



# DROWNING IN US

JENNIFER JUAN

**Drowning In Us**  
**Jennifer Juan**

## **About This Book**

Marina has ruined her life. Feeling unfulfilled, she has walked out on her boyfriend, a decent job and her whole life in London, and after taking several wrong turns on the way to a pity party at her sister's house, has arrived in Blackpool, with only her credit card and a sense of regret for company. Depressed and searching for a sign of what the universe wants her to do, Marina meets and falls for a handsome coast guard, Grant. Is Grant all he appears to be? Can Marina let down her guard and let love in? Is love what she needs right now? Explore "Drowning In Us", the brand new book by Jennifer Juan, combining romantic poetry with micro fiction, "Drowning In Us" will take you on a journey you'll never forget.

## **About The Author**

Jennifer Juan is a cultural melting pot of an artist. She is a writer, a musician, a producer, a film maker and a podcast host, currently residing in the Kent countryside, but dreaming of the ocean. A tornado of darkness and delicacy, Juan creates engaging and powerful projects, using a variety of mediums and platforms, each dripping with her signature playful, yet powerful style of writing.

Beginning her journey as an artist as a teenager, Juan graduated from The University of Greenwich in 2013, and began sharing her work on her personal website, JenniferJuan.Com, as well as through social media, posting written poetry and video projects.

In 2017, Juan began producing a weekly podcast, sharing her poetry, insights into her writing techniques, and released several printed volumes of poetry, including the critically acclaimed "Home Wrecker".

**For my Grant, love your Marina x**

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*Our story begins with Marina ruining her life...*

## **Prologue**

I miss Grant. I hate that I miss him, but I miss him all the same.

I never meant to fall in love with him, or even to meet him, but he's the kind of man who has a funny way of finding his way into your life, and once he's there, you know, from the moment you see him, that you're never going to forget him, no matter how hard you try.

I've really, really tried.

The worst kind of love, is one that aches, and screams, deep under your skin. The kind that pulls every part of your body and soul into the depths of despair, then right back up again, to the very heights of heaven. That was how I loved Grant. That is how I still love him. Grateful for the giddiness, and the grief, that thinking of him brings me, and drowning in him. Drowning in us.

It had been a long night of travelling, and as I walked out of the train station, into a clear, bright day, I felt as if I had carried the smoke of the city with me. My throat was tight, as I tried to choke down my uncertainty. I got through two entire packets of menthol king size, before sunrise, which probably didn't help my throat. I wasn't even sure where I was going, at first, I just knew that what I was running from would consume me, if I didn't find somewhere to hide.

It's funny, how we're all so used to the idea that love is some beautiful, magical force. While that may be true sometimes, it can be terrifying, destructive and downright awful, and sometimes, it can just be boring. I was running away from the boring, when I met Grant.

Harry was the love of my life, for a while, but it didn't work out. It wasn't a big and dramatic ending, it was a slow trickle of incidents, each one ending with me assuring myself that I could make it, that **WE** could make it, and that if I just held on, I could save us.

I couldn't save us. There hadn't been a final moment that tipped me over the edge. If anything, the last time I saw Harry was good. We had dinner together, at Canary Wharf. He talked about work, I wondered if I could have a dessert without feeling the guilt on my mind, and god knows what on my hips for the rest of my life, and things were normal. Once I decided against dessert, and Harry had finished monologuing about his job, which was not nearly as interesting as he thought, I excused myself to the bathroom, but headed out the door and to the car park.

I felt like I could hardly breathe. I didn't know where I was going, or what I would do when I got there, but I knew that I had been sat across from a man I'd been fighting to keep hold of, and I suddenly couldn't remember why. It suddenly hit me. He hadn't done anything wrong, we hadn't argued, but it

suddenly hit me that I didn't love him. Maybe I had, once, but I was now fighting for a feeling, for the nostalgia of when we were in love. I felt like I'd wasted so much time, and as I wandered up and down the car park, I knew I had to go, before I went back in, surrendered to more years fighting for a relationship I didn't really want, and drove myself crazy.

I began to question everything in my life. Did I only stay with Harry because I was lonely, did I only stay at my job because I needed the money? When was the last time I woke up and felt truly excited about what could happen? I was suddenly overwhelmed with how unfulfilled I was. I couldn't think of a single thing in my life that was spontaneous, or fuelled by passion. I was trapped, and so, I ran. I get how spoiled this sounds, believe me. Some people would kill for a flat, no matter how tiny it was, or a job, no matter how unfulfilling it was, or even for a man, no matter how little they loved him, but people would also kill, or die, for freedom, and while I wasn't sure I was ready to shed any blood, I was certainly ready to run for the hills, or, as it all turns out, the north.

