Perfect Chemistry by Simone Elkeles

A fresh, urban twist on the classic tale of star-crossed lovers.

When Brittany Ellis walks into chemistry class on the first day of senior year, she has no clue that her carefully created “perfect” life is about to unravel before her eyes. She’s forced to be lab partners with Alex Fuentes, a gang member from the other side of town, and he is about to threaten everything she’s worked so hard for—her flawless reputation, her relationship with her boyfriend, and the secret that her home life is anything but perfect. Alex is a bad boy and he knows it. So when he makes a bet with his friends to lure Brittany into his life, he thinks nothing of it. But soon Alex realizes Brittany is a real person with real problems, and suddenly the bet he made in arrogance turns into something much more. In a passionate story about looking beneath the surface, Simone Elkeles breaks through the stereotypes and barriers that threaten to keep Brittany and Alex apart.

My Personal Review:
Alex Fuentes is gang member from the south side of Fairfield, and Brittany Ellis is a privileged girl from the north. Each have a status and a reputation to uphold at Fairfield High, but they also have secrets—for Alex, its the desire to break free from the Latino Blood gang and his tough image and succeed in life. Brittanys life may look perfect from the outside, but at home, her parents are struggling to deal with Brittanys handicapped sister.

Brittany and Alex are on the opposite ends of the social scene spectrum, but that doesn’t stop their chemistry teacher from making them lab partners. Its hate at first sight for both, but as they learn more about each other and slowly move beyond the stereotypes, they’ll discover completely new people.

Perfect Chemistry is the classic love story of two utterly different people falling for each other, despite their initial loathing. Elkeles breathes new life into the old tale, giving it a fresh teenage perspective by interchangeably
writing in both Alex and Brittanys point of view, keeping Perfect Chemistry fresh and evenly paced. The plot is realistic and sweet without being cliché, and the dialogue is perfect; gritty, and genuine. Each side is portrayed objectively, and though Alex and Brittanys relationship does move at a fast pace, their thoughts, insecurities, hang-ups, and urges all ring true and are easy for nearly any teen to identify with.

Though it is an important part of the book, the romance doesn't dominate it: strong themes of acceptance, diversity, courage, and independence are also present, making for a powerful read that boldly faces the consequences of gang life, and offers an unflinching look at how difficult it is to extricate oneself from it. Elkeles has created a riveting and strong novel with an important and relevant message and a romance hotter than any exothermic reaction.

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