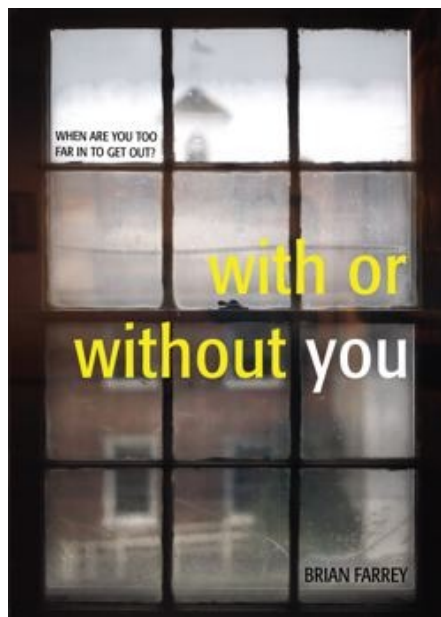




With or Without You

Brian Farrey

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Eighteen-year-old Evan and his best friend, Davis, get beaten up for being loners. For being gay. For just being themselves. But as rough as things often seem, at least Evan can take comfort in his sweet, sexy boyfriend Erik - whom he's kept secret from everyone for almost a year.

Then Evan and Davis are recruited to join the Chasers, a fringe crowd that promises them protection and status. Davis is swept up in the excitement, but Evan is caught between his loyalty to Davis and his love for Erik. Evan's lied to keep his two worlds separate. Now his lies are about to implode...and destroy the very relationships he's been trying to protect.

With or Without You Details

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From Reader Review With or Without You for online ebook

Melanie says

Evan and Davis have been best friends since they were 11 and Davis moved into Evan's neighborhood. After realizing that both are gay but not attracted to each other both boys rely on each other to survive the daily battle that is school. Bullied, beat up and tormented by fellow high school kids, Evan keeps a triage kit in his bedroom for those times that they need medical attention. That's how bad it is.

Evan and Davis have a plan though. They are both getting out of Madison, WI to go to Chicago for college. However Evan is hiding a secret, a secret named Erik. Eric is wonderful and is opening Evan's eyes to the world around him. What Evan learns from Erik makes him realize that maybe the new group that Davis has fallen in with is not the best.

And it's not. He calls himself Cicada or Sable. He's a young man living in the youth hostel in Madison. He rounds up as many gay teens as he can to teach them about their "gay history," specifically Stonewall. But at the first meeting Evan is shocked at what Sable considers a "learning experience."

Eventually Evan realizes why Sable calls the group "Bugchasers" and fills the boys heads with visions of becoming "chasers." Sable is HIV positive. He contracted the virus through a dirty drug needle. Subsequently he has become very bitter about his experience and believes that others should be infected too. He himself eventually becomes a chaser and wishes to spread his "gift." He teaches the young men he recruits that to contract the HIV virus is to be given the "gift."

When Evan realizes what's been going on he's horrified. He follows Davis all the way to New York to try to save him from himself and Sable. But when he finds Davis, it's probably too late. Evan finally realizes that Davis has to make his own decisions. He himself has to make up his mind about his own budding but serious relationship.

A fantastic book for LGBTQ youth. Bugchasers do exist even though the concept is terrifying. Better youth are exposed through literature rather than real-world experience.

Karen says

OK, I have to say that I wasn't sure about this book at first. When I was about 100 pages in I almost put it down, but I decided to keep going and I am glad that I did.

Not that the first 100 pages was bad or uninteresting, but because it was like a chick-lit book but with two boys. For anyone that knows me, I do not care for chick-lit books or at least most of them that I have read anyway.

The first 100 or so pages was all about relationships, love, etc. But then I peeked ahead and I seen that the whole book was not like that.

This book is about relationships, love, honesty, betrayal, confusion, fitting in, of course, being gay and HIV. It is also about understanding, trust, and discovering who you are.

And those are the things that kept me reading.

Evan has a best friend, Davis, and a boyfriend, Erik, who nobody knows about. Erik is the perfect guy. He is smart, loving, understanding, talented and hard working, dedicated. Evan is talented and kind but he is also lost and still trying to discover who he is and what exactly he wants in life.

