



JEFF MANGIAT

**REALISTIC FICTION**  
a made-up story that  
seems real

# Girl Can't Dance

BY LISA YEE • BASED ON THE FIRST LINE BY KEYA ROY



### AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

In this story, the main character, Emma, longs to be famous. How do her ideas about fame change?

**A**t first sight of me, I guarantee you'd want my autograph.

Well, maybe not now. But there was a time when that was true.

It's not that I am crazy beautiful, or talented, or tremendously smart. In fact, I'm pretty ordinary, which is why what happened was extraordinary. My twin

brother, Theo, said that I should thank him.

"For what?" I asked. "For making my life miserable?"

"You made your own life miserable," he said. "I just happened to be there."

Maybe I should start at the beginning. . . .

### **M**y best friend, Aubree, and I were obsessed with celebrities.

You know: boy bands, movie stars, anyone on that TV show *Immediate Access*. Plus we'd spend hours watching the latest UrTube videos, like the one of Jackson Jax riding in a giant teacup at Disneyland. One time, Aubree's mom took us to his concert, and I swear, **even though I was one of 15,000 screaming girls, Jackson Jax pointed to me** and said in his signature whisper, "Girl, this song is for you."

So, a couple of months ago, Aubree and I were watching TV when she asked, "Emma, what's the most important thing to you?"

"Fame," I said. "What about you?"

"Friends," she replied. "If you ever got famous, you'd still be my friend, right?" Aubree and I had been friends since first grade.

"Of course!" I answered. "And I'd also go on the *Gary Larry Show* and ride in a limo."

**I did two out of three of those things.**



OK, so this story is totally fictional, but doesn't this Jackson Jax guy seem kind of . . . familiar?

This story has a TON of foreshadowing. Can you find other examples? What effect does it have on the story?

### CONTEST WINNER

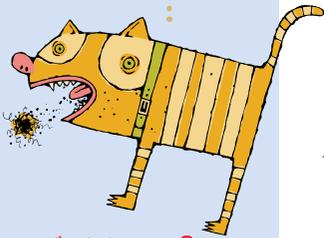


**CONGRATULATIONS TO KEYA ROY** from Bellevue, Washington. Back in September, we asked YOU, our readers, to send us your ideas for a great first line. Well, Lisa Yee handpicked Keya's first line out of thousands of entries to be the start of her story. And we just love the way it turned out!

KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE



How would the meaning change if Lisa had said that Theo “walked” into Emma’s room?



What type of figurative language is Lisa using here?

## My Uncle Roger gave me a karaoke machine for my 13th birthday.

For the longest time, it stayed in the box—and for good reason. My singing is so bad that when it’s someone’s birthday, it’s best for everyone if I just mouth the words.

One Saturday night, Aubree and I opened the box.

“Karaoke!” Theo exclaimed as he **barged** into my room. “Can I try?”

“Go away,” I said.

“Please . . .” he begged.

“Go away!” I shouted.

“You’ll be sorry,” he warned.

I started belting out Jackson Jax’s mega hit, “Girl, It’s Gotta B U,” then began to dance.

**I looked like a cat trying to cough up a hairball.** Aubree laughed so hard she couldn’t even breathe. “Emma,” she cried, “please promise me you won’t ever do that in public!”

“Oh, right,” I said. “Like that would ever happen!”

**O**n Monday, Theo was eager to get to school. That should have been my clue that my world was about to turn inside out. I have P.E. first period. Being as uncoordinated as I am, I hate P.E., and I think it’s fair to say that P.E. hates me. We were lining up to play basketball when suddenly a bunch of boys started singing a horrible rendition of “Girl, It’s Gotta B U.” Everyone was laughing, including me. But when they started dancing, I felt like I had been punched in the stomach.

The boys were imitating me!

But why?

How . . . ?

“Hey, Emma,” Julian said as he dribbled the basketball. “You’re a star!”

All through middle school, I had hoped that Julian would notice me. I had even practiced talking to him in front of the mirror. “Oh, hello, Julian,” I’d say in a sophisticated voice.

Julian was waiting for me to speak.

“Whaaa . . . whaaa . . . whaa?” I stammered.

“Saw your video on UrTube,” he said, grinning. “You know, ‘Girl Can’t Dance.’”

Julian pretended to spit up a hairball.

Things only got worse after that. It seemed like the entire school had seen my “Girl Can’t Dance” video.

And then I knew: Theo. It had to be Theo. When I spotted him at lunchtime, he started running. He was fast, but I was faster. “You creep,” I yelled, “you’re going to pay for this.”

Just then I noticed Serena Malik and a bunch popular kids laughing. A couple of them did the hairball dance move, while one sang the song horribly off-key on purpose. I let go of Theo’s shirt and ran to the bathroom to hide.

**M**om and Dad grounded Theo and took away his computer privileges for a month. But it was too late. “Girl Can’t Dance” had received more than 1,800 hits—and we had only 600 students at our middle school. Even after Theo took the video off of his UrTube account, it kept showing up on other people’s. Then

the strangest thing happened. Some kids started being nice to me. And one day someone I didn't even know was wearing a "Girl Can't Dance" T-shirt with my photo on it!

My video had gone viral.

"You're a celebrity," Aubree gushed. "Emma, you're famous!"

