



Exit Strategy

Ryan Potter

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Looming above Zach Ramsey's hometown of Blaine are the smokestacks of the truck assembly plant, the greasy lifeblood of this Detroit suburb. Surrounded by drunks, broken marriages, and factory rats living in fear of the pink slip, Zach is getting the hell out of town after graduation. But first, he's going to enjoy the summer before senior year.

Getting smashed with his best friend Tank and falling in love for the first time, Zach's having a blast until he uncovers dark secrets that shake his faith in everyone--including Tank, a wrestler whose violent mood swings betray a shocking habit.

As he gets pulled deeper into an ugly scandal, Zach is faced with the toughest decision of his life--one that will prove just what kind of adult he's destined to be.

"Fast-paced and riveting."--Kirkus Reviews

Exit Strategy Details

Date : Published March 8th 2010 by Flux (first published March 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9780738715735

Author : Ryan Potter

Format : Paperback 303 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Teen

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From Reader Review Exit Strategy for online ebook

V. Emily says

3.5 stars

I picked this off the shelf of my school library while I was waiting for my parents, and I was immediately intrigued. I checked it out, kept reading, and was even more interested by the page. However -- and especially in the last third or fourth of the book -- I began to discover some aspects that I didn't really like.

One from very early in the story: "Wait, so now Zach is in love with Sarah just because she 'turned hot'? Is that really love -- no braces, no glasses, and a closet full of Aeropostale clothes?" That was my reaction to this whole subplot thing. Sure, it's very believable for a teenage guy to feel that way once he "discovers" how cute the girl is. But it seemed like Zach was really, truly in love with her and if that was the case, then I wanted more reason than "she's hot now."

Later in the story: I'm sorry, but I have to say the ending was extremely unsatisfying. I mean, don't get me wrong, I didn't want the picture-perfect ending. That wouldn't have been realistic, especially for Zach. But there were so many things (repeated phrases, ideas, and ambitions, etc.) that Potter could've drawn from to create a powerful and still unhappy ending. I found the last line in particular to be a bad ending sentence. It did not pack a lot of emotion or anything substantial. It was a good book, but the ending took a lot away from my pleasure with it.

But all that said, I did like the way this story was presented. I loved the realism, the humor, and the general plot. It was sad but not heartbreakingly, with a "life's not fair" construction that I appreciated. I do recommend it if you don't mind the two things I mentioned above.

Jan says

The best part of this contemporary problem novel is the freshness and authenticity of the writing. I really felt that this author knows the world of adolescent boys and I loved how he incorporated social commentary into the story (terrible economy, drug use) without making it too didactic, but instead used it as a way to develop characters and make the setting believable.

Seventeen-year-old Zach is anticipating senior year and crafting his BEP (Blaine Escape Plan). Blaine is his hometown in Michigan, a fading blue collar town dependent upon the Detroit auto industry for jobs. But the economy has hit Blaine hard. One thing that brings the town together is high school sports. Zach plays football, albeit reluctantly, to keep his father happy. His best friend Tank is a talented wrestler. When Zach's older brother Justin quits football, Zach assumes it is because the coach is a notorious jerk. But Justin confesses that the coach is pushing steroids on all the players and Zach realizes that means Tank, who has been gaining a lot of weight, is also on steroids. To complicate matters, Zach is in love with Tank's sister, Sarah, and Tank has vowed to "kill" anyone who dares to go out with his sister. Tank is an impulsive risk-taker who has difficulty controlling his anger, which is now exacerbated by his use of steroids. Zach must risk his friendship with Tank to "out" the coach and pursue his relationship with Sarah.

This stunning gritty and bittersweet debut novel is pitch perfect in its depiction of contemporary male adolescence. Although this could be called an "issue" novel, because it addresses the problem of steroids and

the devastating effects of a bad economy, these issues add depth and definition to the characters, instead of taking center stage in a more crude “don’t do drugs” polemic. These are real characters that you will recognize and their voices are authentic.

10thumbs says

I picked this up for \$1 at the Friends of the Library book sale and was pleasantly surprised. It was an engaging glimpse into 3 summer months of Zach's life. The town he grew up in is dying, if not already dead, Zach wants nothing more than to escape and not become his moribund parents or stuck brother. If he falls in love with his best friend's sister... all the better.

It took me a while to figure out why Zach was doing seemingly meaningless and/or self-destructive things early on, then I remembered he's a teen-ager and that's what you do at that age: work through all your crap without much rhyme or reason.

Potter writes without condescension -- instead laying bare the odd mix of wonder, frustration, clarity, joy, boredom, fear and hope that is life as a 17-year-old.

