



Release

Patrick Ness

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Inspired by *Mrs Dalloway* and Judy Blume's *Forever*, Release is one day in the life of Adam Thorn, 17. It's a big day. Things go wrong. It's intense, and all the while, weirdness approaches...

Adam Thorn is having what will turn out to be the most unsettling, difficult day of his life, with relationships fracturing, a harrowing incident at work, and a showdown between this gay teen and his preacher father that changes everything. It's a day of confrontation, running, sex, love, heartbreak, and maybe, just maybe, hope. He won't come out of it unchanged. And all the while, lurking at the edges of the story, something extraordinary and unsettling is on a collision course.

Release Details

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From Reader Review Release for online ebook

Lori says

OK, another YA coming of age story. I am not sure when it became interesting. Suddenly, I want to know what happens to these people.

The main characters father is a conservative minister but, notably, light-handed as such.

I wasn't sure why the ghost of “dead woman in a drowned dress” kept showing up and, the height of the faun surprised me. A lot of people complained about the second story. To me, the speculative aspects seemed a bit like a Greek chorus.

I'll repeat the trigger warnings: for homophobia and sexual harassment. The last one is timely.

Emily (Books with Emily Fox) says

3.5?

It's hard to rate this book because I really liked the contemporary story but didn't care at all for the magical realism/fantasy one...

Patrick Ness's writing is a delight though!

Lola says

I'm not unfamiliar with Patrick Ness, which is why I expected this book to be strange, weird even, possibly befuddling. But it was actually very comprehensible and not out of the ordinary, if I don't take in account the random revengeful ghost.

Having read neither Judy Bloom's “Forever” nor Virginia Woolf's “Mrs. Dalloway,” I had no idea what kind of beast “Release” would turn out to be. If there are references to those two novels, I didn't get them. All I know is that there are two intertwined stories in this book—a ghost's and a teenage gay boy's who is having the Worst Day Ever.

I liked Adam just fine. I feel as though it's easier to connect with characters that show their flaws and vulnerable side to the reader, and Adam does that fairly often. His friends and foes—and family—are not so open. We know close to nothing about them. It's more about how they affect Adam and how Adam perceives them. We do not get their sides of the story.

That's okay. It's not preferable, but this is a short enough novel and Adam is having the Worst Day Ever, so let's not ask too much of him. His entourage is about to leave him—leaves Linus, whom he knows not what to do with. He's his boyfriend, but then again, is he really in love with him? So there are things Adam must

figure out on this dreadful day.

Patrick Ness surprised me. The story is mainly focused on Adam and his various relationships—romantic, friendship and family-related. Since Adam is gay and his family is super-religious, this is a taboo subject in his family. But he, himself, is pretty comfortable with his way of life. In fact, the author discusses his sex life very openly, leaving little intimate details for the reader to figure out. That surprised me. It's a good thing, especially since the topics—sex, masturbating, unrequited love—discussed are relevant to teenagers and many YA authors do not go that far.

I would definitely decapitate the ghost if given the chance, because she is irrelevant and only a distraction to the main story. What were you thinking, Patrick Ness? The characters didn't even care about the dead girl. She is mentioned maybe once or twice—extremely briefly—in total. Come on.

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Raeleen Lemay says

I'm a bit disappointed by this one. What I didn't realize going into it was that it's told in alternating chapters, with alternating viewpoints. I was under the impression that this book was just about Adam, but it's not! Also, the other storyline just didn't interest me *at all* so that really detracted from my enjoyment quite a bit. However, it did lend a very interesting feel to the book, as the two storylines take place over the same period of time (a single day, with some flashbacks) but they felt entirely different. I can definitely see why some people would love what Ness did here, but it ended up just being too weird and confusing for me personally.

On the other hand, what I really liked about this book was the main character. He is so open and vulnerable (to a reader at least, not necessarily with other characters in the book lol) but it made him such an interesting leading man. He goes through heartbreak, confusion, emotional abuse, and you really feel all of that with him as a reader. I also loved finally seeing a YA book that (rather graphically) demonstrates a healthy, happy, sexual relationship of a gay couple. There was no cheating, no scandal, just a normal, amazing relationship, and it was a delight to read! I don't often like romance in YA novels, but the romance in this book felt so genuine and just so so cute (and, there's a surprising amount of sex! Just so you know!)

