



# The Vast Fields of Ordinary

*Nick Burd*

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## **The Vast Fields of Ordinary** Nick Burd

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.

## **The Vast Fields of Ordinary Details**

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# From Reader Review The Vast Fields of Ordinary for online ebook

## Ami says

### 3.5 stars

I don't have many experiences with GLBT Young Adult, in fact this might only be my 4th books in this genre. I'm glad that I don't find too many angst or that "search of sexual preference". This is like reading one or two other young adult fiction titles, of living in a suburb, with a gay teenager as lead character.

Dade Hamilton already know that he is gay. He never has that urge to try with girls. I'm sort of glad that it doesn't focus on his high school years -- I've read some other stories about how bad it is to live as a gay teenager in high school where people are making your life hell -- and instead the story takes place in Dade's last summer before going to college.

There is emotional struggle in himself, facing a kind of "abusive" relationship with one boy, Pablo -- who fu\*cks him but refuses to acknowledge him in front of other people -- and a more positive one with the other, Alex, who is two years older and accepts Dade for everything that he is.

The ending is a bit sad but feels like it should be. While it not really a happy ever after, but then again, the story only takes on that summer. There are still a long way ahead on his future. And I believe that the summer changes him and prepare him for that.

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## Wigs says

First of all I want to say that often my favorite books to read are any fiction books that have queer themes. So I was hoping to be pleased no matter what, and I seem to think of myself as a forgiving person when it comes to books (in fact before this I couldn't really name any book in recent history I'd read besides Twilight that I would consider 'bad') Unfortunately, I quickly began to realize that this book is in fact, awful.

Although some of that is to blame from the back cover. I know that authors aren't responsible (right?) for the summary on the back of the book, but this one seemed to describe that something was going to happen. "A tragic event that would change the course of Dade's life." So I was waiting to read about this event. From the back of the book even mentioning, one would think it was going to be the inciting incident, otherwise why spoil, right? And I waited and waited and waited and waited and waited and fucking waited some more and nothing tragic happened until about the last chapter, and it certainly didn't seem to change the course of the narrator's life much in any way. The worst part was that while I was waiting and waiting for something INTERESTING to actually happen, I kept imagining how it was going to happen, like "oh here it comes, this is it, something horrible is going to happen right about now...." and no, nothing happened. The plethora of events that I imagined were possibly going to happen were much more interesting than what even does happen, which is, may I repeat myself again, pretty much nothing by the time we get there anyway.

This book goes absolutely nowhere.

Underneath all the nothing that happens to the main character, a continuous mention of a missing girl is brought up. There is meant to be some 'deep' symbolism, in context of the main character, the little girl getting lost at the beginning of the summer and magically found (with no explanation of what even happened to her) at the end, and I can't for the life of me ever figure out why the main character even cared for a second beyond a superficial level about it. I certainly didn't care about her, because the narrator didn't make me care.

The main character/narrator Dade I didn't find likeable at all. At first I thought I would, but then I realized he had no interests aside from poetry and bands with really cliché names. He seems to have no will of his own and lets his friends convince him how to act and what's cool, including participating in the very cult-like and disturbing head-shaving party which is about the time I decided I wanted to be done with this book (however I continued til the end, I'm not one to leave a book once I've gotten most of the way through.) We read pages and pages of him sitting out by the pool and moping about in his room and going to backyard parties and each event seems to be even more mundane than the other. Then when it comes to the boys he's paired up with, the parts of the book that could actually be interesting, the sex is skipped over and barely even mentioned, using about a sentence to describe that anything even happened. Worst of all, at the end of the book, the narrator tells us that he is writing a book and it is called the Vast Fields of Ordinary like it's going to be some amazing life story. So the book is in fact self-aware, and yet it has no idea what a terribly uninteresting, vast field of boring it was.

I guess I should have known by the title that nothing was going to happen. But still.

The writing itself was terribly weak as well. Not only were there a few spelling and grammar errors (though I suppose that's the editor's fault for not catching them before publication, and dammit, this is the second edition of the book, you'd think they'd catch the errors by now), but the author writes like a 14 year old writing fanfiction. Anytime a character is introduced we are treated to a ridiculous amount of sentences that interrupt the story in order to give us a description of what they look like. For example, when the main character is at a diner and a waitress comes us, he immediately tells us "she was wearing sparkly barrettes and [blah blah]..." when there is certainly a better way, if you must tell us this detail, to weave it into the story better. As they say in film, 'show, don't tell.' So at least make a description part of your action, like perhaps he notes the waitress tucks the pen in her hair behind her sparkly barrette or something, instead of giving us very middle-school simple sentences to talk about what someone is wearing. There were several other instances of that, however it was when I came to the part about this waitress when I realized 'wow, this writing is awfully weak.' This book also suffered a bit from the Juno-syndrome, where the author was writing how he thought teens talked to one another and it seems painfully forced and dumbed down.

I think I've covered enough what went wrong here. Basically weak writing centered around almost zero plot. Just descriptions of someone's boring summer. I have never read a book packed with that much nothing, except perhaps Twilight, which unfortunately, I read right before this one.

There is plenty of good queer fiction out there. This is not one of them.

