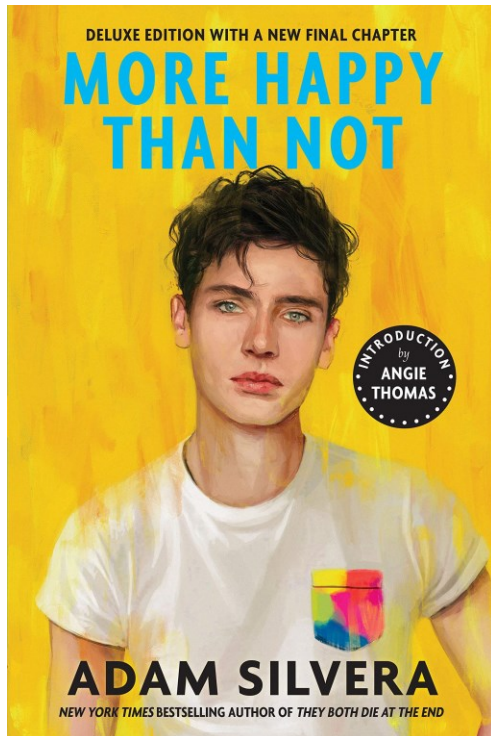


MORE HAPPY THAN NOT



Young Adult

By Adam Silvera

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CONTENT WARNING

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Book Summary:

A teenage boy recalls his memories after attempting to change his sexuality and his hurtful past, by having a memory-erasing procedure.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains alternate sexualities; sexual activities; sexual nudity; excessive/frequent profanity; derogatory terms; alcohol and drug use; and self-harm including suicide.

3 / 5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
3	<p>"A beautiful debut novel [that] manages a delicate knitting of class politics through an ambitious narrative about sexual identity and connection that considers the heavy weight and constructive value of traumatic memory..."</p> <p>..."Silvera's tale combines the best features of science fiction with social justice in this engaging read, as Aaron finds a place where he belongs."</p> <p>..."It confronts race and sexuality in a way I haven't seen in the genre before."</p>
4	<p>"A gut wrenching story of race and sexuality."</p> <p>..."A bold, inventive, raw look at male sexuality in an irresistible sci-fi package."</p>
7	<p>"[A] well executed story of a teen experiencing firsts- first love, first sex, first loss- and struggling with his identity and sexuality...Ingenious."</p>
16	<p>(Rumor has it she's learning basic French because her neighbor down the hall may be having an affair with the married superintendent, and the language barrier is a bit of a block...)</p>
17	<p>Kyle's identical twin brother, Kenneth, was gunned down last December for sleeping with this guy Jordan's younger sister. Kyle was the only one who actually slept with her, though.</p>
29	<p>Genevieve finally loses her balance and I catch her, but not in that heroic way where I could carry her away into the sunset, or even in a funny way where she lands perfectly horizontal on top of me and we kiss. It's more like her body twists and I catch her under her arms but her legs drop and skid back, and now her face is facing my dick, and it's awkward because she's never seen it.</p>
31	<p>Only then do I see where this is going. A sexy lightbulb moment flashes, and when it does, I get up and jump so high I think I might've left an Aaron-shaped hole in the clouds. But when I come back down, I remember something very crucial: Fuck, I have no idea how to have sex.</p>
33	<p>I was hoping I could watch an unhealthy amount of porn to memorize techniques, but it's almost impossible in a one-bedroom apartment.</p> <p>...I've even considered maybe watching porn in the morning while he's knocked out, but even naked bodies can't wake me up.</p> <p>I know I'm lucky just to have a cell phone, even though it has the shittiest Internet connection ever, but with a laptop I could sneak into the bathroom for "research."</p>
34	<p>The apartment feels extra small, my head even smaller, so I go outside to breathe for a second or minute or hour, but no longer than that because I am having sex tonight whether I know how to or not.</p> <p>...He got his first blow job at thirteen from this girl Charlene, and he would go on and on about it whenever we played video games.</p> <p>..."I'll be fast. I need to know how to have sex."</p> <p>...He shakes his pungent weed in my face. "I gotta make some bank, A."</p> <p>"And I gotta make my girlfriend happy, B." I pull out the two condoms I bought from work yesterday and shake them in his face. "Look, just give me some tips or tell me girls don't really care about their first times or something."</p>
35	<p>"Fuck all that. I boned a bunch of girls just so I could get off and feel better."</p> <p>..."Nolan, who's fathered two kids at seventeen? No thanks."</p> <p>..."What, did your father not give you a sex talk before he kicked it?"</p> <p>Really crude way of labeling my dad's suicide, I know.</p>