Also, another complaint about this book is that you don't get a nice ending for all aspects. There are some pretty hard feelings that are pretty central to the story that don't get resolved at all, and I was really hoping to get more on that front. (view spoiler)

Anyway, it was a quite read with some weird stuff and a cute romance. Read it if you want!

Chelsea (chelseadolling reads) says

I AM SO GLAD I FINALLY READ THIS. I adored the writing and the characters so much. However..... while I did really, really enjoy the main story of this book, I was mega confused by the secondary ghost queen plot line thing. Like. Huh? I think a re-read is in order to better grasp what that had to do with everything bc it went right over my head. BUT STILL. Really, really liked this.

Philip says

1.5ish stars.

There are two separate storylines within this book. They kind of come together at the end, but not in a big enough way to justify the existence of the second.

I give the secondary "faun/queen" story 1 star because it is non-sensical and pretentious and pointless. Also the faun bugged me, repeating "My queen? My queen? My queen? My queen? My queen!" almost as bad as Titanic, "Rose? Jack! Jack? Rose! Rose! Jack? Rose? Jack! Jack! Rose! Jack? Rose! Rose? Jack!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRqK9...>

I give the main "Adam and the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day" story 2 stars for being a worthy, sporadically powerful tale told with conceited self-righteousness, and shameless melodrama.

I will try to sensitively separate the valid, heartbreaking circumstances Adam experiences with the treatment they're given in this story. I'm not sure whether Ness intentionally provided Adam with the broadest, most stereotypical representations of **Evil** - his sleazy, predator boss (complete with pedo-stache), and truly awful, bible-wielding family - and **Good** - his perfectly supportive, open-minded best friend's family and long-suffering angel boyfriend. Maybe it was a purposeful choice to make Adam himself seem more genuine in contrast; he is believably irritating and self-obsessed in the way most teenagers are. I find that between the near-caricaturization of the supporting players and the everything-and-the-kitchen-sink-stuffed-into-a-single-day plot (baby mama drama, workplace sexual assault, coming out, casting out demons, lots of sex, more than one friend moving away forever), Adam's story is done a disservice.

Spoiler:

There's a point near the end of the book in which Adam Triumphs over his Evil Father that, at the time of reading, is so exciting and fulfilling to witness because it would never happen in real life. The beauty of literature. Doesn't every 16-year-old fantasize about Righteously Defeating his Injudicious Parent by saying "eff you, I'm running away and living at my best friend's house, try and stop me (insert raspberry)," while slack-jawed Parent powerlessly stands by? A few minutes after reading, however, I couldn't help but think it selfishly contributes to the oversimplification of a legitimately painful situation. Not to mention the absurdity of Adam screaming about his boyfriend's lush pubes while his dad frantically tries to pray his gay away as they prepare for a baptism in dad's church.

Disappointing because I was such a big fan of A Monster Calls, but maybe I shouldn't give up on Ness just yet?

Posted in Mr. Philip's Library

Larry H says

Patrick Ness' new book, ***Release***, is essentially two completely different novels in one. The core story is absolutely wonderful, thought-provoking and emotional, funny and sweet, and it reaffirmed why I am such a fan of Ness' writing. While I think I understood the point of the second story, I don't understand why it was necessary to tack it on here, so I guess I would have preferred some sort of explanation or connection between the two.

Some may be so put off by the second story that it may detract from your enjoyment of the core story, and that's unfortunate, because there is so much heart and poetry to be found.

One hell of a day is in store for Adam Thorn. His ex-boyfriend-of-sorts, Enzo, is leaving to move to Atlanta, and he still can't seem to shake his feelings for Enzo or completely process how and why their relationship ended. And although a new boy, Linus, is more than happy to take Enzo's place, and might possibly be in love with Adam, Adam is struggling with feelings of betrayal and low self-worth. He hopes everything will work its way out at Enzo's farewell "get-together."

Meanwhile, there is a crisis at home which roils his ultra-religious family. While Adam has gotten used to his parents' barely hidden disapproval of him (although he's never come out to them), it still hurts to see how easily they will forgive the missteps of his brother, who is following in the footsteps of their preacher father, but that they don't get him. But more and more, Adam knows that your chosen family is so much more important and cherished than the one you're born into.