You'd be surprised how far a shoddy sense of direction and a broken heart can get you. I was aiming for my sister's house, in Preston, and I missed it, by quite a bit, and by the time I arrived in Blackpool, I realised I was too tired to figure out the train journey back, and I didn't care to hear my sister smugly tell me she had been right about "him" all along, even though Harry wasn't even my biggest problem, so I sat and watched the sunrise, and waited for some kind of sign.

What exactly I was looking for, I couldn't tell you, I'm not even sure now, but I saw people, as the town came to life, happy people. Maybe I'd spent too much time in London ("That London" according to everyone who remarked on my accent) to find happy people common. I don't imagine everyone back home was unhappy, they definitely were not greeting the day with a sweet smile and genuine enthusiasm. I survived, back home, but here, I saw people who lived for simply being alive.

I wanted to feel something more than obligation to a routine.

I was so confused, but admittedly, I could have been confused due to sleep deprivation. I wasn't sure what I wanted, but I had a feeling I wouldn't find it by going back to the life I knew.

I tried not to feel bitter as happy couples passed me. What nobody tells you about break ups, even ones that you trigger by walking out of date night and getting a series of very expensive trains halfway across the country, is how helpless you can be to a desire for everyone else to be as miserable as you are.

As the sun joined us, and I watched hands joining, lips locking and all the things I'd left behind, I began to wonder if I'd ever feel that way again. I longed for the abandonment of inhibition that love gifted to the chosen ones, just being overwhelmed with passion for somebody, and feeling free of the world when they are in your arms. I'd forgotten how it felt, after months of petty bickering and resentment, and now, it surrounded me, but I couldn't touch it, because it wasn't mine.

I had candy floss for breakfast, knowing how much the strict dieter I was up until that very morning would disapprove, and gaining deep satisfaction from it. With every soft bite, I felt more awake, and aware, and as I swallowed the bright lights, warm weather and the possibility of a genuine Lancashire hot pot, instead of an microwaved imitation, I was so grateful to be alone and exploring.

People waved to me, and the first time, I wasn't sure what to do. I wondered if I'd stepped on someone's child, or offended somebody, but as it all turns out, people were just pleased to see me, which after years on autopilot, avoiding eye contact and conversation, was very welcome. I could hear music, from everywhere, and for a few minutes, literally anything seemed possible.

I wandered until I found a place to stay, on Moore Street. Again, more smiles, and I returned them each and every time. When I awoke, later that day, it was hard to leave such a comfortable bed, but I felt like I had so much to explore.

It was time to live, free of the smoke of where I'd been, and the disappointment I'd driven miles to escape. I covered my pain with a pretty summer dress and headed out the door.

I swear, that morning, I even saw a donkey smile at me. I named him Carlos.

## Grim Up North

It isn't grim up north, but I am.  
With my soft southern sound,  
and my heavy, healing heart,  
and all the apologies I'll make for both.

I used to think I was so smart,  
but I'm watching so many,  
who have learned the lessons,  
I'm doomed to repeat,  
who have licked life and her secrets,  
and might just teach me.

I've heard,  
down there,  
we're unkind,  
and when I'm called by kindness  
from people with no need to know me,  
I think they could be right.  
Trading smoky silence  
for wall to wall warmth,  
kick off those kitten heels,  
the universe under the explosion of my entirety.  
Tip toe through towers of sandy nostalgia,  
with a sweet smile that I'm not used to returning.

I could be anyone,  
tomorrow,  
today,  
as long as I stay,  
I can change,  
I can change.  
I can leave everything I was,  
to choke to death,  
in the polluted streets I sped from,  
and I can be reborn,  
here,  
now,  
with nothing to lose.

Who would you like me to be?

## Beach Walk

I came here to pick up shells,  
yet I've picked up a man.  
He stares until I'm shy,  
and laughs until I love.

Lust, it must be lust.  
I cannot list a single thing  
beyond his body,  
that I cannot live without,  
and yet,  
suddenly,  
it's summer,  
he's surrounded by the sun,  
and I know it will never rain again,  
as long as he is mine.  
As stupid as that sounds,  
he smiles,  
and I know that it's true.

