

# ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES



*Young Adult*

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ISBN: 978-0-385-75588-7

## Book Summary:

Two suicidal teenagers come together in a romantic relationship and try to save each other.

## Summary of Concerns:

This book contains moderate profanity and derogatory terms; suicidal ideations; sexual activities; and alcohol use.

**2** / 5

**Teen Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

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3	<p>Is today a good day to die?  This is something I ask myself in the morning when I wake up.  ...Is today the day?  And if not today- when?  I am asking myself this now as I stand on a narrow ledge six stories above the ground. I'm so high up, I'm practically part of the sky. I look down at the pavement below, and the world tilts. I close my eyes, enjoying the way everything spins. Maybe this time I'll do it- let the air carry me away. It will be like floating in a pool, drifting off until there's nothing.</p>
4	<p>I open my eyes, and the ground is still there, hard and permanent. I am in the bell tower of the high school, standing on a ledge about four inches wide.</p>
6	<p>See, I excel at other, more important things- guitar, sex, and consistently disappointing my dad, to name a few.</p>
7	<p>"So it'll be an open coffin for me, which means if I jump, it ain't gonna be pretty. Besides, I kind of like my face intact like this, two eyes, one nose, one mouth, a full set of teeth, which, if I'm being honest, is one of my best features."</p>
12	<p>The truth is, there are a lot of reasons, most of which change daily, like the thirteen fourth graders killed earlier this week when some SOB opened fire in their school gym, or the girl two years behind me who just died of cancer, or the man I saw outside the Mall Cinema kicking his dog, or my father.</p>
21	<p>I wonder what she would say if I told her that an hour ago I was being talked off the ledge of the bell tower.</p>
22	<p>At least fifteen people- some I know, some I don't, some who haven't talked to me in months- stop me on the way to class to tell me how courageous I was to save Theodore Finch from killing himself.</p>
26	<p>My cousin Stacey, who goes to New Castle, says she and a friend were in Chicago and he was playing this club and he totally hooked up with both of them?</p>
34	<p>"What we need to do is get you laid." It's an indirect reference to the bell tower incident. If I get laid, I won't try killing myself. According to Charlie, getting laid fixes everything. If only world leaders would get laid well and regularly, the world's problems might disappear.</p>
36	<p>I fish through my desk for a cigarette, stick it in my mouth, and remember as I'm reaching for my lighter that Theodore Finch, 80's kid, doesn't smoke. God, I hate him, the clean-cut eager little prick. I leave the cigarette in my mouth unlit, trying to chew the nicotine out, and pick up the guitar, play along, then give it up and sit down at the computer, swinging my chair around so it's backward, the only way I can compose.</p>
46	<p>"Did you get any ass?"  "Yeah, but I think it was by mistake."  ...I don't see Ashley or Shelby anywhere, but fifteen guys are sprawled on the floor playing a drinking game.  ...Couples re making out.</p>
47	<p>when they're done, Suze says to me, "We hooked up sophomore year. He may be weird, but I'll say this for him, that's one guy who knows what he's doing."</p>