The whole story is mostly about Evan and Erik, but it is also about Evan and Davis. Evan and Davis had their futures planned together (as BFFs), but then certain things happened and Davis got mixed up with the wrong people because they made him feel as if he finally 'belonged'. His judgement was clouded by that, but luckily Evans was not. I think that if Evan didn't have Erik that maybe he would have fell for the the wrong crowd too. But he didn't and because he didn't he tried to make Davis see the truth.

It was a very dangerous path and what Evan did was very brave and unselfish of him. But while he was being loyal and trying to help one person, he was being disloyal and unintentionally hurting someone else.

I couldn't believe the things I read in this book about HIV and 'bugchasers'. How horrible!

On a sidenote, anyone who has an Erik in their lives are very lucky and they should do whatever they can to keep them in it.

Thomas says

Evan and Davis have been best friends since the third grade. They share many things: their sexuality, beatings from bullies, and a desire to escape their lonely little town of Madison, Wisconsin. In fact, they both plan to attend the University of Chicago this upcoming fall. However, Evan has one thing Davis doesn't - a comforting and reliable boyfriend named Erik. Evan has successfully kept Erik a secret from his friends and his family for quite some time, but when Davis gets recruited to join the Chasers and pulls Evan along with him, Evan's relationships take a turn for the worse.

More like a 4.5 - I'll focus on the good things first. I loved the characters and the writing. Evan and Erik's relationship was real and compassionate. It wasn't perfect, but it wasn't awkward and clumsy either. Though I disliked Davis, I liked how Brian Farrey kept his and Evan's friendship a prominent part of the story without making it more than that. The writing didn't amaze me, but it added a nice touch to the plot and there were some lines I wanted to write down and save for later.

There was one plot element I wanted to change, but unless you've read the book I wouldn't click the spoiler... (view spoiler). This added element detracted from my enjoyment of the story as a whole. The ambiguity of the ending annoyed me initially, but as I thought about it more I realized it worked for the book.

Overall, a solid read. One of the best books with gay characters I've read in awhile.

Jackson says

Shame on the ALA's GLBT Roundtable for giving this book the Stonewall Book Honor!

I read this book a few months ago and was so disillusioned by how horrible it was that I couldn't even review it or really read much of anything for awhile. I think it's important to say a few things about it, though, because I was extremely excited about reading it and was very saddened when it did not live up to what I had hoped it would be and actually was written in a way that I thought would probably do more harm than good

to the teens who really need something like this.

I don't feel like writing a full review, but I just wanted to touch on 3 points so here goes:

- 1) Even though this is sort of marketed as a novel that educates teens about HIV/AIDS, all poz (HIV-positive) characters in the story are portrayed really negatively. The least extreme example is the older, kind & well-meaning man who is portrayed as being sweet but irresponsible. The most extreme example is the teen who is portrayed as being a cult leader who is trying to manipulate other teens into letting him give them HIV & who goes as far as to actually *stab* someone (I'm sorry, I'm not even including a spoiler alert there because it's so completely ridiculous and anything cohesive or interesting about the story has already completely unraveled by the time you get to this point in the novel.)
- 2) The character who is feeling lonely and isolated because he's gay and lives in a small town & is constantly bullied & just wants to belong somewhere, who spends much of the book considering intentionally contracting HIV because he thinks it will give him a sense of belonging to a community is this interesting character in this story. This is the character I want to relate to and care about and this is the character whose journey actually seems important to me. He is portrayed as being pathetic, misguided and sort of a hopeless case. Instead, the author spends most of the book focusing on his best friend who has a perfect life, a perfect secret boyfriend and no real problems. Snooze. Who cares?
- 3) At one point, the author totally has a chance to redeem himself in a way that would not have caused me to forgive him, but would have put enough good back into the world that I would have felt like there was at least something important that had happened here. See, for those of you who don't know, there is this thing called PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis). It's kind of like a morning after pill for HIV exposure and is actually extremely effective (something like 95%) at preventing HIV transmission in people who have been exposed if you are able to access it within a day or two or three of the exposure. NO ONE knows about it. Once, a coworker of mine was exposed to HIV at work and I told her she should get PEP & she didn't believe me that it was a real thing and when she asked her doctor about it, her doctor said he'd never heard of it. Seriously. But do you know the only reason I even knew about it as a teen? It was mentioned in this gay YA novel I found at the library (I think it was one of the *Rainbow Boys* books by Alex Sanchez--cheers, Alex Sanchez!). Informing teens about PEP is so important that it would have been enough to, in some small way, actually redeem the whole book in spite of being awful. But when Farrey has the opportunity to educate readers about PEP, he totally misses the boat. It is mentioned, as a nurse vaguely tells the characters that they should probably get one if they think there's been an HIV exposure but that they don't have it at that hospital, but rather than actually seeing to it that the character gets a PEP, this whole point is dismissed & never brought up again. Instead, they treat the characters for injuries sustained while having anal sex, apparently trying to scare kids from having sex at all, rather than giving them the tools to be well informed of their options when they choose to do so. I would not go as far as to say that the author gives inaccurate information about PEP because he doesn't outright lie, but he certainly is misleading in the way he chooses to present information to readers about their options for dealing with a potential HIV exposure. While a lot of other things about this book made me angry, this was the worst offense & I feel like I need to let any teens or adults who work with teens know that thebody.com is one good resource for gaining *accurate* information about HIV/AIDS (there are tons of other good resources, this is the one I know off the top of my head because it's the one I usually reference personally) and another good sex ed resource geared specifically towards young people is Scarleteen.

