



Never Been Kissed

Molly O'Keefe

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Perfect for readers of Susan Elizabeth Phillips and Rachel Gibson, Molly O'Keefe's second novel in her exciting new series—The Boys of Bishop—features an irresistible romance and unforgettable characters in a page-turning story that delivers equal parts emotion and humor . . . with a little edge to boot.

As the daughter of a wealthy politician, Ashley Montgomery has had enough of her parents' expectations for her future and is going her own way, volunteering to work at a refugee camp in Africa. But her act of charity turns dangerous when she takes a boat trip and is abducted by Somali pirates. Enter Brody Baxter, who was a bodyguard for the Montgomery family ten years ago and doesn't think twice about coming to Ashley's rescue. Handsome and tough, Brody has always done what needed to be done. So he swoops in, saves Ashley, and brings her to a place where she can rest and recuperate without the glare of the press and her demanding family: Brody's small hometown of Bishop, Arkansas. But Ashley soon realizes that she's not the only one in need of healing.

Holed up with Ashley in a tiny apartment over his brother's bar in Bishop, Brody is tempted and torn in ways he never anticipated. Beautiful Ashley, vibrant despite her ordeal, fearless enough to love him beyond his wall of self-punishment, is now determined to save *him*. But with a little faith and a lot of love, they just may find happiness in each others' arms.

Never Been Kissed Details

Date : Published July 1st 2014 by Bantam

ISBN :

Author : Molly O'Keefe

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From Reader Review Never Been Kissed for online ebook

Ksenia says

I binge read this series, and Never Been Kissed is my favorite book. I loved this story to pieces. I enjoyed so many things about it; I don't even know where to start.

I'll start with romance. This is the reason we read this kind of stories after all. Ashley and Brody's story absolutely won me over. There were a lot of chemistry and feelings. And Molly O'Keefe writes such sensual erotic scenes. There was also second love story between Cora and Sean. To my surprise I enjoyed it a lot. I'm not usually a fan of "two stories in one". I prefer books that concentrate on one couple and don't divert readers attention. But in this case second romance worked perfectly.

And Molly's characterization was again impeccable. Her characters were well written and multidimensional.

I also was fascinated by dynamic between Brody and his brother Sean. Molly added many nuances to their relationship. Their story was sad and full of heartbreak, but also filled with love and hope.

Oh, there was a little bit mystery too. Brody was her father's bodyguard many years ago and Ashley had a teenage crush on him. It's obvious that something happened, but we don't know exactly what. I loved how the author revealed it bit by bit.

There were so many times I wanted to quote, and then realized that these words would lose part of their charm out of context. It's better to read this book.

In truth Never Been Kissed has so many stereotypical tropes (virginal blushing heroine, who has a long-time crush on strong brooding hero; guy who thinks that he is not good enough for heroine, and saves her from bad guys). But Molly miraculously gave them all new touch.

I loved this story and put Never Been Kissed on my favourite shelf. Highly recommended.

You can find my reviews:

Renegade ♥ says

4 to 4 1/2 stars

I really enjoyed this novel as Ms. O'Keefe is a talented author who creates some wonderful and interesting characters as well as great stories that capture my attention and imagination. Brody, Ashley, Sean and Cora all made me think, laugh and moved me in different ways and I'm glad I took the journey.

But, right now, I must admit that I'm rather perplexed/annoyed by the cover of this novel. Not because it isn't an acceptable romantic image, but because it doesn't accurately represent the lead hero, Brody, and I can't help but wonder at the various reasons behind that.

I've read numerous complaints from readers about how cover images often don't accurately represent the characters within, but this goes beyond blonde versus brunette, etc.

Brody's ancestry is Filipino and African American.

Why does the cover not reflect this?

What exactly was the publisher thinking? What's behind this particular choice? What's the message they're sending out here? And is it really one they want to be sending?

Or am I expected to believe that this was an oversight?

That's some oversight.

Especially in a book with not one but two interracial romance story lines.

Do they honestly think readers just don't notice?

We notice.

Susan (susayq ~) says

Another winner by Molly O'Keefe!