This could be the end of my resistance,  
and the start of realisation.  
It could easily be everything.  
It could well be wishful thinking.

I walk away,  
a channel to him  
on top of my wrist's Chanel,  
simply saying "I hope you'll call."

He thinks he's so old fashioned,  
but those eyes are brand new.  
I don't want this to exist,  
essential and engrossing.

It's gross how caught up I am,  
thinking like Juliet.  
Poison propelled by blade,  
with no priest to blame.

I've promised myself a passion free period of time,  
nights of collecting sleep and shells,  
and yet, if we never met again,  
I'll raise the tide with my tears.

## First Date

The world was never enough,  
until it belonged to us,  
and we were etched on every corner.

Lone ovation,  
aviation of my spirit,  
his hand is in mine,  
and I see him everywhere I look.

In twenty four hours,  
I've thought of twenty four delectable details,  
nails lost to nervousness,  
on the hands I'm fond of holding,  
perpetual please and thank you,  
once ordinary and expected,  
instantly incantations when they are yours.

## **Baby Back There**

You made a secret out of me  
when you whispered what you wanted,  
your lips lost in my lip gloss.

Another drink,  
another night.

We're timeless,  
on a time limit.

I know you're hiding secrets,  
all over town,  
but I'm thrown to the thrill of your inevitable infidelity.

Play me if you have to.

Play me when you want to.

Tell me, do I sound sweeter,  
than the soundtrack you've been driving to?

You've got a baby back there,  
but I just can't stop myself.

My skin burns from the geyser of guilt,  
as we're dancing,

but all it takes is one more kiss,  
one more drink,

and I'm soothed, and silent.

Backing away from the balcony of betrayal,  
and praying the promises you made,  
will keep you from toppling over the edge,  
into an ocean of temptation.

Always addictive,  
what lies beneath,  
your next fix is floating in icy blue,  
calling you down to play.

Lonely lies fill up your thoughts,  
convince your conscience,  
you've never been better.

You've got a baby back there,  
and one here on the hook.

Don't touch that line,  
I want you tonight.

## Stars

Sunday night,  
after church,  
we sin,  
at sea,  
settled in each other.

Watching waves,  
wash away our worries.  
Wind reaches for you,  
and the bleached beauty,  
that my hands can't resist.  
Peroxide,  
every other month,  
as if grey could keep me away.

Rain can't disturb,  
what's safe,  
under the precious planks,  
walked over by thousands,  
but a home,  
for two,  
on a starry night.

## Ballroom Dancing

I never learned how to let you lead,  
but you take me,  
across the floor,  
across the world,  
with each tepid,  
tempted touch of your hand.

I lead you astray,  
but you're still the one,  
taking us across the floor,  
across those lines,  
with every touch,  
I go from mine,  
to yours,  
to mine,  
again.

We are a kaleidoscope,  
rabid rainbows,  
under our own spell,  
spinning until we cannot stand,  
to be apart,  
to be alone,  
to stand at all.

I fall,  
for you,  
into you,  
onto you,  
but it won't do,  
for us to stay,  
for you have your life,  
and I have mine,  
and this was just a dance.

## Planting Roses

No bars to break,  
but here I am,  
surrounded by searching space,  
a prisoner,  
encased in ivy,  
that I have imagined,  
grew side by side,  
with the roses we planted.

I never knew my charge,  
but I was sentenced to be sped,  
back to the real world,  
on several delayed trains,  
with barely there air conditioning,  
and piece by piece,  
I felt each flower fall,  
all around me.

The empty, invisible walls tell tales,  
and I can't tell which voice is yours,  
anymore,  
because the rain still falls,  
and the wind still wails,  
but I'm not sure they're really there.  
I'm not sure where it hurts,  
I just know that it does,  
and I know why it does,  
even if that isn't "proper science".

I don't know if you'll wait for me,  
or how long you'd have to wait,  
but I know I need you to.  
I remember this kind of crying,  
thirteen,  
Hastings beach,  
knowing my world wouldn't fit into a quaint country village,  
not just the bright lights,  
I had dreamed of,  
for as long as I knew how to dream,  
but a love.  
I wanted a love,  
that I couldn't yet describe,  
and maybe never could.

Again,  
twenty three,  
pausing at Preston,  
with my heart in my throat,  
poking it's way out,  
with razor blades and regret,  
knowing it had found the love,  
but not the words,  
to explain how essential it was.

