



## **The First**

*Sara Zaske*

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Cassie Craig is not the chosen one. Not even close.

She's just an ordinary, 15-year-old California girl with a few problems. She talks too much. She has a crush on a guy in her school. She worries about her dad who's a Marine in Afghanistan.

Then, there's her new friend, Violet. The weirdest girl in school, Violet comes from magical people who claim to be the first on earth.

When Cassie discovers that Violet has powers over nature, she will do anything to be her friend—all for the chance Violet might help bring her dad home.

But Cassie isn't the only one who wants Violet's powers, and she soon finds out how dangerous it is to be the true friend of one of the most powerful magical beings in the world.

## **The First Details**

Date : Published November 3rd 2012 by CreateSpace (first published April 21st 2012)

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Author : Sara Zaske

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# From Reader Review The First for online ebook

## Greta says

3.5 stars

Brief summary:

Cassie becomes intrigued with her school's shy girl, Violet. Violet is more than human. She's a First Person, and she has power over the natural world. As Cassie comes to know Violet, she learns more about the First People, namely that they aren't happy with humans. Everyone wants to use Violet for her incredible powers, even Cassie. However, violet is determined not to let herself be used as a weapon. They both just want to protect those they love.

Liked:

- Cassie was a strong willed, intelligent and brave main character. She really seemed to know her own mind. I was impressed with how she never seemed motivated by popularity.
- The premise was unique, and I've always been intrigued by the idea of plant people.
- The writing was easy to digest. A well paced story.
- Envisioning all the ways Violet used her powers was kind of cool.

Didn't love:

- At first I couldn't reconcile the supernatural and reality based sides of the story...Cassie wanting to use Violet's First Person abilities to help stop the war in Afghanistan. Wha? Luckily, this did not become the main storyline.
  - The First People's whole agenda and obvious bigotry against humans. I kind of felt the author was characterizing them as sort of out of control environmentalists/ conservationists. I wasn't comfortable with that kind of bad guy.
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## Christina (Ensnconced in Lit) says

I won this book from member librarything giveaways in exchange for an honest review.

The First by Sara Zaske is about Cassie, a teenager who used to be part of a mean girls crowd until she meets Violet, a strange girl who has powers that Cassie cannot even fathom. But as she meets Violet's grandfather, who is charismatic but sinister, Cassie realizes that she is going to play a large role in determining what is going to happen to humanity.

I'll say it out right. Most of the books I receive through librarything are not quality. But this book is different. I was impressed, and I'm hard to impress. The story starts with an observation of Cassie's and from then on, I was hooked. I loved how Zaske gradually revealed the plot and magical powers. This world and people that she has imagined has her own unique, creative twist in a deluged young adult genre. I thought all the female characters were very compelling: Cassie mostly, but also, Violet and her mother.

Also, in a world full of trilogies, I admired and applauded the fact that this was a stand alone novel, and an excellent one at that. I will definitely be looking out for Sara Zaske's future work.

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## **Natalie says**

Wow i really liked this book. What a wonderful concept of new beings in an amazing story.

"The First" are the First people on earth before humans evolved and imitated them. The First hold powers over nature.

Violet is a half "first" and is a loner, she doesn't mix with people and hardly talks, but holds powers like no other.

Cassie is known for her mega mouth, in the fact that she doesn't stop talking. She hangs in a group of friends at School, her Dad is in Afghanistan and her mum is busy with her toddler of a sister!

During a Volley Ball match, Cassie sees something from Violet that she can't explain. Confronting Violet, she asks how she did her "thing". Violet agrees to tell Cassie, if she stays the night!

After a night with Violet, Cassie learns much about the first and is asked to accompany Violet to see her grandfather for the first time on his orchard.

Putting friendships to the test, Cassie and Violet form a bond, trust and loyal friendship.

At the Orchard, Cassie and Violet learn a lot and make new acquaintances, but also learn that her Grandfather's intentions for Violet are not sincere and put's humans and firsts alike in danger.

Can they save people, find love and save the world? Read this amazing book to find out.

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## **Lexie says**

Both Cassie and Violet are young girls in high school, but with very different backgrounds. Cassie was in the "popular crowd" and Violet was a girl with magical abilities tied to nature. Cassie is someone who doesn't hold back her opinion and is very strong in her values, pretty much a rarity in high school!! Once she begins a tenuous friendship with Violet, she is forced to choose between her old crowd and this new girl who intrigues her. Let's just say that Cassie doesn't do well being backed into a corner, because she will follow her heart even if that means getting ousted from the cool crowd. Violet has never had a friend before, and isn't quite sure where or how Cassie fits into her world. Violet is a descendant of a race called "The First". They are people who were one this planet long before humans were and are tied to nature and able to draw upon its abilities. Violet is one of the most powerful people yet, but has a gentle and loving heart.