Just like her last book in this series, Molly has written an awesome story with realistic characters who grow and change through the story. Both Brody and Ashley change so much it's amazing.

The story starts off with Ashley having been kidnapped by Somali pirates and Brody being hired to go retrieve her after the ransom is paid. Let me just stop right here and voice my disgust for Ashley's family. WHY DIDN'T THEY GO GET HER???? Sure, they paid the ransom, but sent someone else to pick her up cause they didn't want all the press. THAT'S COMPLETE AND UTTER BULLSHIT! Ashley's family needs to drown a horrible death in acid. Anyway...Brody goes to get her and takes her back to the states and takes care of her, much to Ashley's eternal happiness, cause see, Ashley has loved Brody since she was 17 and he was a bodyguard for her family. What follows is a story of love and learning to stand on your own and to feel worthy of being loved by others.

This was the second book in this series, but can easily be read as a stand alone. The previous book's plot was barely mentioned and in fact, Jackson and Monica didn't even make an appearance. They were only mentioned briefly. So, if you haven't read anything in this series, get this book, or the first one, and get busy! It's well worth the time spent reading :)

Heather andrews says

After everything Ashley has been through she can still be a smarta**, "no, actually, I fell down the stairs. Ran into a door." Brody smiled. Jet-lagged and concussed, Ashley still had it in her to go a few rounds with Patty Montgomery." Brody I think he likes to tease Ashley, "despite the sting in her arm, she held out her hand and he pulled the phone from his back pocket, but didn't give it to her. "You're pi**ing me off, Brody." That made his lip lift for just a moment, not enough to cause laugh lines or melt the icy river in his eyes, but it was an emotion." I don't know why Brody fights his feelings in this book his damn body wants her just as much as his brain, "he pressed his hips deeper into the mattress, trying to cut off blood flow to his co**, but it only excited him. She - in his bed - excited him." I mean when it comes down to it he'd do anything for this girl, she brings out every side of him, "she was naked but for a pair of polka-dot panties. They were pink. The polka dots were white. Stupid thing to stare at. But he was reduced to stupid. With lust and surprise, she'd made him a dumb beast."

CL says

Received an ARC from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review

If *Wild Child*, the first book in Molly O'Keefe's 'Boys of Bishop' series, was the standout, underrated romance novel of 2013, then chances are the second book in the series could well win the standout romance of 2014 - and the best thing about it is that you don't need to have read the first book in the series to enjoy this.

I just fell in love with this book from start to finish.

Things I loved (in no particular order):

- Brody the Alpha male hero/bodyguard with self esteem issues
- Ashley the likeable Heroine who fights for what she wants
- Rescue scenario
- Flashback to ten years ago
- The crush that would never die
- The sexual tension
- Virgin
- Posh Momma's boy Harrison
- Hero's ethnicity - it was mentioned, it's unusual in mainstream romance but it wasn't made a "BIG DEAL" of which I liked
- Misunderstood father
- The secondary romance of Sean/Cora
- Sean/Brody's relationship

ETA: I have just read the summary for Book #4 in the series and I am ecstatic that Harrison is going to get his own story (and love the trope Molly decided to go with), especially since I'm sure the summary for Book #3 says that it is the last book in the 'Boys Of Bishop' *trilogy*. I'm only sad that I'll have to wait until the end of the year to read it.

www.loveisastateofmind.net

Jen says

A book with two interracial relationships for the price of one? Of course I had to read it.

I had some issues with it.

Besides the whitewashed cover that makes me see red, I was disappointed in the fact that race was downplayed so much in this book. It mostly takes place in a small town in Arkansas and I'm surprised that a white couple with an adopted black/Filipino son made no waves. Really? Everyone's just completely accepting, nothing to see here? And what about Brody, what it must've been like for him? How did it shape his identity? Likewise, the two relationships in the book are handled in the same colorblind way (as another review mentioned, Ashley is the daughter of a wealthy southern politician). It feels odd that with all that was included in this book, racism was the thing to shy away from.

There were parts that I really enjoyed, which were mostly the scenes between Cora and Sean. Sean was such a whiny little brat and he made me laugh.

