

# DRAG TEEN



*Young Adult*

**By Jeffery Self**

ISBN: 978-0-545-82994-6

## **Book Summary:**

A seventeen-year-old boy and his two friends take a road trip to enter a drag queen contest for teenagers.

## **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains excessive/frequent alternate gender ideologies; sexual activities; sexual innuendoes; alternate sexualities; alcohol use by minors; profanity and derogatory terms; mild violence; controversial social and religious commentary; and inflammatory religious commentary.

**2** /5

**Teen Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
1	<p>THIS ISN'T ONE OF THOSE stories about a heartwarming journey toward accepting my cursed homosexual identity. No. First of all, being gay is far from a curse. It's more like an extra order of fries at Wendy's because the lady in the window isn't paying attention while she fills your bag. It's awesome.</p> <p>...Being gay is, in fact, one of the only things I actually like about myself. I've been gay since birth. I've never contemplated the alternative.</p> <p>...When my drag teen story started in earnest, I'd been stuck in Clearwater for all seventeen years of my life.</p>
3	<p>Seth was my boyfriend. He'd moved to town in ninth grade from Maryland, and we'd been boyfriends from the day we'd met. Seth was all sorts of out of my league, to say the least. His adorable features, perfect body, and wavy blond hair made him look like a cartoon version of an attractive teenager.</p> <p>...He was the "cool gay kid" at school, the gay guy everyone wants to be friends with because it gives them the latest must-have fall accessory.</p>
4	<p>Being a gay kid in this decade of equality and anti-bullying and all that stuff that gay celebrities liked to talk about on TV had so many advantages, but one of the biggest disadvantages was that I couldn't blame why I felt like an outsider on being gay anymore. Gay was in, but that didn't mean that all gay people were. Seth was very in.</p>
8	<p>THE LATE SHIFT AT THE gas station usually meant dealing with people who were pretty drunk. The late shift at the gas station on a weekend meant dealing with people who were epically drunk. I've never liked drinking, but I guess that's because my parents have always done so much of it.</p> <p>..."How could you ever suggest that I, a straight-A student, an accomplished tennis and baseball player, and president of the senior class, would ever risk my perfect record for the frivolity of underage drinking!" He grinned. "Okay. A little drunk. And here to see the cutest boy in Clearwater."</p> <p>He leaned over the counter and kissed me, almost knocking over the display of lighters shaped like guns.</p>
10	<p>Seth knew the way to my heart, which just so happened to be wigs. More than a writer or a singer, I wanted to be a drag queen—or rather a drag teen, a term I claimed to have made up (although a quick Google search would have proven otherwise).</p> <p>...I had only ever performed in drag once, and it had not gone so well.</p> <p>But even if I hadn't yet earned my feathered wings, I was still obsessed with drag culture. I suppose it started when I was a kid and stumbled upon that old nineties movie <i>To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar</i>. One night when I couldn't sleep I found it on TV and watched the whole thing, the story of three drag queens turning a town upside down by bringing boatloads of wisdom and glamour to a landlocked hamlet. I wanted to know those queens—I wanted them to show up in my town, fix all my problems, and teach me the same kind of wisdom and glamour so I could live life like they lived life.</p> <p>I confessed this desire to Heather and she very quickly introduced me to RuPaul's Drag Race, the reality show where drag queens competed to win money and vodka.</p>
11	<p>"The John Denton Foundation presents the Sixth Annual Miss Drag Teen Scholarship Pageant." I looked up. "What is this?"</p> <p>"It's another opportunity for you to try performing in drag in a situation that isn't some stupid school talent show."</p>