"Yeah," I admitted. "But I'm famous because I can't sing or dance. Because I humiliated myself. This is not how I imagined it."

"Enjoy the ride," Aubree said. "Everyone knows who you are."

It seemed like she was right. The day "Girl Can't Dance" surpassed a million views, Aubree and I jumped up and down and hugged each other. By the time it hit 14 million views, I was on *Wake Up A.M.* and even *Immediate Access*. When I got the call to be on the *Gary Larry Show*, the producer said they'd send a limo for me. As the studio audience looked on, Gary Larry asked, "Emma, how many people have seen your video?"

"Well, Gary," I said, turning to wink at the camera, "I stopped keeping track when it passed 20 million."

Gary Larry grinned. "Emma, we have a surprise for you."

The curtains parted, and out came . . . Jackson Jax!

He sauntered up to the microphone, looked straight at me, and whispered, "Girl, will you join me?"

The crowd went wild as Jackson Jax sang "Girl, It's Gotta B U," and I did my famous moves from "Girl Can't Dance."

I was a star.

**E**verywhere I went, people asked for my autograph. Total strangers would do my dance when they saw me. Everyone wanted my photo. I started wearing sunglasses to hide from my fans.

"Hey, Emma," a boy said at lunch. He held out a piece of paper. "Can you sign this for my cousin?"

I took off my sunglasses and asked, "Do I know you?"

"It's me, Julian," he answered. "We have P.E. together."

I let out a sigh and then scrawled a giant "E" on the paper.

"Thanks, Emma!" he said. "You're amazing."

"Whatever," I said.

"**You've changed,**" Aubree commented as she bit into her cheese pizza.

I looked at my fingernails. Maybe I'd try deep-purple polish next.

"How so?" I threw my head back and smiled as someone took my picture.

"Well, you're sort of . . . and don't take this the wrong way, but you're kind of . . . stuck up," Aubree said softly.

I put my sunglasses back on. Aubree just didn't get me.

"You're jealous," I told her. "Maybe I need a new best friend—someone who can deal with the awesomeness that is me."

"Maybe you're right," Aubree said, her voice cracking. I thought she might be crying, but it was hard to tell since my sunglasses made the room so dark.

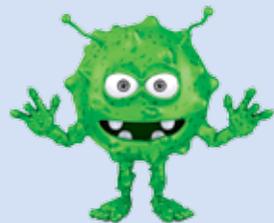
Theo walked past us and muttered, "**I've created a monster.**"



This word comes from the Greek roots "auto" (meaning "self") and "graph" (meaning "write"). Can you think of other words with these roots?



How has Emma changed? Why has she changed?



What does this figure of speech mean?





We just love the images Lisa creates! What does this detail reveal about the nature of Emma's fame?



Andy Warhol was an American artist who became popular in the 1960s. His art explored pop culture, advertising, and celebrity. What does his statement mean?



Emma is throwing away more than just her sunglasses. What is the larger meaning of this gesture?

**I stopped eating lunch with Aubree and started sitting with Serena Malik and the popular group.** A couple of weeks earlier, they had made fun of me. Now they wanted to hear about Jackson Jax, and the limo, and Gary Larry.

After a while, though, I learned that you can tell the same stories only so many times before people get bored. My UrTube hits began to dwindle to only a few thousand a day, then a few hundred, then a couple, until it seemed like no one was watching it anymore. The new top trending video was called “Betty & Herman.” **It was of a monkey riding a bike with a duck on her head.**

“Your 15 minutes of fame is up,” Theo said one night.

I was sitting alone in my room, watching “Girl Can’t Dance” on UrTube. I looked like an idiot. A happy, clueless idiot.

“Huh?”

“Andy Warhol said that everyone will be famous for 15 minutes,” Theo explained as he stood between me and the computer.

**“Who’s Andy Warhol?”** I asked. “Does he do karaoke?”

“You’re hopeless,” my brother told me.

**As quickly as I had become a celebrity, I had turned back into a pumpkin.** A pumpkin with no friends.

“Hi, Julian!” I said. He was at his locker. “Did your cousin like the autograph?”

He looked like he didn’t know who I was.

“It’s me, Emma,” I said. “You know, ‘Girl Can’t Dance.’”

I did a couple of hairball moves.

When he cringed, so did I.

Even though I still sat with the popular kids, I was pretty much ignored. After several days of this, I picked up my tray and walked to where Aubree was eating with a bunch of kids from our English class.

“Hey,” I said, motioning to an empty chair. “Mind if I join you?”

When Aubree shrugged, I sat down. No one said a word. It was beyond awkward. After 10 minutes of silence, I got up and left.

As I ate alone, I thought about how I wasn’t famous for something I could do. I was famous for something I couldn’t do—sing or dance. I was famous for not being talented. And if that was my 15 minutes of fame, I had wasted it.

**From my calculations,** it took 3 minutes for me to do “Girl Can’t Dance,” 16 minutes for Theo to upload it to UrTube, and 14 million views to make me a star. And what did that all add up to? I lost the one friend who really counted.

I owed Aubree an apology. Maybe even 14 million apologies. Fame wasn’t important to me anymore. Friends were. **I tossed my sunglasses in the trash can,** and then headed back to Aubree.

I had something important to tell her. ●

TOP TO BOTTOM: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM (2); MONDADORI VIA GETTY IMAGES; OCEAN/CORBIS