I will say this again, because it is worth restating:

Shame on the ALA's GLBT Roundtable for giving this book the Stonewall Book Honor! Seriously, if you read this book and thought it was a good example of LGBTQ teen fiction and should be honored as such, you are ill-informed on LGBTQ issues, specifically those concerning young people, and you have no business being on such a committee. I am sure you meant well, but this is not the first total miss on your part (see:

Almost Perfect) but you are librarians and should therefore know that books matter and giving youth bad/inaccurate/bigoted information can be really harmful to them!

Andres says

I really enjoyed this book because of the "good read" trifecta: great writing, great characters, and interesting story. I tend to pass over a lot of the YA books that come across my desk at work because of the hokey plots or the uninspired writing (which only reflects on what gets delivered to me, not YA literature in general!). If the synopsis on the back doesn't sound like a hundred other similar stories, I at least give the book a try.

And this book is definitely worth a try. The characters here are people you meet instead of just read about: Evan with his painting, Davis with his insecurity, Erik with his cautious love, Shan with her over-protectiveness---these are flawed but fully realized people who are trying to figure themselves out while being shaped by their push-and-pull, sometimes good/sometimes bad relationships.

The writing and dialogue are equal amounts fun, funny, clever, and serious. I have some minor quibbles with a plot point here or there but nothing too serious. The ending left me wanting more since it is kind of open-ended, which I like less and less the more books I find them in. Some character stories aren't resolved (to my satisfaction), but I'll chalk that up to wanting more of a good thing. They aren't details that are important to the overall story of Evan and Erik but I'm a sucker for completion.

Different from what I usually read, but worth the time for the writing and characters.

Leslee says

With or Without You is a very well-written book with a dramatic and intriguing plot. The story line probably isn't appropriate for anyone younger than middle school. Evan is a high school senior, along with his best friend Davis. Both of these boys are gay and are experiencing great struggle in fitting in. Evan also has a boyfriend, Eric that he keeps from his friends and family. The author does a wonderful job of describing the hardships Evan is going through when he has to make decisions on how to live his life. His parents are not supportive or caring for that matter, and he is torn between his life with Davis and his life with Eric.

Davis and Evan find a group, The Chasers, where they might have the chance to feel included in the world. Davis and Evan act very differently towards the Chasers and their beliefs, and so their friendship is soon torn. Evan has to make the decision on staying friends with Davis, or saving his life. I think Evan made the right decision, even if Davis and him didn't stay friends in the end.

This book would be great for all readers, homosexual or heterosexual. It gives readers the opportunity to feel empathy towards how hard life can be when you are gay. This book also gets the information across on the fact that yes, bullying towards these individuals does occur and it is a huge problem that needs to stop.

