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Heartbreak Boys

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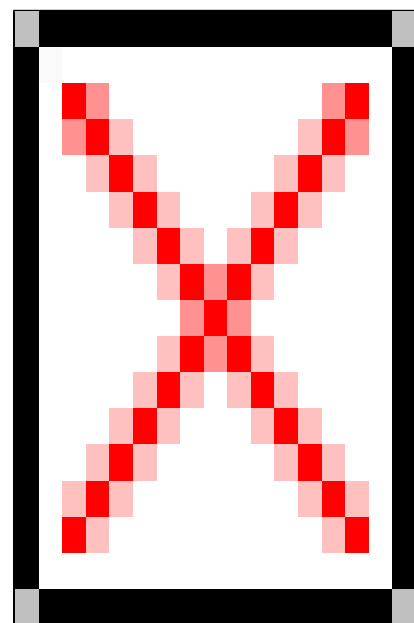
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3



Faking it for social media is the name of the game in this sweet gay rom-com road trip novel. Jack and Nate have both been dumped at the end of year prom in dramatic style, and their exes are off to start an amazing new relationship together. So, Jack and Nate decide to create a 'highlights reel' of their equally outstanding summer on Insta, showing the world they're winning. However, fabricating a super summer out of a series of dismal campsites isn't easy, and before long all the tropes of a British summer road trip, (as well as those in a reluctant romance), are being rolled out: an airport dash, failure to get over an ex, lack of beds, and more.

The banter between Jack and Nate's distinctive personalities is funny and authentic, and the circumstances they find themselves in are varied and amusing, from a vegan farm to a military training area. Told in alternating first person accounts, the distinctiveness of their personalities falters a little in their voices, and it's both helpful and necessary to have the named voice written at the start of each chapter. And of course, it is difficult for any author to write two alternating first person accounts without the reader favouring one, and Nate is a much more sympathetic, if grumpier, character.

There's a predictableness to the initial reluctance, and then coming together, of the protagonists, so the story is more about the telling than the ending, but it is entertaining. Despite the inevitability of many of the scenes, Green is good at drawing attention to identity and social media pitfalls, as well as exploring real teen angst.

The unfortunate difficulty though is that the book is so clearly set in the summer of 2020. The year is mentioned several times in this edition, and in one scene it is a pivotal joke, and because it was written pre 2020, the story lives in a universe in which Covid never happened. This is a slight distraction but shouldn't put readers off ? the novel is a fun road-trip read, with Green's trademark gay teen insights and sparkling humour, and deserves merit for the ease with which it fully embraces finding and owning one's identity.

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