Kricket says

liked:

-michigan, detroit area setting! granted, i would have liked it even more if zach had gone to the DIA and absorbed some rich detroit area culture...but we take what we can get in detroit. it is just so refreshing to read some teen lit that doesn't take place in NYC. NEWSFLASH: a lot of teenagers do not live in NYC!

-the thriller aspect where zach uncovers the steroid scandal and tries to find out the truth about tank's dad. oooh, exciting!

-zach's job at the liquor store was very realistic. i hate it when teenagers have "jobs" where they just stand around talking to their friends and don't need to do any work.

-the ending. it wasn't all wrapped up perfectly neat-like.

didn't like:

-i'm just so tired of the plot where the former nerdy girl suddenly becomes hot overnight and WHAM! the dude is in love. at this point in my orthodontia, i am especially resentful of girls becoming hot because their braces are removed. mr. potter: this is 100% personal sentiment and you shouldn't worry about it because i'm not a teenage boy.

(did i mention that i know ryan potter now? he came to our book club when we discussed this! hi mr. potter!)

-i was underwhelmed by zach & sarah's romance. more chemistry needed! more steeeeaaam!

overall verdict: definitely recommended for teenage dudes, detroit area in particular.

Kari says

The basic plot idea behind this book is certainly interesting and not one I expected from reading the summary. From the start, this book had me hooked from the narrative voice, the somewhat cryptic first chapter, and the colorful cast of characters. Potter defines his characters and adds enough idiosyncrasies to make them memorable.

Set in Zach's perspective, this is a very real story told from the mind of a 17 year old boy with everything that comes with it. Though he's on the football team, Zach isn't a typical jock, particularly compared to his best friend Tank, and has quite a bit going on in his head. Often times, I found myself wondering why these two were best friends but they simply were and Potter did a fantastic job creating their history and bond. Zach has his stupid moments but he has his times of clarity as well, helping to pull together the idea of a 17 year old and Potter nailed that aspect.

Tank is a very interesting character- a psycho by all accounts but as with all well developed characters, there are further underlying things related to this boy. His twin sister, Sarah, is an equally as unique character though for different reasons and Potter incorporated her very smoothly into the story.

The plot of this book is filled with twists and unexpected turns, keeping the reader enthralled the entire time. Even after the basic, main idea was revealed, the outcome remained uncertain and Potter kept the reader involved with drama and action as well as humor and banter. Potter covers a wide array of emotions throughout this story, pitching each on perfectly. Adding to the well developed, intriguing plot is the writing itself. Potter has a gift with writing and the narrative voice never waivers, allowing the reader to slip into Zach's mind almost from the beginning.

The ending was beautifully written although I can see it being a turn off for people. Personally, I adored it, appreciated it and commend Potter for taking that route. It is a very real outcome with a strong message, also helping keep the realism that surfaced often in the story right up to the end. Potter is an author to watch out for, making a grand debut with this novel which I highly recommend.

Nick Schroeder says

Zach Ramsey is just a high school student from a small town in Michigan. He is getting ready to enter his senior year of high school; however, the summer before his senior year was quite an adventure for him and everyone close to him. Throughout the story, Zach talks about all the problems of his town, and he discusses his escape plan or "exit strategy". Zach's family is having money problems after both of his parents were laid off. Zach also works at a drugstore where he steals some of the liquor to make money on the side. Also, Zach realizes that he has a huge crush on his best friend's sister, Sarah. The only problem is that his best friend, Tank, is one of the best wrestlers in the state and Tank has said that he would hurt anyone that liked his sister. In addition, Zach finds out that his high school football coach is supplying steroids to the superior athletes at the school including Tank. In the end, Zach, Tank, and Sarah work together to get the football coach fired. Lastly, Tank's family ends up moving out to Colorado, so Zach is left without his best friend and girlfriend.

One group who might like this book would be people who enjoy reading realistic fiction with characters struggling with normal problems. Zach and his family are constantly running into all sorts of problems that they have to deal with. This is why I could relate to this book because it is all about some of the usual problems that people are faced with today.

Another group who might like this book are people who enjoy reading adventure novels. Zach, Tank, and Sarah are always sneaking around, and getting into some dangerous situations. For example, Tank gets upset at a party and fires a gun, and then on the same night, he sees his dad with another woman and fires more shots.

I would not say that this was my favorite book ever, but I did enjoy it. There were many points in the story where I did not want to put the book down, and was just flipping page-to-page. This book was filled with adventure, and I never knew what was going to happen next because there were some unexpected outcomes. The only part of the story that I did not particularly enjoy was the conclusion because the book seemed to end abruptly. The conclusion happened in about two pages, and it failed to tie up some loose ends for me. Other than that, the other elements of the novel were great and it was a book that I enjoyed.

