



Braden's Story

Mason Dodd

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Braden is 13, an only child and the member of a devout Christian family, and everything couldn't be better until he begins realizing his attraction for the same sex. Soon, the family that once felt indestructible begins faltering and is seemingly torn apart by the simple fact he struggles to fulfil the expectation of who he's meant to be in the eyes of his parents and God. In fact, everyone seems to know what's best but him.

Warning: occasional coarse language and a mild sex scene.

Visit: masonscrawls.com for updates on my gay fiction and other musings.

Braden's Story Details

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Author : Mason Dodd

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From Reader Review Braden's Story for online ebook

Anna D. says

Overall it was a good story, I got attached to the characters. Review to follow

Ian Wood says

This is a slightly abridged version of the complete review as it appears at my blog dedicated to reading, writing (no 'rithmatic!), movies, & TV. Blog reviews often contain links which are not reproduced here, nor will updates or modifications to the blog review be replicated here. Graphic and children's reviews on the blog typically feature two or three images from the book's interior, which are not reproduced here.

Note that I don't really do stars. To me a book is either worth reading or it isn't. I can't rate it three-fifths worth reading! The only reason I've relented and started putting stars up there is to credit the good ones, which were being unfairly uncredited. So, all you'll ever see from me is a five-star or a one-star (since no stars isn't a rating, unfortunately).

I rated this book WARTY!

WARNING: THERE MAY BE UNHIDDEN SPOILERS IN THIS REVIEW. PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK!

Braden is thirteen and being hit with the growing realization that he's gay. His family, highly religious and very fundamentalist, isn't going to like this one bit. This story details how Braden comes to terms with his true nature and his feelings, and how he copes or fails to do so, with the reactions of others. I started out liking the story, but quickly grew tired of the writing style and the endless grammatical and spelling errors, some of which I list on my blog. No matter how much I might want to support books like this one, I cannot in good faith recommend this particular story.

The errors, in what is a story badly in need of an editor, were numerous. In addition, there were other issues, such as the fact that these are very religious folk, yet the language the younger ones employ seems highly unlikely at best, and their disrespect for adults isn't believable given their background. Just be warned that if you're tempted to pick this up thinking it's a religious or spiritual book, it's really not!

There really are people who come down hard on gays and gay marriage, acting under the religious delusion that being gay is a sinful choice which calls for a cure. They're morons. Throughout history, human attempts at "curing" nature have been consistently disastrous, and this one will be too. People who delight in having anal sex with their wife or girlfriend irrationally think there is something wrong with two guys enjoying the same thing with each other. People who preach 'love thy neighbor' out of one side of their mouth have no problem stirring up resentment and hatred against people who only want to be allowed to love and marry one another. It's not only hypocritical, it's sick.

The problem for the big three monotheistic religions in accommodating this however, lies in the ignorant words of old men who specifically prohibited homosexual relations in the Old (men) Testament - only between men, however! The OT has nothing to say about lesbianism! People mistakenly think that Queen

Victoria did not believe that lesbianism existed, which is why it never was made illegal in England, but this belief is a myth. It was never mentioned in Victorian statutes for the same reason it was never mentioned in the OT. Old white men couldn't have cared tuppence about women's sexuality. It wasn't even considered that they had any. Only male homosexuality threatened these geezers, and why on Earth would women be attracted to each other when there were so many manly men around?!

So the problem for those who adhere to these religions is that the Bible does expressly prohibit it. This means they either have to dispense with the blind edicts of ignorant old men, or they have to dispense with homosexuals, and they're far too cowardly and insecure to do the former, so it's gays who suffer.

Some of the other things which these young teens were depicted as saying were bizarre too. At one point for example, Mia, who is Braden's best friend, says to him "Gimme a break, Bray Bray" which sounded so babyish that it brought me right out of suspension of disbelief. These teens are also using bad language in church when they're sitting close-by grown-ups, which struck me as stupid and unrealistic.

I didn't have a problem with the religious people cussing, but for kids to use such bad language within earshot of their parents and family friends struck me as very unrealistic and spoke poorly of the kids' judgment. This was a bad impression to give because it fuels an argument that Braden's sexuality was also an example of poor judgment rather than his nature, which is nonsensical, but it's a serious mistake to write in a way which puts ammunition into the hands of your detractors, even if that ammo is a pile of duds.