Sean Kennedy says

(2.5 / 5)

This was an odd book to read, as it felt very disjointed. It often seemed like there were two very different stories battling against each other - one a sweet teen romance and the other a melodramatic ABC Family movie that delivered its message with a sledgehammer.

It could have gelled together more had the supporting characters been less one-note. They're either bad or good with very little grey areas. The narrator's boyfriend is too good, the new kid in town is too evil, the parents are just bizarre with no explanations for their motives at all. Perhaps you can read this from the perspective of an unreliable narrator, but I think even an unreliable narrator would still give a little more reasoning behind things.

It is because of this that the big dark reveal comes across more preposterous than horrifying.

Still, that being said, it was a pretty good fast read and I never wanted to abandon it. It reminded me a lot of the Pan Horizons books I used to read in my teens, where heavy moralising seemed more in order than fully exploring a subject.

Zoë Danielle says

With or Without You by Brian Farrey is a young adult novel told from the perspective of eighteen year-old Evan, a boy who along with his best friend Davis have spent highschool being bullied for being gay. Luckily Evan is able to take comfort in his kind, wonderful, boyfriend Erik, somebody he has kept secret from everyone- even Davis- for nearly a year. Then Evan and Davis get an invitation to join the Chasers, a gay society that offers protection and belonging of the kind neither of them has ever had. While Davis is immediately swept up into the world of the Chasers, Evan finds himself torn between the two important men in his life. How many lies is Evan willing to tell to keep Erik a secret, and how long before his two worlds come crashing together?

With or Without You is a very intense debut by Farrey, it is definitely the kind of book which immediately hooks you in and takes you for a whirlwind and unforgettable ride. It is important to have all types of GLBT characters and literature, but if I had to describe With or Without You in one word it would be gritty. Evan and Davis stand in stark contrast to some of the cheerful gay males present in young adult books, for example David Levithan's Boy Meets Boy, but the story they have to tell is both realistic and heartbreaking.

This is not a book to read lightly, this is a book to devour. As a main character, Evan is both believable and frustrating. His deeply rooted insecurity makes him do things that are not logical, but ultimately he leaves the reader with a worthwhile lesson about being true to yourself. I found Evan's friendship with Davis charming, at least until things spiraled out of control, and I loved some of the little flashbacks Farrey included to give extra insight into how Evan met both Davis and Erik. I also thought the setting, With or Without You takes place in Madison, Wisconsin, was unique and interesting. Setting the novel in a small town allowed Farrey to address some issues that are hopefully less common in cities, although even Evan and Davis are lucky enough to have a youth centre for GLBT individuals to go to.

Farrey has a thrilling story to tell in With or Without You but what really makes the book memorable is Evan. Evan grabs a place right next to your heart and winds himself around it, refusing to let go even after you put down the book. The only complaint I have about the novel is that I really wished for more resolution. Of course, in real life things don't end up neat and tidy, but that's why I enjoy fiction, the author has the ability to let the reader know how things turn out and in a way I felt a bit disappointed by that aspect of the book. Throughout the novel, Farrey's debut With or Without You is charming, shocking and even heartbreaking, but a strong main character and a smooth writing style means that one thing that is

consistent is the fact that from page one onwards, you will not be able to put this exciting and realistic book down.

Lauren says

Read my full review here: [Lauren Reads YA](#)

I discovered *With or Without You* through Melissa's and Dylan's YouTube videos, in which they constantly raved about this book. So it's not surprising that I had very high expectations of it... I didn't love it as much as I thought I would, though. It was just a good read for me. Not spectacular or anything.

With or Without You is a thought-provoking, realistic novel about gay teenagers, fitting in, friendship, love, and everything in between. It is also about trust, betrayal, and discovering who you are.

I'm still not sure if I liked Evan or not. It annoyed me that he wasn't totally honest with Eric, which you should be able to with your partner. However, at some points I understand why he did what he did. I liked how Evan tried to save Davis' life, no matter what he had to do. He's the best friend everyone wishes for. Davis wasn't at all the person I expected, which was the typical, likeable best friend-type. Honestly, I thought he was an idiot—getting himself into all this trouble, and not understanding how bad it was.