Ashley mostly annoyed me. The do-gooder who downplays her involvement in everything she does, being sooo incredibly humble, while Brody would think, "I'm sure what she gave/did was MUCH more than she claimed." When she got back to the states she couldn't eat food at first without thinking of how she could split her loaves and fishes for the poor. She lets Brody walk all over her, presents herself to him time and time again, even though he's an ass to her. I get it, she's a giver but ENOUGH.

I do have to say that it was jarring for me to read about how battered/gruesome/broken she looked and then about Brody's dick getting hard from looking at her. And then you find out that she's a virgin on top of it all so she has to be handled MORE delicately...it was too much. I should mention that I did enjoy the scenes where there was an unspoken tension between them and I did feel like there was a genuine connection there. I really liked Brody, strong and silent ass though he might have been. When he washes and combs her hair? Yeah, that was a swoon-worthy moment.

It was a mixed bag for me. 2.5 stars? I have no clue.

Lynn Spencer says

Sometimes I buy a book to read for pleasure, but I end up enjoying it enough that I just can't put it aside without reviewing it. **Never Been Kissed** was one of those. It's not perfect, but I did enjoy it quite a bit.

Things get off to a rather action-packed start in this novel. Bodyguard Brody Baxter is working at a job, when he finds himself confronted by Harrison Montgomery, polished politician and son of a wealthy political family who employed him ten years before. Harrison has come to Brody with a job that requires some skill and discretion - rescuing his sister Ashley from Somali pirates and keeping things quiet. After all, Brody has kept Montgomery family secrets in the past, so Harrison figures he's the perfect one for this task, too.

And so Brody finds himself going off in search of Ashley, the black sheep of the Montgomery family. Instead of hosting fundraisers and working for the family machine, Ashley has spent her time abroad as a relief worker. Her current predicament has left her very shaken and since it would bring up questions and issues no one wants to confront in the middle of her brother's campaign, Ashley needs a place to lay low. So, Brody takes her home to Bishop, Arkansas.

Before you roll your eyes and think, "Oh no, not another small town romance," give this one a chance. O'Keefe writes wonderful dialogue and I found myself starting to really grow fond of her characters as I watched their interactions. Ashley can be a little bit of a Pollyanna sometimes and Brody has a giant chip on his shoulder, but there's a certain decency to them that shines through. The interesting secondary characters help in this regard, too. I found the sometimes tortured relationship between Brody and his brother at least as interesting as his budding relationship with Ashley.

This is a partial review. You can find the complete text at All About Romance:
<http://likesbooks.com/cgi-bin/bookRev...>

Michelle [Helen Geek] says

03/08/2014 --

Overall Rating = 3.5 Stars

Book Cover / Book Blurb / Book Title = 3 / 3 /1 = 2.5 Stars

Writer's Voice = 4 Stars

Character Development = 3.5 Stars

Story Appreciation = 3.5 Stars

Worth the Chili = 4 Stars -- [\$5.99 on Amazon when released in July 2014]

Smexy [HEAT] Rating = Moderate

384 pages

This is the 4th or 5th Loveswept book I've read in the last few months. Kudo's to the publisher. The publisher is bringing us an edgier, grittier read. The covers aren't indicative of the story underneath. The stories are a bit more than you'd expect. Very well written. Not your mom's romance novel!

Molly O'Keefe is an auto read author for me. She always has an interesting twist and her characters jump out of the pages at you.

+++++ SMACK!! +++++++

This book was a good example of this authors talent. It had a few issues, but overall, I really liked it.

What stood out for me in this one?

1 -- I say it again and again, but the characters do it for me. Almost every time [this includes dialogue and character interaction - the whole enchilada!!].

Brody -- what an interesting man. He holds everyone at an arm's distance. Everyone. He feels so deeply about the people in his life, but he can't trust this. He doesn't think he deserves good things. He feels he will be a huge disappointment anyway. He never voices this and you have to wait a while for it to all be revealed. You feel him and his need to connect.

