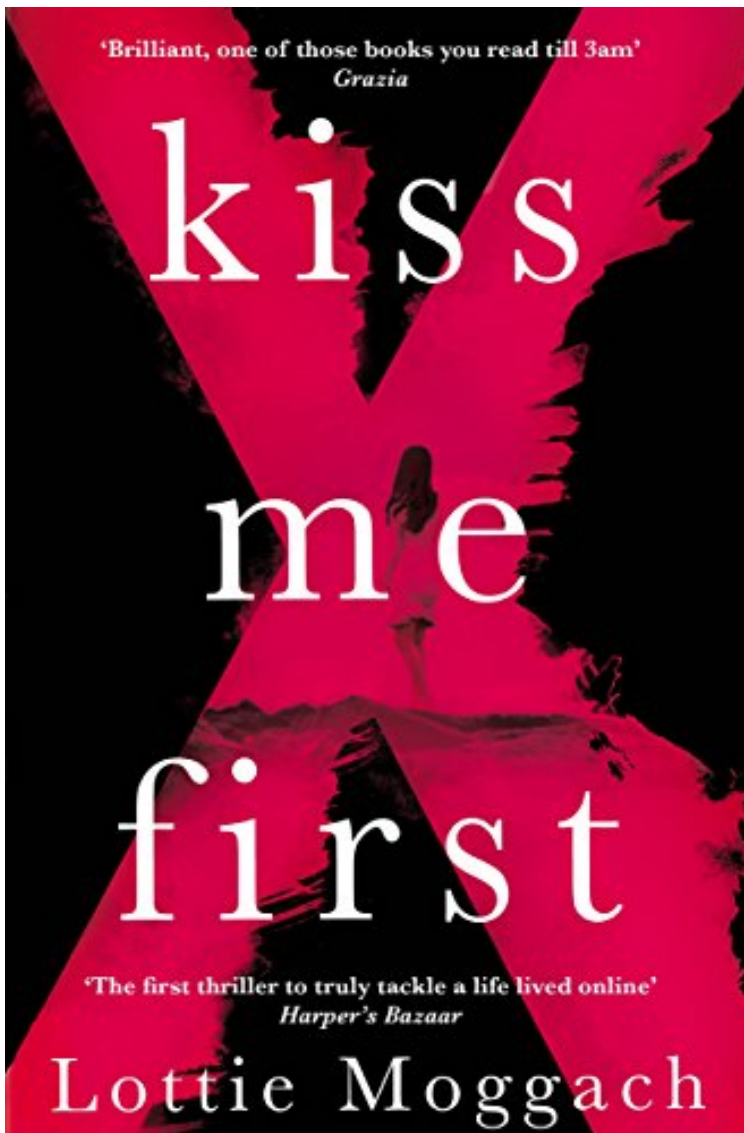


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Kiss Me First: A dark literary thriller that will have you hooked from the first page (English Edition)



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Par Lottie Moggach : **Kiss Me First: A dark literary thriller that will have you hooked from the first page (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Kiss Me First: A dark literary thriller that will have you hooked from the first page (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurShortlisted for the Guardian First Book AwardKiss Me First is a gripping mystery from debut novelist, Lottie Moggach. On the internet, we can be anyone we choose. No one knows who we really are. Sheltered and obsessive, Leila spends more time online than out in the real world. So she seems the ideal person to take over the virtual identity of the vivacious and fragile Tess, who wants to disappear.

But even with all the facts at her fingertips, there are things that Leila cant possibly know about Tess or herself until it is too late . . . Soon to be dramatised in a major production for E4 and Netflix by Brian Elsey, co-creator of E4 teen drama *Skins*. Excerpted from the hardcover edition.

It was a Friday night, about nine weeks into the project. Tesss voice sounded normal, but I could see that she had been crying and her narrow face was pale. For the first few minutes of the conversation, she leaned her head back against the wall behind her bed, gaze turned to the ceiling. Then she righted it and looked straight at the camera. Her eyes were as Id never seen them: both empty and terrified. Mum sometimes had the same look, toward the end. Im scared, she said. What about? I asked, stupidly. Im so fucking scared, she said, and burst into tears. She had never cried in front of me; in fact, she had told me she rarely cried. It was one of the things we had in common. Then she sniffed, wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, and said more clearly, Do you understand? Of course, I said, although I didnt entirely. She looked straight into the camera for a moment and said, Can I see you? At first I thought she meant, Could we meet up? I started to remind her that we had agreed that shouldnt happen, but she cut me off. Switch on your camera. After a moment, I said, I think its best if we dont. I want to see you, said Tess. You get to see me. She was staring right at the camera, her tears almost dried up. She gave a small smile and I felt myself soften. It was hard to resist, and I almost said, Okay, then, but instead I said, I dont think its a good idea. She looked at me a moment longer. Then she shrugged and returned her gaze to the ceiling. I will be honest here: I didnt want Tess to see me in case I failed to meet her expectations. This isnt rational, I know: Who knows what she thought I looked like, and what did it matter? But I had examined her face so carefully, I knew every nuance of her expressions, and I couldnt bear the thought that, if I turned on the camera, I might see a look of disappointment pass over it, however briefly. Then, still looking at the ceiling, she said, I cant do it. Of course you can, I said. She didnt speak for more than a minute, and then said, uncharacteristically meek: Is it okay if we stop for today? Without waiting for an answer, she terminated the call. I admit that that particular conversation has replayed in my head several times since. All I can say is, I said what felt right at the time. She was upset and I was comforting her. It seemed entirely natural for Tess to be scared. And when we spoke the next day, she was back to what by that stage was normal—calm, polite, and detached. The incident wasnt mentioned again. Then, a few days later, she looked into the camera and tapped on the lens, a habit she had. Do you have everything you need? I had presumed that we would go on communicating right up until the last moment. But I also knew it had to end. So I said, Yes. I think so. She nodded, as if to herself, and looked away. At that moment, knowing I was seeing her for the last time, I felt a sudden, intense rush of adrenaline and something akin to sadness. After quite a long pause, she said, I cant thank you enough. And then: Good-bye. She looked into the camera and made a gesture like a salute. Good-bye, I said, and: Thank you. Why are you thanking me? I dont know. She was looking down at something, her leg or the bed. I stared at her long, flat nose, the curve of her cheekbone, the lines around her mouth as delicate as fallen eyelashes. Then she looked up, leaned forward, and turned off the camera. And that was it. Our final conversation.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2011