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## **Marlan says**

A good read. When I started it, I prepared myself for a long and bitter tale of closeted suburban hell. Dade's

parents are splitting up, his hot closeted boyfriend is a selfish asshole, and he has no real friends in school. Thankfully things go up from here. The summer after he graduates he meets up with Lucy, a spitfire lesbian who becomes his bff. She's awesome and gives him the emotional support he's been starving for. Dade also meets Alex, an adorable drug dealer who's crazy sweet and is pretty much the perfect boyfriend (drugs aside of course).

What I like best about this book is how Dade steps out of his comfort zone and takes a chance on adventure. He grows some self respect and dumps Pablo (the closeted a-hole) and more importantly doesn't go back to him. I loved watching his self-confidence grow. The characterizations and dialogue were fairly spot on throughout the story. Pablo (the a-hole ex) comes across selfish, but haunted, so you can't help feeling a little sorry for him.

Why this didn't get the full five stars:

There is a side plot about a missing girl, which never impacts the story in any meaningful way. It does act as a handy metaphor and plot device, but it comes across forced which weakens its effect.

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## **Lola says**

I could not finish this book. I could not take any more of Dade and his random crush for the handsome guy who sells weed. Dade had a bad breakup with his not-boyfriend, so when he sees Alex, it's lust-and-love at first sight.

He's obsessed with him, and when Alex doesn't call him (although he said he would), he whines and whines and whines. Hello, you could have reached him yourself if you wanted to talk to him so bad, dear.

I understand that Dade was lonely and really, really needed a boyfriend (because teenagers can't function without love-interests, right?) but to me it felt like he chose the first guy he saw after his bad breakup with Jackass Pablo who wanted him only for his body.

It was hard to feel bad for him, because he felt bad for himself enough for the two of us. He thinks his life is awful. Indeed, his parents are divorcing, he's not popular and the guy he thinks about nonstop might not like him back (or be gay). Hello, your parents still love you so much, you alienated someone who needed your support and kindness and how could you even not be a little cautious of and turned off by the fact that your love-interest is a dropout and sells weed to high school students?

The truth is Alex is actually nice and a good enough companion for Dade since the latter's standards are not very high, (the guy has to be cute and gay) but it seemed to me like his existence and connection to Dade were forced. Personally, I thought Dade going to Alex's workplace to talk to him as though they knew each other was too much, especially since they barely shared two words at the party. (Hey do you need weed? No? Okay, bye.) Then they go to Alex's car and drive to his dealer's house. Are you kidding me? Are you?

I read half of the story, since the writing was engaging, but eventually skipped to the ending, which was awful. It made me feel as though I read (half of) the story for nothing. It's very disappointing.

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## Ralph says

This novel is about Dade Hamilton's last summer at home. He goes to parties, goes to work and meets a few friends. The boy he's fooling around with pretty much dumps him and he meets a new boy named Alex who he falls in love with.

Okay, I liked this book overall but there were a lot of things I didn't like about it. I think there were too many side plots going on and none of them were really developed at all. The whole thing with Jenny Moore was weird, and didn't really have anything to do with the story line. The problems between his parents was also weird and pretty anti-climactic.

I didn't much like the ending either. It seemed rushed and was also a bit anti-climactic. The author had some interesting ideas for the ending, but he kinda just crammed them all together in an overview plot summary. The ending leaves you with a lot of questions - What happened to Jenny? What happen with Pablo? What happened with Alex?

It also seemed like some of the characters were bipolar. One minute they wanted to be his best friend, and then next they were bitching and yelling at him. Pablo and "Fessica" (A crappy name IMO) in particular. The whole scene with Pablo in the milk cooler was unnecessary too. (Don't forget creepy.)

But for some reason, I liked the book over all. I enjoyed Dade's relationship with Alex, and I could relate to some of the things he was going through. The novel was well written, free of any blaring grammatical or punctuation mistakes. Once I got through the first chapter or two, it was a pretty engaging novel. =)

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## Hannah says

So good. Such a disappointing ending. I can see how thematically the ending works, but...ugh, it hurts like a broken heart.

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## Lenore says

2.5 stars rounded up.

So. The Vast Fields of Ordinary. Indeed. Because there wasn't anything really extraordinary about this book.

Someone should probably rewrite the blurb. I kept expecting "*tragedy to shutter the dreamy curtain of summer*," but unless you count the last chapter—that textbook example of telling instead of showing—tragedy was resoundingly absent from this book.

I didn't like Dade. He was a boring, unexceptional, detached, and at times even mean rich kid with rich kids' problems. (Okay, Pablo wasn't very nice to him in the first 1/3 of the book, I'll give him that, but look what happened to bad Pablo who refused to come out of the closet for Dade's sake. Hm?) He'd just finished school and he was about to go to college and, practically, all he did was doze the summer away sprawled out on a chaise by the pool of his house pretending he cared about his parents' impending divorce. In those pool scenes he kind of reminded me of Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*.