When Cassie first saw Violet use her abilities she immediately wanted to use it to help her dad and the soldiers in Afghanistan. She brought it up several times with Violet, but once she saw how extreme Violet's grandfather was and how he only wanted to use Violet she realized that friendship is based on respect and compassion and she never wanted to put Violet in that position. While originally reading this, I thought that

whole situation was bizarre until I realized that most anyone in Cassie's position would want the same thing. The fact that she backed down on her position, acknowledged she was wrong, and then proceeded to help Violet without thinking about what could be gained I realized that the author was telling a story that everyone could relate to. Most of us might not be as reasonable as Cassie, when it came to letting our own agendas go especially when they pertain to those we love!!

I thought this was an original idea and I enjoyed the quick read. Zaske did a good job of telling her story, even down to the extremist views of Violet's grandfather. There are extremists in every culture, race, religion, and government in the world. By extrapolating the lessons from this story most everyone can see that in their own perspective, but Zaske does it in a way that doesn't bore or condescend to the reader. It looks like this is going to be a possible series, but it is a well told stand alone novel.

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### **Sara says**

I would like to thank the author for giving me this book in exchange for an honest review. my rating is probably more of a 3.5 stars. I feel this book is best for ages 12 to 18.

Cassie is a regular high school 15 year old, a little outspoken at times, and just wants her Dad to be able to come home from Afghanistan so her life can be normal again. Violet is the silent, small girl from school that never says a word. Cassie accidentally befriends her and violet reveals that she is a member of an ancient people call "The First." She is connected to trees, and has the magic ability to make plants grow at an amazing speed, and control water, and cause storms. Cassie at first thinks she can use Violet's talents to come up with a ridiculous plan to end the war and bring her father home. But then both girls meet Violet's grandfather, and her feelings change. Grandfather, Mr. Baumler, reminds me of an extreme, fanatical, "Go Green" tree person. He has a plan to rid the area of all humans, or monkey people, as they refer to them. And he needs Violet's help to accomplish this. His craziness makes Cassie realize she was going to use Violet, too, and this helps them to become better friends, and work to save the city.

This was a very interesting book with a new kind of people. Sometimes I found a little of the extreme plans a little ridiculous, but it was entertaining. Cassie has a little bit of a big math that helps to entertain. And there is a hint of romance in the air with Kodi. Recommend this mostly to teens. I found it cute and easy to read.

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### **Kathy LaMee says**

Sara Zaske has delivered a debut novel that brings a fabulous twist of a tale to the YA genre! It is fresh and new, and I loved it!

The story's central character, Cassie, is a typical teenager. She part of clique in school but by a twist of fate and her intense curiosity, she ends up spending the night with the 'odd' girl- Violet. That night, Cassie's world is turned sideways as she discovers some interesting things about her new-found friend's connection to nature and some pretty awesome powers. Violet sees Cassie as a strong deliberate person. She also knows Cassie just can't help herself when it comes to her curiosity; that's why she's chosen her to help her on a quest to go and meet her grandfather, and find out more about her powers. Soon the girls are thrown into a situation that is beyond anything either of them could have imagined and they have to rely on their own inner

strength and powers to win out over a catastrophic plan that will end life as they know it.

There are many things I like about Zaske's debut novel. First, it doesn't take reading her bio to know this is an author who has written- a lot. There is nothing at all amateurish about her first published novel. She does an excellent job at pace and progression of the story, unwrapping the characters and the plot slowly- urging us to keep reading to find out more. The story itself is wonderful and combines fantasy YA genre with environmental consciousness that culminates in a struggle that sounds all too plausible. Of course, as any good YA book should, there are relevant teen issues- bullying, cliques, love interests- that give the reader easy to make connections to all of the characters. As a mother of teens and an adult reader who indulges in YA I found a lot of ways to connect with the parents of both Violet and Cassie and what drives them to make the decisions they do. Zaske does an excellent job providing a relevant yet fantastical story that any reader will enjoy. Kudos to her as well for producing a fabulous stand alone book in a market saturated with series and trilogies and the like. I look forward to reading more from this great new author! I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review on TracyRiva.com

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## **Elicia Cheah says**

You can also find this review at <http://girlinthewoodsreviews.blogspot...>

Detailed Review: This book was special in a way which I haven't seen in ages. Not only is it different, it is creative and original.