There is no Internet here, not even dial-up. I didnt anticipate not being able to get online. Of course I had done my research, but the commune has no Web site and I could find little practical information elsewhere beyond directions on how to get here. There were just useless comments in forums, along the lines of Oh, I love it, its so peaceful and beautiful. I know that communes are places where people go to get back to nature, but I understood that they are also where people live and work on a semipermanent to permanent basis, and so assumed there would be some facility to get online. Spain is a developed country, after all. I understand that Tess had to head to a remote spot, but three-quarters of the way up a mountain, without a phone mast in sight—thats just unnecessary. Of all the places in the world, why did she choose to spend the last days of her life here? I admit, though, that the location is not unpleasant. Ive pitched my tent in a clearing with extensive views over the valley. The surrounding mountains are huge and colored various shades of green, blue, and gray, according to distance. At their feet is a thin silver river. The farthest peaks are capped with snow: an incongruous sight in this heat. Now that were going into evening, the sky is darkening to a mysterious misty blue. Theres a woman here dressed like an elf, with a top exposing her stomach, and sandals laced up to her knees. Another one has bright red hair twisted up on either side of her head, like horns. Lots of the men have long hair and beards, and a few are wearing these priestlike skirts. Most of them, however, look like the people begging at the cash points on Kentish Town Road, only extremely tanned. I had thought I might not look too out of place here. Mum used to say I had hair like a hippie, center parted and almost down to my waist—but I feel like Im from a different planet. Nobody here seems to do very much at all. As far as I can see, they just sit around poking fires and making tea in filthy saucepans, or drumming, or constructing

unidentifiable objects out of feathers and string. There seems to be little communal about it, aside from a collective wish to live in a squalid manner for free. There are a few tents like mine, but most people seem to sleep in tatty vans with garish paintings on the side, or among the trees in shelters constructed out of plastic sheeting and bedspreads. They all smoke, and it appears obligatory to have a dog, and no one picks up their droppings. I've had to use half of my supply of wet wipes cleaning the wheels of my suitcase. As for the human facilities, I was prepared for them to be rudimentary but was shocked when directed to a spot behind some trees signposted shitpit. Just a hole in the ground, with no seat and no paper, and when you look down you can see other peoples waste just lying there. I had promised myself that, after Mum, I wouldn't have dealings with other peoples excrement and so have decided to make my own private hole in some nearby bushes. It is, of course, everyones prerogative to live their lives in whichever way they choose, as long as they do not hurt others. But like this? Back in London, I felt near certain she had come here. It all seemed to add up. But now I'm starting to have doubts. Nonetheless, I told myself I'd spend a week here making inquiries, and that is what I shall do. Tomorrow I'll start showing her photo around. I've prepared a story about how she is a friend who stayed here last summer and whom I've lost track of but believe is still somewhere in the area. It's not actually a lie. I just won't mention that I'm looking for proof of her death. It's almost half past nine now, but it's still sweltering. Of course, I had researched the temperature, but I wasn't fully prepared for what ninety degrees Fahrenheit feels like. I have to keep wiping my fingers on a towel to stop moisture from getting into my keyboard. It was even hotter in August last year, when Tess would have been here. Ninety-five degrees; I looked it up. She liked the heat, though. She looked like these people, with their sharp shoulder blades. She might have worn a little top like the elf woman she had clothes like that. I've opened the flap of my tent and can see a rash of stars and the moon, which is almost as bright as my laptop screen. The site is quiet now, except for the hum of insects and what I think I hope is the sound of a generator somewhere nearby. I'll investigate that tomorrow. Although I have a spare battery for my laptop, I'll need power. You see, this is what I'm going to do while I'm here: write an account of everything that has happened. *Revue de presse* A brave, poignant and humane novel about society's taboos--and the cost of breaking them. Lottie Moggach has put her finger to the pulse of our times. Liz Jensen, author of *THE*

RAPTURE