Also, Dade should be dubbed the Gladstone Gander of Midwestern suburbia. The moment he needed a BFF, Lucy (who also happened to be a lesbian, how convenient) magically moved to his neighbourhood. The moment he needed a real boyfriend, Alex Kincaid appeared as if out of thin air. Bonus features: he was cool, he was sexy, and he was gay (he was also a drug dealer and a loser, but who cared about that.) The moment he needed time and space to explore his newly minted relationship with Alex, his parents decided to go to Europe for two weeks to try and save their marriage. I know, right? Gladstone Dade.

Then you had that little missing girl. Who I suppose symbolised Dade's life? Yep. I won't go there. It wasn't very well done.

Still, I won't say this book was an entire waste of time. Although the story had a cliché air about it, there were parts where the writing was decent and had me wondering about the author's other work (he hasn't written anything else, unfortunately.)

I'd say, if you approach this without any great expectations, you might even like it.

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### **Thomas says**

"The Vast Fields of Ordinary" is about Dade Hamilton, a gay in the closet teenager who is living his senior summer in the worst way possible. He has a horrible job at a grocery store, a "boyfriend" who won't even acknowledge his presence in public, and his parents are at each other's necks in arguments and conflicts. Dade is barely getting by with alcohol and drugs, until he meets Alex, a dreamy and somewhat thrifty young man who might just change Dade's life forever.

I loved this book. Every word of it. I finished it in barely a day and a half. Wow... the only complaint I have is that the cover kind of made me not want to read the book, but the phrase "Don't judge a book by its cover" rings true for this delightful novel. Dade was such an awesome character. He was believable in every action he took and emotion he spoke. He never came off as whiny or irritable or annoying, and his development throughout the novel was truly breathtaking. The other characters were also well drawn and likeable... I loved Lucy and Alex, I even liked Fessica. The plot line never got boring for me, even though the part with the missing girl was kinda creepy. However, this was a totally awesome book and I would recommend it to everyone I knew.

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### **Kassa says**

Vast Fields of Ordinary stands out in the dense genre of young adult fiction. Although it's emotional and filled with angst, it's also edgy and daring. It puts teenage behavior on display with all the rebellion, antisocial yearning mixed with tentative forays into drug and alcohol use. This is not a book parents will give to their kids to learn from but there is so much captured within these beautifully written pages that readers can't help but identify and learn from the characters. I can easily see why this book was nominated for YA genre in the recent Lambda Literary awards. If you're a fan of young adult fiction, read this book.

The story follows the main protagonist Dade as he struggles through the summer after high school and before college. This is a time of learning and growth for Dade in many ways, both positive and destructive. He's learning to recognize unhealthy relationships, such as the one he has with the deeply closeted Pablo.

Breaking away from the cycle of cruel behavior and late night hookups is not easy for Dade and only the appearance of a new friend in crazy, outrageous Lucy and new crush Alex propel Dade in new directions. Yet these directions are questionable at best with Alex's job as a minor drug dealer and Dade's growing frustration with his home life.

This is of course at the heart a classic coming of age story, one that has been told countless times. The repetition of the theme somehow never manages to dilute its continued importance and relevance. There have always been teenagers coming out to themselves, friends, and family and searching for acceptance and recognition. Here Dade is in many ways a typical quiet teenager. He's picked on at school, which he accepts and ignores as much as possible. He's bullied by girls and boys alike, never defending himself and struggling to ignore the growing hurt. Dade accepts for years a pseudo friendship with Pablo. Pablo dates a popular, bullying girl but messes around with Dade on the side, treating Dade like a disposable, convenient release.

Pablo and Dade's complicated relationship forms a driving force in the story as Dade slowly learns to let go of his false dreams and accept his reality. It's a difficult, complicated process and likely one Dade couldn't have accomplished without the appearance of a new crush. Dade may not always be a likable character with his actions and thoughts. He struggles with understandable emotions and doesn't always make the right choices. He vacillates between his emotions and acts out against his parents. He uses his upcoming College freedom to rebel, drinking and doing drugs without fear of repercussions. His parents, who do truly love him but are wrapped up in their own drama shows the complexity of teenagers and parents at that cusp. None of the characters are saints and often they act in selfish, predictable ways but they are likely to resonate with readers.

The writing is compelling and technically great. The prose is crisp, clean, and nicely detailed without ever slowing the pace or boring the reader. The pace is quite even and the pages fly by quickly as the action moves from one scene to the next. The typical, recognizable party atmosphere of newly graduated high school students stands out with its cruelty and desperation. Again, these are timeless scenes that may not offer something uniquely different but are still engaging and absorbing. The graphic nature of the various actions – from sex to doing drugs to vomiting from drinking – is offered without remorse or shame. The edgy quality to the story helps cement the authenticity of its actions, not afraid to go the dark corners no one wants to admit teenagers get up to. This doesn't celebrate those behaviors but honestly depicts the kinds of things teenagers do that parents want to ignore.

The underlying issue of Dade's sexuality, specifically his homosexuality, is an interesting inclusion. It's clearly a main theme but Dade's struggles with life, relationships, and identity feel more universal. On the one hand that broadens the audience who can identify and relate to the characters, but it also slightly washes out the affect of Dade's sexuality. Several times I felt the entire story could have been told even if Dade had been straight. This helps show that the problems affecting young men and women are much bigger than sexuality while keeping that thread important and relevant. It doesn't take over the story and dominate and I'm left feeling conflicted if this is a good thing or a bad thing.

