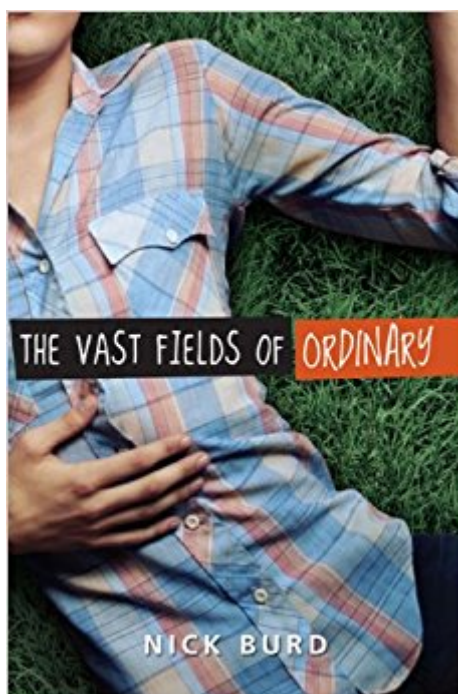


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The Vast Fields Of Ordinary



Synopsis

It's Dade's last summer at home. He has a crappy job at Food World, a "boyfriend" who won't publicly acknowledge his existence (maybe because Pablo also has a girlfriend), and parents on the verge of a divorce. College is Dade's shining beacon of possibility, a horizon to keep him from floating away. Then he meets the mysterious Alex Kincaid. Falling in real love finally lets Dade come out of the closet and, ironically, ignites a ruthless passion in Pablo. But just when true happiness has set in, tragedy shatters the dreamy curtain of summer, and Dade will use every ounce of strength he's gained to break from his past and start fresh with the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is definitely one of the best books I've read in long time. I couldn't put it down! Through the author's mesmerizing writing I could feel the sheer loneliness that Dade felt growing up in a midwestern town feeling isolated and out of place as he laid in his bed night confessing to his ceiling fan he is gay. Don't get me wrong, Dade never comes across as helpless or pitiful (maybe a little unsure of himself) instead you can see he is biding his time believing that there has to be more out there for him. His first attempt at reaching out is Pablo a boy he loves but who is using him to express physical feelings he can't even admit to himself. Although Pablo treats Dade horribly and is pretty much a jerk, I couldn't help feeling sorry for him as he desperately tried to deny who he really is. A bright spot for Dade is when he meets the neighbors niece who is staying for the summer. She is the first person who really pushes Dade to be himself and shows him he is actually a pretty great guy. I would hate to see this book get tagged as only a gay "coming out" book. It's a great

read and comes across as one point of view of the thousands of teens out there who are just trying to figure out who they are, dealing with what life throws at them and wondering what life has in store for them. Moderately sexual explicit scenes along with drinking and drug use make this book appropriate for high school and above.

I tried. I really really tried to identify with Dade Hamilton the young gay main character of this book. He's young, gay and feeling alienated in a small Iowa town. I've been there! I live in a small Iowa town! I was young, gay and feeling alienated once too. It's just that it was kind of hard for me to connect with Dade in this story for two major reasons. Reason #1: Dade is such a hard character to understand. His mood swings wildly. He says something and then contradicts himself the very next chapter. He has such a hot and cold relationship with his parents that I feel more sorry for THEM than I do for him. His interactions with everyone, friend and enemy, leave me confused and wondering what Dade is so angsty about. He brings on most of his own problems and then the things he seems to care about more than anything in the world just get written off a few pages later. His relationships with Pablo and Alex are never fully fleshed out or made to feel "real". More like plot devices that are put in place so Dade can sabotage himself. Reason #2: For an alienated young gay teen in Iowa he really doesn't have a lot to be writing bad poetry over or drinking his "problems" away. He has two parents who are trying to make their relationship work for him. He has not one but two guys (plus a girl) all pining for him throughout the book. He has a cool Lesbian friend who helps him ease his way into gayness, even taking him to a local gay bar which doesn't exist in small Iowa towns (not to nitpick... We also have very few below-ground pools). High School sucked but we don't hear hardly anything about high school. Instead we hear that in the few months since High School Dade meets at least four people who become his friends and don't seem to want anything from him in return besides love and friendship. He lives in the 'Burbs which has become such a tired cliché of middle-class imprisonment over the years. The whole book just felt kind of stunted. Like an unfinished sentence. Nick Burd obviously is doing something right in that this book made a connection with so many people. I was sadly not one of them. Having gotten the easy part (the complaining) out of the way the descriptive writing and some of the romantic scenes in the book were very well done! I found myself continuing to read despite all the problems I listed above mostly for these reasons. I cared enough about the flawed characters and liked the style of the writing enough to finish a book and for that it deserves a 3rd star from me. I'm just still not quite sure what it all means?

Dade Hamilton is a typical teen. But gay. Alienated from his school, his parents, his whole life in suburban Iowa. His parents are alienated from each other and the life they've ended up with together. It's much better than it sounds. It is very well written, evocative of time and place. I kept thinking of "Catcher in the Rye" (which I've never liked), but this book hasn't got that grim nihilism. This is a top flight book for a young adult audience, or for fans of that (me, an old adult, loves them). It is a simple story of Dade's last summer at home before college. It is the summer when his teen alienation peaks, crashes, and reassembles into something better, stronger, more hopeful. He learns to love and to forgive. But it's not a journey without pain and joy. If I disliked anything about this book, it's that it feels too spot-on real. As the parent of teenagers I was appalled at the thought that my kids might feel like this about me. But as a one-time gay teenager, Dade's moods and emotions resonated through me like a thunder storm. I never quite clicked emotionally with Dade, tho' I understood him and agreed with him. In the end, I shared his hope, and came away praying that I'm doing a better job as a parent than his did.

Nick Burd has written a terrific novel about a gay teenager from Iowa. "The Vast Fields of Ordinary" probes the depth of feelings of the main character, Dade Hamilton, and Burd comes up with a warm, troubling and accurate view of coming out. While the book is timely for Dade's own generation it has ramifications for older generations as well. Being gay in America is still fraught with complications on many levels and those who think that recent easing of the public view of homosexuality makes life better, need to be reminded (as the author does for the reader) of the troubling internal and external aspects of leading a double life. Although Dade comes out to his parents and friends without too much repercussion, Burd deftly explores Dade's relationship with Alex, his main love, and Pablo, his sometime companion. The Jenny Moore character serves as an unnecessary diversion to an otherwise brilliant narrative, but Dade's gay friendships are wonderfully presented and carry a good deal of literary weight. "The Vast Fields of Ordinary" is a compelling first novel by Nick Burd....I hope we read more from him.

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