

HERE'S TO US



Young Adult

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CONTENT WARNING

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Book Summary:

Two young men attempt to live without each other after falling in love with one another.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; sexual nudity; profanity and derogatory term use; alternate sexualities; alternate gender ideologies; and alcohol use.

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Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

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4	His tongue is hanging out from the corner of his lips, and even when he's being silly, it makes me want to kiss him, like that first time when we were working together on our creative writing homework.
5	What if we become official boyfriends instead of just friends who kiss and hang out?
6	Too many exciting moments were being reserved for sequels that may never happen, and all the characters inspired by my friends and ex-boyfriends needed to be more fully developed and accessible to people outside my circle. ...And Dylan loves the world so much he's been fantasizing about a real-life drag bar where all the drag queens are dressed as different fantasy races like elves and trolls, which is a thing I've never remotely expressed interest in. ...He's another white-passing Puerto Rican like me, but his parents actually raised him bilingual, unlike mine.
10	"We need to figure out your couple name," Dylan says. "I think 'Bario' has a nice ring to it, though 'Men' is chef's-kiss perfection. Because you're both dudes and—"
11	"Because the D Machine is too irresistible." "Gross, man," I say. "Oh, that just stands for the Dylan Machine. I call my friend downstairs the—"
16	I didn't have it in me then because everything was going so well for him with his new boyfriend, and I wasn't trying to pretend my birthday was a happy one. ...Then my chest tightens when I see a selfie of Arthur holding up the postcard of Central Park that I gave him when we said goodbye two summers ago; written on the back is a sexual scene between our The Wicked Wizard War characters, Ben-Jamin and King Arturo, for his eyes only.
20	Now all I can think about is how I didn't even get a kiss from Mario when he arrived. ...I want to be with someone who can't keep his lips off me or whose hand always finds mine as if they were never supposed to be apart. But with Mario I can't always tell if he even wants to be kissing me and holding my hand. Sometimes he points out cute guys on the street like he's encouraging me to go for it. ...These moments where we can forget that we don't need to be boyfriends to enjoy each other.
21	"Mario, there's something really incredible about someone who looks like you making clothes when you should be naked every day."
24	"Hush." I lean in to kiss him. "Guess what." "What?" "I'm bored." "Thanks a lot," he says. "Of packing." I push his bangs off his face and kiss him again.
25	"Michael McCowan, this is queer off-Broadway theater! I'll be laughed off the stage."
27	Every queer Broadway nerd in the country would be vying for this, and some of them probably had more impressive theater credits than Beauregard and Belvedere in Ethan's basement.
43	I shelve the condom boxes, thinking about another consequence of still living with my parents. Last month Pa was doing laundry and found a condom sleeve in my jeans pocket. It led to this big conversation where he asked if I was sexually active or not. He was shocked