It never ends,  
it only eases,  
until it doesn't,  
and then,  
I am back behind bars,  
that cannot be broken,  
by anything but,  
freedom to be locked away,  
planting roses,  
with you,  
and watching your excited eyes,  
as we we wait for them to grow.

I could walk away,  
at any second,  
out the door,  
into the sunset,  
under a train,  
but with each step,  
the chains of my choice,  
and the punishment it brings others,  
would grow heavier,  
until my legs broke,  
and my torso wept.

Give me rain,  
or sun,  
or death.  
Give me some way,  
to make each moment just a moment,  
rather than a reminder,  
that I have a life,  
and a job,  
and a whole realm of responsibilities,

that don't include planting roses,  
with you,  
and watching your excited eyes,  
as we we wait for them to grow.

Give me hope,  
that one day,  
I will find a time,  
when I can survive on the inside,  
and see it more as the outside,  
real life,  
my life,  
without you.

Tell me that I'll survive,  
even if you're lying,  
or,  
better yet,  
lie down,  
keep my side of the bed warm,  
rain roses from the roof,  
petals,  
settled in the sheets,  
growing strong under bright lights,  
waiting for me to make parole.

I've found the words now.

## **Be Lucky, Darling**

The stars have told he's a monkey,  
but I know he's scared of heights.  
I still feel his frantic fingers clinging to mine,  
as the sky welcomed us.  
He shakes himself out, like a dog,  
and tramples through the tide,  
to fetch me from my fantasising.  
The stars have told me I'm a sheep,  
and though I'm soft, and sweet,  
no dog shall be my master,  
and I'd hoped never to run at one's command.  
The whistle whispers,  
I resist running,  
but I shudder, and I slither,  
and I catch a train,  
to have my taken man,  
like the hypnotised snake he knows I am.

## **Kokomo**

Take it fast,  
take it slow,  
just take it with me.  
Running away,  
or at least,  
briskly walking,  
in sensible shoes,  
with silly scenarios,  
that we dreamed up,  
over coffee and cigarettes.  
Baby, we're unglued again.  
Baby, you're made of magic.

We're driving too fast,  
in the wrong lane,  
and a car we stole,  
but I know we're on the road to Heaven.  
Let it crash,  
let it burn,  
as long as my charred remains,  
are discovered next to yours.

## If I Could

The magic was in my head,  
like the heaven of your heart,  
that I thought belonged to me.

My woollen waiting,  
unrewarded,  
at another station,  
in another stand off,  
between my head,  
my heart,  
and my hurt.

Will I ever know,  
why you,  
unfashionable, irresistible love,  
were unfashionably late,  
and out of my reach,  
and out of my life,  
and out of my league?

If I could,  
would I want to?  
The mystery of you,  
haunts my heart.

## Back To The Ballroom

Goodbye, my girl.  
How I wish it wasn't so,  
and that I had warmth in my heart,  
at the thought of seeing you one more time.  
I don't do much these days,  
because the town isn't the same when you are gone.  
You wouldn't believe the way the wind howls,  
crying out to play with your hair.  
I don't know if you'll forgive my lack of appearance,  
but it was for your own good,  
as was holding your hand,  
as you crossed every street,  
and insisting on a coat,  
regardless of how much you and the sun persisted.  
I know I'll love you for the rest of my life,  
because as I write this,  
it is close to the end.  
I just hope that your heart can love again,  
but just in case,  
I'll be loitering outside the ballroom,  
up the stairs, and straight ahead,  
awaiting that dance you promised,  
to me and my two left feet.

## Epilogue

Grant and I decided we were going to run away together. I told him that I didn't care if I'd been "The other woman", as long as I could be his.

Losing Grant, for the very last time hurt more than I could have ever imagined. I had spent so long convincing myself that I was competing with a girlfriend, a family, commitments and responsibilities, but in fact, I was up against an enemy whose arms I could never tempt my man away from.

Death.

Grant had never been unavailable, in the traditional sense. There was no girlfriend, no baby, no happy home for me to break up. There was a tumour, there was pain, and there was death, all of which he had tried to protect me from, in the beginning, before falling just as deeply as I did, until it was too late, and we were one, submerged, under the sea, and the stars.

The worst kind of love, is one that aches, and screams, deep under your skin. The kind that pulls every part of your body and soul into the depths of despair, then right back up again, to the very heights of heaven. That was how I loved Grant. That is how I still love him. Grateful for the giddiness, and the grief, that thinking of him brings me, and drowning in him. Drowning in us.