too much time on interior monologues, her personal motto is probably dialogues instead of monologues. This way of telling makes the whole story fast-moving and easy to consume, and also kinda to a page turner because you just want to know what comes next and how it ends.

I can understand WHY the author is so popular withing the genre and I can also imagine that this book will find many lovers, but it just fell a bit flat for me and left me slightly unsatisfied.

What was good:

Many events and a lot of action, it was not boring at all, and I was curious all the time while reading how the story would develop itself.

A heartwarming love tale-story that will make many hearts melt.

What didn't work for me:

(view spoiler)

TOO MUCH DRAMA. Beginning with their back stories and through the whole plot this novel is OVERLOADED with DRAMA.

(view spoiler)

When I finished this book, I didn't rate it immediately. It took me some time to order my thoughts, but I'm still on the fence with this one.

There were part that were good, but I had too many eye-rolling moments and I am still not sure, if 3,5 stars are a bit too much for this novel.

But I decided to leave it this way. I'm not sure if I am going to read more by the author in the future.

I think that the fans of Barbara Elsborg won't be disappointed as they know what to expect and they want exactly THAT what she offers to her readers.

If you're new to the author's works and enjoy the plot-driven novels with many twists and all kind of emotions, and don't mind some eye-rolls you'll probably like this book too.

ARC kindly provided by the author to GBR in exchange for a honest review.

Alex says

There should be a trigger warning here.

Child abuse is depict very thoroughly and it was very hard at time to read it.

I'm not going to go into a long review. I'm still too much in the feelings this story brought on. The book is long but I was completely captivated, from start to end.

This author is so good with the angst. So good with everything.

Words fail me a little here.

I just LOVED it! Just read it!!

***J* Too Many Books Too Little Time says**

My first full 5 star read for the year, which makes this one my favorite book of 2018.

There really is no way I can do this book justice with a review.

It's a long book, which I dislike. It's YA-ish, which I dislike. It's low(ish) steam, which I dislike.

Yet, I loved every. single. word. of this book. Every moment of Caspian and Zed's journey. Every heartbreak, every struggle, every success, every bit of pain. Their friendship. Their connection. Their love for each other.

Their journey, their story.....it was everything. Every. Thing.

Kazza says

God. This. Book. These boys. All. The. Goddamn. Emotions.

This is a very emotional coming-of-age story, complete with all the feelings - like happiness, fun, joy. Or sad and angry ones, like sorrow, hurt, fear, and disgust. They're all there, there isn't anything that isn't covered, so it's an intense rollercoaster that doesn't finish until the fantastic and uplifting end which, by the way, is about as perfect as possible, especially for a New Adult story.

The MCs, Zed and Caspian, go through the wringer in *The Story of Us* but this is their story over ten summers, starting in 2010. Set in Kent and London and including significant, sometimes tumultuous, periods during this time - the 2012 London Summer Olympics, the Manchester Ariane Grande concert bombing, and more. Fiction and non-fiction collide in a thoughtful way to tell these two boy's story and their individual stories, because sometimes they can't be together. However, one thing remains a constant throughout - no matter what happens, no matter where they are, they remain devoted to one another.

I'm not sure that Barbara Elsborg has written a New Adult book before but I hope she writes more. More than anything this is a beautiful and powerful tale. It moved me, it shattered me, it gave me life. I had to put the book aside for short periods to catch my breath because I was totally involved. I loved Zed. I loved Caspian. Loved them right from the time they met at ages 14/15. My heart bled for them at times, and on other occasions I laughed with them, even if the humour could be used to hide some fear or anxiety. I adored Henry and Jonas, everyone lost and alone deserves a Henry and Jonas to find them.

Wonderful writing thus reading, it can steal your breath away.

Brave and gorgeous MCs. Ones who grab your heart and don't let it go, not even after finishing

A little different.

Great connection.

Beautiful, heartfelt storytelling.

Worth every one of the 5 stars.

Prepare your tissues because you'll need them, even if you smile or *aww* at times through the tears, have them prepared.

Longer, non-spoiler blog review at-

Truuss says

The Story of Us 5+++

An extraordinary story... one of a kind... one you'll rarely meet.

Only at 23% and my heart already broke more than once. Horrible, painful circumstances.

I wanted to stop reading because this has just the triggers I can't handle... deceive... lies... and because no one argues against it, a whole future goes to hell... but of course I didn't stop... I tortured myself.

Zed flew from one living prison into the other and somehow he survived it.

Caspian had no other story. Life was hard, very very hard. He was fading...

I had a feeling of walls closing upon me... the angst... the hurt... almost unbearable, I cried my eyes out
And the joy... heartwarming, beautiful, I cried my eyes out.

