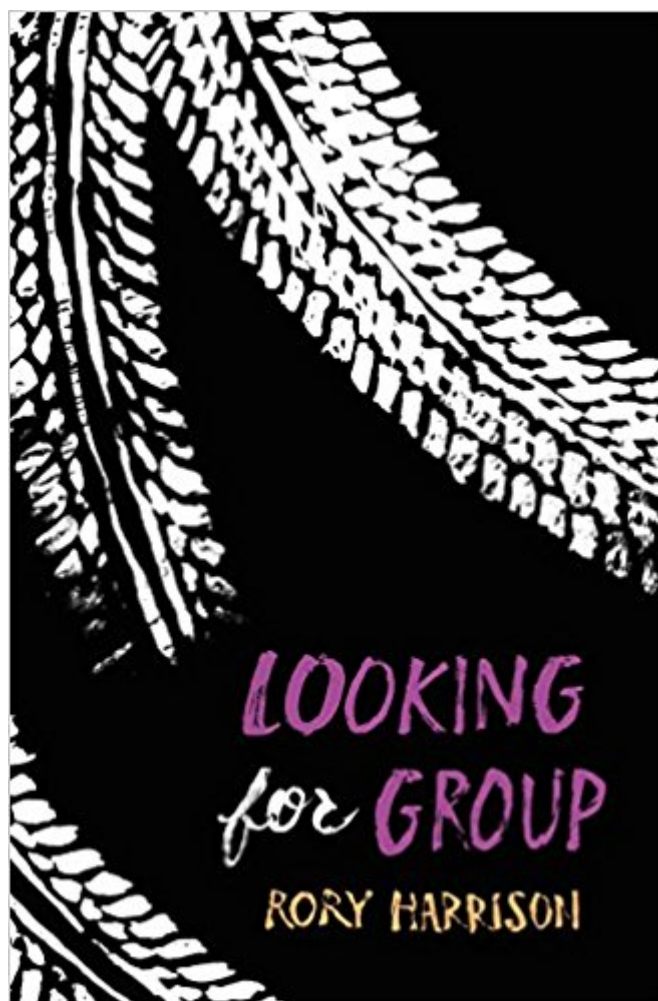


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Looking For Group



Synopsis

One of TeenVogue.com's 10 Best Queer Books to Check Out: "Looking for Group is a road trip book that ends with a punch to the gut. Warning: this is a book that will make you cry." Rory Harrison's beautiful novel about identity, home, and fresh starts recounts one boy's quest to discover a world where he can thrive, one adventure at a time. Dylan doesn't have a lot of experience with comfort. His room in the falling-down Village Estates can generously be categorized as squalid, and he sure isn't getting any love from his mother, who seemed to, no, definitely did, enjoy the perks that went along with being the parent of a "cancer kid." His only escape has been in the form of his favorite video game, World of Warcraft, and the one true friend who makes him feel understood, even if it is just online: Arden. And now that Dylan is suddenly in remission, he wants to take Arden on a real mission, one he never thought he'd live to set out on: a journey to a mysterious ship in the middle of the Salton Sea. But Arden is fighting her own battles, ones that Dylan can't always help her win. As they navigate their way west, they grapple with Arden's father (who refuses to recognize his daughter's true gender), Dylan's addiction, and the messy, complicated romance fighting so hard to blossom through the cracks of their battle-hardened hearts.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Harrison treats her characters with love and kindness, even when they're not kind to themselves. This book is a triumph, allowing honesty, excitement, humor, and heart to step over

gender and sexuality constraints and tell a beautiful story. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) “Boldly thrusts transgender issues into the spotlight in a way unheard of before. A satisfying read I’ll return to again and again.” (New York Times Bestselling Author Zac Brewer) “The characters’ differences, desires, and perceptions, are captivating... The story could prompt spirited intergenerational book discussions.” (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)) “Dylan’s narration, in taut paragraphs with white space between them, eloquently captures issues... This is a tender tale of love on the road.” (Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books) “Harrison’s writing is often lovely as she portrays Dylan’s kaleidoscopic emotions. Like that of David in Lisa Williamson’s *The Art of Being Normal* (2015), Dylan’s first-person narrative is deeply introspective and intense.” (Booklist)