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	<p>when I told him that I'd had sex with Hudson, Arthur, and Mario. Pa got really fidgety because I don't think any of the articles he read about how to talk to his son about sex could've prepared him for what to say when you find out your nineteen-year-old son has had sex with more people than you. All he could really say was how he was relieved condoms were always involved, and that he would tell Ma for me if I wanted.</p> <p>...“He’s not my boyfriend.” And right as Dylan opens his mouth, I add, “And we don’t have sex marathons.”</p> <p>“How are you not bumping butts with that perfect creation every chance you get? I told Samantha that I bet Mario was created in a lab by some horny Dr. Frankenstein, and she did not disagree.”</p> <p>...“Hot,” Dylan says.</p> <p>“It’s more than just sex for us,” I say while carrying the extra condoms to the back room.</p> <p>“I know, Big Ben. I saw you guys together. You’re definitely going to be the Luigi to his Mario, just jumping down each other’s pipes and”—Dylan stops talking as a customer with a child passes us in the aisle—“ just—”</p>
45	<p>“You’re the one who asked if buying the book meant you were gay,” I say.</p>
55	<p>“And let him know I miss his raw sexual energy,” Dylan says.</p>
109	<p>My gaze lands on a Black guy with a pierced septum and a “Trans Rights Are Human Rights” shirt—he’s talking to a tiny retro-femme white woman and a guy with brown skin and huge eighties glasses, who looks barely older than I am.</p> <p>...“He/ him, right, for pronouns?” Taj asks, and I nod.</p>
111	<p>“Oh! No thanks, I’m good. First-day jitters. Can’t have caffeine, or I’ll turn into Sonic the Hedgehog. Or a vibrator.”</p> <p>Hello, yes, hi? I’d like to speak with a manager, please, about the possibility of me voluntarily bursting into flames? Because I, for some unknowable fucking reason, decided to refer to myself as both a Sega Genesis character and a sex toy on my first day of work.</p>
134	<p>He’ll reel in animated sharks on Animal Crossing, I’ll watch Broadway Miscast videos on YouTube, and then we’ll brush our teeth and turn the lights out and definitely not have sex, since Mikey won’t even masturbate when his sister’s home.</p> <p>...This is a boy who, as legend has it, once turned down a blow job in favor of beating Dylan’s high score on Candy Crush.</p> <p>A blow job from Hudson, for the record. Ben’s never turned down a blow job from me.</p> <p>...Blow jobs definitely aren’t relevant. That’s not even a concept that applies to us now, because Ben has a boyfriend, and I have a boyfriend, and everyone’s settled.</p> <p>...“Oh man, sorry. I was up so late—”</p> <p>Having sex with Ben, I think.</p> <p>“—pinning down the beats for the climax,” he says. And it takes me a full fucking minute to realize he’s talking about a screenplay, not a sex act.</p>
138	<p>But when I glance up, it’s just Pubestache staring me down and, inexplicably, flicking his tongue into the V of a backward peace sign. Not exactly the hand gesture I’d use to describe my sex life, but okay.</p> <p>I grace Pubestache with a classic hand gesture of my own.</p>
140	<p>“Arthur! Eyes on the prize.” Dylan taps the claw-machine glass, pointing to what appears to be a ball of neon-orange synthetic fur with two snow-white penises sticking out of its face.</p>

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159	“Like, Jacob came over to ask us something, and I’m holding this bottle of foundation made for the whitest of white people. And I guess I was just antsy or something, because I don’t even realize I’m pressing up and down on this bottle pump until this goopy blob splooges out and lands on his thigh—”
161	I shoot her a nice big not-talking-about-splodge-and-foreskins-this-time smile. I end up going for the challah French toast, which sounds great until Ben orders something five dollars cheaper off the appetizer menu.
162	I’m not trying to be dense, but I saw them kissing—in broad daylight. Which is what you do with your boyfriend, not some random guy you’re hooking up with. Okay, there might have been a modest amount of daylight kissing before Mikey and I were official, but not at the goddamn post office. I’m sorry, but there are two and only two reasons to kiss at a post office. Either you just got proposed to via flash mob, or you’re saying goodbye to your first love before you head back home to Georgia. Anything else is just gratuitous PDA. ...He’s not talking about your dick. Strangers on the subway know what your eyes look like.
164	Obviously we’re serious in the sense that we call each other boyfriends and have sex sometimes. But love?
170	I’ve even had a couple dreams where I’m this third wheel as they make out in front of me.
179	And for hours, we pretty much stay like that, tucked up on the couch. I mean, we make out a little, but it’s strictly Disney Channel. We don’t even bring up the possibility of sex. Maybe that’s a waste of precious alone time, but it’s nice.
181	I don’t think I’d have even noticed it if Mikey hadn’t drilled the name into my head. It’s his favorite ice cream place in Boston. His sister and brother-in-law got engaged there, and it’s also where Mikey came out to his brother.
183	How do I even phrase the introductions? Guy I lost my virginity to, meet the guy who just said I love you for the first time literally two seconds ago.
188	I was his first kiss, his first boyfriend, the first person he had sex with, the first breakup he cried over.
201	Right on cue, Jessie appears in the doorway, a weekend bag hitched over her shoulder. “Namrata thinks I should bring condoms and booze.” “Orgy etiquette on point.” I press my palms together.
203	“You and I have shared a bed. Many times.” Dylan scoffs. “I’m supposed to find that reassuring? Benzo, every time you and I are within ten feet of each other, you can cut the sexual tension with a knife.” ...“Seussical, what’s the drink situation here?” “Right. Okay, water, obviously. Coke, milk, OJ, and . . . uh. I can scope out the other stuff.” I stand. ...“Sweet. You two, hook me up with some Seuss juice. The Mikester and I are long overdue for some bro time.” Dylan slides closer to Mikey, who looks terrified. A minute later, I’m standing with Ben in my uncle’s tiny bright kitchen, trying to remember how conversations work. “So, um. I think most of the alcoholic stuff is—” “Is this chocolate liqueur?” Ben holds up a bottle Jessie must have left on the counter. “Is this, like, up for grabs, or—” ...“Have you ever tried it?” I shake my head. “You should. It’s like a Levain cookie in drink form.” He pulls a spoon out of my uncle’s