At first glance, Cassie Craig is what you would call normal. She has a busy mother who always has to take care her younger sister, Drew. Her father is in war in the middle of Afghanistan.

But in one day, everything can change.

All thanks to Violet Starkey. She's not what you'd call normal. She is weird, as in she doesn't talk at all, she wears the wrong clothes, she doesn't even try to fit in.

How did Cassie even become friends with her? Cassie, the best friend of a popular girl would never have dreamed of befriending Violet, not even if she was given a million dollars.

So why? Well, it goes like this. A volleyball match in school. Violet get hits in the face by the ball. She doesn't even fall. Cassie saw Violet's shoes, which had something underneath that stuck to the ground.

They're roots.

Don't believe me? Read on.

After that, Cassie's curiosity forces her to abandon her friendship and everything she's ever believed in. Because what she is about to know is something impossible.

Violet comes from a group or SPECIES called the First People. Like their name suggests, they are the first people to ever exist on Earth. They are closer to nature. When Cassie visits Violet's house, she knew then that they were real for certain after Violet demonstrated her powers to her.

Not without igniting any plan in Cassie's head. She wants her new friend to stop the war her father is fighting with her powers. Make it snow or rain, anything.

But soon, Violet and Cassie find themselves in the middle of plot to destroy America, planned by Violet's grandfather so they could regain what was lost to them many centuries before. Violet's powers are more powerful than any of the First People, that's why she's essential. Cassie is just tagging along, though she doesn't like the idea of her home being destroyed.

But left without any other choice, Violet is forced to do it.

Here's another fact about the First People:

When they are born, their souls are bound to an object of nature, such as a tree or an animal.

In the end, Violet is forced to sacrifice her powers to prevent the same thing from happening anymore.

Brief Review: Unusual and original, this story moved me in a different way than most YA books usually do. A great debut for the author.

Final Rating: 5/5 'Totally Amazing'

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## **Between the Bind says**

Find this review and more on [Between the Bind](#)

The First is a unique story, explained well in the above blurb. The plot is well developed and the characterization is thoughtful. I appreciated that the First People were elite's - which made complete sense to me as they are so much more advanced, intelligent, and powerful than humans. And then there is little halfling Violet, who is most definitely an odd ball - but an endearing one. Ms. Zaske definitely pulled me into her world of First's.

The First begins in high school...with mean girls. I'm not a big fan of the typical mean girl but SZ is a sneaky beast - able to frustrate me while constructing my connection with Violet and my innate desire to punch faces protect her from the above vom-bags.

SZ also surprised me when Cassie was included in the "mean girl" group. I actually enjoyed my initial dislike for Cassie, forcing her to not only win Violet's respect and trust but also my own. The change facilitated was realistic, which to me means that it took a some time for Cassie to be a trustworthy character after her initial lemming behavior.

But once the friendship between Violet and Cassie is real, you can really see the kind, protective, and honest young woman underneath the initial vapid teenage exterior. Cassie really had a depth to her that I enjoyed uncovering.

There were a few plot points that I didn't really think fit, or were too quickly paced to feel like the natural evolution of the story - for example, when Cassie began to research ways to use Violet's powers to bring her dad home from the Afghanistan. I felt like there wasn't enough attention paid to this - and because of it, the concept was almost unnecessary.

Overall, *The First* was an engaging read with a unique concept. Even with the minor editing flaws and some plot disconnect, *The First* is a book to add to your to-read shelf.

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## **Markella says**

For more reviews, check out my blog [It's A Hardcover Life](#)

"The First" is an Eco-thriller centered on Cassie, a normal high school girl, who makes friends with Violet, the ultimate weirdo. Cassie just wants some answers after seeing Violet do something impossible but what she gets sucked into has the potential of killing everyone she knows and possibly capsizing all of California. Turns out Violet is a part of The First people, a race older than humans with powers to manipulate nature. When Violet asks Cassie to come with her to see her long lost grandfather, Cassie agrees hoping Violet will use her powers to stop the war in Afghanistan and thus bring her father home. From there everything spirals out of control with the reader's introduction to the First people, their powers and the plot against humans.

*The First* was a bit slow going for me. At first I wasn't sure if I would like the story. It jumps right into Cassie seeing Violet do something crazy and following her home. I didn't understand why Cassie would do it and I usually prefer a bit of a lead in and intro to the characters before things start to happen. But after a rocky beginning, I sailed through "The First" mainly because of the interesting plot, characters and cool paranormal people.