Erik—I fell in love with him. He was so understanding and has a great positive influence on Evan. He handled everything well and when Evan didn't tell the world about his sexy 'new' boyfriend, Eric pushed him a little because who wants to be hidden like that?

I quite liked how art is so involved in this book, and it was very original how Evan uses window panes as his canvas. Every now and then, a new 'chapter' starts with a description of a painting Evan made, with details about the colours & painting techniques. After that, a flashback follows, most of the time about either Erik or Davis.

I almost couldn't believe the horrible things that were happening in this book, like being beat up because of your sexuality, HIV and 'bugchasers'. I know this stuff happens, but it's just really hard to imagine when you're in a totally different world. This is a beautifully written book for both homosexuals and heterosexuals. It gives you the opportunity to look into the lives of gay teenagers who are not accepted for who they are and who they love. It's crazy, really, that this actually still happens. *With or Without You* also makes you very aware of how serious this problem is and that it needs to stop.

Doret says

18yr old Evan has just graduated high school. Everyone knows Evan is gay, but no one knows about his boyfriend. Not even Davis, his best friend. The two have been friends since the third grade and came out when they were thirteen. Evan and Davis have been bullied all throughout high school. They planned to move to Chicago for college but that was before Erik and the Chasers.

Evan has been dating Erik for a year. The two have a great relationship. Erik has welcomed Evan fully into his life. Evan feels like a better person when he's with Erik. One of the reasons he's kept Erik a secret is doesn't want Erik to see the weaker Evan. He also worries that relationship will make Davis feel left out.

Davis has always been trying to fit in. When Davis sees a new flier about a new club called the Chasers, that promises to teach what it means to be gay and how to stop being a doormat, he's eager to join. Evan being the best friend that he is goes with him .

Something doesn't feel right about the Chasers or its leader Sable to Evan. But Davis believes he's finally found something to belong to. When Evan learns the truth about the Chasers intentions he tries to warn Davis.

After a year of juggling, Evans two worlds are finally going to collide. Forcing Evan to decide on a future with his bestfriend or boyfriend.

I really liked With or Without You. One of my favorite parts of the story was Evan and Erik's relationship. Farrey goes well beyond the this is not a coming out story, creating a couple that it would be difficult for anyone not to see how much they love each other.

The author took the time to develop Erik's character which only added to my like of Evan and Erik. I loved Evan, he felt very real and was well drawn. Farrey's writing was smooth and well paced. There's a lot going on but it never feels like too much. A great debut.

Nancy says

Posted at Shelf Inflicted

Evan and Davis have been friends since childhood. Now on the cusp of graduation, they are planning to leave behind homophobic bullies and attend college in Chicago, but life has a way of changing well-intentioned plans. Evan is an artist who copies others' work while he's finding his own style. He meets a sweet guy who's just perfect in every way, and while this annoys me, I figure he deserves something good out of life since his sister Shan is his parents' favorite and his friend Davis is busy with the "Chasers". I know teens often have trouble communicating, don't always know who to trust, and want to take care of problems themselves, but I'm still not sure why Evan feels a need to keep his new boyfriend, Erik, a secret from his family and his childhood friend. He is also very reluctant to share his life with Erik, which ends up causing problems for both young men.

Back to the "Chasers". They meet at the Rainbow Youth Center, a legitimate hangout for LGBT teens. Run by the charismatic Sable, and a magnet for boys with low self-esteem, this group promises power, respect, and change. While Sable's words boost the boys' confidence, and he gradually gains their trust, it is already too late for some.

Teens do stupid things and are naturally rebellious. Back in my day they listen to music too loud, stay out past curfew, drive too fast, have unsafe sex, tell lies, smoke cigarettes, and experiment with drugs. Today, they do all that, plus text and drive. I believe most kids think about the consequences of their actions but often decide taking risks is worth it, particularly if it means acceptance by their peers.