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48	Roamer pops the top off a beer and chugs it down. ...Ten months ago, I would have sat beside them, drinking beer and fitting in, and writing witty commentary in my head:...
49	The smell of beer is everywhere. ...Tomorrow they'll think it was just another drunk kid.
50	We tried to catch them with our tongues, and then Ryan's tongue found its way into my mouth, and I closed my eyes as the flakes landed on my cheeks. ...Ryan's hands found their way under my shirt. I remember how warm they were, and even as I kissed him, I was thinking, I'm kissing Ryan Cross. Things like this didn't happen to me before we moved to Indiana. I slipped my own hands under his sweatshirt, and the skin there was hot but smooth.
59	"So, how long have you been having these suicidal feelings?"
69	One of the great pleasures of my life is making comments like this, because having a gay son is my bigoted prick of a father's worst nightmare.
74	January 11. According to the New York Times, nearly 20 percent of suicides are committed by poison, but among doctors who kill themselves, that number is 57 percent. My thoughts on the method: Seems like kind of a coward's way out, if you ask me. I think I'd rather feel something. That said, if someone held a gun to my head (haha- sorry, suicide humor) and made me use poison, I'd choose cyanide. In gaseous form, death can be instant, which I realize defeats the purpose of feeling something. But come to think of it, after a lifetime of feeling too much, maybe there's actually something to be said for fast and sudden. When I finish, I walk into the bathroom to dig through the medicine cabinet. Advil, aspirin, and some kind of over-the-counter sleeping pills I stole from Kate and then stored in an old prescription bottle of Mom's. ...But you never know when you might need a good sleeping pill. I open the bottle now, dump the blue tablets into my palm, and count them. Thirty. Back at my desk, I line the pills up one by one by one, like a little blue army.
76	I adjust myself and think how weirdly, stupidly sexy this is.
77	I scoop up the sleeping pills and hold them in my palm. I can swallow them right now, lie down on my bed, close my eyes, drift away.
82	"Violet Markey, and she's not skinny. She has hips." "And a sweet, sweet ass."
106	I wonder if I could sleep like this, here on the bottom of the bathtub, if I wanted to sleep which I don't. I let my mind drift. I hear words forming as if I'm sitting at the computer already. In March of 1941, after three serious breakdowns, Virginia Woolf wrote a note to her husband and walked to a nearby river. She shoved heavy stones into her pocket and dove into the river. She shoved heavy stones into her pocket and dove into the water. "Dearest," the note began, "I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times...So I am doing what seems the best thing to do." How long has it been? Four minutes? Five? Longer? My lungs are starting to burn. Stay calm, I tell myself. Stay relaxed. The worst thing you can do is panic. Six minutes? Seven? The longest I've held my breath is six and a half minutes.

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108	The Bartlett Dirt has named the top ten suicidal students in school, and my phone is buzzing because Theodore Finch is number one on the list. Jordan Gripenwaldt has covered the front page of the school paper with resources and information about teen suicide and what to do if you're thinking of killing yourself, but no one is paying attention to this.
122	<p>Amanda's head pops up over the seat, her shirt hanging open so that I can see her bra, which is baby blue with yellow flowers. Like that, I can feel the image burning into my retinas, where it will remain forever...</p> <p>There are too many distractions, and so I talk over the noise to Ryan, but he's more interested in sneaking his hand up my shirt. I've managed to make it seventeen years, eight months, two weeks, and one day without having sex in the backseat of an Impala (or anywhere, for that matter), so I tell him I'm dying to see the view, and I push open the door and stand there.</p>
123	Then Ryan's hand is snaking its way up my shirt again, and I pull away.
140	<p>Interesting fact: Hanging is the most frequently used method of suicide in the United Kingdom because, researchers say, it's viewed as being both quick and easy. But the length of the rope has to be calibrated in proportion to the weight of the person; otherwise there is nothing quick or easy about it. Additional interesting fact: The modern method of judicial hanging is termed the Long Drop.</p>
145	I try to tell it he might have meant "Just be careful when you have sex. Use a condom," but instead, because, you know, it's a brain, and therefore has- is- a mind of its own, it starts thinking of every way in which Violet Markey might break my heart.
159	He's got a beer in one hand and a remote in the other.
161	<p>The rate of car exhaust suicides in the States has declined since the mid-sixties, when emission controls were introduced. In England, where emission controls barely exist, that rate has doubled.</p> <p>...I picture a body of water and me on my back floating, still and peaceful, no movement except my heart beating in my chest. When they find me, I'll just look like I'm sleeping.</p> <p>In 2013, a man in Pennsylvania committed suicide via carbon monoxide, but when his family tried to rescue him, they were overcome by the fumes and every single one of them died before rescue crews could save them.</p>
163	Protect the penis.
185	Roamer swings and hits Finch's face with a thud. He swings again and again, his fist smashing into Finch's mouth, into his nose, into his ribs. At first Finch isn't fighting back- he's just blocking the shots. But then he has Roamer's arm twisted behind his back, and he's plunging his head into the water and holding it under.
200	Then I hold her face in my hands and kiss her. I kiss her harder than I mean to, so I ease off a little, but then she's kissing me back. Her arms are around me neck, and I'm up against her, and she's against the car, and then I pick her up, and her legs are around me, and I somehow get the back door open, and then I'm laying her down on the blanket that's there, and I close the doors and yank off my sweater, and she pulls off her shirt, and I say, "You are driving me crazy. You have been driving me crazy for weeks."

