



Boys, Girls, and Other Hazardous Materials

By Rosalind Wiseman

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A debut novel from the bestselling author of *Queen Bees and Wannabes!*

Charlie Healy just wants a drama-free year, but it doesn't seem like she's going to get it. After surviving a middle school packed with mean girls, Charlie is ready to leave all that behind in high school. But then, on her very first day, she runs into her former best friend, Will, who moved away years ago. Now he's back, he's HOT, and he's popular. And he takes Charlie back into the danger zone of the popular crowd. But when a hazing prank goes wrong, Charlie has to decide where her loyalties lie.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 8–11—Attempting to avoid vicious, former "frenemies" (and their influence), Charlotte Healey starts her high school career in neighboring Harmony Falls, hoping for a clean slate. Things look promising when she makes friends the first day and awkwardly reunites, after three years, with ex-best friend/boy-next-door-turned-crush Will. Unfortunately, people from Charlie's past keep turning up, like Nidhi, former target of the nasty kids at her old school. Charlie and Nidhi reconcile and score a column in the school paper on the freshman experience. Trying to find romance and their niche in the social hierarchy, Charlie and company survive the familiar highs and lows of high school and friendship in a place where traditions, both exclusionary and dangerous, reign. Charlie learns that both sexes are equally capable of cruelty, manipulation, and susceptibility to social pressure, but she's no longer one to keep quiet when the bullies and their enablers need to be taken to task. Wiseman's fiction debut has recognizable situations and archetypes, though Harmony Falls's students and authority figures sometimes come off as stock, superficial, or stereotypical. Fortunately, Charlie proves a flawed, humorous, and perceptive narrator as she matures, standing up for herself and others. There is occasional swearing, some forced dialogue (heavy on the exclamations), and a discussion-worthy ending. While high school can seem "life and death" dramatic, Wiseman reveals the nasty business of bullying and the ugly (sometimes life-threatening) turns that questing for acceptance can take.—*Danielle Serra, Cliffside Park Public Library, NJ*

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From [Booklist](#)

Wiseman's best-selling nonfiction title for adults, *Queen Bees and Wannabees: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence* (2002), inspired the movie *Mean Girls*, but in her first novel for young adults, it's the guys who behave badly. Charlie can't wait to leave her middle-school "frenemies" behind and start high school, where she hopes to make "cool, interesting, nonevil, nonvindictive friends." Her wish is granted on her first day, when she meets smart, supportive Sydney and reconnects with Nidhi, who shared Charlie's eighth-grade misery. Soon, the inseparable trio widens to include some guys, whose involvement in a disturbing hazing incident sets off a chain of moral dilemmas. Charlie's narration—filled with IMs and texts—sets a breezy tone and includes some occasional four-letter frankness: "Chicks before Dicks," declares Sydney. "Never choose a guy over a friend." But in her realistic portrayal of everyday freshman anxieties, romance, and the sometimes "toolish" culture of male high-school athletes, Wiseman prompts readers to consider vital questions about authentic friendship, personal responsibility, and the slippery roles of bully, bystander, and victim. Grades 7-10. --Gillian Engberg

Review

"[A] realistic portrayal of everyday freshman anxieties, romance, and the sometimes +toolish+ culture of male high-school athletes." -*Booklist*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Stan Whitley:

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