For Adam, that chosen family is his best friend, Angela, and her family. Adam and Angela have gotten each other since a near-death experience bonded them together as young children. Adam envies Angela's relationship with her free-spirited parents, while Angela is saddened for her friend's treatment at the hands of his family. She's willing to fight his battles for him or with him, and always has his back. But she, too, has a bombshell for Adam which threatens to rock their solid core.

As if the day can't get any worse, things at his part-time job at the "evil international mega-conglomerate" come to a head because of his creepy, lecherous boss, Wade. When Wade gives Adam an ultimatum he really can't refuse despite the implications, it sets up multiple confrontations which put Adam on the short end of the stick. It's really enough to break anyone, much someone struggling as much as Adam is.

Meanwhile, as Adam's life appears to be falling apart, a second story is occurring, one with a plot that is part fantasy, part supernatural (I think). In this story, which takes place at the same time and in some of the same places as Adam's story, a faun with mysterious powers must save his young queen from enacting her revenge, even if it means destruction for them both. There is some overlap to Adam's story (that eventually becomes clear), but I don't actually know if what takes place in the story really does happen in Adam's world.

I'm trying to be somewhat vague, even with Adam's story, because it flows so beautifully as it unfolds. Nothing is necessarily earth-shattering or unique, but there's just so much love, pain, angst, and heart, I fell head over heels for the story. And while the other story is confusing, Ness is still a tremendously poetic guide, so I marveled at his language even as I found myself asking over and over, "What does this have to do with the *story*?"

Ness knows how to tug at your heartstrings and how to make you laugh. The relationship between Adam and Angela felt so loving and genuine that it makes you wish you had a friendship like that (or perhaps inspires you to call that special friend and let them know how you feel about them). While Adam's situation is a little depressing at times, you know there are so many teenagers just like Adam struggling with these same issues.

I know I struggled with some of them myself back before movable type was invented.

One interesting thing, which may or may not put you off this book: *Release* is the first book I've read that actually has sex scenes between two gay teenagers. (They're of age, though, so relax.) They're not completely explicit but they're definitely more detailed than what you usually see in YA novels. So be warned if that makes you uncomfortable.

Not everyone will love this book, because of that odd second plot. I totally understand that, but it's sad, because I think that at its core, *Release* is a book about finding the freedom you need to be yourself and live your own way, no matter who you are or how you choose to label yourself. It's also a book about love, both conditional and unconditional, whether it's among family, between friends, or in a romantic sense.

While this isn't quite the home run I had hoped it would be, I still love the way Ness writes, and it will be a while before I can get this book out of my head. I still have to catch up on some of Ness' older books, too.

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blo...>

Korrina (OwlCrate) says

Wow. Just wow. I read this book in just a few short hours, completely transfixed from the first page. There's something very special about Patrick Ness's writing.

Emma Giordano says

4 stars! I really enjoyed this read. It takes some important topics that are rarely discussed in YA, and in society in general. There were a few elements I didn't enjoy as much, but overall, *Release* is an important novel a wide variety of people should read.

CW: homomisia (homophobia), sexual harassment, intimate partner violence

Release is a modern day contemporary yet there appears to be a supernatural/paranormal aspect as certain chapters follow the ghost of a recently deceased girl after rising out of the lake. I have to say, this was my least favorite part of the novel. The real-world storyline was fabulous, but the chapters from the ghost felt out of place. I wasn't a fan of the prose and didn't really understand why it was included. Clearly, it's meant to serve as some analogy or connection to Adam's story, but I can admit I may have just not read it critically enough. I've found similar issues for me personally in some of his other works, where I just do not "get" the slight paranormal elements included. Patrick Ness is such a strong contemporary writer but I can't ever seem to grasp the supernatural portions of his books. The "ghost/queen/faun" narrative was my biggest dislike about the book, otherwise, I really enjoyed the rest of it.

I have to say, I am SO DAMN PLEASED with the portrayal of sexual harassment in this book. For one, sexual harassment against young boys is NEVER TALKED ABOUT and so often brushed off and hidden. I think this book could give a lot of comfort to boys who have been in similar situations as this topic is handled with care. But also, *Release* tackles Quid Pro Quo harassment (in the workplace; authority figure

promises benefits and/or threatens consequences regarding sexual favors from an employee). I don't think I've ever read a young adult novel that discusses this form of harassment, which makes this book even more of a gem to me. This topic related to this population is so under-discussed and I really commend Ness for taking a stand and giving victims hope to fight through.