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	<p>My mouth is on her neck, and she's making these gasping sounds, and then she says, "Oh my God, where are we?" And she's laughing, and I'm laughing, and she's kissing my neck, and my entire body feels like it's going to fucking explode, and her skin is smooth and warm, I run my hand over the curve of her hip as she bites my ear, and then that hand is sliding into the hollow between her stomach and her jeans. She holds on to me tighter, and when I start undoing my belt, she kind of pulls away, and I want to bang my head against the wall of Little Bastard because, shit. She's a virgin. I can tell by the pull-away.</p>
205	<p>"I thought it was a good idea not to get myself incarcerated before I have a chance to get laid again."</p>
209	<p>Do you think any guy will ever have sex with me or love me for who I am?</p>
214	<p>By now, the wandering is really an excuse to drive somewhere and make out. I tell myself I'm not ready because to me sex is a Big Deal, even is some of my friends have been doing it since ninth grade.</p>
215	<p>I feel like I'm living for these moments- the moments when I'm just about to lie down beside him, when I know it's getting ready to happen, his skin on mine, his mouth on mine, and then when he's touching me and the electric current is shooting through me everywhere.</p> <p>...We kiss until my lips are numb, stopping ourselves at the very edge of Someday, saying not yet, not hear, even though it takes willpower I didn't know I had.</p>
220	<p>She kicks off her shoes and pulls off her shirt and pants so that, in seconds, she is standing there in only her bra and underwear, which are a kind of dull rose color but somehow the sexiest things I've ever seen.</p> <p>I go totally and utterly speechless and she starts to laugh. "Well, come on. I know you're not shy, so drop your pants and let's do this. I assume you want to see if the rumors are true." My mind draws a blank, and she juts one hip out, Amanda Monk-style, resting a hand on it. "About it being bottomless?"</p> <p>"Oh yeah. Right. Of course." I slide off my jeans so I'm in my boxers, and I take her hand.</p>
222	<p>We tread water, looking at each other, and suddenly there's not enough water in the world to clean away my dirty thoughts.</p>
224	<p>Less than 2 percent of people in the U.S. kill themselves by drowning, maybe because the human body was built to float. The number one country in the world for drowning, accidental or otherwise, is Russia, which has twice as many deaths as the next highest, Japan. The Cayman Islands, surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, has the fewest drownings of all.</p>
227	<p>I pull her in and kiss her the way I've always wanted to kiss her, a lot more R-rated than PG-13.</p>
228	<p>And then she kisses me. It's the kind of kiss that makes me lose track of everything, and so it may be hours or minutes by the time we break apart.</p> <p>...So that she doesn't feel she has to say it back, I kiss her again, and wonder if I dare do anything else, go any further, because I don't want to ruin this moment. And then, because I'm now the one thinking too much, and because she is different from all other girls and because I really, really don't want to screw this</p>