On the whole this is a completely enthralling read, almost not always easy. There are a few missteps such as the prolonged subplot about the missing autistic girl, Jenny. This obsession mirrors Dade's angst in a lot of ways but often too obscurely to make the point the story is trying. Instead it feels more distracting and convoluted. Often the most sympathetic of the cast, Alex, struggles to understand Dade's obsession with Jenny, eventually accepting without understanding. This confusion is likely to mirror the reader unfortunately. Additionally the characters of Alex and Lucy are truly stunning. Both deserve more than the few mentions in the book, though they are so compelling they threatened to take the book over. I'd love to see both of these characters get their own stories; their complex personalities richly deserve it.



If you haven't read this offering, now is the perfect time to pick this up. It's not exactly a light hearted beach read but it has a great narrator voice that will keep you glued to the story. While nothing earth shattering or ground breaking may be included, Vast Fields of Ordinary still offers something important, relevant, and not to be missed. The excellent writing, great cast, and honest portrayal are highly likely to resonate with readers of all kinds.

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## **Nikyta \*Miss Forgetful\* says**

### **3.5 stars**

I have a hard time rating this one because nothing really happens besides some mild angst on Dade's part and a brief scene at the end of the book. I also hated the ending but after I got into the story, I didn't really want to stop reading it.

I loved the characters. Well most of them. Dade is funny in a sarcastic, somewhat mellow, what-do-I-do-now type of way and I liked that. Lucy, Dade's lesbian friend, brought Dade out of his shell and made him into a funny, likable person. Alex was my favorite, though. He's the typical bad boy, I guess you could call him. He finished high school but never went to college, he works at a crappy restaurant and he sells weed to stuck-up preppy kids. But, he likes Dade and helps Dade come to terms with being gay and is ultimately Dade's first love and Alex loves him right back. It's kinda sweet.

I think my main problem with this book is the ending. I'm a lover of HEA's and this doesn't have an HEA or HFN. At least not one romantically linked. In fact, the main couple don't end up together at all. After that scene I mentioned earlier, Dade breaks it off with Alex and then leaves Cedarville for college and doesn't see Alex again after that. There's not even any indication Dade will ever return to Cedarville or to Alex. There were some parts of the book which were just there that didn't add to the story at all and just made me do a 'WTF?' moment thinking of what the point of putting it in the book was. Other than that, the book was good. Nothing really happens but it still holds your attention.

I heard there was going to be a sequel one day and I honestly hope the sequel is about Alex and Dade reconnecting after Dade is out of college, or even during college, because if it's about Dade and someone else I'm not sure if I'll read it because I really liked Alex and I think they should end up together. Lol

Overall, this was a well-written, good YA novel. Recommended.

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## **Nick Bicknell says**

I think this book gets a bad rap for a variety of reasons, the chief reason being that it isn't afraid to deal with drugs and not paint them in a negative light. Of course when I refer to drugs, I'm referring to marijuana and alcohol, you know, the two things that most teenagers manage to get their fingers into at one point or another, and most of us, honestly, grow up just fine. It's no surprise that the most popular negative reviews on this site harp on the fact that there are drugs and that the primary love interest of the main character is a drug dealer. I'm not going to comment on this fact much, I'll just give a simple statement: yes, this book involves drugs. No, they're not portrayed in a negative light at all. Yes, I'm fine with this. You know why? I've smoked pot. I've drank. Neither of those things define me, and those things don't define the characters of

this book either. People need to get over their hangups. It's ironic to me that these people who complain about this drug-fueled (barely) lifestyle are reading an LGBTQ book that also promotes an alternative lifestyle. I understand there is a big difference between being gay and choosing to get trashed (I'm gay, after all) but this sort of close-mined hypocrisy is just too much for me to handle. Onward to the review!

Dade Hamilton is just your run of the mill boy, who just so happens to be gay, who is spending his last summer at home before he leaves for college. A lot of reviews tear him apart for being weak, or that all of his problems come from him being gay, but nowhere in the book did I find this to be remotely the case. Sure, there were problems that sprung up in his life due to his lifestyle, but they're very real problems. I went through them. Dade is a realistic character, a gay boy who is neither effeminate or manly, he's just himself.

He's sleeping with a sort-of boyfriend who is in the closet and has a girlfriend. Dade is his ass on the side. His name is Pablo, and he was a wonderful character. He's gay, as a reader you never really get the impression that he's bisexual, he's gay. He's in the closet. And as Dade tells him somewhere near the beginning of the novel, he's a coward. I felt for him, and I mean really felt for him. His situation is not an unusual one--torn between two paths, the social norm, and his real self. Everyone knows the guy that everyone knows is gay, but somehow has a girlfriend and refuses to be himself. Pablo is that character.

The book doesn't really follow a set path. There are a number of plotlines that all reach some sort of resolution towards the end of the novel--not all of them happy, not all of them sad, just like life. I thought the book was very fulfilling, it didn't sugarcoat anything that wasn't necessary, and unlike some other readers, I didn't mind that there were characters who acted outside of social norms. I'm not going to pretend that these people don't exist, I'm not going to pretend that all of their lives end in police shoot-outs and tragedy, and I'm certainly not going to give a book a horrible review just because they portrayed characters smoking weed, like others. I like to pride myself on being realistic and not having ridiculous expectations.