What I absolutely loved about "The First" and what really made me interested in the story were the characters. Each and every one of them was unique and individual. Rather than tell you what each person was like Zinke showed their personalities in their actions and speech. Cassie was a blabber mouth, curious and goodhearted. Violet was quiet, observed, and strong-willed. Don't get me started on her mother. Each person felt real, like I knew them, and each was distinct.

I also liked the general vibe of the story. Although this is considered an Eco-thriller, it wasn't too preachy about the whole don't destroy the Earth message. The message was clear and I agreed with the points, but I was happy it didn't overshadow the plot.

The only complaint I have is that I wish the relationship between Cassie and her love interest would have been a little more involved. I loved him. He was intriguing, mysterious and good-looking but their time together was too far in between for the amount of devotion he shows her. I wish he would have been a bigger part of the book.

**OVERALL:** "The First" was slow going in the beginning but with kick ass paranormals, great characters and a fast paced storyline, I would recommend it as a fun and easy read.---8.5 out of 10



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## **Lindsay says**

This book started off just ok for me. It wasn't slow, it didn't move fast, it wasn't great, it wasn't horrible... the first 35% left me indifferent. I was actually thinking as I was reading that I might just put this down. Then I hit approximately 40% and things became interesting. Cassie and Violet started to grow on me and Kodi intrigued me.

The last 60% of this book was action packed, interesting and a complete page turner. I thought the story was interesting and I particularly like the fact that the main character wasn't supernatural in a paranormal book. It was just a nice change of pace.

The book ended in such a way that I was satisfied with the ending while being curious about a possible series.

I wish there had been a little more of a romance in the story, but it had nice bones and a nice connection between characters.

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## **Melanie Cusick-Jones says**

What a great and unexpected book! I'd read - I think - that *The First* was a dystopian and so I'd left it in my Kindle dwindling having had a good dose of dystopia recently. And then I began reading it (after pressing the wrong button on my kindle) and mistakenly thought I was reading a book about vampires and at around 15% in was wondering how the hell the people with power over nature were going to have anything to do with vampires...what can I say - I don't always pay attention!

So - back to the book. There are dystopian elements to *The First*, but it would only be a dystopian book if you are one of the First People - if you're a human, like me, then the environmental indicators in the book are a nice nod in the direction of dystopia, but it's not the end of the world, but a little journey down that path. The environmental message is handled really well in the book, so it isn't overbearing, but there are lots of good pieces of information to get you thinking.

The characters, dialogue and writing are great - very engaging, perfect pitch for a YA (I would also suggest this as being suitable for MG audience as it is clean, quirky and fun on the whole). The character voices feel authentically teenaged and the pitch, pace and action are all perfectly balanced with the motivations of the individuals. For me it felt a little like a fantasy cross-over in parts - the powers of the First People and their approach to life certainly had those elements, but it worked very well in the contemporary setting. I also liked the family/military references, which are outside the main plot, but I felt were very 'real' to life for anyone who has been in those situations.

Overall, I think this was a great read. It is a nice length and paced so well to keep you reading - I got through it in four days, which is quick for me as I don't always get too much time to read. I think the story was also

very original and quality of writing was great. I would recommend this to anyone looking for a good adventure story with interesting characters.

Thanks very much to Sara for releasing this free at Amazon on Earth Day, as that's where I got my copy.

You can find more of my reviews at: <http://melcj.wordpress.com/category/r...>

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### **Amy says**

I really enjoyed this book for one main reason and that was it's uniqueness. I've never read a book with a plot like *The First*. It was different in a good way. I really enjoyed Violet and learning about her powers. I was worried at first that I wasn't going to like it because of the fantasy elements, but it was quite believable and interesting.

The last 1/3 of the book really sucked me in. I just couldn't stop reading. After Cassie got back from the orchard I just knew the proverbial sh\*t was going to hit the fan. I didn't know the action was going to be that enthralling though. I was reading at a restaurant that was closing when I had just a little bit left and it killed me to have to stop and drive home then finish the book.

Thank you to the author, Sara Zaske, for the opportunity to read such a unique story. It was most enjoyable.

Sorry my review is so short. I just think I summed it up very concisely. Five stars for the action and uniqueness of the plot. Great read!