Kalen says

Harrumph. My review vanished into thin air. Here's the shorter version:

Exit Strategy is a somewhat frustrating and uneven read about a teenager working on his exit plan out of his hometown. That part is believable enough. Potter is good at capturing the feeling that your hometown will only bring you down and you have to save yourself and get out--something I think most teenagers feel.

(minor spoilers)

The unevenness comes in stilted and unbelievable dialogue (Zach in particular often sounds like a scolding adult) and crazy relationships. Zach both respects and hates Big Dale--and the reason for the hate isn't really clear (until concerns are raised that Dale may be hitting his son, Tank, Zach's best friend) and Zach has a similar relationship with his boss, Huey. The negative thoughts and behaviors towards Huey seem to come out of nowhere, without context. And the big steroid controversy never really plays out in any dramatic fashion. There is one scene of confrontation near the end, but then it just sort of fizzles, even in the final pages.

Vicki says

The thing about books with an intended YA audience is that you have to enjoy them a little bit differently if you're an adult. A book can work for a teenager, but might not work at all for an adult. The thing about all books, no matter the intended audience, is that they should have at least a stab at structural integrity and plausibility.

The problem with this book is that it's got many of the right ingredients: a main character whose

small/economically depressed home town has him planning a way out; a scandal involving beloved by some, hated by a few authority figure; and a smart, hot love interest; a set of parents who are having Marital Troubles; a big brother whose self-destruction can serve as a handy lesson for the younger. The problem is that it has all of those things, and an extremely clunky execution. You've got all those ingredients, a crapload of done to death cliches, and 312 pages for these things to work themselves out into some type of statement about society, and most readers will have given up on it, tolerant young adult readers or not.

Sometimes I can get past stuff if I know kids will like it. There are books that I've hated for various reasons, but still recommended at work because I know teens will like them. This one I can't really say that about. There are some good things going on in here, occasional glimpses of good writing and a good story -- the depressed state of a small struggling Detroit area town, for example. Totally fascinating. But I think there are a lot of moments that are too hard to get past. Those moments and plot devices will leave you rolling your eyes.

Kyle Jean-pierre says

This is a wonderful book. It was a great read for me. The read was especially highlighted because it comes in the midst of my high school experience. Not only did I see the story-line and overall plot as inventive and creative with a refreshing originality the writing style of the author came to be comfortingly unique. Although I found there to be many cliches within the dialogue between the characters. Still that is a small price or a minuscule dent in the epic flight that this novel carries you on.

The book enlists three main characters "Zack, Tank, and Sarah". They're all seniors in high school and can't wait to graduate. Zack wants to graduate to get out of his home-town and begin life as an adult and just live. Tank has his eyes on his college athletic future in wrestling. He is reviered among his peers to be crazy and violent but wants to get him and his sister Sarah a life of their own in new Universities. Sarah wants her academic life to continue once she gets to college. She was always the high school nerd but now she has begun to physically develop and the guys are falling into her lap. one of whom is Zack her best friend besides her big bro. Tank. All of this unfolds in beautiful direction in Ryan Potters book "Exit Strategy".

Brett Bonebrake says

"Exit Strategy" is a novel about a 17-year-old boy, Zach Ramsey, who longs for his exit out of his hometown, Blaine. Zach just finished his junior year of high school and we read about his experiences throughout that summer. Zach faces many problems throughout this summer. For example, Zach is trying to get out of playing football his senior year, but his oppressive dad is against Zach doing this. We also see Zach having trouble getting along with his best friend, Tank. All Zach wants to do is finish his senior year and get out of Blaine, but his road to doing this isn't very easy. Overall, I didn't really like this book to much because I wasn't able to connect with Zach much.

Kacper says

I think that overall this was a decent book. In my opinion the story was slow and confusing, there was too much going on. However it did get better as I started getting close to the end and the book did compensate for the slow story with interesting characters like tank. I didn't agree with most of the actions Zach made

throughout the book book, but overall he was an interesting and likable character. If you like drama, romance novels this would be the perfect book for you .

La Femme Readers says

Rating: 4.5 out of 5

Exit Strategy is a YA book like no other. The well-developed characters and unique plot formulated a memorable story. The main character Zach, lived in Blaine, a small Detroit suburb with no opportunities. The epitome of success was working in the truck assembly plant. Zach, wanted out after graduation. He refused to live in ignorance and yearned for a deeper meaning of life for the future. However, he still had a Summer left so why not cause havoc? And, that's exactly what Zach did. Working to uncover the town's steroid kingpin wasn't easy. Intelligence and sneaky behavior was the only way he was going to collect the evidence he needed and who better for the job than Zach.