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	...There's a list of things I would rather do than have the sex talk with my brother, but dying a virgin isn't on it.
36	"...Grandpa encouraged him to just have fun when he was ready, and to always make sure to wear a condom so he didn't have to grow up too soon like some of his friends did. And he would've said you're making him proud if you actually feel ready."
37	I step into the corner store, Sherman's Deli, and pick up a little something for her since it feels like dick move to take a girl's virginity without some kind of present. Skinny-Dave says flowers are the perfect deflowering gift, so if that's what he thinks, it's gotta be the wrong move. As I approach Genevieve's door and knock, I look down at my crotch and say, "You better do what you were made to do. So help me God, I will ruin you if you don't. I will absolutely massacre you. Okay, Aaron, stop talking to your dick. And yourself." ..."Good conversation with your dick?"
39	"I'm done holding you back. If you don't go, make sure it's because you want to have sex all summer." ..."I should probably make sure it's worth staying for first, right?"
40	The last time we tried having sex I got sick from movie popcorn. ...I imagine myself tearing my shirt off and charging toward her for awesome sex, but I'm more likely to get tangled in my shirt, tripping over my feet, and making this everything but awesome.
41	I break free from her not-quite-tight grip, slide up on her, and kiss her lips and neck, and everything else I instinctively feel is right. She pulls my shirt off and it sails over my shoulder. "Remember that time you were half naked in my bed?" Genevieve asks, looking up at me. She unzips my jeans and I kick them off with much awkward difficulty while she laughs. If I thought there was any chance Genevieve would've laughed seeing me in my boxers, I would've faked a reason to get out of this.
42	This, when he came in to buy baby wipes for his two girls; he always uses condoms, but he must be wearing them really wrong. That's more than can be said for Collin, who didn't bother using a condom with Nicole.
43	We've watched them kick each other's asses, date, and hook up with each other's exes.
47	"You have to tell me about Genevieve's tits now." ..."I bet. No homo, but I would watch that sex tape to see your girl in action. Not you."
50	I half expect her to play-choke me like she did before we had sex last night, except for real.
51	Normally I'm better at not staring at her cleavage whenever she wears these baggy-cut shirts, but my post-sex hormones are at a high. ...She only wanted me for sex. Maybe the sex was bad. I was bad at sex because we rushed this. Maybe we should've never had sex, ever. ...And she's definitely not leaving because the sex was so-so.

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70	Something tells me sex in a crappy motel room wouldn't count as a real gift unless you're a complete arrogant bastard in a high school prom movie.
79	He lets me join him, which is great because it keeps me busy enough to suffer through his small talk about "procrastination masturbation," where you save a porn link for later because you can't be bothered with the cleanup at that moment.
90	I nod my head to say hey, but they must be too high from smoking some of Brendan's weed earlier.
93	"You had sex with your ex up here?" He laughs. "Nah, never sex. Just other stuff."
95	"I'll have to teach you then. It's a basic life skill, like swimming and masturbating."
104	"...For some bizarre reason, the hellions at Leteo agreed to wipe the memory of his wife's and son's existences after he tried to kill himself in jail."
107	On one of the steps, Brendan is rolling up some weed on top of graph paper and overdue bills. ..."These aren't for my clients," Brendan says, licking the tip of his freshly rolled-and-folded blunt. ..."My boss is looking for another dishwasher," Baby Freddy says. "If you want to stop dealing." "Washing dishes is for spics like you and Skinny-Dave. I'm good." ...I've seen Baby Freddy trying to smoke and it would be a waste of the weed he's saving from shorting others. "Kenneth liked to smoke," I say. ..."Fucking shame Kenneth's brother fucked the wrong guy's sister. A guy with a gun."
108	"Maybe the real reason Kyle forgot about Kenneth," Brendan says, lighting up the blunt he just rolled and inhaling deeply. "Great, now you got me smoking someone else's shit." He tosses all his blunts into a Ziploc bag and sprinkles the remaining weed in.
110	But, well, sex is basic math: condom equals less chance of having a baby, and no condom usually equals baby. And I shouldn't have to feel like a dick because he didn't think to properly wrap his up.
111	"He had sex without a condom and is now expecting a kid. The end."
114	"And smoked too," Skinny-Dave says, laughing
119	"Faith is just arrogance disguised by God," Skinny-Dave says. It's exactly the kind of thing you expect to hear from a pothead.
121	His mom told him about an assistant job at this barbershop on Melrose, and even though he didn't really want to sweep up curls while barbers told crude stories about the women they've slept with,...
126	...Skinny-Dave just needs a blunt and a staircase to pee in and he's good;... ...Just as no one ever had to tell me that Skinny-Dave loves blazing, or how Brendan is falling down the black hole of drug dealing because his parents are in jail, I don't need anyone- even Thomas himself- to tell me he's gay.

