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# Brooklyn, Burning



## Synopsis

When you're sixteen and no one understands who you are, sometimes the only choice left is to run. If you're lucky, you find a place that accepts you, no questions asked. And if you're really lucky, that place has a drum set, a place to practice, and a place to sleep. For Kid, the streets of Greenpoint, Brooklyn, are that place. Over the course of two scorching summers, Kid falls hopelessly in love and then loses nearly everything and everyone worth caring about. But as summer draws to a close, Kid finally finds someone who can last beyond the sunset. *Brooklyn, Burning* is the story of two summers in Brooklyn, two summers of fires, music, loss, and ultimately, love.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A lyrical, understated punk-kid love song to Brooklyn and to chosen family. . . . Overall, the tone is as raw, down-to-earth and transcendent as the music Scout and Kid ultimately make together."

--Kirkus Reviews, starred review "Brezenoff lets readers take the reins, recasting and reimagining the lead roles as often as they like. For readers with little use for labels, it's an intimate yet

wonderfully open rock 'n' roll love story." --Publishers Weekly, starred review "A moving, personal story of friendship, loss, and love, Brezenoff's novel is also a tender tribute to all LGBTQ youth."

--The Horn Book Magazine "With its development of a supportive ersatz family and its happy-as-it's-going-to-get ending, this will appeal to readers who enjoyed David Levithan's *Love Is the Higher Law*." --Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books "A lyrical, understated punk-kid love song to Brooklyn and to chosen family. . . . Overall, the tone is as raw, down-to-earth and

transcendent as the music Scout and Kid ultimately make together." --Kirkus Reviews, starred review"Brezenoff lets readers take the reins, recasting and reimagining the lead roles as often as they like. For readers with little use for labels, it's an intimate yet wonderfully open rock 'n' roll love story." --Publishers Weekly, starred review"A moving, personal story of friendship, loss, and love, Brezenoff's novel is also a tender tribute to all LGBTQ youth." --The Horn Book Magazine"With its development of a supportive ersatz family and its happy-as-it's-going-to-get ending, this will appeal to readers who enjoyed David Levithan's Love Is the Higher Law." --Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

Steve Brezenoff is the author of dozens of chapter books for younger readers and the young adult novel *The Absolute Value of -1*. Born in Queens, Steve has lived in the suburbs on Long Island, on a couch on Manhattan's Upper East Side, a few feet from the 7 train in the Sunnyside neighborhood in Queens, and across the Hudson River in Jersey City--but none of those places has stuck with him or been missed as acutely as Brooklyn, where he lived on and off for much of his twenties and early thirties. Steve now lives in St. Paul, with his wife, Beth, their son, Sam, and dog, Harry.

This is a book for young people that goes beyond gender barriers. It romanticizes one of the ugliest parts of Brooklyn as a home for a street kid. The characters do not have any depth, which I found disturbing, also, the author seems to know a lot about LGBT teenagers and northern Brooklyn, but has no idea about music. His impressive descriptions of places falls short when trying to describe music and can't even name a rhythm. Overall, the best part is to show confused kids, about their gender, sexual orientation, their parents or their role in life, that they are not alone and that they need to face their fears and allow themselves to grieve after losing a beloved person.

This book is not describable for me; it's a thing the reader has to live through to have a clue what it is. It's poetic and graceful and vital. It contains inescapable questions but the answers don't matter. The connections between characters tell me everything I need to know about the universe: that love and comfort and care are what it's all about, and in the end, what survives. Mr Brenzenoff, thank you for one of the best experiences of my reading life.

No Problem

Great book

Thanks.

Among the many, many Young Adult novels that I've read, *\*Brooklyn, Burning\** is unique in two distinct ways. First and most obviously it refuses to gender its protagonist, Kid, or the object of Kid's affection, Scout. Initially, this (intentional) failure to identify the gender of the two characters at the center of the novel evoked anxiety and discomfort in me "how could I imagine these characters, I thought, if I don't know their respective genders? As I became more acquainted with Kid and Scout, however, and this is largely due to Brezenoff's skill as a storyteller, their genders no longer mattered to me. I was more concerned with their happiness. And this reading experience, I realized, brilliantly reflects one of the novel's prominent themes: love, affection, and genuine emotional connection transcends gender (whether socially constructed, biologically determined, ambiguous, definite, known, or unknown). This novel's other unique characteristic is its focus on homelessness and the impact of gentrification on urban neighborhoods and the queer youth who inhabit them. Kid and Scout, as well as their friends Konny and Jonny (and Felix, a spectral yet significant presence whose past is crucial in understanding Kid's character), lack any sort of nurturing home environment (whether in the conventional sense or any other sense), and the circumstances that resulted in their homelessness are directly related to their ambiguous gender identities and sexual orientations. Employing a contemporary setting and featuring current cultural realities in a story that depicts a quest for the quintessential source of happiness, Brezenoff has woven a masterful and original tale of displaced urban youth in search of love and family.

*Brooklyn, Burning* is the type of book that only comes along once in awhile and burns its beautiful story into your heart. Kid is a teen runaway and so is Scout. They meet outside of Fish's bar in Brooklyn and develop a relationship while they try and survive on the streets. Both play instruments and make beautiful music together that is raw and creative. Kid used to sleep in the old warehouse down by the river but it burned. The authorities suspect arson and Kid is their prime suspect. Kid is reeling from the loss of first love and is trying to find the strength to move on and is thinking maybe jail would be the right punishment. Yet Scout is always there when needed and maybe the truth will actually set you free. The story is narrated by Kid whose gender is undefined, in fact for both Kid and Scout, you don't know whether they are boy or girl, gay or straight. *Brooklyn, Burning* is written without pronouns for the main characters. It is an interesting way to read a novel and I loved it. I

love how Brezenoff experiments with gender and makes a statement about love and transcendence. At its heart Brooklyn, Burning is a love story. Yet this love story makes you think about gender stereotypes and how teens and people define themselves. Brezenoff's writing is poetic and original. I like a writer that takes risks and gets creative. The characters of Kid and Scout are endearing and you will fall in love with them as they throw off societal labels. I loved this story of non-conformity.

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