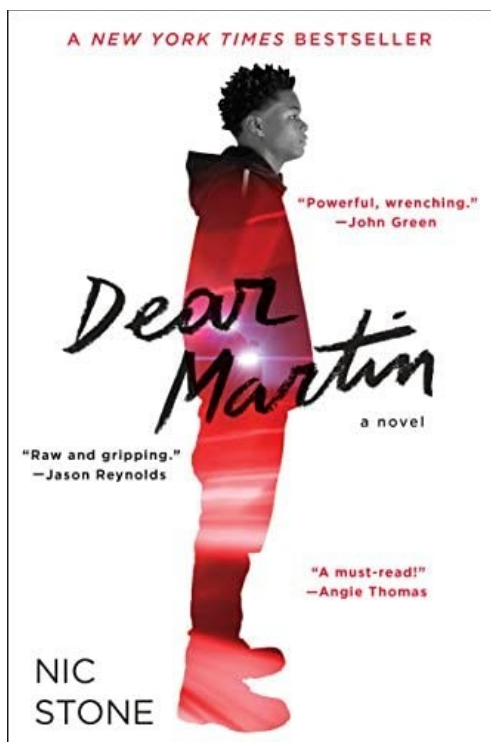


DEAR MARTIN



Young Adult

By Nic Stone

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Book Summary:

A seventeen-year-old African American male perceives authority and American culture as being unjust toward black Americans due to racism.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains profanity; racism; controversial racial and social commentary; and alcohol use involving minors.

2/**5**

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
3	He knows she's stone drunk, but this is too much, even for her.
4	Melo can be a little dramatic when she's drunk.
5	<p>Even drunk, Jus can't deny Melo's the finest girl he's ever laid eyes—not to mention hands—on.</p> <p>...Now he's got the urge to kiss her even though her eyes are red and her hair's a mess and she smells like vodka and cigarettes and weed.</p>
7	<p>Before he can get his head out of the car, he feels a tug on his shirt and is yanked backward. His head smacks the doorframe just before a hand clamps down on the back of his neck. His upper body slams onto the trunk with so much force, he bites the inside of his cheek, and his mouth fills with blood.</p> <p>Jus swallows, head spinning, unable to get his bearings. The sting of cold metal around his wrists pulls him back to reality. Handcuffs. It hits him: Melo's drunk beyond belief in the backseat of a car she fully intended to drive, yet Jus is the one in handcuffs. The cop shoves him to the ground beside the police cruiser as he asks if Justyce understands his rights. Justyce doesn't remember hearing any rights, but his ears had been ringing from the two blows to the head, so maybe he missed them. He swallows more blood. "Officer, this is a big misundersta—" he starts to say, but he doesn't get to finish because the officer hits him in the face. "Don't you say shit to me, you son of a bitch. I knew your punk ass was up to no good when I saw you walking down the road with that goddamn hood on."</p> <p>So the hood was a bad idea. Earbuds too. Probably would've noticed he was being trailed without them. "But, Officer, I—" "You keep your mouth shut." The cop squats and gets right in Justyce's face. "I know your kind: punks like you wander the streets of nice neighborhoods searching for prey. Just couldn't resist the pretty white girl who'd locked her keys in her car, could ya?"</p>
13	<p>Long story short, I tried to do a good deed and wound up on the ground in handcuffs. And despite the fact that my ex-girl was visibly drunk off her ass, excuse my language, I apparently looked so menacing in my prep school hoodie, the cop who cuffed me called for backup.</p> <p>...There was this kid, Shemar Carson...black dude, my age, shot and killed in Nevada by this white cop back in June. The details are hazy since there weren't any witnesses, but what's clear is this cop shot an unarmed kid. Four times. Even fishier, according to the medical examiners, there was a two-hour gap between the estimated time of death and when the cop called it in.</p> <p>...I thought if I made sure to be an upstanding member of society, I'd be exempt from the stuff THOSE black guys deal with, you know? Really hard to swallow that I was wrong. All I can think now is "How different would things have gone had I not been a black guy?"</p> <p>...Yeah, there are no more "colored" water fountains, and it's supposed to be illegal to discriminate, but if I can be forced to sit on the concrete in too-tight cuffs when I've done nothing wrong, it's clear there's an issue.</p>
16	"So you mean to tell me that after this girl sat there and watched this cop brutalize your ass—"
23	Doc: I'll come right out with it, then: Do you guys feel we've achieved full "equality" with regard to race?