So yes, I really liked the book. It was well-written and extremely interesting. It's funny to me that someone in a review compared this to Twilight, and it just really shows the arrogance of our generation when someone has to compare every book they read to Twilight, when they probably don't even really know what makes Twilight bad and just parrot things they've heard off of message boards. This is the farthest thing from Twilight you can get. This is realistic, and the prose is wonderful, not purple like S. Meyers--you're lying to yourself if you're comparing anything about them.

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### **Doug Beatty says**

This book was tremendous. The characters are so life like and it really makes clear the angst of being a teenager. The story centers around Dade Hamilton who is secretly having sex with Pablo, one of the stars of the high school football team. Pablo also has a girlfriend and does not recognize any relationship with Dade other than that of clandestine sex partner, and Dade begins to question whether that is what he really wants. Dade is also having problems with his parents, his mother is drifting away to a world of pills and booze, and his father seems to have found a girlfriend he met at a poetry class. Dade's saving grace comes in the form of Lucy, a lesbian from California who comes to Iowa to live because her parents think the city is changing her for the worse. At a party, Dade meets Alex who drops by to sell pot. Alex is handsome and charming, and Dade discovers that he works at the Taco Taco and stops by to say hello. This begins a summer of love for Dade, but Pablo is still waiting in the wings. Is he willing to let Dade go for good?

Nick Burd creates memorable characters and places them in a world where there are no easy answers. Added

to this is a mystery of a young autistic girl who has gone missing from her home. Dade is someone you grow to care about deeply over the course of the novel and Burd's talent for writing is evident. This would be a wonderful novel to give to older teens who are struggling to find their own identity.

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### **Ellen Hopkins says**

An important book, especially for young gay men.

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### **Nyrae Dawn says**

Omg.... OMG, did I love this book. So incredible. I finished it last night and spent half the night awake thinking about it. So, so good. The voice is incredible and very authentic. This book goes on my keeper shelf, for sure.

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### **John Egbert says**

This was probably the worst LGBT book I have ever read. Here's why;

#### 1. The drugs.

I have no huge problem with topics like drugs and alcohol in YA. But when you practically promote it and make it out like the norm, etc "Oh, and I smoked another joint,". The main character in the novel, Dade, is constantly smoking marijuana. His parents seem okay with it, and his mother even says "I'm okay with it every once in a while,". What? *What?*

His boyfriend, Alex, is a freakin' drug dealer for chrissakes. It's like there is nothing wrong with it, and people treat it like it's a hobby. What the heck? Is this what we're trying to say to teens? Gay or straight, smoking pot is always the answer!

#### 2. Pablo : Aka The "Sexican"

Pablo is a screwed up dude. He uses Dade constantly, calling him over to his house whenever he wishes to have sexual relations with him. However, whenever Dade tries to actually make a relationship out of it, or even kiss Pablo, Pablo goes batshit insane. Oh, and did I mention Pablo has a girlfriend?

Eventually, Pablo turns out to be so screwed up that he just drives off a cliff or something.

Yeppers, cuz if you're bi it's the only answer to your problems.

Seriously.

But going backwards in time, he often begs for Dade to come back to him so he can use him again. Dade, having grown a little bit of a brain by this point refuses, ~~but it's not much better since he's dating a loser drug~~

~~dealer anyhow~~ and it's good he got away from that kind of destructive relationship. But maybe the author could have Pablo getting over himself and sorting himself out, instead of, well :

Yeah. That.

### 3. Alex : The Loser Drug Dealer Who Works At Taco Taco But Still Is A Supposed Awesome Dream-boy

He deals drugs -- but that makes him even hotter! Yes, that's right. Alex deals drugs. But that's okay, because it only means that he can get him and his lover drugs for FREE!

So fricken sexy.

He is a useless and stupid loser. I'm serious. He is made out to be the answer to all of Dade's problems, his savior, his wonder, and Dade won't shut up about him. I as the reader see nothing special about Alex.

His "profession", drug dealing, is not seen as a bad or dangerous thing. Dade never thinks "Oh shit maybe I shouldn't be kickin' it with this drug dealer (and user)". Instead he thinks "Oh God Alex looks so hot when he's smoking a joint!!!"

Alex's friends (who are always stoned) are seen as cute and funny, instead of warnings of how you do NOT want to be when you get older. They're like comedic reliefs, instead of horrifying visions of the future and what drugs can do.

### 4. Fessica : It's Alright To Treat The Girl That Likes You Like Crap!

Because Dade is a ~~self-obsessed jackass~~ confused and hurt soul, he acts rude towards Fessica (a girl in his town that has a huge crush on him but who is insecure because she is overshadowed by her sister ~~OMG ORIGINAL AMIRITE!!~~) multiple times. However, although he says some pretty messed up things to her (yet still refers to her as his friend) he never apologizes, for fear that it would get awkward.

