



## A Boy Like Me

**Jennie Wood**

215 Ink (Sep 4, 2014)

Softcover \$12.99 (270pp)

978-0-692-23806-6

*This story of a trans boy falling in love with a girl in high school is delightful and heartwarming in all the right places.*

*A Boy Like Me*, by Jennie Wood, is the story of a trans boy, Peyton, and the girl he's been in love with since middle school. Peyton faces and overcomes fear and derision from his peers, his community, and himself. He grows up, and grows into himself, even as he falls deeper in love with Tara Parks. It is a bewitching love story, fueled by Peyton's insecurity, Tara's fiercely flaring anger, and their undeniable chemistry together.

It begins on the first day of eighth grade, the first day of "Katherine's" first period, in the girl's bathroom where he is hiding from the world. Tara Parks is the beautiful new girl who befriends him, swapping his dress for her clothes—her brother's hand-me-downs. She decides then, "Your name should be Peyton."

Wood perfectly captures the intensity and immediacy of adolescent ups and downs. Peyton is portrayed with just the right combination of insecurity and interpersonal cluelessness to galvanize the plot and his frequently unsuccessful attempts to get on the same page with Tara. Typical to the usual romance plot line, misunderstandings cloud their decisions, and other recognizable relationship foibles take place. Yet the story is delightful and heartrending in all the right places, so the plot can be forgiven an occasional cliché.

Many trans narratives are brutal, gritty, and devastating—this story is remarkable in that it offers a happy ending through all the pain. Peyton's high-school experience is difficult in a way that many LGBT teenagers can relate to, and some of his experiences, like his mother kicking him out, are the stuff of nightmares. However, the overall tone of the book and the message of the story is that life is not all bad. This book may mark the beginning of a new era of LGBT lit—where the story of a trans boy in the south can be a run-of-the mill romance, and the reader can expect to giggle, gasp, and eagerly turn the pages for the next kissing scene.

EMERSON M. FULLER (Winter 2015)

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