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127	I take one last look at my drawing of Thomas kissing a tall guy before I crumple it up.
129	She sets the painting down and straddles my lap. She takes off my shirt, plays with my growing patch of chest hair, and skims my jawline with the tip of her finger. ...I flip her over onto the bed. I pull out a condom from my jeans as we strip down. I don't slip it on yet because I haven't quite taken off yet- I'm psyching myself out too much. She grabs me and I close my eyes because if I see her disappointed I'll somersault out the window. The memory of Thomas taking his shirt off, running into the sprinklers, and doing push-ups overcomes me, and as much as I try to push it out of my mind to focus on my beautiful girlfriend, suddenly all systems are a go.
131	Well, Baby Freddy stole three bottles of raspberry Smirnoff from his mother's liquor cabinet. (That kid might be a flakey punk bitch every now and again, but he definitely respects any opportunity to get twisted.)
133	She shifts my head toward her and kisses me intensely, her tongue tasting like raspberry vodka and cranberry juice as she shoves it down my throat. You would think she's expecting Thomas to leave so we can use his bed.
134	Fat-Dave walks over to me with a red Solo cup filled to the brim. It spills over his hand. "Cheers to your girl's nice tits!" "Cheers," I say without a drink. I fill up three cups- 20 percent liquor, 80 percent juice for Gen's sake.
135	I sit down on the ground, and Genevieve relaxes right into my lap, eating cake and drinking it down with another cup of booze.
136	I mouth, "She's drunk" to him and he shrugs it off. ...Genevieve leans back and kisses me hard again, her tongue completely out of sync with mine. ..."Kings!" Deon says. Great, a drinking card game without cards.
143	No one here recognizes me as the kid of the security guard who killed himself, so that's a plus.
147	I don't even think Danny is gay, but that kind of stuff just sets Me-Crazy off like little white party poppers.
149	...it's the same look he had the day I left home to go have sex for the first time.
154	"...Maybe it happens like this for all dude-likers, where one day you're a girl-liker and the next day you're not. I guess maybe I could be a girl-slash-dude-liker, but I don't know."
155	"Do you mind being a dude-liker?"
159	She's gotta be asking me if I'm breaking up with her, but I consider the chance that she's asking me if I'm a dude-liker.
161	Here's the thing: I remember genuinely being a girl-liker when I was younger. I asked girls out on dates, was offered a blow job at fourteen if I pretended to be this girl's boyfriend to get her ex jealous- which I did, but pussied out when she unbuttoned my pants- and I only focused on the girls when watching straight porn.

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164	I brought beer over to Thomas's house earlier today. Perk of being a cashier at Good Food's is how I get away with checking people's IDs but no one has to check mine I cash out. I sit up against his bedroom wall, chugging back the rest of my third Corona as Thomas twists his fourth PBR open. I get another too, not just to catch up, but because I need a drink when I catch Thomas icing his bruised eye with the freezing can.
165	He chugs his PBR like a funnel, until it's empty.
166	He opens it and beer sprays all over him. I'm drunk-laughing on the floor, which is the same as regular laughing, except it's obnoxiously louder and only happens when you're drunk. Thomas is drunk-laughing too while he changes into a new shirt.
168	When he turns to me, I trace his eyebrows from one to the other, and I lean in and kiss him. ..."...Sorry, fuck. I've just had too many drinks."
170	I sit up and see Brendan, Skinny-Dave, and Me-Crazy passing a cigarette around on the jungle gym.
184	I hid the folder under my mattress like it's porn or something,... ...They're talking about how to get a girl wet with only their fingers and how you don't need a condom if you're hitting it from the back.
186	"I know I can be really confused about what I should be doing with my life and how I feel like I don't belong, but I have no doubts about what gets my heart going and my dick hard..."
187	Nolan chimes in, "Why you playing with other dudes? You had a bomb-ass girlfriend, and Bren told us you stopped hitting that." ...Maybe if I fuck up Brendan, or Skinny-Dave who looks too high for his own good, that'll get them to back off.
190	"You're gay! No one cares!"
191	"Stop choosing the girl characters! Be a boy!"
192	Dad turns away from the game for the first time all night. "You're a boy," he says. "Don't ever act like a girl."
193	(AGE THIRTEEN) Brendan runs up to me. "Yo! Yo! I just got my first blow job!" ..."Whoa. Awesome. From who?" "Some girl who's friends with Kenneth and Kyle. She thinks Kyle is cuter because he's coming into his mustache, but I talked a good game and got her into my pants. I am a god!" ...I gotta admit, I thought I was doomed to life of hookups like Brendan and Skinny-Dave.
194	Not Brendan anymore, I got turned off from him after hearing him talk about sleeping with girls as conquests. No, I think about the dudes I see undress in the locker room at school, the ones sitting across from me on the bus staring at nothing and likely thinking about their normal crushes.
198	Collin has already lost both of his virginities. He got it on with this girl Suria when he was fourteen, after she gave him a hand