Now, his best friend Tank was an intriguing character. The behavior he exhibited was explosive and temperamental. Their friendship was sometimes dysfunctional yet ironically balanced each other out. I thought it was adorable that Zach's first real crush was on Tank's twin sister. His attraction to her blossoming beauty captured his heart and made him into a lovesick puppy. I really enjoyed their time together, I just wish she played a bigger role in the book. He not only experienced love but many other emotions throughout the chapters. His issues at home, Tank's rage and secretive cop father, steroid kingpin and being in love shaped the person Zach turned out to be in the end. The bittersweet conclusion left me sad but also elated that he surpassed all the obstacles Blaine threw at him. Overall, a very enjoyable read by an author who shows great promise in writing books that will arouse the interest of females and males.

Leann says

Exit Strategy is a realistic, unique, and totally awesome debut novel.

Onto the story, *Exit Strategy* is really Zach's coming of age story, mixed in with a lot of scandal, secrets, and a bit of romance. It all starts with what seems like an easy enough task for Zach to complete, and that's when everything goes downhill. Soon enough, Zach's falling for Sarah, Tank's twin sister, and everything he ever thought he knew is falling to pieces. After all, everyone has secrets...but Zach's just now discovering them all, and he feels like it's up to him to do something about it all.

I have to say, Tank Foster (Zach's best friend) definitely stole the show at some points. His character was so intriguing, and I was always wondering when he'd snap. Zach was a great character as well. His personality seemed legitimate, and his voice seemed real. He has flaws, and he's not perfect, but he is still very likable. Potter describes all of his characters nicely, giving you the perfect idea of just what these characters are like and who they are.

Exit Strategy is filled with enough subplots to keep the story moving at a nice pace (and yet they never left me confused). This is one of those books where I can't tell you much (unless I want to spoil the plot), but I can say that it was a great, realistic story and worthwhile to read.

Highlights: Potter creates a realistic and well developed character with Zach. The plot never ceased to be interesting and entertaining. I also loved how the ending wasn't your average ending, because it really makes the book stand out more.

Lowlights: Hmm...I guess I wanted a bit more of the romance angle? But honestly, I'm not complaining.

Lisa (A Life Bound By Books) says

4.5 Stars - Exit Strategy was far from many things I've read before. I seem to be saying that often these days. The characters and story were written from the view point of our main character Zach – a 17 year old boy who wants more from his life then what's happening around him, then what he knows his town can offer. It focuses on the months of the summer before his senior year of High School.

Zach wants nothing more then to get out of his hometown of Blaine. Much of the focus on his story is about the varying BEP – “Blain Escape Plans” for not only Zach, but the other characters throughout as well. It's something that Zach wants more then anything, not only for himself, but also for the people he cares about and this aspect of the story comes through clearly. There were many shocking truths that are brought to light, making the characters full of so many layers that the author sometimes only touches lightly upon. Giving the readers just enough to fully comprehend what each was going through throughout the story – via the eyes of Zach.

Potter makes being a 17 year old boy in a no where town real and true. From Zach and his search for more in his life and those around him, to Tank – his best friend, and his need for perfection on the wrestling mat; to the root of the subject matter and it's affects that ripple throughout so many lives, which wasn't nice or sweet – it all fit and worked in this well written story. Let's not forget about Sarah – Tank's twin sister who wasn't found often throughout the story, but Potter worked magic in what was there. I never felt like I missed anything in the complex relationship she had with her brother, father and Zach.

Strong characters make up a huge part of any great book and this one doesn't disappoint. Understanding early on what this book was about didn't take away from anything while reading. There was plenty to give me as a reader and I'd suspect anyone else - room to question just where the characters would find themselves at the end of the story. The end was bittersweet but worked perfectly and really, I don't think any other would have fit like this one did.

All in all author Ryan Potter has written a story that surpassed my expatiations and I for one am looking forward to seeing just what he writes next. For more information about the author and Exit Strategy, please visit: <http://www.exitstrategy17.com> also, please keep an eye out here for an interview with Ryan soon.

For more info and reviews please visit my Book Review Blog here - A Life Bound By Books

KayLee says

I liked the story, and Zach's voice, but two things bothered me.

1: The romance was terrible. Actually, there really was no romance. There was absolutely no chemistry between Zach and Sarah. The only reason I saw that Zach liked her was because she was hot. That's really all

he said about her, except that she was a dork the year before. She was a really flat character, and every scene that they were together I just felt like gagging, it was that bad.

2: The title is called "exit strategy" and the whole recurring statement in here is that he wants to leave so bad... But we don't ever see if he escapes or not!! I guess that's just the 'mystery' of the ending :P
