

Beautiful Disaster is a New Adult novel that helped to define the genre, which typically deals with Young Adult novel themes in a more mature manner. The novel's author, Jamie McGuire, does not hold back with this tale of romance and opposites attracting, with poignant themes of jealousy, fear and belonging sharply characterizing the novel's character-driven plot.

Abby Abernathy moves far away with her best friend, America, bent on leaving her troubling past behind altogether and starting fresh at Eastern University. And yet soon after arriving into town, Abby meets the university's proverbial bad boy/ladies' man: Travis Maddox. With his good looks, tattoos and dangerous personality, Travis is everything that Abby is not, and everything she has traveled so far to avoid.

It is actually when Abby goes to a floating, underground fight circle with friends America and Shepley (America's boyfriend and Travis's roommate/cousin) that she meets Travis. He is drawn to Abby because, of all the females he knows, she is the only one who does not want to date him. Besides, he does not really believe in relationships. For her part, Abby is attempting to distance herself from her past, and so is not interested in getting involved with Travis, especially with his reputation. In sum, neither want to fall in love with the other person. And yet the attraction is unmistakable.

Initially disgusted by his reputation on campus, Abby begins to see that Travis is different than his actual reputation in many regards, thus making the attraction even more stated. However, Abby tries to distance herself a bit more when she learns that her reputation is being affected by her friendship with Travis. Travis, though, becomes angry, and will not allow her to pull away. She soon begins dating one of Travis's frat brothers, Parker, which infuriates Travis even more. Travis decides to take matters into his own hand and, to trap Abby, makes a bet with her: he will purposely not take a hit during his next fight. If he loses, he must remain abstinent for a month. If he wins, however, Abby must spend a month at his apartment.

The entire time, however, Travis insists on the two being just friends. And yet when he overhears Abby telling America her reasons for not dating him, he feels slighted, and sleeps with two girls that very night while Abby is in the apartment. Moreover, Travis is a constant pain in the side of Abby and Parker's relationship. He finally admits that he will not release Abby from the bet because he does not want to see her with Parker.

Things boil to a breaking point when Travis throws a surprise party for Abby and she ends up making out with Parker. Soon, rumors swirl that she is sleeping with both guys. And yet Abby insists that she cannot date Travis because he reminds her of her past, and her father. With the bet still on, Parker breaks up with Abby until her month at Travis's apartment is over. She goes through with the bet, but on the last night, has sex with Travis, then leaves. Her departure saddens Travis, and also the fact that she starts up with Parker as soon as the bet is over. And yet while dating Parker, Abby realizes that her feelings for Travis are strong. When Travis finally admits that he loves her, she breaks up with Parker and starts dating Travis.

A part of Abby's past is finally revealed as she enjoys time with Travis's family. Though traumatic for her, Travis insists that her past is in fact the past, and that she deserves to be happy. Another part of her past comes to the surface when her father, Mick, who is a gambling addict, visits and needs help repaying a debt. Abby agrees to help, and her friends travel to Las Vegas where she is able to win most of the money Mick needs. Travis also agrees to help, and takes a professional fight to make up the difference. Travis, though, is asked to keep fighting, and when Abby objects, the pair break up.

Abby endures a painful few months, in which she pretends to be Travis's girlfriend at a Thanksgiving celebration even though they have separated, decides to reconcile but does not, then catches Travis with a girl and a box of condoms. Travis is still meddling in Abby's affairs, and asks her to a fight to interrupt a dinner she has planned with Parker. Later, when he forcibly removes a drunken Abby from a frat party, Travis finally admits he loves her and the pair makes up.

When Travis engages in the last fight of the year, the building housing the fight burns down. Both Travis and Abby almost get caught in the fire. This life-altering event reinforces for Abby that she and Travis belong together. She proposes to him, and the two travel to Las Vegas to get married, where she then tattoos his surname onto her.