There was a lot of texting described, too which felt way overdone to me. Invariably, depicting texts fails in YA stories. It seems like the writer is trying far too hard to be hip and 'authentically teen', and it just makes me want to skip it, especially since the bulk of it really conveys nothing of value and does little to move the story. A simple brief sentence describing the text is far more effective than a whole paragraph of text-onics.

There was a certain naiveté to this story. It felt a bit like reading fan fiction, or reading a first draft by a young author, and usually this will turn me off a story. In the case, the simplistic tone actually tended to lend it some authenticity. First person PoV stories are usually appallingly unrealistic. I am not remotely a first person fan. Far from rendering the story more immediate and accessible, it typically makes it seem irritatingly false and self-centered to me. This one wasn't, but the value of this was lost amidst all the other issues.

The novel was pretty much completely lacking in any really descriptive prose. It was mostly about movement between one place and another, and the conversations which took place between the teens - chats which were in serious danger of losing the reader because very few of the speeches were ascribed to a specific speaker. It was mostly a list of spoken text with insufficient attribution to give the reader a decent idea of who was saying what. There was almost nothing to set atmosphere or to describe the surroundings, not even sketchily. It made the story seem rootless in many ways, like it wasn't actually happening in real life but in some ghostly existence divorced from the real world, which is also a mistake for a novel of this type, which really begs to be solidly grounded in reality.

In the final analysis, I can't recommend this, but if you happen to like it, there is a companion novel titled Aaron's story. I can't say if these two are tied together in any way.

Bob Silverstein says

Anyone interested in well written, emotionally charged stories about gay boys up against the views of their hardcore Christian parents should read (in this order) "Aaron's Story" and "Braden's Story" by Mason Dodd. I think these are two of the best novels on the subject.

Crystal Sell says

Reality check

This is the best book I've read in the genre. This book is a very emotional and up front experience of a coming out story. It puts you inside of the characters minds. I would recommend it anyone and everyone should read.

Frank Tatum says

One of the Best Coming Out Novels

This book is long, unlike what many so called gay authors are calling books today and publishing on Kindle. 27 pages is a pamphlet, not a book. Then, to have the Gaul to publish 3 to 10 ten to forty page pamphlets and call it a "series," just makes you, as an author, a greedy person. Mason Dodd gives you and me a real, over 400 page novel, with developed characters and a story that I could not put down. If you read just one gay novel this year, read Braden's Story!

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Alicja says

rating: 1/5

I feel terrible for giving this book one star because this book tries to address a variety of real issues of growing up gay in a severely religious household and being forced out the closet in school.

But this book just didn't work for me.

I can see where the author was coming from and where he wanted to go but unfortunately the execution was greatly lacking. The characters lacked depth and complexity. Many interactions took the form of an episode of Jerry Springer where there was yelling and hitting involved at the apex of all fights. Character development also felt false, they stagnated in place and then suddenly magically changed in a moment *queue sappy music for dramatic effect* when it was most melodramatically convenient, cheaply playing on

reader emotions (because the reality of what kids in these kinds of situations go through is heartbreaking enough, no need for cheap tricks to make it more so).

And then there was the awful attempt at text messaging (*thgs lik netspk hapns bc txt sukd w 3 ltr 1 btn kybrds* but now we have smartphones with autocorrect so netspeak would actually require extra work so it just doesn't make sense for anything published in 2014).

Half-way through I was bored. By the end I wanted to throw my Kindle at the wall out of sheer frustration.

Adam Fox says

awesome book free on book bub a few days ago could not put this book down the book has so many similarities to my own it is uncanny good to know there are awesome authors out there willing to tell this side of the glbt life 5 stars has me in tears 5 times

Stephen Byron says

This story is about a boy that is raised in a Christian home and has a great life but..... a must read

Jon O says

I personally thought the book was important. It shared the personal struggle of a teen, who was trapped in a Christian-belief family. Sometimes life could really be hard on those who were, no matter what non-believer would say, living a life that was different. It was never a choice. It was as natural as the feeling a hetero man for a woman. Unfortunately, not many could see this and this happened to be Braden's story - a boy divided between the family he loved and accepting himself for who he was.