(view spoiler)

I loved and hated this book. I liked how very serious issues were explored, but felt the messages were too heavy-handed. While I found Evan and Davis to be well-developed, the secondary characters were not. The

book was well-paced and gripping, even though I found some of the horrifying situations toward the end a little unbelievable. I loved Evan's paintings on glass and how each pane illuminated some aspect of his life. I loved the growth of his character, but wanted more for Davis.

Recommended with some reservations for older teens.

Kelley says

I devoured the whole thing yesterday, staying up way too late even though the kids would have me up way too early. I just couldn't stop reading.

Honestly, I'm not sure where to even start in this review. I think I'm still trying to process what I read, but I need to talk about it too. There was much more to this book than I realized going into it. Layers of plot that were all equally engaging. As I've said before there are two things that really get me when I'm reading. I'm an emotional reader. I love books that make me FEEL. Second, I'm a character reader. There has to be that thread connecting me to the character, something that draws me in and ties me to them. I can't truly get lost in a book if there isn't a character I connect with. WITH OR WITHOUT YOU had both of the two qualities that really make a book special for me.

For me, everything here leads to Evan. I absolutely love his character. He's written so incredibly real. There's something about him that draws you in. His emotions burrow their way into your heart, making you feel right along with him. I understood his insecurities, his need for love, his need to protect someone whose life had been so tied to his. My heart broke for his friendship with Davis, seeing him try and navigate the winding road of their relationship and that of his relationship with his boyfriend, Erik. Which wasn't easy for him since those roads were miles apart.

Those of you who read my blog regularly know that I'm a tender-hearted romantic so you won't be surprised to hear how much I loved the relationship between Evan and Erik. It was so well-written, so true to ANY romantic relationship. Their sweet moments were oh-so-sweet and Mr. Farrey did a great job painting their love for each other. That isn't to say it wasn't without it's problems, but what REAL relationship is? I'm not adequately putting to words how beautiful their relationship was. There was a strength to it that I don't see a lot in YA. They were both flawed in different ways, the relationship had it's flaws as well, but it had an honesty to it too. I felt like it was wide open in its honesty, like Evan and Erik, like their relationship was laid bare for the reader, even though Evan wasn't always honest with Erik. It was truly something special and I never once doubted how much they loved each other.

This books was raw, honest, emotional, and real. Full of complicating yet simple relationships. It's about a boy, toeing the line between two world he had fought to keep apart. About learning to move forward, while trying to hold on to the past too. You see Evan grow so much through the pages of this book. I already want to read it again!

If you couldn't tell, I kind of, sort of loved it ;)

Doug Beatty says

I did enjoy this book. I will try to post the review with little spoilers because there are some major plot points that need to be kept hidden, so that they will surprise the reader when they get to them.

This is the story of Evan Weiss, who has an interesting "friendship" with a childhood boy named Davis. They go to high school together, are both gay, and have the unfortunate condition of getting beaten up by the local high school jocks. Evan's home life is interesting, he has a sister who is constantly praised and talked about and his parents remain indifferent to him. This really is not explored in the novel, and Evan's parents are not clearly defined, so it is hard to imagine the reason for their feelings. They live above their parents grocery store. Davis has a distant father and his mother has been taken into psychiatric care. Davis has what Evan calls "Boing" moments, that appear to be manic episodes, followed by depression, but that is never clearly stated. Evan feels that he must protect Davis and help him get out of Madison Wisconsin, and they plan to move to Chicago together. Plans change when Evan meets Erik, a college nursing student who is also a volleyball player and a sculptor. (though I like Erik as a character, he is really too good to be true. He could have been toned down just a bit to make him a bit more realistic.) Evan is terrified to let Erik know about his parents, his sister, Davis, so basically shuts Erik entirely out of his life until Erik becomes more persistent. Davis on the other hand begins to make new "friends" and starts to go down another path entirely and this puts Evan in the middle and leads you to the major plotline of the novel.

I do like Evan, but I find that in many cases, teen novels fall into the "I am unsure of who to tell about my problems so I am not going to tell anyone and fix them myself." I understand that some teens may use this strategy but it seems like it is almost a constant in novels as of late, and you want to smack the main character and get them to open up. Here, Evan has had a boyfriend for a year, and refuses to tell him anything. He refuses to talk to the woman who runs the gay and lesbian youth center. I would think you would open up to someone, but alas, no. And some of his decisions are unfortunate, and you really see this weakness of character, that makes you like him a little bit less than you once did. At least that was the case for me. There was also the case of something happening that goes unpunished that left a sour taste in my mouth after reading the novel.