At a party he goes to at Fessica's house, she gets wasted. He helps her get up to her room, and she tries to come on to him. He freaks out and runs out of the room. Later, when she approaches him about this the next day and confides in him, telling him that she has always felt useless compared to her sister and confessing her love for him (yes, all in the same breath), he freaks out again. She brings up what happened in her room but he tells her that she was practically trying to rape him and that he is totally not into her.

Honestly, he's pretty jerky about it. He could have just told her that he wasn't interested in her like that and that he was gay. But noooo, he has to get all mean with her. She starts crying, and he feels bad for it but still doesn't apologize.

Fast forward to the next day, he approaches her because she spread a rumor about him. Only, she didn't. She only jokingly told Jessica the "rumor", who blew it out of proportion. He doesn't apologize again, but instead asks her to relay information about Alex (the dealer at the party he fell in love with).

Not at one point does he treat Fessica with respect, even though she's pretty friendly to him (except when she

calls him "faggot", but at that time he really sort of deserved it for being such a jerk) -- unless you count near the end when he invites her to his stupid trainwreck party out of pity.

Never at once does he apologize or try and evaluate in his mind whether or not he did the right thing. In all honesty, it's pretty awful.

#### 5. Goal? What Goal?

Dade has no goal in life. He's not that concerned about college. He barely knows what he wants to do with his life. The entire book his only concern is getting a boyfriend (even after he already has one, he won't shut up). I understand the need to be loved, but let's get real -- Alex was hardly the best person to get this from.

Nick tries to feed us that he stopped depending on other for happiness, but that was a bald faced lie. Dade's happiness depended on Alex all the way through the book. I was never sure what he wanted, or if he got it or not.

What was this book supposed to be about, anyways?

[image error]

I don't know either, random hipster girl. I don't know either.

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### **Cory says**

Reading this book was painful.

Our main character, Dade Hamilton, is an idiot. I wanted to pimp slap him every other page. Dade makes Bella Swan look like Mother Teresa.

Just as a side-note, Dade is gay, but that's pretty much irrelevant to the plot. Dade wants you to think that his problems stem from being gay, but actually, he's just an asshole. There are kids who get tormented every single day because of their sexuality. Then we have whiners, like Dade, who are the Jesse Jacksons of the gay rights movement. Every single thing that happens to you is not because of your sexuality.

Be warned, this is full of spoilers.

Dade Hamilton is sleeping with Pablo Soto, aka, the sexican. Before you get your hopes up, there's nothing sexy about Pablo. He's bi and struggling to come out of the closet. Around 70% of all Hispanics in America are Catholic. I imagine that it's hard for him to deal with his sexuality, especially since he's friends with the biggest douchebags in the school.

Unfortunately, Pablo doesn't want to out himself. He has an on and off relationship with Dade that veers on the abusive side. Pablo initiated it, not Dade.

Dade complains about not having friends and being constantly bullied. But he doesn't want friends. He thinks he's better than everyone else. And as far as I can tell, he's never bullied. So, you know what this idiot does? He sits with the guys who are obviously homophobic.

I don't believe in blaming the victim, but as a girl, there's no way I'm walking into a rapist's jail cell. As a black kid, I'm not walking into a KKK meeting. So as an obviously gay kid, even if you're not out, why would you sit with your so-called tormenters if they weren't even bothering you? It makes no sense.

Dade continues to whine about having no friends, yet he pushes away a girl who's obviously interested in him. He doesn't have the guts to

a) tell her he's gay

or

b) tell her he's not interested

So, instead, he whines some more about how hard life is for him.

He also deals with his parents getting a divorce. He blames his dad and treats his mom like a child because she takes anti-depressants. Nice one there, Dade. Blame the victim for taking medication. Fuck you.

He's going to college in three months. Obviously, his parents splitting up has nothing to do with him. Both are vying for his attention and constantly telling him that they love him. But he doesn't care. This is just one more reason for him to whine. There are kids with real problems. Their parents hate them. Their parents yell constantly, don't pay child support, or pull out guns and threaten to shoot their spouses. None of this happens to Dade. Their divorce is lily white.

On the other hand, Fessica, his not-love interest, is actually going through a pretty bad divorce. Her father abandoned their family and she's seriously considering suicide because she really has no friends. And she's in-love with Dade who wants nothing to do with her because he's an asshole.

What does Dade do? He throws himself another fucking pity party. Then he goes back to oogling his manic pixie love interest, Alex Kincaid.

If Dade is just a whining asshole, Alex is a loser. He has no personality to speak of. He is a MPDB. He works at Taco-Taco, sells weed to High School students, and dropped out of college because he was having an affair with a man almost twice his age.

Dade falls head over heels in love with Alex because Alex is the best thing since grilled cheese.

Alex is also coincidentally hot. Coincidentally, he's also gay. And very in love with Dade.

Alright, gay boys out there. Please tell me the odds of two very hot boys falling head over heels for you in a suburban town that's very close-minded.

But wait, there's more!

There is not a single straight character portrayed positively in this entire book. Not one.

Judy, Pablo's boyfriend, has big breasts, which means she's evil, and apparently she has no right to be angry that Dade is sleeping with her boyfriend. It's her fault that she planned to go to school with Pablo and wants Dade gone. She tells Dade to quit hooking up with him, or else she'll get someone to beat Dade up. This

never happens, but Dade whines anyway.