Ashley is a really good person. You know it immediately. But, she has the self-confidence of a gnat. Brody knew her 10 years ago. She was a 17 year old girl in her first throes of love for the beautiful bodyguard. She has never forgotten him. At her brother's request, Brody steps in to save her and bring her safely home. What she doesn't know is, Brody never forgot her either. When he found out about her situation, his blood ran cold. He couldn't do anything else but come to her rescue. He has always cared about her. Two people who care about the other, have never forgotten, but will they have the courage now to do something about it?

Gah!

Sounds trite and cheesy, but it works. It really is a rather unique set of circumstances [which make the story so good ..] and kept me very engaged.

2 -- Loved Sean and Cora. We almost get two stories for the price of one in this one with their banter and relationship. Sean's relationship with Brody is rather complex. Brody has always kept him at a distance. There is a 7 year difference between these two "brothers" and some how it seemed stuck. Never quite moving past the younger brother idolizing the older. It eventually gets all worked out, but watching the struggle for Sean was interesting. I could have easily disliked him because he seemed so immature at time. However .. in walks Cora. Cora .. she adds an element of hominess. An element of "things will be alright." She makes Sean a man in this story. Through his interactions with her, you know he is not the kid [at 30 years old] he is with Brody. Not sure how to describe it, but I really liked her in this story and don't think the story would have worked so well without her.

3 -- The backdrop or back-story. Ashley was rescued from Somali pirates by Brody. Her family [father and brother are Georgian politicians] paid the ransom asked. They asked Brody to go collect her. They knew he would keep it all *quiet*. He brought her home, but now her family wanted to use her hostage situation for their own political gain and she just couldn't do it. At least not right now. She needed to get her psyche back in order. She asked Brody to take her somewhere they couldn't find her - just for a little while. He took her home to Arkansas. Sounds strange, but it all works. Poor Ashley is a mess. She has black eyes and a swollen face. She has stitches from knife wounds. She has sleeps all the time and has lost so much weight. Brody cares for her. He has to stay close to her. They stay in the apartment above his brothers' "hole in the wall" bar.

Now, for a few things that I had a few issues with:

1 -- The title and the cover make the whole thing sound like a fluffy read. It really isn't. The story and the characters have grit. Be prepared.

2 -- There were a few places where the story transition was clunky. Didn't flow particularly well and I had to stop, re-read the paragraph to make sense of it. May be due to me reading an ARC copy, so I didn't discount this in my review, but mention it.

3 -- I didn't think the last 40% or so was as well put together as the first part of the book. It seemed to lag a bit and lost a bit of its oomph for me. Almost like Ms. O'Keefe lost her way a bit and couldn't figure out her

next move. Up to this point, I would have had no issue with awarding 5 stars. Also, again, may be due to me having an ARC copy, but need to comment on this and will consider this in my rating. It is important and I can't re-read the last half at some point to know whether they "fixed" things or not. Maybe the ARC was released a bit too soon? The book's not due out until July .. this is March.

Further explain on my logic .. I wasn't asked to read a Beta copy for content and grammar adjustment, I asked for and was awarded an ARC copy. ARC's are "almost ready for prime time .. almost released". My assumption is that flow / content issues have been resolved by now.

4 -- Brody's birth mother is Filipino, his birth father is Black. He is adopted by White parents. Cora is Black. Ashley and Sean are White. Not enough was done with these cultural differences. Remember, most of the story takes place in Arkansas. I'm next door in Oklahoma and know this is still a huge deal and could have been played up nicely in this story. Either the author or the publisher is testing the waters by having characters with various backgrounds. Either way, the author really didn't do much with it. I was a bit disappointed. It was great that it worked out and there was little effort really, but this is Arkansas. Ashley has highly influential politicians in her immediate family [Georgia politicians - no less]. Nothing really touched on here. She could have done so much with this element and didn't. Why?

I love Molly O'Keefe. I love how she brings together a story and develops her characters. When you read her, you know you'll get a touch of unique and unusual and really well drawn characters. I wasn't disappointed in Ashley and Brody and feel like I was awarded a BOGO when I got Cora and Sean too. Very nice. An auto-read author for me with good reason. She rarely disappoints me.

ARC provided by the author and Random House Publishing Group - Bantam Dell via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

+++++

03/05/2014 -- One of this authors books was a fav of mine last year. I CAN NOT WAIT to read this! She does a really nice job. VERY happy right now!!