“Whatever you're on the edge of, fall on my side,”

They had to wait until the right time and chance come by to be together, and that.... that took some time.

Jonas and Henry thank goodness there are men like them. The light they shine!!

It's almost impossible to give a review without spoiling so I will avoid the story and tell you what I thought and felt about it:

Amazingly beautiful written captivating story. Widely and detailed described journey of two boys growing up in the wrong families and environments. Going through heavy stuff no one should have to go! A heartbreaking story, with some extreme events. They survived thank goodness !!

Caspian and Zed together..? So much of everything, sweetness, kindness, sexiness, humor and above all... unconditional love!! All with capitals! I wanted to hug them hard, I wanted to scream their names and 'I love you both so much' from the top of that cliff.

I laughed and cried and laughed out loud and now I just can't get them out of my mind...

Extremely good story Highly recommended!!

Read and reviewed for LesCourt ARC team

Ariana says

I am not a fan of YA, but there is the odd book in that genre that calls out to me.

This one was one of them, as the massive amount of 5 star reviews that came with it, as well as the promise of a great angsty story tempted me to go for it.

Did I regret it? Certainly not!

I like Barbara Elsborg's writing ('Falling' and 'Breaking' are two of my most favourite reads), but I think she really pulled out all the stops for this one.

As soon as I started it was like a vortex sucking me into the plot. It is not often the angst gets so intense I have to physically put the book down for half an hour. As I usually love that kind of stuff I tried to analyse why it got to me that much.

I think it's because ...

a) Zed and Caspian are so young (14 and 15) at the beginning, and what happens to them, physically and psychologically, is horrifying. My inner fury rocketed sky-high at what they have to suffer and I needed a break to calm down again.

b) Their situation feels so hopeless. There is absolutely nothing they can do to change it. They are at the whim of adults who are failing them left, right and centre. The betrayal by those who should love them is absolutely shocking. I admit I had a few select swear words on my lip for their fathers, in the first half of the book particularly.

Barbara Elsborg absolutely shines with her characterization. I adored both, Zed and Caspian for their incredible bravery, their determination to do what's right and their unbelievable resilience in the face of what life throws at them. Of course they have their downs, but the belief in what they have with each other keeps them going, even though giving up would be so much easier.

Their love story is deeply touching, and grabbed my heart tight where it matters. And there is heat too, but so much love and tenderness. Not to forget the humour (Caspian's) during their love making. Their first time was amazingly cute and hot at the same time.

While the first half really had me on tenterhooks all the way, the tension lightened in the second part a little bit. Not there isn't plenty to fret about, but Jonas and Henry hit the plot like two rays of sunshine on a bright summer's day. I love these guys so hard, so hard. Showing first Zed and then Caspian, there are some decent adults in this world was like balm on an open wound after all what happened before!

I admit that at times it all felt a bit 'too much': the intensity, the angst, the horror, and maybe some plot development felt a tad too easy. But it didn't matter. AT ALL. The characters win this one by a mile. And their love story is one I won't forget.

Without you my future is nothing. I will never desert you. Don't think I will. This is our story. We can make it whatever we want it to be.

Highly recommended.

Judith says

"(...)This is our story. We can make it whatever we want it to be. "

The Story of Us is a thought provoking,emotional story about 2 young boys who meet in the summer of 2010 and the subsequent story follows their lives over ten summer's.

Aged 14 and 15 when they meet both boys don't have happy home lives and their struggles within their families were incredibly difficult to read at times.Caspian is just a little bit wild,a free spirit,always looking for new adventures.Zed is more cautious,he definitely doesn't want to take risks and draw attention to himself but they compliment each other perfectly.Time passes and they wait and they plan...but the worst kind of betrayal leaves both their young lives in tatters.My heart was in my mouth more than once reading this,it's definitely not pretty at times but it had me completely gripped.

There's a reason Barbara Elsborg is one of my favourite Authors and this book is no exception.She weaves a carefully crafted story here,incorporating real life events effortlessly that fit into the story so well.

Caspian and Zed's story is so many things,

-there's love and laughter,

-there's pain and suffering,

-it's about friendship,family (not necessarily conventional),

-it's happy,

-it's sad,

Go on this remarkable journey with these two young men...you won't be disappointed.

An Arc of The Story of Us was kindly provided to DirtyBooksObsession in exchange for an honest review.

This review is posted on DirtyBooksObsession

Tess says

4.5 stars

I sort of thought the author overdid it with the extent of the crap these kids went through (not quite believable) but then the last 30% or so really made up for it.

I also adored Henry and Jonas and would love to read their story ...