Another wonderful piece of this book is Adam's struggle with his faith. I tend to have a soft spot for YA novels about teens distancing themselves from Christianity as it is something I have gone through myself. (I will say for my Christian followers, I feel Adam's questioning of his faith is done with respect to Christianity/Evangelism and his issues are not at all an attack on his belief system.) I know for a fact there are so many young LGBTQ+ teens out there who have grown up in religious households that create a hostile environment for them to be their true selves, and again, I believe *Release* can be a great comfort for individuals in that situation. I obviously can't speak for the representation but as Ness is a gay man (yay own voices!) I trust he's handled this topic with grace. Watching Adam's fears transform into defiance and confidence was truly elevating and I value my time watching him grow as a character.

Overall, this was a super enjoyable read. It takes place over the course of one day and it is immensely easy to fly through. I always enjoy Ness's books and am especially glad this particular story exists for all the good I know it can do for readers. Would highly recommend.

I received a free copy of this book from Walker Books at Book Expo 2017. I had no obligation to review this book and all opinions are my own.

C.G. Drews says

I was so addicted to every single page of this. Omg can Patrick Ness do no wrong. His characters are so *real* and my absolutely favourite thing of all the evers is how his stories seamlessly weave in a sort of fantastical or mystical element into them. Like I don't always "Get" it fully...but I APPRECIATE it and it makes me want to reread the book as soon as I've finished. aGHHH THIS WAS JUST SO SO GOOD.

The story actually takes place over one day, too! Otherwise known as "The Most Really Worst Day In The Possible Of Existence". I felt so bad for Adam. Mate. This was so bad. And the fact that I could get this invested in characters and their lives and the complexity of everything and it's just ONE DAY is (A) proof of phenomenal writing, and (B) proof that I have a heart. Excellent. I had my doubts.

ADAM IS PRECIOUS. He's very lost and he feels like he isn't loved. Well, actually *worse*: he feels like he doesn't deserve to be loved. My heart kind of broke for him, because, sure he doesn't have the "worst life ever" on the outside, but he has a highly religious family who believe being gay is a choice and a sin. And the boy he loved the most just broke his heart. And like the pain and heartache was so raw and palpable on the pages. He's not whingeing the whole time, but you can see pieces of him cracking as everything in his day goes from *bad* to *actual hell*.

And yes it does have a lot of religion in it. But not like the preachy style. More like: This is Adam's family. THEY SUCK. And they are trying to love him *in spite of him being gay* and aguhrghuhgh no excuse me while I just get very distressed. Also there's an author's note that says the author actually based this story of his life growing up in a strictly religious family while being gay. **You can absolutely feel the authenticity of Adam's emotions because of this.** And like I don't think the book particularly hates ON religion. It criticises people who are hypocrites with how they show love. There's plenty of homophobia and it huuuurts.

SMOL LIST OF THINGS TO LOVE:

- Adam has the most epic best friend of Angela, who's Korean, and they love each other (platonically!!) to pieces.
- there is pizza
- it talks about the fact you CAN choose your own family
- there are plenty of surprising twists
- YOUR HEART MIGHT BREAK SEVERAL TIMES
- there is a meaningful rose
- death
- relatable and interesting and complex teenagers who just felt SO REAL

Okay so the magical realism aspect? I didn't *quite* understand it. There's a dead girl who is a ghost and she goes looking for her killer...and I DON'T EVEN KNOW, DUDE. She finds a faun??? She starts to be a queen??? It was all very vague and metaphorical with flowery writing and ethereal tones. And like I APPRECIATED IT, but I actually didn't quite understand how it wrapped into Adam's story. Obviously it didn't dampen my enjoyment of the story to be a Clueless Avocado. (Ooh, my new nickname. I shall put that on my business cards.) BECAUSE FIVE STARS. ALL THE STARS. STARS FOR EVERYONE.