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	<p>cutlery drawer.</p> <p>...He nudges a spoonful of liqueur toward me like it's cough syrup, but suddenly freezes in midair. I tilt my head away, flustered.</p> <p>"Here." He hands it to me instead, and I bring the spoon to my lips. It's not technically my first taste of alcohol, but I'm pretty sure it's my first taste of alcohol not preceded by old people saying "borei pri hagafen." I swirl it around in my mouth for a moment, and at first I think it tastes like chocolate, but worse. But the more I sit with it, the more I like it, and by the time I finish the spoonful, I'm sold.</p> <p>Ben looks at me expectantly. "What do you think?"</p> <p>"It's so rich."</p> <p>"Yeah. I mean, I think it's usually mixed in with something. Do you have any Bailey's?"</p> <p>"Who?"</p> <p>"Bailey's Irish Cream. Or bourbon. I'm trying to think of what would pair well with chocolate."</p> <p>"How do you know all this? Is Mario a bartender or something?"</p> <p>"Mario doesn't drink."</p> <p>"Oh—"</p> <p>"And he's twenty. He's not—oh, you've got vodka! That should work." Ben looks at me.</p> <p>"You're sure your uncle won't mind?"</p> <p>"Yeah, it's totally fine."</p> <p>"Okay, cool." He pulls up a recipe on his phone. "So we just need enough for four people, right?"</p> <p>"Three. Mikey doesn't drink either."</p> <p>I mean, technically, neither do I.</p> <p>Though it's not that I don't drink. I just haven't yet. But once I tried a bite of weed brownie with Musa. Sure, it's possible we didn't know the brownie contained weed at the time, just like it's possible we immediately spit it out and spent the rest of the night panicking about failed drug tests and broken futures, but the point is, I'm not the baby-faced kid I was two summers ago. And maybe Ben needs to know that.</p> <p>"Okay, try this." Ben passes me a glass full of what looks like melted chocolate. But as soon as I take a sip, I have to clap my hand to my mouth to keep from spitting it out. Ben's eyes widen. "You okay?"</p> <p>"Yup! No, it's good!"</p> <p>He takes the glass back and sips it. "Yeah, that's a little strong. Let me mess with the proportions." I watch him pour in more Godiva, trying not to think about the fact that Ben just sipped from my glass like it was nothing. Isn't that kind of like a gateway to kissing?</p>
214	<p>"You're in a good mood," I say.</p> <p>"How could I not be after all that?" Mario says, tossing my condom into his trash and burying it under rejected sketches for shirt designs.</p> <p>...Mario leans in and kisses me.</p>
218	<p>He leans in for a kiss, and as much as I want to step back to protect my heart, I welcome his lips—because I know they'll be on the other side of the country soon.</p>
240	<p>I'm sixteen years old, carrying a bag full of condoms, and every square foot of this sidewalk feels like holy ground.</p>
261	<p>I kiss him out on the street and think about kissing him in Los Angeles, on streets where I've never kissed Arthur.</p>

