

Cemetery Boys

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Cemetery Boys tells a very genuine and mature story about a young gay and trans boy's struggles with his family's acceptance and understanding, with just a dash of ghostly shenanigans. Yadriel, our main character, knows that his family supports him, but never really see him as a boy the same way he does. Add in your run-of-the-mill YA teenager issues and you'll get a fairly rocky, albeit well meaning, family dynamic. But for Yadriel, everything changes when he accidentally summons the ghost Julian Diaz in a poorly thought out plan on proving his masculinity. He never expected to befriend the ghost of the school's bad boy. He never expected to be dragged into solving his murder. And, he never expected to fall in love.

For a story centered around the unexpected, the plot's a little cliché. The mystery isn't nearly as mysterious as it's made out to be, and the stakes never seem to rise. Most of the tension comes from the characters and their interactions. All of the characters are well fleshed out and three dimensional. All of the dialogue and personal drama feels very natural, and a lot more compelling than the overarching plot. I loved seeing how each character grew closer, whether it be platonically or romantically. Yadriel and Julian have a very refreshing romantic dynamic. Yadriel's family is dysfunctional in a grounded way. You can tell they care about him, but aren't able to understand what he's going through. The characters and each of their developments are a lot more compelling than the main plot. I'd definitely read the book just for them.

This novel is perfect for both younger and older teenagers in middle school and high school. Those who aren't interested in the mystery and fantasy elements will likely stick around for the characters. Those who don't mind cheesy mysteries will love every aspect of this novel. It makes the perfect gift for younger teens looking for representation.

Recommended Titles:

Red, White, and Royal Blue by Casey McQuiston

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Lily and Duncan by Donna Gephart