Page	Content
13	<p>“It’s baseball—but I see your point. And I also see how wrong your point is. You are totally a drag queen—or at least have major drag queen potential. You were great when you did it in the school talent show. It’s not your fault that your audience was made of a collection of inbreds who wouldn’t know a good drag queen if she hit them over the head with a platform heel.”</p>
17	<p>There were a few murmurs and coughs, a few muffled laughs and gasps from people who acted like they’d never seen a boy in a dress before.            ...I was going to be singing “Part of Your World” from The Little Mermaid—a song that was definitely in the top five of gay gay gay.</p>
18	<p>I got through about a third of the song before I heard it—fag or another of those trivial slurs ignorant people use as if they matter. I didn’t care. When someone calls a teenage boy in a dress, singing a song from The Little Mermaid, a fag, their obviousness doesn’t garner a response.</p>
21	<p>He kissed me, sweetly and briefly.</p>
31	<p>We dropped Seth at his house and I kissed him good-night. It felt like one of those distracted kisses where both of you are in completely different headspaces but kissing because that’s what you’re supposed to do when you’re boyfriends saying good-bye to each other.</p>
35	<p>She pulled me into her soft chest. What Heather lacked in confidence she made up for in boob size.            “You can’t be in here, Heather.” My voice was muffled so far into her cleavage it almost echoed.</p>
37	<p>“It’s a drag pageant!” Seth exclaimed. “It basically works like a beauty pageant for teenage drag queens and the winner gets a full scholarship!”            ...“That sounds perfect! You love drag queens!”            ...“Okay, fine. You were a teenage boy performing at his high school in drag—what did you expect? This is different. This is where we aren’t the freaks. Where is it located?”</p>
39	<p>I was far from original, and the last time I’d actually felt proud was when I first saw myself fully in drag.</p>
41	<p>“I was just on the website for the scholarship, actually. Did you know John Denton was some obscure playwright who left his money to this foundation to help gay kids?”            ...“Isn’t it crazy to think about how when somebody like John Denton was a kid, the very word gay was considered so taboo he couldn’t have even said it?” I asked. I had never lived in a world where gay wasn’t at the very least the description of a wacky next-door neighbor on a TV show. Sure, it wasn’t always easy to be gay in Clearwater, Florida, but it wasn’t anything like someone like John Denton would have experienced. Gay people were everywhere now and some of them were getting married and having kids, to a degree that John Denton probably wouldn’t have been able to wrap his head around. Sure, I was insecure about almost everything, but at least I had the freedom to be proud of being a gay person, even if I wasn’t wild about the person part.</p>
47	<p>Give me a wig, I was going to win it—the scholarship, the title, everything. I was going to be THE Miss Drag Teen, and not just for Seth, not just for Heather or John Denton, but for me.</p>
50	<p>Seth finished his text with a flourish of emojis, and spun around to kiss me.</p>

Page	Content
68	<p>I was willing to go outside my box as far as the gay bar was concerned, but I wasn't going to step as far as getting in a car with strangers. The gay bar, Sugarbaker's, was more than twenty minutes away, and when we pulled up to the place I was sure we had the wrong address. It was in a small strip mall, sandwiched between a Starbucks and a pet store. The guys from the diner, whose names I still hadn't learned, were right about IDs not being needed at the door. I wasn't interested in drinking—as usual, the idea grossed me out—so I was happy to be the designated driver.</p> <p>Even though it was a run-down pit of a bar, it was our first gay bar, and it immediately felt sorta magical, as much as a place that smelled like bleach and stale beer could.</p> <p>...Outside was a small southern Podunk town with a Bible bookstore connected to an Arby's, but inside there was a cool little oasis for gay people from all walks of life, to come inside and breathe easy, even just for the night.</p> <p>...They introduced themselves back: Alex, the gay one, was the type of guy whose perfect body was likely documented in a plethora of Instagram shirtless selfies, crowned by one of those confident pearly white smiles that make you either a movie star or cult leader, or both. Matt, the straight, cute hipster guy, must have been around our age.</p> <p>...The guys laughed and asked what we wanted to drink. I asked for a Diet Coke while Heather and Seth shrugged.</p> <p>"I'll get you two vodka cranberries." Alex pulled a shiny American Express card out of his wallet. "They're disgusting but they're part of the gay bar experience."</p> <p>At first I thought the bartender was catching onto Seth being underage, but then I realized he was just checking him out. In fact, every guy in the bar was checking Seth out. The only people who seemed to be immune were the cluster of lesbians playing pool.</p>
71	<p>"So you're a drag queen?" Alex asked, with a slight but very apparent tone of judgment. I could feel my cheeks getting redder by the second.</p> <p>"Well, sorta," I sputtered.</p> <p>..."That's only because you didn't know how to do all the makeup and costuming routines. Which I've told you we're going to figure out before we get to New York. There are YouTube tutorials for that." Seth looked back at Alex with a guilty grin. "Let's just say, neither JT nor I understood the importance of tucking."</p>
72	<p>He pointed at an old drag queen in the corner of the room who was setting up a microphone on a little stage. "That's Bambi. She's been around forever. She's drag royalty around here. If you give her twenty bucks, she'd probably teach you everything you need to know. To be honest, for twenty bucks I'm pretty sure Bambi would do anything you asked her to do."</p>
74	<p>"Want a drink?" she offered.</p> <p>"I'm seventeen."</p> <p>"And your point is?"</p> <p>"Naw, I don't drink."</p>
75	<p>"See what I'm doing here, darling? In order to create a face, you've got to start over entirely, and the first thing to go should always be the eyebrows. Some queens pluck theirs, but that crap looks just too damn weird for me in the daylight, so I cover mine up. I'm old school like that."</p>
76	<p>"Drag is armor, darling. No matter how you look at it. Once I become Bambi, nobody can hurt me. Not my family, not the drunk assholes at the bar, nobody. A good lace-front wig and the right contouring are as strong a bulletproof vest as I've ever needed."</p>

