

Beast

Brie Spangler

Reviewed by: Rina Guo, 16

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

www.bethestaryouare.org

Dylan is fifteen and often called “The Beast” because of his 6’4” height and endless body hair. Boys tend to shove and make fun of him, and girls gawk and start running when he walks casually behind them. When Dylan falls off his roof and ends up at the hospital with a broken leg, he asks the doctor if there is someone that can help change him. To stop the growing bones, the hairy skin, the disgusted stares. Instead, to Dylan’s horror, he gets referred to a therapy program for self-harm adolescents, where he ends up meeting Jamie. Suddenly, Dylan finds himself sneaking out of therapy appointments to hang out with Jamie, and they begin to fall in love. But just when everything is going well, Jamie reveals a big secret about herself, that starts to change the way people see Dylan and the way Dylan sees Jamie. Dylan struggles with trying to piece back his relationships with others while also trying to understand and accept himself.

This is a young adult novel for readers at least fifteen years old. There is some strong language and also suggestive content.

I liked the thought that was put into making each of the characters in this novel. Some of their qualities are uncommon and less cliché compared to other novels, especially the main character and the love interest. In addition, you could clearly see each individuals’ own shortcomings and weaknesses, aside from the main character. This made the story more interesting and gave the reader more insight about multiple perspectives on the plot. It was nice to see character development in Dylan and to see him open up to Jamie more. However, I feel like some of his responses or reactions were a bit unrealistic. Several scenes such as his outburst after Jamie revealed her secret seemed a bit too extreme to me. In addition, something I didn’t like as much was the confusing theme and purpose of the story. From the title, it seemed like this would be a story about Dylan’s personal transformation and learning how to accept his insecurities about his appearance. But I feel like the novel became more centered on Dylan and Jamie’s love story. Toward the end of the book, Dylan did change as a person in terms of his values and mindset, but it didn’t really seem like a very definite and satisfying conclusion to Dylan’s personal journey. If the novel was supposed to be centered around both of them, then I think it would have been better if we could have had a bit more backstory about Jamie’s life as well as her personal thoughts and emotions. Her identity and story is quite a major detail that greatly affects the plot and Dylan’s growth, so It would have complimented the novel well if we were able to hear more of her voice and perspective.

Overall, I still enjoyed this book. If you want to read a realistic fiction story about teenage love, self-discovery and acceptance, this is a great novel. It’s also one of the less common books that contain LGBTQ characters, so if you’re looking for a different take on other romance stories, this would be a great pick!

Recommended Titles:

- Almost Perfect by Brian Katcher
- Luna by Julie Anne Peters
- Beautiful Music for Ugly Children by Kirstin Cronn-Mills
- If I Was Your Girl by Meredith Russo
- I am J by Cris Beam