Mandy says

I liked this book but didn't love it. I really loved the whole idea behind the book - bodyguard and the girl he protects falling in love. The problem for me is that I just didn't feel the connection between Brody and Ashley. I felt like Brody was kind of a jerk for the first 80% of the book and I just didn't buy his reasons as to why he acted the way he did. Ashley is supposed to be this strong woman who survives pirates and helps in underdeveloped countries but puts up with Brody pushing her away. On the positive side, the steamy scenes were hot and I also liked the supporting characters.

ARC provided by publisher via NetGalley in exchange of an honest review

Jacqueline says

I was pretty surprised at this book. The cover and the title led me to believe it would be a much lighter read. This was the story of a very damaged man. Most of it was told in his POV. He was taciturn and very closed off. He didn't know how to show or accept love. The heroine finally helped him overcome his fear that to love someone would cause them to leave him somehow. She only helped him though. He made the decision to change and open up on his own. This wasn't a case of insta love though. They had had a previous abortive but emotional relationship but she had been too young for him to follow up on it. Plus this story where they met again took place over a month or so where they got to know each other again.

I totally recommend this for readers who like damaged quiet but wonderful heroes.

Ellie says

I really enjoyed it! A great romance, actually there are two parallel love stories in this book and both were very good.

I'm already excited for Harrison's story in Indecent Proposal which will come out in November 2014. A forced marriage for political reasons coupled with a pregnancy - it's a new romantic trope for me, so I'm curious about how it will all play out.

Full review published also on my blog - <http://elliereadsfiction.blogspot.com/>

This is the second book in the Boys of Bishop series but I'm reading it out of order, so I've already read and loved book 3, Between the Sheets. Still, there were no major spoilers, except the HEA which is to be expected, it's romance after all.

This book actually tells two parallel love stories. Brody and Ashley may be the main couple, but his brother Sean and Cora gave them a run for their money. Actually, a lot of times I liked Sean much better than Brody.

Just like Between the Sheets, here Ms O'Keefe tells a very intense and emotional story. Brody and Ashley have a history and the present brought them back together 10 years later. They have strong feelings for one another but both are fighting against them - she in order to avoid the pain and humiliation she suffered the first time round, him - to protect himself from potential heartbreak.

On the surface, they appear opposites, yet they have a lot in common - they both are hurt and they serious family issues they need to deal with. Ahsley, though recovering after being taken hostage by Somalian pirates and being physically rather weak, came off as stronger, willing to try, to stand up for herself, even against her family. Brody is bad ass, ex-marine, now bodyguard, yet at time his insistence on staying away and detached from everyone was really annoying. He needed to man up and admit that he cared about his brother and father, about Ashely.

I greatly enjoyed the parallel love story of Sean and Cora. He was awkward, slightly lost, struggling with his business, trying to take care of his father and trying to get through to his brother. She was more in control, in command. It is a tender hate-to-love story between a sweet beta male and a strong, independent woman.

I liked the small-town setting, though the story is very much focused on the two main couples. We don't really get to see much of the town and its people.

A minor complaint I have relates to the way the events that happened between Ashley and Brody 10 years ago were handled in the present. We see how what happened affected them and changed the direction of their lives. It's mostly presented from Ashley's POV and is never openly discussed between her and Brody. I missed a heart-to-heart scene where they get to talk about their past, accept and move on. I didn't get the feeling that Brody realized how much it all has affected Ashley.

Overall, it's a good small-town romance with complex characters, some drama, some fun times and some sexy times. The characters are portrayed realistically and they are easy to relate to. The next book in the series, *Indecent Proposal*, will be about Ashley's brother, Harrison and his political marriage and it comes out in November.

Ally says

That's it. I'm sure Ms O'Keefe has cast a spell on me.

Series: Yep

Sexy times: Hotty hotty hotness

Plan on reading more by the author: Always. Color me a fan girl.

Synopsis: Brody is on his way to extricate our fair heroine from the clutches of Somali pirates. Upon doing so, her super politicized ick of a mother/monster, swoops down upon our sweet Ashley. Brody whisks her away to his home town which is replete with all sorts of family issues of his own. They move into a dump of an apartment over his brother's bar and we let the adventures begin while Ashley heals body and soul.