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	<p>job under the bleachers in the gym. Then he let this guy plow him last year when he was vacationing in the Poconos.</p> <p>I still have both of my virginities to lose. I've only gotten as far as groping with Genevieve. I want to take it to the next level with Collin.</p> <p>We recently tried doing it in a nearby building's staircase, but didn't get very far undressing ourselves before we heard someone coming down. The same deal with this abandoned porch up on the balcony a few nights ago, which was really risky, but worth risking, I think.</p>
199	<p>It's chillier today, so we can't have sex when we get to our spot.</p>
200	<p>Kyle couldn't fucking help himself and just had to fucking fuck Jordan's fucking sister, even though we all fucking knew Jordan is the kind of fucking guy who would fucking kill someone if you fucking crossed him.</p>
202	<p>GENEVIEVE PULLS MY BELT and drags me to the edge of her bed. Her father is out of town until tomorrow, for a reason I can't remember, and it's obvious what her intentions were after the double date. If I want to keep what I have with Collin, I have to play along so she doesn't get suspicious. She climbs onto her bed and relaxes on her knees, pausing in front of my face.</p> <p>"You want this, right?"</p> <p>I should tell her something like "Not really" and just walk away and call up Collin. Instead, I grab her shoulders and pull her to me, kissing her neck, face, and lips.</p> <p>"You're beautiful," I whisper right into her ear.</p> <p>These seem like all the right things to do.</p> <p>She takes off my shirt and throws it across the room. "Unbutton my shirt," she says, tracing circles into my chest with her fingers. Every time I rip a button off, she breathes this low moan that seems artificial, but it's crazy to think we're both faking our way through this. I drop her shirt and we study each other's bodies. She's in a green bra she probably bought for tonight while I'm in the same boxers as yesterday.</p> <p>Genevieve falls to her back and turns off her bedside lamp. "Come here."</p> <p>Hopefully the moonlight doesn't expose the dread on my face that I'm disguising with suggestive eyebrow bounces and smirks as I crawl toward her. I grip her waist and before I can kiss her, I slap a hand on my bare stomach and groan.</p>
207	<p>"If there's something about homosexuality you don't understand, you can talk to your son about it in a kind way," Mom says, maintaining a steady tone that's both fearless for me and respectful toward Dad.</p>
208	<p>He points his finger at me. "I'll fucking throw him out myself." My mom guards me.</p> <p>Dad wraps his big hands around her throat, shaking her. "Huh, you still think he's making the right choice?"</p> <p>I run over, grab his TV remote, and hit him so hard in the back of his head with it that the batteries pop out. He shoves my mom into the intercom phone and she falls to the floor, desperately trying to catch her breath. Before I can check on her, my dad—the man who fucking played catch with me—punches me in the back of my head, and I crash into a tower of Eric's used games. He drags me by my shirt collar and leaves me outside the apartment door. "I'll be damned if I'm alive the day you bring a boy home, you fucking faggot."</p>