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	up, I concentrate on kissing her on the banks of the Blue Hole, in the sunshine, and I let that be enough.
230	He takes my hand and spins me out and then in so I'm tucked against him, and we sway, and rock a little, but mostly stand still, pressed together, my heart pounding because if I tilt my head back, just like this, he will kiss me like he's doing now. ...And then I realize his towel is lying on the floor and he's naked. ...And then I close my eyes as my own towel drops and the song comes to an end. I still hear it after we are in the bed and under the sheets and other songs are playing.
248	I sit beside him, across the room from Amanda and Roamer and Ryan, and afterward he pulls me under the stairwell and kisses me like he's afraid I might disappear.
250	He laughs when I pinch his arm, and then his hands are on my face and he's kissing me, which makes the stitch disappear.
251	Under the covers, we get naked and heated, and afterward we talk like children, the blanket up over our heads.
260	By sunset, I'm on my way back to Bartlett, cutting through the heart of Indianapolis, smoking my fourth American Spirit cigarette in a row.
264	For a few seconds, all she does is breathe in the scent of flowers, and then she turns to me and, without a word, kisses me.
269	I walk Violet to class and hold her hand and kiss her and give her the best smile I can find so that she won't watch me that way.
271	"I'm fine. Believe me, if I decide to kill myself, you'll be the first to know. I'll save a front-row seat, or at least wait till you've got more money for the lawsuit." Note to self: Suicide is not a laughing matter, particularly for authority figures who are in any way responsible for you.
278	We eat in silence, and afterward, I find the sleeping pills in my mom's medicine cabinet. I take the whole bottle back to my room and drop half the contents down my throat and then, in the bathroom, bend over the sink, washing them down. Let's see what Cesare Pavese felt. Let's see if there's any valiant acclamation to this. I stretch out on the floor of my closet, the bottle in my hand. I try to imagine my body shutting down, little by little, going totally numb. I almost feel the heaviness coming over me, even though I know it's too fast. I can barely lift my head, and my feet seem miles away. Stay here, the pills say. Don't move. Let us do our work. It's this haze of blackness that settles over me, like a fog, only darker. My body is pressed down by the back and the fog, into the floor. There's no acclamation here. This is what it feels like to be asleep. ...I force myself up and drag myself to the bathroom, where I stick my finger down my throat and throw up. Nothing much comes out, even though I just ate. ...I push my limbs through the doors of the emergency room and say to the first person I see, "I swallowed pills and can't get them out of me. Get them out of me."
279	Fact: Most suicides occur between the hours of noon and six p.m. Guys with tattoos are more likely to kill themselves with guns.

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	People with brown eyes are more likely to choose hanging or poison. Coffee drinkers are less likely to commit suicide than non-coffee drinkers.
281	This isn't a nature class, but a support group for teens who are thinking about, or have attempted, or have survived, suicide.
283	When it's my turn, I introduce myself as Josh Raymond, seventeen, no previous experience beyond my recent halfhearted experiment with sleeping pills.
284	In a wooden voice, she recites, "I'm Rachel, I'm seventeen, I'm bulimic, and I tried to kill myself twice, both times with pills..." ...I want to get away from labels. "I'm OCD," "I'm depressed," "I'm a cutter," they say, like these are the things that define them.
285	She holds up her wrists , and even across the table I can see the scars.
292	He writes I, want, to, have, sex, with, Ultraviolet, Remarkable.
293	He slaps this onto the wall and then kisses me, his arm circling my waist. Before I know it, I'm on my back and he's looking down at me, and I am pulling off his shirt. Then his skin is on mine, and I'm on top of him, and for a while I forget we're on the floor of a closet because all I can think of is him, us, him and me, Finch and Violet, Violet and Finch, and everything is okay again.
298	"It's called Life Is Life. It's this- it's a support group for teenagers who've either thought about suicide or tried it."
301	He kisses me again and leans sexily against the door, as if he knows how good he looks.
302	A bottle of vodka sits on ice.
303	He kisses me. I kiss him. ...He kisses me. I kiss him.
336	Each time, I can stay a little longer, but not as long as Finch, who could hold his breath for minutes. Could hold. Because at some point, I know: he's gone. He's not somewhere. He's nowhere.
341	I stand, thinking how it wasn't an accident at all and how "suicide victim" is an interesting term. The victim part of it implies they had no choice. And maybe Finch didn't feel like he had a choice, or maybe he wasn't trying to kill himself at all but just going in search of the bottom.
377	In August of that year, he took a lethal dose of sleeping pills, and even though he kept a daily journal, no one could ever truly explain why he did it.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	16
Bitch	4
Faggot	1
Fuck	8
Goddamn	1
Piss	8
Prick	2
Shit	16