Keep in mind that he bitches at his dad for having an affair, although he's already sorted it out with Dade's mom. He's a hypocritical little shit.

Jessica, Fessica's sister and Judy's best friend, is also evil. She has no right to be mad that Dade treats her sister like shit and is having an affair with her best friend's boyfriend.

The list goes on and on. Yet Dade wants to hang out with these people.

Dade complains about having to hang out with them, but he doesn't have to. He's going to college. He can do whatever he wants! These people don't want him around, but he forces himself on them by going to their parties and sitting with them at lunch.

So, to the rescue comes Lucy, his gay best friend. You all know the purpose of gay best friends. They have more chemistry with the protagonist than the love interest so they have to be gay to keep people from shipping them together.

Lucy is gay and does drugs and drinks and that makes her cool. When his mom takes medication because she's depressed, that makes her sad and pitiful.

Lucy is an annoying stereotype. She's the kid of a bunch of obnoxious Christians. We're told that she's awesome, but this is never shown. She takes Dade to a gay bar filled with thirty-year-old gay guys.

Why, I don't know. She says that it's a right of passage. She starts Dade on the path to becoming an alcoholic, and Alex turns him into a pot head. They also have a lot of unprotected sex, ignoring the fact that Alex used to sleep around. A lot. Hmmm...

Dade continues to whine and whine about his relationship with his parents and Fessica, even though he has no reason to do so. Then, dun dun dun, Pablo wants him back. Dade turns him down and yells at him. Basically, he acts like a self-righteous bitch.

He treats Pablo like he's David Karofsky. In reality, he's just really messed up. Pablo wants to fix things. When Dade ignores him, he starts stalking Dade, who does nothing about it. In the best scene of this stupid book, Pablo tries to come to terms with his sexuality and kisses him. Dade turns him away. Pablo is obviously disturbed, but Dade does nothing to comfort him. Pablo drives off a cliff, committing suicide.

Eventually, Alex and Dade break up. He goes to college. His parents get divorced. The End.

Dade learns nothing. This book is the bane of LGBTQ literature.

1.5 Stars because the writing was good. At least Nick Burd got something out of his MFA program. Creating a sympathetic protagonist was not one of those things.

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## **Pace says**

Dade is an entirely realistic character. There are times you want to hug him and there are times you want to

slap him.

Dade has just graduated high school and is coming into his own in a small, stuffy town where every house looks the same. He is torn between his love of the fields and the country and the freedom it provides, and the structure of his life now in a suburb where you eat dinner at the country club and keep all your dark secrets hidden away. His parents are in a loveless marriage and his mother takes more anti-depressants than she should. He's in the closet and in a secret relationship with a guy who will never come out--not even to himself.

So when Dade meets a mysterious older boy, he latches onto the new opportunities he brings. He works his way through his last summer at home struggling with himself, his relationships, his family, and his view on life. He has to watch his parents' marriage crumble at the same time as his relationship falls to the wayside, and a new one blossoms.

While Dade may make choices that are questionable, he's a stereotypical eighteen year old boy. He's instinctual and often acts without thinking and speaks without caring.

Author Nick Burd has created a realistic portrayal of growing up in the Midwest and itching to get out.

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### **Jacob says**

I read this book a year ago, and its narrator quickly became one of those characters who stuck with me as I moved on to other books. (spoilers) He is a young man dealing with his parents dysfunctional relationship, his own burgeoning sexuality, and the rejection from the young man he loves. This book beautifully depicts what being a gay teen can be like. Life for many teenagers is not sanitary or politically correct. If you think being a drug dealer or excessive smoking and drinking aren't realistically part of many teenage lives, you're living with blinders on. This book doesn't shy away from those themes. It is authentic. Truly effective young adult literature will not try to whitewash the experience, removing all drugs, sex and violence. This novel is not about drugs or sex or violence, so it doesn't linger too long on those details as if they are what matters. It is about love, acceptance, loneliness, and friendship. Everything else is just scenery.

This novel has somewhat graphic depictions of gay intimacy (I'd give it a PG13). It is authentic and well-written. The characters are memorable and realistic- I feel like I've met them. Dade is a narrator that reminds me somewhat of Chbosky's Charlie, Hinton's Ponyboy, or even Huck Finn or Holden Caulfield. He is gay, but his experience is a valid, poignant read for anyone. This is one of those books where I desperately wanted to keep reading, hoping for Dade and the other characters to finally find peace and happiness, though I knew it wouldn't end that way, not for everyone. I highly recommend this novel. Don't reject it because the characters aren't cleared for an after-school special. Read it without judgement, and you'll experience a moving journey through a boy's last summer at home.

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### **earthy says**

I'm tired of all these Poignant, Gritty, Real Life Teen Stories full of sex and drugs and alcohol and Meaningful, Fleeting Moments and Parents Who Don't Get It and the ever-present high school caste system of jocks and nerds and everything in between. I mean, I suppose that really is some people's experience, but far too often in novels it comes across as melodramatic and manipulative, an adult looking back



Meaningfully at his/her teen years and Coming Away With An Important Lesson.