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268	<p>“Gentlemen, time to try this bad boy on for size. And by ‘bad boy’—he glances slyly at Ben—“ I do not mean the suit.”</p> <p>“I’m not having sex with you in a Bloomingdale’s dressing room,” says Ben.</p> <p>“Then we’ll save it for Bergdorf.” Dylan tousles Ben’s hair.</p>
272	<p>Mario leans forward to kiss Ben on the lips.</p>
280	<p>“If you aren’t talking to Ben about how badly you want to make sweet love with him by the time I get back, then you’ll be making sweet love to yourself for a long time.”</p>
283	<p>“I don’t see anyone making sweet love.”</p>
293	<p>I’m his first I love you, his first time having sex, his first kiss, his first everything.</p>
299	<p>Between this kiss and the ones he’s given me all week whenever we’ve greeted each other, this is what I’ve been missing with him the entire time.</p>
300	<p>“So Tío Carlos has a lot of industry contacts, obviously, and he’s friends with this one film agent at UTA—the United Talent Agency. The agent Dariel is this queer man who loves fantasy stories. Carlos brought up The Wicked Wizard War.”</p>
304	<p>I’m sure they’ll go home and have sex and make a bunch of big tearful love declarations.</p>
318	<p>I’m sure they’ve kissed and made up by now.</p>
320	<p>“Are you impersonating some straight bro? If you don’t stop and smell some roses I will get a new best friend at the Pride parade.”</p>
323	<p>It’s Pride Weekend Eve, and crying in my boxers about my ex’s hot boyfriend is a deeply valid expression of gay culture.</p>
326	<p>“I’m not exactly in the celebratory mood,” I say.</p> <p>“Uh-uh. Nope. Pride has nothing to do with Mikey!”</p> <p>“You know Mikey’s gay, right?”</p> <p>“I mean, it’s not about you and Mikey. It’s about you and your identity, your community. I mean, look at this. It’s incredible.” Ethan gestures vaguely at the flags and streamers adorning the storefronts, the giant screens lit up with rainbows.</p> <p>“Okay? Obviously, I’m glad it exists. I just don’t feel like going to a big gay party a week after my big gay breakup.”</p> <p>“But this is a big gay opportunity to move on! What if you run into the guy you’re really meant to be with?”</p> <p>...“Or even the guy you’re meant to hook up with. I can be your wingman!”</p>
328	<p>“But it’s so unbelievably cool of you to come up here. Honestly, it’s cool that you want to go to Pride! Like, not every straight guy is clamoring to play wingman at Pride for his gay best friend—”</p>
330	<p>“You’re allergic to monosexuality!”</p> <p>...“That, sir, is what we call”—I pause, grabbing a shirt off one of the Pride racks and thrusting it into his arms—“ a bi awakening.”</p>
332	<p>“Wow, you really are bi, aren’t you?” I hug him again. “Fuck, I’m so proud of you!”</p> <p>“Thanks.” He smiles. “And sorry I was being pushy about Pride. I actually didn’t come here with, you know, a bi agenda. I’m just still a little—like, this is a very recent line of inquiry for me. Hasn’t been, uh, put under peer review.”</p> <p>...“Gentleman’s choice! Les Bisexuales or Queer Evan Hansen?”</p>
335	<p>I’m just trying to be present during this parade: brushing shoulders with people who may have had a harder time coming out than I did; listening to Mario as he sings along to songs</p>