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	I hear the door lock and I cry harder than I ever have in my entire life because I can't change the way I am, not as fast and as easily as my father just stopped being Dad.
209	"Yo. You two homos faggots?"
210	"They lying. I bet their little dicks are getting hard right now."
211	I open the door and when I see who's sitting in the bathtub, I drop the shirt and blood just spills down my face and chest. Holy shit. Dad. His eyes are open but he's not looking at me. He didn't take his clothes off before getting into the tub. The water is a deep red, stained by the blood spilling from his slit wrists. He came home to kill himself. He came home to kill himself before I could bring a boy here. He came home to kill himself because of me. All this blood.
213	"...Nicole's pregnant and I was trying to talk her into not keeping the kid before I told you, but she is, so I gotta be a man again." Another bad thing but not unexpected, that was always a risk. "So you knocked her up, whatever. That doesn't make you straight and you're never going to be-"
214	I open up one of my father's unused razors and cut into my wrist like he did, slit in a curve until it smiles so everyone will know I died for happiness. I was expecting relief but instead it's the saddest pain I've ever experienced. I never once stop feeling empty or unworthy of anyone's rescue, not even when the thin line on my wrist makes everything go red.
219	Leteo helps people who hurt themselves because of harmful memories- you won't die from heartbreak but you'll die from, well, killing yourself.
225	"...Would you still carry on with this procedure if your sexuality weren't an issue? Would you want to change being gay?" ...The doctors count down from ten and my eyes shut at eight. Next time I wake up, I'll just be an ordinary straight guy in his bed.
226	The goal was for me to forget I'm gay. Easier said than done since there isn't exactly an off switch like my father thought there was. To beat nature, Leteo fostered the shortly lived straight me by targeting and burying memories connected to my sexuality: my relationship with Collin, my dad's cruelty, my childhood crush on Brendan, etc. If I could simply believe I was straight, I would be straight. Life would be easy.
232	It's the one where he is getting completely undressed in the bathroom while calling me a faggot and telling me how I'm not worth living for. He turns on the bathwater and relaxers inside the tub before cutting his wrists. ..."No homo," he adds while completely avoiding my face.
234	"Let me get this straight," Thomas says. "Leteo made you forget you were gay?"
249	We crawl through the open spot in the fence into the side where history is pulsating with memories of our first time, second time, third time...you get it. Collin scans the area for any wanderers or birds with cameras on their heads

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	<p>before coming back to undo my belt buckle. It's so dark someone could murder us and get away with it, which we prefer- the darkness, not the murder part. I pull him into a rough kiss and I don't doubt that whenever he's kissing Nicole he's pretending she's some other guy- maybe even me- and as I kiss him now I pretend he's someone else, and it's just so fucking sad.</p> <p>He hands me a condom and I rip open the wrapper with my teeth.</p>
271	<p>We have sex quickly, and he heads off to work without wishing me a happy birthday, just a pat on the back after he pulled up his pants from around his ankles.</p> <p>...Yeah, there's the risk of seeing him holding hands with Genevieve as they go upstairs and probably have sex so he can feel straight.</p>
284	<p>"I shouldn't have let you have sex with Genevieve," he whispers.</p> <p>..."...I didn't stop you because I thought your life was going to be easier when you weren't gay. It didn't matter to me if you unknowingly led someone on."</p>
287	<p>"Where can we go instead? You need to go buy a condom too because Nicole was finally in the mood last night and I used mine."</p>
292	<p>"...I wouldn't have dated you and I definitely wouldn't have had sex with you."</p> <p>...I can't tell her how I want to spend my days taking on the world with him and watching movies and drinking Blue Moons late into the night while we draw on each other.</p>
296	<p>So now in this moment I have this fantasy: Thomas is straight- which I now believe is either very real or who he needs to be right now- but he goes to Leteo and convinces them to give him a procedure so he can forget he's straight. Once he's gay, he finds me just like he said he would and we build a life of happy memories together.</p>
308	<p>I flip to an entry about having fun playing Othello with Mom; a page later I'm writing about how suicidal I am.</p>
312	<p>Outside our apartment, I remember all of the wrong things; banging on the door after my father threw me out because I'm gay; coming home after Collin wanted to break from me, and I found my father dead in the bathtub.</p>
324	<p>But there was one day where I was questioning myself- my sexuality.</p>
325	<p>Every thought makes my stomach hurt- the two of them laughing together, kissing, having sex, going on dates, being happy without me.</p>
328	<p>We then go to the spot between the flower shop and the meat market where Collin and I had sex for the first time. Jordan tells me about losing his virginity with his friend John from homeroom when he was sixteen and bored and horny.</p>
335	<p>I grew up thinking being gay was a choice, which was so much more comforting than thinking I was born wrong. If I had subconsciously chosen to like boys, I could switch back to "normal" before any of my friends noticed that I was different, before they would take it into their own hands to straighten me out.</p> <p>Being gay, of course, was never a choice.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory	Count
Ass	25
Bitch	25
Dick	14
Fag/Faggot	8
Fuck	116
Piss	20
Pussy	1
Shit	71
Spic	1