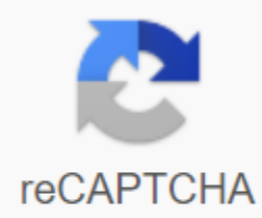




I'm not robot



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## Butter battle book characters

As we all know, social media can be used for all kinds of healthy and productive things, such as staying in touch with loved ones from afar. Normal and sane things. I also use it to stay in touch with lovers from afar, and it's great at that. Maybe I'm doing this right now. You are more likely, however, to see me using social media for the following things: learn when my friends ran their first marathons, or got engaged to the man of their dreams, or won major writing prizes, or bought beautiful homes. Oh, and feeling bad about myself as I dwell on realizing that Rachel from college got her ph.D. in the time it took me to figure out what day of the week I'm supposed to put the trash. There is also the very common use of me displaying my own achievements, in the hope that by sharing them with many other people and getting their approval, my achievements will feel less hollow. However, for every unreal accomplishment we loved, we should know now that everyone is on the Internet. Because we all lie on the Internet. Yet, somehow, we continue to believe that the pretty images of other people paint their lives are actually real, and that we must be the only ones in the world who burned dinner after wasting all day playing iPad games. That is not, I repeat, not the case. This misconception is the subject of my new novel, *Tonight The Streets Are Ours*. The story tells the story of a young girl, dissatisfied with her own life, who becomes obsessed with the spiritual, romantic and sophisticated musings of a teenage blogger. In the end, she and her best friend went on a trip to New York to find him. During an epic night together, she realizes that it is not exactly who she thought it would be based on what he wrote about his life. It's not that this blogger told lies outright - like, he's not actually a middle-aged serial killer - but he lied the same way we all do online: by omission. So today I thought I'd try to be honest, and let you in on some of what I'm omitting from my own character online. Lie 1: #ProvenceFirst, we have this one, #Provence (could there be a more boastful hashtag?), of the bike trip that my mother and I took around France, because we are extremely adventurous of the world and athletic. Here's what I failed to mention: On the first day of our bike trip, my mother had fallen and broken a rib. We had to take an ambulance to a hospital in and not only could she not ride a bike for the rest of the trip, but she couldn't really walk either. She spent the rest of our vacation in a variety of French hotel rooms while I went up from one to the other. On the road, I tried to keep my spirits up and have enough fun for both of us, but there is this VENT in Provence. Maybe you've heard of it, it's called e Mistral, and right away it's a bad sign, that it's such a strong wind as to have to have NAME. When Le Mistral blows — as was the day I took this picture — it can blow up to 50 miles per hour, and there are warnings not to go cycling. But I did it anyway, and worried all the time about the wind knocking me over, in a country where I didn't speak the language and was all alone in the country because my mother was in a hotel room eating ibuprofen. The view was extremely beautiful, however. That's 100 percent true. Lie 2: The SnowmanThere was a snowy day, so my boyfriend and I worked from home, and we took a break to build a snowman! How adorable are we? We're like straight out of a movie called 500 Days of Winter! Omis of this photo: I had to intimidate my boyfriend in building a snowman. I was like, LET'S BE FANTASM, and he said, But it's really cold and there's no point and I'd rather stay indoors and play video games. But you can go build a snowman yourself if it means a lot to you. And then I got mad about it and I said, One day we'll be old, and we're going to look back on those moments when we could have been frolicking lovingly in the snow and we're going to be filled with regrets. So he agreed to frolic, but I wouldn't say it's terribly loving. If more people on Twitter had played this one, that could have made me feel better about our forced attempt at romance. Lie 3: Coney IslandMy friend Emily and I cycled down to the beach to see the sand sculpture contest. There was amazing art there, as these photos show. And what chance am I to live in a city where events like this happen, and to have a friend who wants to explore them with me? Omis of these photos: The fact that it was 100 degrees and it took all my energy just to walk. Also the fact that Emily's bike had got a flat tire on the way to the beach. Basically, I took some pictures that I thought I could turn into an attractive Instagram collage once I was out of the sun and could breathe again, and then we left. Lie 4: The HamptonsHere I'm in the Halcyon Hamptons, because I'm so chic and relaxed! Not included: the fact that I spent my whole weekend in the Hampton with the writers block, looking at this pond and hoping it would inspire me. (It didn't.) Lie 5: Shakespeare! On the summer solstice, I like to have friends to read the entire dream of a summer night of Shakespeare. This year, one of my guests brought this awesome old giant tome, because she takes her Shakespeare even more seriously than I do - that makes her the perfect kind of guest for this party! The part you can't see is that I had spent the whole weekend worrying about this party, culminating in waves of anxiety crashing just before people arrived. I had a clear vision of how I wanted to go tonight, so I was deeply worried that it would rain, or the food wouldn't turn right, or I wouldn't have time to all the food, or I wouldn't have enough copies of the piece, or anything. Then, on the day of, a few friends texted me to cancel the last minute, at that moment I looked at all the food I had managed to make and all the copies of the piece I had dug up and thought to myself, What a cruel irony is this life. In the end, I had enough guests, the food was eaten, the room was read, and all is well that ends well. So my point with all these examples is not that those things that look so great online were actually terrible. None of them were terrible. My point is simply that these things that look perfect online are actually imperfect. That's all. That's what the protagonist of *Tonight The Streets Are Ours* realizes. And maybe one day, that's what we can all achieve as well. In the meantime, please follow me @LeilaSalesBooks on Twitter and Instagram for more photos like these. Don't take them too seriously. Images: Leila Sales/Instagram It's no secret that writers like John Green and Lurlene McDaniel have made a career out of tearing our hearts out and trampling on them. But what are the unluckiest books and characters of all time, the ones you want to read when you need a good dose of schadenfreude? Frankly, there are many contenders for this title. The absurd specialize in characters who, despite their own contrary feelings, have no purpose in the world of their books. In 2015, Hanya Yanagihara stood out for having caused a lot of trouble on the protagonist of her booker-nominated novel, *A Little Life*. And some writers revel in writing the lives of unhappy characters. Despite what you might think, reading the most unlucky books and characters of all time is not always a depressing undertaking. Of course, some of these stories are sad, but others follow characters who jump from the stove to the fire over and over again, and those - often - are downright hilarious. Whether you're looking for a sad book to get out your family, check out *The Metamorphosis*. Gregor Samsa wakes up to find that he has turned into a big insect, which radically changes the lives of his parents and sister. Click here to buy.8. *Anna Sewell's Black Beauty*!It's hard to find a sadr children's book than *Anna Sewell's Black Beauty*, which follows a horse through a series of evil and ignorant owners. Click here to buy.9. *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy TooleThis book is not as unlucky as the life of its author. In 1969, John Kennedy Toole committed suicide after years of trying to find a publisher for his novel. After Toole's mother dug up a manuscript and shopped it around, *A Confederacy of Dunces* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1981.Click here to buy.10 *The lottery* by Shirley JacksonCitizens of a small town prepare for a dark, annual ritual in this short story from *The Haunting of Hill House* author Shirley Jackson.Click here to buy.11. *Amy Tan's The Bonesetter's Daughter*When her memory begins to deteriorate, a Chinese-American immigrant gives her daughter a written account of her life to be translated. But what the young woman learns about her mother could change

their relationship forever. [Click here to buy.](#)12. Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*The owners of a small circus raise their own sideshow monsters in this haunting novel. [Click here to buy.](#)13. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom StoppardThis play by Tom Stoppard reinvents Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from the perspective of two minor and unhappy characters. [Click here to buy.](#) Image: [mybookbath/Instagram](#)

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