ALL IN ALL: I absolutely loved this story. It was precious and raw and simultaneously heartbreaking and hopeful. And I seriously hope Adam has a better day after this book ends because seriously, talk about a day of craptasticness. **I will always always *always* love books where the message is: YOU DESERVE TO BE LOVED.** Because you do. This book definitely caught my cold dead Vulcan heart and, omg, I feel a singular warm emotion. <3 I love it.

Emily May says

Who cared if he'd grow out of it? That didn't make it any less true in those painful and euphoric days when it was happening. The truth was always now, even if you were young. Especially if you were young.

I am so *torn*. I'm not even sure how I feel about Release overall. It's **like there are two books in here** - one I absolutely loved, and the other I just didn't enjoy at all.

Ness is one of those authors who never writes the same book, or same kind of book, twice. Liking one is no guarantee you will like another. I absolutely adored his Chaos Walking trilogy - The Knife of Never Letting Go, The Ask and the Answer and Monsters of Men, I thought A Monster Calls was a beautiful middle grade book, and I loved what Ness did in More Than This. However, The Crane Wife didn't work for me, and I thought The Rest of Us Just Live Here was clever, but boring.

Release is a strange story, heavily influenced by Mrs. Dalloway and Judy Blume's Forever. In fact, it's a little meta for my tastes (kind of like The Rest of Us Just Live Here was) and even includes direct references to Forever in the story, whilst the first and last lines are plays on the first and last lines of Mrs. Dalloway.

When I said it felt like there were two books in one, that's because the story alternates between a day in the life of Adam Thorn, and **a weird, kinda magical realism ghost story** about a faun and a queen, which

clearly had something to do with the recent death of a meth addict, but I'm still not 100% sure I get what the hell was going on.

The faun wishes to tell her, tell her that she is caught, his Queen, snagged and bound by a frightened soul. He needs to tell her that she is in danger of becoming lost forever, but he cannot. He can only look at the sun, less than an hour from its midday peak. The faun is worried. The faun is very worried.

Adam Thorn's story, on the other hand, is **very powerful**. He is the gay son of a preacher, struggling against his family's beliefs, trying to ward off the sexual advances of his boss, and working through some serious heartbreak... all in the space of one day. The book manages to cover sex, love, friendship, family and loss in so few pages, and in such a moving way.

Adam's chapters are **hard-hitting, beautiful and sad**. His ultimate realization towards the end of the book carries with it that certain bittersweetness that only comes with the letting go of someone you loved deeply.

But I just didn't enjoy the experimental style of the other chapters. I'm sure it was supposed to be deep and meaningful, but the choice to add it felt cold and intellectual in a book that was otherwise so emotionally tense. I wanted more Adam, less weird.

I would hesitate before recommending this book. Though Adam's story was compelling and his character so well-drawn, a lot of this short book is taken up with metaphoric wanderings into the weird and - sometimes it seemed - nonsensical. But maybe smarter people than me will appreciate it. Otherwise, I recommend reading Silvera's *History Is All You Left Me* instead.

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Adam Silvera says

One of a kind novel set over the course of one day. Boys talking about love, beauty, sex, beautiful sex, a ghost, and so much more.

Warda says

EDIT: I had to change my rating to 5 stars! It's been a few days and I haven't been able to stop thinking about it. The format of this book and the way the story is told and how it comes so well together was just stunning and such a joy to read.

Original review:

I just adore Patrick Ness so much! This story tugged at my heartstrings and the writing was mesmerising!

This book needs to be read by everyone, just because it's been written by Patrick Ness. The characters he writes, the lessons and themes he infuses accompanied with flawless writing is always a guaranteed win.

❄️?Nani❄️? says

first off, shout out to that beautiful cover, which, much to my embarrassment, didn't even take notice until I held the book in my hands. ?

I knew I was going to love Adam the moment I read the blurb and once I started reading it, all it took was the first page.

Release is an emotionally deep and poignant story that takes place over the course of a single day— a day full of wonderful and awful surprises as it explores and discusses a multitude of themes in a stirring and compulsively readable way.

? Adam:

Adam lives in a deeply religious household, his father is an evangelical preacher and his brother—the golden son—is training to become an evangelical preacher. The day begins with Adam getting flowers for his mum (Americans are going, it's mOm!) then preparing for his ex-boyfriend's going-away party and as it goes on, we get a glimpse of his life, weighed down by his father's "Yoke", as he so calls it, until he can achieve the independence and freedom that he so longs for and a life without secrecy or shame.