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24	<p>America's a pretty color-blind place now.</p> <p>...SJ: It never ceases to amaze me that guys like you have your heads so far up your entitled asses—</p> <p>Doc: Sarah-Jane. SJ: Sorry. It's just—you're completely oblivious to the struggles of anyone outside your little social group. Jared: Whatever, SJ. SJ: I'm serious. What about the economic disparities? What about the fact that proportionally speaking, there are more people of color living in poverty than white people? Have you even thought about that?</p> <p>...Jared: Dude, Manny drives a Range Rover. Manny: What does that have to do with anything? Jared: No beef, dude. I'm just saying your folks make way more money than mine.</p> <p>...Manny: Okay. They worked really hard to get to where they are, so— Jared: I'm not saying they didn't, dude. You just proved my point. Black people have the same opportunities as white people in this country if they're willing to work hard enough. Manny's parents are a perfect example. SJ: Seriously? You really think one example proves things are equal? What about Justyce? His mom works sixty hours a week, but she doesn't make a tenth of what your dad ma—</p>
26	<p>Jared: Anyway, to those unfamiliar with the US Constitution, thanks to the Fourteenth Amendment, every person in this country has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness— SJ: Bullshit.</p> <p>...Justyce: Yeah, I am. SJ: You of all people know I'm right, Jus— Justyce: Leave me outta this. SJ: Fine. Bottom line, it's been over two centuries, and African Americans are still getting a raw deal.</p>
27	<p>All the courts "proved" yesterday was that a white guy can kill an unarmed teenager and get away with it if the kid is black.</p>
29	<p>SJ: You get away with it because you're white, asshole.</p> <p>...Jared: Do you? Sounds like you're jumping on the White Is Wrong bandwagon to me. Justyce: [Cracks his knuckles and shakes his head.] SJ: Whatever, Jared. Bottom line, nobody sees us and automatically assumes we're up to no good.</p>
30	<p>Jared: Can you believe that asshole? What kind of teacher has the nerve to suggest there's racial inequality to a classroom full of millennials?</p>
31	<p>Jared: If you ask me, she wants Justyce to pop her little cherry.</p> <p>...Blake: You still totally wanna tap that, bro.</p>
44	<p>Trey laughs, and one of the other guys lifts his shirt to reveal the handgun grip sticking out of his waistband. "I most certainly can, white boy," Trey says. "Now you and ya li'l crew getcha punk asses outta here before things escalate."</p> <p>...Trey: Bruh, you know these niggas don't wanna chill with us. They "goin places" and shit. Gotta stay connected to the white man for the ride to the top....</p>
49	<p>Me: What if Trey is right? What if, no matter what I do, the only thing white people will ever see me as is a nig—an "n-word"?</p> <p>...Me: It's a conundrum: white people hold most positions of authority in this country. How do I deal with the fact that I DO need them to get ahead without feeling like I'm turning my back on my own people?</p>
51	<p>My whole life, Mama's told me, "Don't you bring home a white girl."</p>