Ahem.

The Vast Fields of Ordinary is an important book, primarily because we definitely need more stories about the teen LGBTQ experience. Also, the author really does have a way of grabbing you with clever phrases and a likeable narration style.

So it's an important book. But not a very good one.

Dade is a put-upon, whiney narrator without any real charm. His situation--being inexplicably stuck on Pablo, his not-really-boyfriend who treats him like dirt and covers up their liaisons by having a steady (naturally obnoxious) girlfriend--is lamentable, and when Dade finds and immediately falls in lust/love with the conveniently gay but not terribly interesting Alex, you do sort of hope things will work out. The subplot with Dade's parents fighting off an inevitable divorce is frustrating, as both of them are cardboard cut-outs rather than fully realized characters, and even the charming Lucy, Dade's conveniently lesbian friend who has a "problematic" past in LA, is really nothing more than a stereotype (albeit a fun one).

Yes, the story's heart-wrenching and moderately appealing, but nothing that happens here hasn't basically already happened in a hundred other YA Coming Of Age books (in particular it reminded me of The Perks of Being a Wallflower), and, perhaps most problematic of all, it's hard to really CARE about anyone or anything.

I also suspect (though I could be totally wrong here) that the story is at least somewhat autobiographical and might have benefitted from a bit more removal from the actual events (a point ironically mentioned by Lucy in the context of Dade's writing, i.e., that it's often obvious he's writing about himself, and he needs to make things more universal).

I do hope that if an LGBTQ teen or ally picks this up, he/she will get something good from it. Personally, I'll keep looking for something that feels more authentic and less Deeply Meaningful.

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## **Laura says**

Welcome to Dade Hamilton's last summer before heading off to college. A summer of coming out, falling in love, and finding himself. But also a time of confusion, loneliness, tension, and longing. Dade has a lot going on in his ordinary world. His parents are on the verge of divorce, his "boyfriend" won't acknowledge their relationship, and a local girl goes missing capturing everyone's attention. Things are not as ordinary as they appear.

This is an "I'm never going to be able to explain what this story did to me" type of read, so I'm just going to jump in head first. I can't really say I liked these characters through and through. At times, they made me smile, laugh, and melt from one car ride, party, and phone call to the next. But other times, their selfishness and tendency to wrap themselves up in their own world of sadness disappointed and frustrated me like you wouldn't believe. In other words, all of these characters felt real. So real to me. Every character—Dade, Pablo, Alex, Dade's parents, and more—were so lost and lonely. In their own bubbles of pain, confusion, or regret. My emotions were all over the map with this one. Sympathy to disappointment. Pride to frustration.

Happy to heartbroken. Powerful, complex, layered characters that tore me to bits from one moment to the next. Why doesn't he talk to him? How the hell did he just make me feel bad for him after everything? So many emotions. I did like Alex though. I can say that actually. Haha...But I'll get back to him later.

**"We waited. Around us the night moved. Wind rustled the corn, and the chirps of crickets pinballed around us, first here, then there, then over there."**

What I really want to gush about is the writing. I loved the energy, flow, and use of the words and silence on the page. Nick Burd's descriptions found a way under my skin. In just a few words, he could make me see and feel the moment, emotion, and energy in the room so clearly. Simple language that somehow brought magic to the ordinary. Mr. Burd could pull me right in there with them. I felt the heat, water, or night on my skin. Felt the confusion and need. A unique voice and vibe that hit me with force. A quiet power that snuck up on me.

**"His smile sparked something in his eyes that made me feel like I was the only person in the room, maybe the only person in the whole wide world."**

Alex Kincaid! An adorable, witty, charming swirl of sadness and sexy. He was the "awww" in the book. Every summer needs a romance and Alex Kincaid was perfect. Dreamy and lost in his own way. I adored Dade and Alex's chemistry and what they pulled out of each other. As the summer moved along, Dade came more and more into himself with confidence and acceptance. Two hearts that found and needed each other for the summer. Oh, and Alex's walk across the lawn with his dress shirt, tie, flowers in hand, muttering a pep talk to himself was one of the most realistic, terrifying and sweet moments in fiction.

Now....the ending. Was I supposed to feel hope at the end? Maybe in a way I did. Small wave of hope. But really the ending gave me the shivers. It will haunt me. I wish I could explain why, but sometimes that haunting feeling in my belly can't be put into words. I just feel it.

Dade's coming of age journey was something special to watch, feel, and be a part of.

So that review was a mess. Haha...Sorry. There is a lot going on here. But in the end—I am so happy Dade is no longer talking to his ceiling fan about how he feels. My heart hopes he will find his happiness in life. I know, I know. I'm talking like these characters are real people. That shows how deep this book went with me. I feel haunted. I took a big part of this world filled with flat open land, cornfields to wander, and flashes of life's ordinary or extraordinary ways with me. But in many ways, this book took a big part of me.

A highly recommended read. One that will stick with you. I can't wait to experience more from Nick Burd.

**\*\*Warning\*\*Rambling Spoiler Ahead\*\***

This spoiler is really for me. Later when the emotions have stopped messing with my head maybe it will make sense to me.

(view spoiler)