LOOKING FOR GROUP FOR THE QUEST OF A LIFETIME Dylan doesn’t have a lot of experience with comfort. His room in the falling-down Village Estates can generously be categorized as “squalid,” and he sure as hell isn’t getting any love from his mother, who seemed to “no, definitely did not enjoy the perks that went along with being the parent of a “cancer kid.” Now that Dylan’s suddenly in remission, all he’s left with is a lingering OxyContin addiction and a hunger for something “anything but the life he’s known. His only escape has been in the form of his favorite video game “World of Warcraft” and the one true friend who makes him feel understood even if it’s just online. Dylan met Arden playing Warcraft, and now he wants to take her on a real mission, one he never thought he’d live to set out on: a journey to a mysterious ship in the middle of the Salton Sea. But Arden is fighting her own battles, ones that Dylan can’t always help her win. As they navigate their way west, they grapple with Arden’s father (who refuses to recognize his daughter’s true gender), Dylan’s addiction, and the messy, complicated romance fighting so hard to blossom through the cracks of their battle-hardened hearts.

Dylan may have survived cancer, but surviving his mom is another matter. With a run-down home, his mother bored after taking advantage of his time sick, and unable to register for school, Dylan starts to drive. He finds himself at the home of Arden, the girl he’s been playing World of Warcraft with for years but never met in person. He proposes an epic, real-life quest, and before they know it, they’re on the road. But running away from problems

doesn't erase them, and as something blooms between Dylan and Arden, they both must face what they left behind if they want a future.

What I Loved: Though the writing style may not work for some, I enjoyed the short, quick paragraphs and chapters. The page count is on the longer side, but the style made it all too easy to say "Just one more chapter" and end up reading at least 5 more.

My favorite part of LOOKING FOR GROUP is the relationship between Arden and Dylan. Both are discovering new sides of themselves, the good and the not so good. Neither character lets the other get away with mistakes, and I love the way they stand up to each other while still showing how much they care. This is one couple with high ship-ability.

What Left Me Wanting More: While the writing style is great and I love the relationship between Arden and Dylan, the plot felt a bit flat for me. I wasn't particularly invested in the storyline, and even though there was a clear goal in mind for their quest, it lacked strong enough tension to make me eager to keep reading.

Final Verdict: Though the plot didn't keep me fully engaged, readers who love road trip stories and slow-building romances will likely find *LOOKING FOR A GROUP* a solid choice.

I have to admit, I don't ever read the synopses for any of the books I read. I like going into books without knowing anything about them. That way, I can't get spoiled for the plot. Due to that, I thought this book was something completely different when I requested it. There's a web-comic called *Looking For Group*, and I thought this book was a novelization of that. It wasn't. The two have nothing to do with each other. That being said, once I started to read the book, and got over my initial disappointment about it not being what I thought it was, I did find it enjoyable.

Typically, I'm not a big fan of the road trip sub genre in young adult books. I find them silly, nonsensical, and unrealistic. For a book about a road trip, *Looking For Group* wasn't too bad. There were parts (mostly when they were going through the Midwest) where I was so bored that it was hard to concentrate. I had to force myself to push through it. Otherwise, I enjoyed the road trip, which is unusual for me.

I did love the LGBTQ+ representation in *Looking For Group*. I thought that Rory Harrison did a great job of writing a transgender character. She also did a great job of explaining what it means to be transgender, for those that might not know much about it. I learned a lot about transgender people from this book. I think that others will too.

Once I got past the boring parts of *Looking For Group*, I found myself really enjoying the book. I will probably read more of Rory Harrison's future books when they are released. I recommend this book to anyone looking for a fun, geeky read with diverse representation. I also recommend this book to anyone who plays online games, like *World of Warcraft*, or *League of Legends*.

Harrison has an amazing talent for creating atmosphere and writing in an immersive way, including fascinating details we almost never consciously think about, like the way a vibrating old car makes everything in the sideview mirrors blurry. The intensity of the details also worked really well to help convey Dylan's anxiety, and his tendency to get overwhelmed. I liked the matter-of-fact way Harrison handled writing about Arden as a transgirl, without most of the melodrama we tend to see. She's as human as everyone else, with both great traits and annoying tendencies. The two of them may have complex family and personal issues, but for the most part they are just two kids on a joyride. This is a road trip tale, so per genre standards, not big on plot. The focus is on character development, and it can be fairly slow moving. If that is going to get frustrating, this probably isn't your type of book. There were a couple things that bothered me, mainly the way that Dylan's sexual interest in Arden was handled (he's a gay guy), and the fact that we got very little consequence after Arden explained that she was unhappy with him deliberately misgendering her around other people in order to "protect" her. It was sort of brushed off with an apology, despite probably creating some pretty intense worries for Arden about what gender Dylan really sees her as. Both are some common hurtful issues for trans people that I think could have been handled better.

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