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61	<p>Jared: I deserved to get in too! Affirmative action is bullshit.</p> <p>...Jared: Point is, it gives an unfair advantage to minorities. So, okay, Justyce and I might be “equals” or whatever.</p> <p>But there are other minorities without the qualifications I have who will get in before I do. That’s just not fair.</p>
63	<p>SJ: I’m not saying the system is perfect. Yes, people who legitimately aren’t as qualified get picked over people who are, and yes, it’s usually people of color getting picked over white people.</p>
64	<p>Jared: Whatever. All I know is that no matter what college I end up at, when I see a minority, I’m gonna wonder if they’re qualified to be there.</p>
67	<p>Tonight I went home because I decided to share the Yale news with Mama in person, and while she was ecstatic, what I faced when I left the house brought me back as low as the “affirmative action is bullshit” discussion from class today.</p> <p>...“You’ll be back, smart guy. Once you see them white folks don’t want yo black ass at they table.</p> <p>...They not down with you bein’ their equal, dawg. We’ll see you soon.” He grinned.</p> <p>...Jared’s test score thing really bugged me. All this talk about how “equal” things are, yet he assumed I didn’t do as well as he did? And NOBODY can tell me he didn’t make that assumption because he’s white and I’m black, Martin.</p>
71	<p>“She’s not white white. She’s Jewish. It’s different.” Jus sighs. “They were slaves too, dawg. And then the Holocaust. Even now—”</p> <p>...“I know what you mean. Won’t matter to my mama, though. SJ’s skin is white.”</p>
72	<p>“I’m scared of black girls, man.”</p> <p>...“Black girls. I’ve never really encountered a nonfamily one.”</p> <p>...“Like real attitude-y and kinda...” Manny swallows. “Ghetto.”</p>
73	<p>“You’re my only black friend, dawg. I’m supposed to go from this all-white world to an all-black one overnight?”</p>
80	<p>With her final sentence—“We are here to argue that racial disparities in the US criminal justice system are largely due to racial profiling”—a murmur trickles through the audience.</p> <p>...His eyes shift among the three of them as he and SJ rattle off the statistics that support their argument: drug use versus drug conviction numbers, arrest numbers in minority-populated versus white-populated police zones...By the time they get to the superpredator stuff, all three judges are rapt.</p>
85	<p>A couple of mornings after she gives him the cold shoulder, he and the rest of the nation learn that Tavarrius Jenkins, a sixteen-year-old black kid shot by police while trying to help an older white woman in a Lexus, has died from his injuries.</p>
87	<p>Before he knows it, his cup is empty and he’s reaching for the flask Manny left on the ottoman.</p>
89	<p>“That’s exactly what I’m sayin’. Guy’s walking down the street with his boys and stops to help a lady who ran out of gas on the wrong side of town. Cops get there and tell him to put his hands up cuz they think he’s robbing her, and when he does, they open fire cuz they think his cell phone is a gun. Shit’s fucked up, man.”</p> <p>Jus grabs the flask again and takes a swig. “Niggas gettin’ shot for carrying candy</p>

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	<p>and cell phones and shit. Can you imagine what woulda happened to me if I'd had my cell phone out that night? I could be dead, dawg. And for what?" He swigs again just to feel the burn.</p> <p>...Ask why he cares more about some stupid white-boy party than he does about the unjust death of a guy who looks like him.</p>
90	<p>"Hell nah, I'm not 'bouta chill. Ya boy's got racist lawn gnomes and white people in blackface hanging on the walls, now he pulls this shit, and you want me to chill?"</p>
91	<p>Justyce: It's already outta hand, Manny. Your boy Blake is a racist.</p>
96	<p>Every time I turn on the news and see another black person gunned down, I'm reminded that people look at me and see a threat instead of a human being.</p> <p>...There was some white dude on TV after the Tavarrius Jenkins thing broke talking about how cases like his and Shemar Carson's "deflect from the issue of black-on-black crime," but how are black people supposed to know how to treat each other with respect when since we were brought over here, we've been told we're not respectable?</p>
118	<p>"Man, please. This is my car," Manny says. "I'm done bending over backwards to appease white people."</p>
123	<p>In our top story, tragedy in Oak Ridge this afternoon, where two young men in an SUV were shot at a traffic light. The incident occurred just after noon at the intersection of Thirteenth Street and Marshall Avenue.</p> <p>According to the wife of the shooter—who was riding in the passenger seat—there was a brief dispute over loud music before shots were fired from one vehicle into the other. The identities of the wounded are being withheld pending further investigation, but we've received reports that one of the teens was pronounced dead en route to the hospital, and the other is in critical condition. The shooter has been identified as fifty-two-year-old Garrett Tison, an officer with the Atlanta PD.</p>
128	<p>It's quite the predicament: wanting to touch and hug and kiss a white girl after a white man shot him and killed his best friend?</p>
131	<p>"The man was defending himself from thugs," said Tison's neighbor April Henry. "I've known Garrett for twenty-five years. If he says those boys had a gun, they had a gun." A fellow police officer, who asked to remain anonymous, claims the indictment is nothing more than a publicity stunt at Tison's expense. "They're out to make an example of him. Prosecutor pulled the race card, and the grand jury bought it hook, line, and sinker."</p>
134	<p>Jus does as instructed, and after a minute, Mr. Julian comes to the table with three beverages: a glass of red wine for Dr. Rivers, a glass of iced tea for Justyce, and a tumbler of what Jus assumes is Jack Daniel's Single Barrel— that's the stuff Manny used to sneak into his flask—for himself.</p>
141	<p>"Well, like a week before you...before Castillo died, dude arrested my ass. My girl was drunk, and I was tryna get her home, but he thought I was carjacking her. Put me in cuffs and wouldn't let me say a word."</p>