I thought the writer did a good job in holding the interest of the readers. I enjoyed all the messages shared between Braden and others. Some made me chuckled happy for Braden and some made me jealous of him, for having all this blossoming romance around him. Mia was really vocal and matured for a character who was just 13 years old. Braden's mother was portrayed well. It was so believable such a woman would exist. Broken record - I enjoyed the label thrown upon Lydia. There were several other characters in the book that made the book worthwhile in reading. I have only wished that we were going to see Jack involved at the end. Pity that did not happen.

However, at times, I thought the story line was too angry and true enough, repetitive (broken record). It was interesting to find characters so young and so affected by the surrounding.

I did not enjoy the second last chapter. I thought the change was too fast and less believable.

****SPOILER ALERT****

Still, I am worried for any misinterpretation of the story. In the TV series Glee, when the homophobic closet bully tried to take his life and failed, it seemed that life was better for those who tried, and failed, in attempting suicide. What if this was misinterpreted by some - that the solution for acceptance by family would be an attempt at suicide. I seriously hope that I am wrong.

christopher w. says

Best story I've read

Very good story line, made me laugh, cry and get angry. I felt for every character even when things just seemed to get worse and worse I think I cried for a couple hours while reading this, but in my opinion Braden is a hero in his own right

Lester says

Read both stories (Aaron and Braden) one after the other in two days...

I came out late in my life, and though I'm now in a wonderful relationship for 12 year, I tend to miss/wonder what my teenager year would have been if I had came out at that time.

So, I really enjoyed both stories, as I believe they do complement each others quite well, and should be, in my opinion, read to grasp the complex situation Aaron and Braden are living in. In terms of family, friend and school backgrounds.

Not sure which story I preferred more... Braden's one is really more family struggles based, and I felt a bit more "complex"...

Aaron's story seems to reflect more the mindset and hurdles gay teenagers still go through on the daily basis.

Now both touched my heart and made me wish I could do more in real life, to help young people to come to term with their identities.

Looking forward to next chapters... Michael and/or Steven's stories

Earlyn says

what heartache. some people push their believes on their children and do not realise the consequences that can occur.

Braden's parents are overly religious and anti gay. They preach gay hate 24/7 to Braden and the rest of the family. Little do they know that at that moment he is questioning his sexuality even at 13.

This is a must read, if you are in it for the angst or the sex, don't bother. but have a hankie at the read. great book.

Debra says

4/21/2015 Free on Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/Bradens-Story-M...> and Smashwords.

Jerry says

I am of several minds about this story. One one level it was amazingly engrossing and the deeper I went the more I couldn't put it down. On another level I thought it a cautionary tale for young gay boys to not discount their true nature and for parents of the same to love and support them. I also really liked that it was set in Australia and was different hearing about what it's like for a young gay kid there.

Tons of angst. I almost felt I was reading a "Job's tale" with all the things that could go wrong for a kid and his family. Many times you think you've reached the climax and everything will turn for the better now and of course there is another zinger that spirals out of control.

The author gets kids pretty well, especially with texting. I don't profess to know what kids do with their smartphones but I know my peers use them for searching the Internet and so some of the scenes/circumstances didn't quite ring true for me. If you feel your religion is under attack you just might search out more understanding of bible interpretations. For all the really good arguments the author uses to combat homophobic Christians, he does not really bring up all the denouncements that are readily available. He does have some great dialog about all of the anti gay people.

A lot of what he wrote feels amazingly true and realistic to me. I came out almost 40 years ago.

I grew up in a very religious household where my father was a former minister in a conservative evangelical denomination. I always new I was gay from maybe 7 or 8 but I knew I couldn't ever say anything...to anyone, let alone my parents. Even though homosexuality was preached against and I heard it all the time, I never felt separated from the love of God. I clung to the belief that he created me gay to begin with. After high school I was outed by the mother of a close friend and my parents went nuts saying they wished I was a drug addict because they could get me help for that. It was a rough time, but I wasn't kicked out and we eventually reconciled and made peace. They even came to regard my husband as a son of theirs....I teased my dad he was the son I never was, because he could talk car repair, sports and quote scripture like a scholar. I'm still a Christian and sing in my church choir...well it's kind of hard not to when your husband is the Director of Music.

So at the end, I was captivated by the overall story but disappointed in how the supportive gay friendly church was under represented and how "preachy" it sometimes was.