I do like the descriptions of the characters and Evan's growth as an artist. I also like the character of Erik, and even his sister Shan becomes a little more realistic when she arrives on the scene. And there is a sense of catharsis for Evan, so there is emotional movement in the novel. And it does tackle issues that young people need to know about, so I will give it that.

All in all a good read. Definitely for an older teen, though, as some of the content is pretty serious.

Alexa says

I am not one to leave a book unfinished but I just couldn't keep reading anymore. I made it to page 234 until I had it up to here of how the story was going in circles.

This story is about a gay boy named Evan and he doesn't know how to incorporate everyone in his life together. Evan gets a boyfriend but keeps him a secret and because of that it's starting to destroy his 1 year relationship with his boyfriend. His boyfriend Erik doesn't want to be a secret anymore but is letting himself be the secret for so long.

Evan is losing his best friend Davis to another person who doesn't mean like a good guy at all named Sable but Davis is oblivious to anything. Davis is following Sable and it causes not only Davis and Evan involved

in situations that are now involving the police but a group of other gay boys too.

This story is just so frustrating to read. For example Evan had a feeling from the first time he met Sable that there was something off about him but he still decided to do what Sable told him to do and NO ONE in this "chasers" group is able to speak up to this Sable guy and stand up for themselves.

Evan is torn about what to do with Erik. Evan doesn't know where he wants to go. Chicago? New York? Cali? But Evan doesn't want to think about it so he never makes a decision and makes another round to connect the circle... Which this situation comes up over and over again.

I expected this book to be better, I wanted to read this for such a long time and I couldn't even get through it. I'm just happy I didn't buy this book and borrowed it from the library.

Cynthia (A Blog about Nothing) says

There was a lot of stuff going on in With or Without you, it wasn't just one simple plot with a perfect ending and that's it, there were a few little layers of plots that were all connected to our main character Evan. Evan is torn between his best friend Davis who's gotten into a group call the Chasers, a group that's suppose to support and instilled pride in being gay but it's nothing but bad news and their main focus is to feel free and have sex with whoever they want. He also has his perfect boyfriend Erik, the one he's been hiding from everyone, even his best friend for about a year but now wants him to move to San Diego with him. Evan is a talented painter and wishes to pursue it as a career which were his plans for years, but now he is troubled because he feels a lot of responsibility for Davis who has no one else that cares about him and is getting deeper into a group that will ruin his life forever, but he also has his love life with Erik, someone caring and wonderful, someone that he can really feel comfortable and be himself with.

I felt pretty awful for Evan, his life was never easy, his parents never really paid much attention to him and he only had Davis as a friend his whole life, they helped each other through all those years that they were bullied and getting beaten up at school, so all along you know that he can't just leave him but you're also hoping that he won't leave Erik either. I felt pretty torn just like Evan. The story and intensity increase dramatically as the story goes along, Evan's life spins out of control and everything starts going wrong when he finally finds out the Chaser's shocking goal and initiation rituals. The plot gets darker towards the end, it's not very detailed on sex related scenes, it was a bit cringe worthy in one particular scene and also painfully emotional, by this time it was hard to put the book down since it had me holding my breath hoping that nothing awful would happen to Evan and his friend.

I did love the moments between Evan and Erik, they were sweet and romantic and not uncomfortable at all. I loved Erik, he was so supportive of Evan, funny and understanding and had such a good heart. I'm glad that With or Without You was my first LGBT novel because it was a great one, the story and characters were all so well written that I had no trouble at all immersing myself into it and growing to love and connect with the main character. I also have to mention that I think the cover is perfect for the story, I didn't know how it would relate but once you start reading you know that it makes perfect sense. There's a lot going on in this novel and I thought the author did a really great job getting all these subplots together and wrapping up the story at the end which was bittersweet, and left me thinking about the book for quite a while afterwards. I will definitely be looking forward to reading more by Brian Farrey.