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143	<p>"I know you all about gettin' ahead and everything, Justyce, but you gotta face reality at some point. These white people don't got no respect for us, dawg. Especially the cops. All they 'protect and serve' is their own interests. You just gon' continue to bend ya knee after they proved that shit by killin' ya best friend?"</p>
144	<p>"It's fucked up—there's no escaping the BMC," Quan says. "The BMC?" "Yeah. Black Man's Curse. World's got diarrhea and dudes like us are the toilet." ..."Let me tell you when I learned: my second time in juvie, I was fourteen. There was this seventeen-year-old rich white boy there, Shawn. Dude had got up in the middle of the night and stabbed his dad like eight times." "Damn!" "Right? They tried to get him on an attempted murder charge, but homeboy's lawyer got some doctor to come in and say dude was sleepwalking. And the shit worked! Judge dropped the charge down to simple assault. Guy got sixty days at a youth development campus, then got to go home." ..."I think that was prolly the moment I gave up. Why try to do right if people will always look at me and assume wrong?"</p>
146	<p>As soon as Quan recites the last digit, a guard Jus failed to notice says, "Time's up!" The whole way back to his car, some of Quan's words run laps in Jus's head: Resistance is existence....These white people don't got no respect for us....There's no escaping the Black Man's Curse....It's exactly the kind of thinking Jus tried to combat with the letters to Martin.</p>
157	<p>Turn on the news, another black man slain. They say "It's okay. Save your voice, don't complain. This isn't about race, so stop using that excuse. Now look at this funny picture of Obama in a noose! See how color-blind we are? You're not really black to me. Underneath, where it matters, we both bleed red, you see? So put away that race card; it ain't 1962. There's no more segregation...isn't that enough for you?"</p>
159	<p>Even though his heart is about to explode, Jus pulls the door open and enters the house he's only ever eyed warily due to rumors about all the drugs and guns hidden inside.</p>
161	<p>"You'll learn, young brotha. You'll learn. The Europeans succeeded in denigrating and enslaving peoples of African descent, but there's royal blood flowing through your veins, you hear me?" ..."People across the diaspora have been treated as inferior for so long, most of us have habituated to the lie of white superiority. But never forget," Martel goes on, "your ancestors survived a transatlantic journey, built this nation from the ground up, and maintained a semblance of humanity, even when the very conditions of their existence suggested they were less than human. 'Jihad' is the act of striving, persevering. That is your legacy, young brotha. This country belongs to you."</p>
162	<p>That's when he sees the sawed-off shotgun tucked beneath the edge of the coffee table. ...Jus sits up and takes a drink. The first gulp is too big—he doesn't know why he didn't expect the thing to be alcoholic. He coughs as what feels like the flames of hell run down his esophagus through his chest and into his stomach.</p>

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163	<p>“Brad, that’s the fool you punched at that Halloween party, right? With the KKK shit on?” Gun Guy asks.</p> <p>...“I’m not shakin’ no white man’s hand, Justyce. Not after what that other one did to you.”</p>
182	<p>“Ma, SJ is Jewish,” he says. Manny said it to him, and it’s a valid point, isn’t it? “I know you have issues with white folks, but her people have been through hardship too.”</p> <p>...“Doesn’t matter, son. You can’t see Jewish in her skin color. You tried to help that other girl and wound up in handcuffs. And her daddy is black, ain’t he? If it looks white, it’s white in this world.”</p>
184	<p>By the time Mr. Rentzen finishes his questions, the court has heard the tragic tale of two college-bound bound African American boys, gunned down at a traffic light by an angry white man who used a racial slur and fired his weapon at them when they didn’t comply with his demands.</p>
189	<p>“For whatever reason, you didn’t like that Blake Benson wanted to take this girl to bed. So you assaulted him?”</p>
190	<p>“Hmm...are you having difficulty remembering due to more recent events, or because you were illegally intoxicated?”</p> <p>...“Had you been drinking on the night of January eighteenth, Mr. McAllister?” she presses. Jus sighs. “Yes, I had.”</p>
191	<p>“Did the music you were listening to contain the line Here comes the fun...wait for the sound of the gun?”</p> <p>“Yes, but that’s out of contex—” “Did Mr. Rivers use foul language and make an obscene gesture toward my client that you would’ve perceived as threat?”</p>
202	<p>I wasn’t trying to move mountains of injustice or fight for the equal rights of masses of people...</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	53
Bitch	4
Nigger/Nigga	10
Piss	8
Shit	40