Page	Content
79	I saw myself in the mirror and gasped. I looked like a real, honest to God, legit drag queen. Not just some boy in a dress.
85	I leaned forward and kissed him, trying not to think of the future, of what I wanted our lives to someday be, of all my stupid plans, of every second-guessing thought I had happening in my head at every second of every day.
89	“That guy? Mark? The one I danced with at the bar? At the end of one of the slow dances, he kissed me. I told him he was handsome and you know what he told me?” “What?” “He said that I’d caught his attention because he’d never been with a fat girl before and he wanted to try something crazy.”
96	I stopped myself, realizing that it also might not be the best idea to admit to being on my way to a drag queen pageant in the middle of a dark road in Virginia.
98	It was one of the biggest houses I’d ever been in, and everywhere you looked your eye landed on something homey and interesting. Like a Cracker Barrel without the overt sense of bigotry.
101	“Holy Mary, Mother of God!” Seth cried out. “We’re the Gayders of the Lost Ark.”
102	“You mean Tina is a drag queen?!”
110	“I was white trash with big boobs and bad wigs long before Dolly was—she just perfected it.”
137	“We could go get a fake ID, open up a credit card in its name, and come back?” Heather offered. I shot her a level glance. “A. That’s called fraud. And B. How is that going to help us tonight?”
141	She danced all over the place, pulled hot guys out of the audience, downed people’s drinks, and, in a grand finale, shot a cannon full of orange and red feathers all over the crowd.
143	“Two of them are your type,” she told him. “The other has boobs.”
176	“Please don’t tell anybody. I know most everyone here is a pro at this but, well, I love doing it and I desperately need the scholarship and I don’t want people to think I’m disrespectful to the drag world by just doing it again for a scholarship because that’s not the only reason, it’s just a big one. I really want to be great at this because it brings me a lot of joy, like the most joy I’ve ever felt doing something. And I hope by doing it I can figure out how to be who I’m supposed to be. I want to love myself, and when I’m in drag I think I actually might.”
185	“Can you believe we’re really here?” Heather asked, already tipsy on her second glass of the nasty wine. “We’re so Girls right now!”
194	I knew Heather wouldn’t do anything to put herself in immense danger, but she was definitely capable of doing something stupid, like putting on a skimpy dress and meeting up with a thirty-year-old bouncer from a gay nightclub who she’d met only once before.
215	“Who in here is ready to give these rich old gay people the best drag show they’ve ever seen?!”
217	“The first time I ever dressed up in drag, I felt amazing. Right? I felt like a superstar—and I was. I dominated the night. I went to this party, right? And everybody wanted a photo with me because I looked really damn fine, and somebody posted a photo on Facebook. I didn’t mind, because it racked up so many likes. Then when I came home, my dad comes into my