Betryal says

The story is detected as YA, but I don't beleive this one to be so since the boys involved have already turned 18 and are considered in my opinion adults.

The book is a powerful story that elaborates on HIV and the AIDS epidemic through the eyes of Evan and is written in first person. I found Evan confused and torn between where his priorities should lay and this alone gets him into sticky situations and messes that I'm surprised if he would even get out of them free and clear.

His friend Davis? I wanted to wring his neck and still do. Erik is completely lovable and I adored him from the start. Alas, the ending has left me into the void of the unknown and wishing there was more even though this book is already very long.

Brian Farrey is def an author I'd read more books from.

Rebecca McNutt says

This book was creative and not afraid to speak out, which I admired, but as for the writing style, it was repetitive and quickly got boring.

tarawrawr says

REVIEW ORIGINALLY POSTED <http://hobbitsies.net/wordpress/?p=3147>

With or Without You is an amazing, depressingly realistic portrayal of the misconceptions many people still hold regarding HIV and AIDS, even decades after it became a widely known issue. But apart from the big issue of With or Without You, it's also the story of a high school senior trying to figure out who he is and how to make his own decisions.

There are a lot of books with gay protagonists where the focus is that he's gay. But in With or Without You - that's not an issue. It causes several beatings from high school bullies, but for the most part, it's known and accepted by the people who surround the protagonist, Evan. So that's definitely one refreshing change about With or Without You.

I loved the characters in general – I loved Evan and his passion for art. The things that he was described as created with the glass sounded absolutely stunning. I loved the internal battle between his love for his boyfriend, Erik, and his loyalty to his best friend, Davis. I loved Davis and felt for him, despite the stupid decisions he made throughout the book. And Erik – sweet, caring, Erik. Seriously, Erik has to be one of the best boyfriends I've ever encountered in the literary world.

The storyline broke my heart. Like any good story should, it started out with the simple questions of where to go to college, when to tell my parents about my boyfriend, etc. and quickly escalated to the point of all hell breaking lose.

With or Without You held my attention and broke my heart, and ended beautifully.

Brian says

Overall, I really enjoyed this book, even though it's technically for "young adults." The story was fast-paced and engaging, and the main character (Evan) was very well-developed. I also enjoyed the fact that the book was set in Madison, Wisconsin, one of my favorite places in the country and the city I called home for five years.

Two main things kept me from giving this book five stars. First, besides Evan (and to a lesser extent, his best friend, Davis), I didn't feel like I really got to know any of the other characters. The only one that even came close was Evan's "secret" boyfriend Erik, and even he was a shadow of a character compared to Evan.

Second, some of the scenarios in the book were just flat-out unbelievable. For one thing, while Evan's parents were aloof and self-absorbed, I can't believe they wouldn't have found out about Erik before they did. I also had a hard time swallowing that they wouldn't have noticed when Evan went jetting off to another city. For another thing, I know Madison well, and I can tell you this: there is no way in the world that Evan would have been able to keep his boyfriend a secret from his gay best friend for as long as he did; the gay community in that city is too interconnected for that to happen believably.

All in all, though, this was a good book.

Antonia says

This was a really beautiful story on love, friendship, and everything that lies in the in-between.

I liked the plot, the depth of the characters, the sudden turns on the relationships between the characters and the ending.

I also enjoyed the fact that art was so deeply involved in the book. Quotes about art, description of colours and mixture of them, paintings, and painting techniques. All of them really intrigued me. Furthermore, I loved the characters of Evan and Erik. Evan was so confused, so mixed up, so unsure of his feelings for both Erik and Davis, yet he was capable of surviving the hardest corners of his fate. And Erik was the epitome of deep love and faith. Davis was the one who only wanted easy solutions, only because he was hurt enough.

Overall, it was a highly enjoyable reading. It can teach us a lot about love (both homosexual and heterosexual one), friendship, loyalty, faith in ourselves, and the devastating effects of keeping secrets from the people you love.

I suggest this book to everyone. Whether you support gay rights or not, whether you believe that homosexual love is right or not, I strongly advise you to read this book. It hides great power and outstanding beauty.