We experience, along with Adam, the revelations, heartbreaks and the decision to reshape his life in the defining day which Ness illuminates the intensity of his feelings with raw honesty and beauty. He is vulnerable and feels undeserving of love, he feels rejected by his parents for his gay identity, which they refuse to acknowledge, has a seemingly perfect older brother, can't break his attachment to his not-so-great ex Enzo and as a result can't fully commit to his current boyfriend Linus, his best friend Angela, on whom he relies for an outlet for everything has news of her own that'll throw him for a loop and to top it all off, he has to deal with his boss who sexually harasses him.

As tense as it may seem for a book that takes place in a single day, Ness manages to perfectly form a smart and sensitive story that in no way feels overwhelming to read (except for heartache, you'll feel plenty of that), all the while interweaving a secondary plot thread which involves a supernatural event that unfolds in the same town, but has no connection to Adam's story in any manner nor does it enrich it.

? Adam and parents:

"You have no idea how hard I work to love you."

As for Adam's relationship with his parents, there's a phrase in the book, with which I'll end this particular section, where his father lands a gut-wrenching line after their heated argument, which sufficiently illustrates their difficult and incredibly complex relationship.

It might be one of the saddest things I've read in a book.

? Adam and BF Angela:

One of the best parts of this book is the portrayal of Adam's friendship with Angela, a Korean adoptee, who not only is his emotional crutch but is pretty incredible herself. They're each other's confidant and support system who have nothing but genuine love and understanding for each other. There is so much depth and beauty to this friendship that I continually found myself looking forward to their scene together.

? Secondary narrative:

Alongside Adam's story is another paranormal narrative that follows the ghost of a recently murdered girl which I found so utterly bizarre and detached from the main story.

I read these sections chapter to chapter hoping to discover the link that finally interlocks both stories together and in a way, I supposed it did but I genuinely struggled with it and couldn't wait to get back to Adam's story.

The book minus this particular part could've worked perfectly fine as it didn't add anything new or extra to the main storyline.

Be it fantasy or contemporary, I always find Ness's characters so incredibly touching and easy to connect with in some ways or another and Adam was no exception.

Apart from the secondary plot, *Release* is a beautiful, heartfelt novel that I'm so grateful to have finally read. The writing is beautiful and evocative yet not overly flowery where themes of sex, shame, acceptance and sexuality are explored in the most thoughtful way possible.

Kai says

"They're your parents. They're meant to love you because. Never in spite."

3,5 Stars

Release was one of my most anticipated reads this year and one that I had preordered as soon as I had heard of it. Patrick Ness is one of the most talented authors that I know. *A Monster Calls* was hauntingly beautiful and emotional while *More Than This* was eerie and scary as hell, but nevertheless beautiful. *The Knife of Never Letting Go* was brutal and twisted, too much so in my opinion, and *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* was just lacking in something.

I'm afraid I have to say the same thing about *Release*. I expected a great contemporary novel. In a way it was: a wide range of likeable characters with depth, teen angst, coming of age characteristics, family issues, love and sex. What threw me off was the weird paranormal part of this book, a part that seemed almost trivial. It was very similar to *The Rest of Us Just Live Here*. We basically have two parallel plots that hardly ever overlap. They coexist but don't touch. It's two different stories in one book, and I'd rather have two standalone books than this strange mix-up. It would have worked much better that way. Maybe *TROUJLH* and *Release* are set in the same fictional world and have a connection that I fail to see.

The thing is that Patrick Ness is an outstanding writer with so much potential! Why not focus on one storyline alone? I know both stories could have been fantastic in the way some of his previous books were.

What I love about *Release* is the writing and especially the humour. There were a few laugh-out-loud moments and I enjoyed it through and through. I also want to thank him for being so open-minded about gay sex in YA novels. The sex scene(s) don't feel dirty or cringe-worthy in any way. He manages to go into detail

without really going into detail. It's far from smut-fiction (which I am *really* glad about), simply normal, romantic, important, emotional and fun. The YA genre needs more of that.

I can't wait to see what the future holds for Patrick Ness. He just announced that he will be writing the screenplay for the *Chaos Walking* movie starring Daisy Ridley and Tom Holland. I have high hopes for this adaption - and for his future novels.

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