Page	Content
	<p>bedroom, and he has the picture opened up on his phone. He shoves it in my face and starts yelling, saying what the hell is wrong with you, calling me a freak, telling me I'm disgusting. And right there, before I could even defend myself, he asked if I was gay, and I said yeah, and he got so mad I thought he was going to kill me. But he just took his fist and punched me, really really hard, across my face. Then he left my room, and I could hear my mom crying, telling him to apologize, and I could hear him calling me these awful words. I got a Lean Cuisine out of the freezer and held it on my face and I cried. And then, when it got really late, my mom came into my room and told me I had to leave. She couldn't stop crying, but she was just as scared of Dad as I was. So I left. I never saw them again. All because of some stupid wig I wanted to wear."</p>
225	<p>Then she said her own four key traits were cash, credit, accessories, and something that rhymed with truckability. Finally, she asked the audience to join her in welcoming the contestants of the Sixth Annual Miss Drag Teen Pageant.</p>
229	<p>"Because last—but certainly not least—I'd like to introduce all of you to the newest board member here at the John Denton Foundation. He also happens to be one of the biggest movie stars in the world, and if he ever came into Lady Rooster's coop, it ain't eggs she'd be laying. Please give a barely legal welcome to ... Samuel Deckman!"</p>
240	<p>At the moment, Roxanne Roll was finishing up her speech, which basically consisted of her screaming "rock 'n' roll!" at the audience a lot, and bragging about how she wasn't part of the "gay system," whatever that was. ...Milton had given a long speech about hoping to follow in RuPaul's footsteps as a fashion icon, and had even added a joke about how proud he was to be a flamer.</p>
241	<p>"I can't say that I mind she's not a part of my gay system. Up next, we've got somebody I've seen on the drag scene since she was a tiny little drag preteen—hey, that rhymed! I should be writing the Broadway musicals! Right, Linda?" Linda, still seated at the piano, smiled politely, obviously as exhausted by Lady Rooster as the rest of us were. "Anyway, please make some room for our next little bitch, Natasha!"</p>
244	<p>"But sometimes, this wig, this eyeliner, this all-of-it ... it's just the boost of confidence I need to feel really and truly and happily me. And so that's who I am, JT. We all need our own form of drag sometimes, to wrap ourselves up in, as we brave the frontier of self-discovery. There's been a lot of talk in this pageant about the four key words: glamour, talent, heart, and soul. I found the first two moderately quickly. Those you can rehearse. But the final two—well, that took coming here and doing this to solidify." I cleared my throat. "Heart. I have the sweetest and most beautiful boyfriend in the world, truly. I'd ask him to stand up if I weren't afraid of all of you stealing him." ..."And soul. I've realized that all of this ... performing, letting go, feeling beautiful, feeling loved ... that's my soul. That's everyone's soul. And I've found that here, a happy equation of it all, which I suppose is the whole point of tonight. Despite every setback, every failure, every mishap and freak-out ... here I am. JT. Take me or leave me, wig and mascara and all. I'm just JT, and that's why I drag."</p>
247	<p>"Getting to see so many sides of the gay community and just how big and varied it is. It's easy, I think, as a young queer person, to not feel like you belong to your queer brothers and sisters, because maybe you've never met the ones you identify with. If I've learned anything this year, it's that no matter who you are, where you are, or how you feel, there</p>

Page	Content
	are people out there for you. This enormous community is its own tribe, but within that tribe are countless smaller tribes. If you open yourself up, you'll find yours."
252	"Roger brought me to the club and was trying to get me drunk. He got super handsy, and when I asked him to slow down, he got mad. So I kicked him in the crotch and told him to screw off. Daryl saw me and invited me to crash at his and Lady Rooster's place. We went out for cheeseburgers and ice cream at four a.m. and watched the sun come up over the river from their apartment window. It was legit perfection." ... "So do you still think gay guys hate women?" I asked. "Not all of them."
260	Seth looked around the room, surrounded by dancing couples of all genders, sexualities, appearances, races, tribes.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	6
Bitch	16
Dick	1
Fag/Faggot	2
Piss	8
Prick	2
Queer	6
Shit	7