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### **Damien Kelly says**

I can't lie; I'm not the target for *The First*. I've enjoyed lots of works designated as Young Adult fiction, and my final year of literature studies was focussed entirely on children's literature. There's a difficulty in identifying the elements that lend a children's work (which includes YA fiction) that transcendent, crossover appeal to adult readers, but this book doesn't trouble that level of exploration. Written in a very direct, authentically youthful style, and at a skipping pace, this story wears its juvenile focus on its sleeve, and it hasn't the additional layers that would give it the kind of crossover appeal that the likes of *His Dark Materials*, for example, enjoys.

But that's not to say that this is a formulaic children's book. In the debates over what is and is not a work for younger readers, the only consistent definition is one where the writer is striving to say something about childhood. Sara Zaske definitely has something to say about childhood, and she's doing it in a faithful voice and in an honest way that takes her novel away from a lot of the tropes of the genre.

Cassie, her protagonist, defies cliché at every turn. She's not the magical character, but neither is she the scrappy outsider, fighting up from nothing. She's the side-kick, in every single way—the character who, in any other book, would be a foil for comic asides and set pieces, and it is very novel to see that middle-distance character given narrative focus. She is de-centred from the supernatural story, but she's no reflective, passive observer of events; it's her story, and the magical elements are in service to her story. But even this could be clichéd if the magical events were befalling this very ordinary girl. Crucially, they're not;

what brings Cassie into the plot are her own selfish agendas and I found that really engaging and accessible. Cassie is a uniquely believable teenage girl, and her presence in this otherwise very ethereal world gives it a powerful sense of the recognisable. Add to this a dusty, urban contrast to her otherworld, and there's a strain of Charlainé Harris' *Bon Temps* in Zaske's Oakland that really pushes the modern aesthetic onto what is—in its bones—a very traditional fairytale.

Zaske is, herself, revised and de-centred. All that moving about, becoming a mother, while having that profound desire to look backwards—she is in the middle distance, and can empathise with her main character completely. If she always writes from this authentic place, I'd be quick to pass her books onto my own daughter.

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### **Nancy (The Avid Reader) says**

Cassie is a typical teenage California girl. Her best friend Angie is a very egotistical person. I couldn't understand Cassie and Angie being best friends. I mean they were like night and day. Cassie thought about other people and their feelings. Where as Angie only thought about herself.

Well they were best friends until Cassie became interested in the new girl at school. Violet is a very strange person until you get to know her. She doesn't talk much where as Cassie talks a lot. Violet ask Cassie to go over to her house for a play date. Cassie wants to go but is kind of ashamed to go to someone's house for a play date that is something that little kids do. Besides her best friend, Angie doesn't think she ought to go to that strange girls house.

But Cassie wants very much to go so she does. When they get there Violet tells Cassie about her magical powers. She also tells her about how her family are The First people. That her people were here on earth before humans were.

Violet's estranged grandfather wants her to come for a visit. But Violet's mother doesn't want her to go by herself. She ask Cassie to go with her. Her grandfather wants to use Violet for her what she can do, her being the most powerful person ever. Her grandfather wants to take the world back from the humans. When Violet finds out what it is that he has wanted all along with her she refuses to help him. Her grandfather then blackmails her into doing what he wants by threatening her mother his own daughter's life. Violet thinking that she has no other choice but to help him after he threatens her does want her wants.

She send Cassie home to warn her family and everyone that she can. To try to get as many as she can to leave before it is to late. Cassie tries but no one believes her. The First is one of those books that will stay with you long after you have put it down. I really enjoyed reading it. I would like to know more about Cassie and Violet and The First people.

I recieved a copy of *The First* by Sara Zaske from LibraryThing for review.

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### **Jasmine Villanova says**

Beneath the Moon and Stars review

I wasn't sure about this when I started it. It was kinda slow and one of the characters annoyed me a little bit. It picked up and I ended up liking that character more than I thought I would. I liked the concept the most. It is so unique. I hope there is a sequel because I think there is so much you could do with it.

Cassie never bothered me. I really liked her. I like how she gave Violet a chance before judging her. Violet annoyed me in the first half. She kinda grew on me. I liked her powers and how she finally stood up for herself in the end. She might have the most insane family I've ever read about/ I swear they were kinda scary. Talk about a controlling family.

I think everyone's powers was the coolest part of the storyline. It seemed like the whole book was about her grandfather. It almost like revolved around him. It seemed like he was controlling the story and I didn't really get that. I loved all the action in the end. That being said I think the first half should have had more excitement. I ended up liking the second half better than the first. Overall I really liked this. I hope there is a sequel because I would love to read more about the first people :).

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