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	<p>blasting from a drag queen’s speaker, like Robyn’s “Dancing On My Own” and Carly Rae Jepsen’s “Cut to the Feeling”; cheering as colorful confetti rains down from a rooftop; buying pronoun buttons from a vendor with blue lipstick; taking pictures of two Latinas with signs, one reading Yay I’m Gay!, the other Oh My, I’m Bi!; and joining the massive applause as a young teen grabs a megaphone and comes out as trans.</p> <p>...Basically, Dylan’s aesthetic is GAY AF.</p>
336	<p>“Everyone looks like they’re auditioning for a Lady Gaga video,” Dylan says. Samantha twirls around in her high-waisted rainbow mesh dress. “Dylan!”</p> <p>“It’s not an insult! You’re homophobic for thinking so.”</p>
337	<p>For the most part, people are representing the day in incredible shirts that I wish they’d wear year-round:</p> <p>Sounds Gay, I’m In.</p> <p>The “T” Is Not Silent.</p> <p>Trans & Proud.</p> <p>Space Ace.</p> <p>Assume Nothing.</p> <p>And then a short cute guy turns the corner in one of those Lin-Manuel Miranda love is love is love shirts.</p>
338	<p>Maybe they spent the whole week having incredible sex.</p>
359	<p>“D, I got something to tell you.”</p> <p>“I know you’re gay.”</p>
421	<p>He lets out a choked laugh, grabbing my hands to pull me closer. Then he presses his lips to my forehead, leaving them there just long enough to turn me to liquid. “I love you. Te amo. I’m not moving. I ended things with Mario. Can I kiss you?” His eyes are wet. “Please?”</p> <p>My hands are cupping his face before he even finishes talking.</p> <p>I thought I remembered this feeling, but I must have remembered through glass. Because I wouldn’t have survived the full force of not having this. Ben wraps me in and pulls me closer, hands pressed flat on my back and all I can think is Oh. Right. This.</p> <p>This. The way he has to lean down to kiss me, how I have to tilt my head up like I’m looking at stars. I thread my hands through his hair, all these strands I haven’t met before. Two years of haircuts, new skin cells, new freckles.</p>
425	<p>We reach House Alejo, and my parents are mercifully still not home. I practically drag Arthur to my bedroom like we’re in my book and outrunning some wicked wizards. I bump into boxes, knocking them over. Not concerned, since there’s only clothes in there, but I would throw my laptop across the room right now if it were in our way.</p> <p>I fall back into bed first, kicking off my sneakers and unbuttoning Arthur’s shirt while he’s kissing me. We’re finding our way back to each other with every touch, both of us more experienced than last time, and without meaning to, we’re bringing those histories on top of the sheets. Even though I’m so damn ready to be naked with him again, I take my time undressing him.</p> <p>“I missed you so much,” I whisper.</p> <p>He says he misses me back with another kiss.</p> <p>...His lips keep visiting mine, and I want them to stay.</p> <p>I’ve waited as long as I can when I reach for the condom in my drawer.</p> <p>And as we embrace this do-over, I’m already excited to do it over and over.</p> <p>The deeper I go, the closer we become.</p>

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	...When we finish, I want to start all over. But I'm exhausted and poor Arthur is doing a terrible job fighting back his yawns.
431	I'm ready to run up and kiss him when I remember I'm here to be the best man.
435	Dylan wastes no more time as he kisses the girl he once called his future wife. ...But the truth is, fifteen-year-old me barely dared to dream about kissing a boyfriend in public. I'm pretty sure thirteen-year-old me thought two guys kissing at a wedding was a thing that only happened in strangers' photos.
437	"I feel like taking some naughty pics, is how I feel," Dylan says. Ben mouths the word "wow." "That sounds like more of an after-wedding activity."
441	Ben kisses me. I look up at him, startled. "Okay, then." He kisses me again, his hands running down the sleeves of my jacket, leaving fields of goose bumps in their wake, even through layers of fabric. My arms hook beneath his, hugging him closer, holding his lips against mine, because air is good, but Ben's breath is better. His hands change course, trailing back up to my shoulders, to the back of my neck, and I can't stop thinking about how many stories these hands have told on tiny square keys. His fingertips find the skin just above my collar and just beneath it, tracing around the tag of my shirt—didn't even know that was a move, but it definitely is. ..."Look," he says, his voice breathless from kissing. "Here's the thing about do-overs. You have to try something different, or—you know. There's no point."

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	30
Bitch	3
Dick	2
Fuck	84
Goddamn	11
Piss	2
Queer	12
Shit	39