Heroine: Ashley. Dooood. She and Brody have history from the time when he was a body guard to her political family. She lusted after him, went to far with it and he left. She's not doing that again. This time, she is making sure it sticks. Truly a GOOD character. She spews goodness. She reeks of goodness. And you will love her for it.

Hero: Brody, the disturbed. Gah. This one is a heart grabber and oucher. The sh!t he has been through and the messed upness in his brain will make you wince in sympathy. Never seen a character so hell-bent on his own suffering. Talk about taking the Buddha way too seriously with the "All life is suffering" business. But you will love every minute of his pain and his emergence.

Why it did or didn't work for me: It worked. It was poetry. The words that O'Keefe strings together stop my heart every single damned time.

Add to that, the extremely well developed and defined characters and I bow down to the greatness of the written word. Extreme praise. I know. And I totes think Ms O'Keefe deserves every second of it.

Signed,

O'Keefe's books are my jam

Peace

Sarah says

Weirdly, I enjoyed the B-side story (Sean-Cora) more than the main story (which I liked despite it having a trope that's one I usually don't care for--I think it worked for me because that particular thing isn't a big deal like it is every other time I've come across it). Anyway, Molly's books are really good and if you're looking for a solid contemporary romance, her stuff is always a solid choice.

I also liked the subtle subversion of the notion of "earning" love (such a common romance theme). Maybe I'm reading too much into it, I don't know, but it seemed pretty obvious to me.

I do wish that Brody's identity as a half Filipino, half African American man adopted by a white family had been explored further. There's subtext that led me to believe that a lot of his broodiness and internally focused MO was wrapped up in that experience, but it would've been worth seeing on the page more.

Also, wtf is with the dude on the cover? That's not the guy from the book even remotely. Get it together, Random House.

Molly O'keefe says

Never Been Kissed is on sale for 2.99 at Amazon for a limited time!! No idea how long this will last - but if you're interested in a second chance at love story between a sexy caregiver hero and a heroine who has been put through the wringer - this is for you.

<http://amzn.to/1IpPFn>

Jonetta says

Originally posted on The Book Nympho

Molly O'Keefe is an auto-read for me. I know her stories will always have something "more" and this book is no exception.

Quick summary

Brody Baxter is a professional bodyguard and was on an assignment when he's contacted by Harrison Montgomery to rescue his sister, Ashley, who's been abducted by Somali pirates. Brody has a history with

the family (especially Ashley) and doesn't hesitate. The abduction wasn't pretty and neither was the rescue so when Ashley needs a respite from her high profile family and the world, Brody takes her to his hometown of Bishop, Arkansas to recuperate.

The issues

Ashley's not the only one with family issues. Brody has a fractured relationship with his father and rarely comes back home. His brother, Sean, works hard at trying to be the peacemaker and maintain a relationship with Brody, who he admires and adores but it isn't easy. Brody has some deep rooted issues he's struggling with, one of them being his feelings for Ashley. As for her, she's been in love with him since he first worked for her family.

What I loved, loved, loved

There are so many layers to the story and the characters! There are family dynamics - Ashley's with hers, Brody's with his and Brody's with the Montgomerys - that complicate Brody's ability to accept what Ashley wants to offer. His path to personal freedom was tough, maddening at times, but also incredibly interesting and honest. Each character, including Sean and father Ed, becomes three dimensional through Brody's exploration, giving the story texture and flavor. All of this just makes the relationship that develops between Brody and Ashley much more endearing. She fights hard for him, a reflection of her character and what she brings to the story.

Sean's romance with Cora, a diner owner who at first was a bit prickly with him, is an added bonus. Theirs is an unlikely relationship that is pretty special. I'll leave the details to be discovered as I did.

The bottom line

The writing is just superb! The characters are well crafted and the story complex. Don't let the cover mislead you in thinking this is just another typical romance. It's a contemporary novel of substance that happens to include romance. You'll want to take the time to read this one when you can pause and reflect. O'Keefe never makes it easy and I for one think that's a wonderful thing.

(I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review)
