

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

# "Expectations"

Susan's critique

- good premise  
 - detail on what you wrote  
 good dialogue + physical tags  
 - if he tells her why he's kicking the ball, could lead to more in depth  
 - overall  
 - lots of names → recommend starting  
 12:40 at where kids meet to go to the prom

**Summary:** Closeted high school junior double-dates to Prom with his sister's best girl friend's girlfriend, said best friend, and his secret crush. Chaos ensues.

Comment [s1]: This is confusing. It makes me want to make a chart. Write the titles of each person on a piece of paper (Jackson, Jackson's sister, etc.)

## CHAPTER 1

Four more shots, and I'd crush my record.

Comment [s2]: I like this opening sentence.

I mopped my forehead with my t-shirt. My brows did nothing to keep the sweat from trickling into my eyes as I squinted at the soccer balls lined up in front of me, my chest heaving.

If I made these, maybe my life would get back into shape.

Comment [s3]: Think of a better expression

I lined up the first shot, and let loose.

"MOTHer!"

Comment [s4]: I don't understand the exclamations in between the BAMs I understand "PROM" but that's it. Also don't know why you capitalized some of the letters, but not all of them.

BAM!

"LOVing!"

BAM!

"JUNior!"

BAM!

Each soccer ball slammed into the center of my plywood target, bouncing the board against the dilapidated shed.

Except the last one. My fourth and final effort—PROM!—careened to the right and shot away into the yard.

Dammit.

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Life was still off the rails. Prom loomed. I threw myself onto the grass and screamed incoherently at the sky.

Comment [s5]: Don't make it incoherent-be specific about what he's saying.

"Control yourself, Jackson," said a voice above my head. "The neighbors'll think you're being tortured."

Comment [s6]: This isn't right but not sure how to fix it.

"Screw off, Katy." My goth-clad ~~sister-twin~~ plopped down next to me. ~~Twin-sister~~. Fraternal, obviously, her being a girl and all. Hard to see the resemblance, now that she'd dyed her hair jet black and wore more eyeliner than a Kardashian.

Comment [s7]: This is tightening the sentence. Notice you don't need "sister" because you're already saying "twin" and then you say "girl" in the next sentence.

"Language," she said, handing me a water bottle. "What did that poor wooden goal do to you?"

"That last shot, Sis," I said, mopping my face with my t-shirt. "I'd have broken my record."

Comment [s8]: You used a similar expression earlier. Also, make a comment here-either to himself or out loud to his sister-about what it would've meant to get all of them. Some superstitious thing. If she's into gothic, she'd relate, and you could add more depth to the conversation, rather than info about how many times in a row he'd hit it. It would be a good lead-in into the prom conversation, too, and give us more of a feel as to what they're like.

"Big deal." Katy ripped one of the many dandelions from the lawn. "So you can only hit a four-by-eight piece of wood twenty-four times."

"In a row. From 50 feet. And it's half as tall and only a third as wide as a regulation goal."

Comment [s9]: Good physical tags around their conversation

"Which you're generally standing in. You're the goalie, remember?" She popped the yellow flower off its stalk, aiming it at my head.

"A goalie, I remind you, must kick to his forward line with pinpoint accuracy." I batted the plant away with the bottle and kicked at Katy's black tutu. Yes. My sister wore tutus. Some kind of retro, Black Swan thing.

She swiped at my leg. "So what's really eating you?"

"Nothing." I pressed the palms of my hands into my eyes, willing her to stop talking.

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No luck. "Totally not nothing," she said. "I heard you from the house. You were killing those balls. What's up?"

"Prom." I said, my arms falling onto the grass. This was a conversation I did not want to have again. We both knew how it would end.

Clenching and unclenching her gloved hands, she started in anyway. "You know, this would be so much easier..."

"Katydid," I said, struggling into a sitting position.

"...if you would just..."

"Do not. Say it."

"Tell everyone you're gay."

I sighed, placing my hands on my chest. "You hurt my heart."

Comment [s10]: Why?

She shrugged. "Had to be said."

"Again," I muttered.

"And again," she agreed, "until you man up and tell Scott and the rest of your buddies."

I groaned. "I just want to go to the dance!"

"Understood. C'mon," she said, standing as half her mouth twisted upwards, "I'll help you find your balls."

I snatched at her toule, but she somehow eluded my lightning-fast reflexes. She somersaulted out of range and took off toward the house, leaving me to trudge towards the back fence.

In the back of my mind, I knew she was right. If I let my gay flag fly, or at least told my best friend Scott, things would be simpler. I'd known I was gay since I was three, when I drew a picture of me and Katy in matching purple dresses. Mom took it in stride (not surprising for a

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hippie jewelry designer), but the kids on my peewee soccer team were not as accepting of my skirts. By the time I met Scott in second grade, I figured out it was easier to look like one of the crowd.

Scott and I had become instant best buds. He was in my class, and on my soccer team. He'd practically lived at my house when he'd moved here so he didn't have to listen to his parent's marriage fall apart. For me, ~~back then, being gay didn't mean I wanted a boyfriend—~~ just a best friend.

~~I wrestled one ball out of the bushes along the back fence and carried it while kicking another toward the shed. Katy met me at the door, and we tossed all four into my soccer box. As we locked up and~~ We gathered the balls and threw them into the shed before heading ~~headed~~ intofor the house.

Katy asked, "Why don't you just go stag, like usual?"

"That was the plan, but Scott ruined it by getting a girlfriend." I slammed through the rickety screen door. Scott and I had gone stag to almost ~~every dance, homecoming, and school~~ event you could think of.

"So why the drama?" Katy ~~asked as she~~ followed me to the dining room table, location of most homework production, meals, and Big Talks. Which this was turning into. "Stick with the plan."

"Because of Mindy." I threw myself into a chair and slid my backpack toward me.

"Scott's girlfriend?" Katy's upper lip twisted. "I swear, I do not understand why Scott is dating that witch."

"She's not bad." Mindy wasn't my favorite person, but loyalty to Scott demanded a defense. "Problem is, she thinks it would be swell if I took her best friend to Prom."

Comment [s11]: Second grade? I wouldn't think so. I'd delete this. But I am wondering if Scott is gay? I don't think he is, but seems like Jackson would make a comment about it. Also, I'm not sure about this backstory. I think it would work out better if you incorporated this into the scene when they're going to the prom. Show, don't tell.

Comment [s12]: No need for such detail

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Katy grabbed her throat and gagged. "Sarah Thromble?"

"Exactly. I shall not spend my prom with Satan's daughter."

"Agreed." Katy pulled a pen and an agenda book out of her pack. "We can't have that."

"Nope. But if I go stag, Sarah will be mad at Mindy, Mindy will be mad at Scott, and...

"Got it. So find a date." Katy opened her agenda and started doodling.

"So not into girls like that." Pretty much the definition of gay. "What I would like is to go to the dance, hang in the crazy-ass penthouse suite Hulk's dad is getting him, and crash at the hotel." Hulk was the oldest child of the richest man in town. That same man thought the sun shone out of Brandon's ass. When his golden boy asked, he'd ponied up enough dough to pay for the penthouse suite so his favorite son could have an after-prom blowout.

"That plan is officially toast," I said. "Scott and I got a room to share, now he wants it for him and Mindy."

"And you won't give it to him?"

"Of COURSE I will! I mean, I did. Actually, he paid for it. But that leaves me no place to crash." I turned out my pockets and leaned my chair back on two legs. "Me got no money for me own room."

"Stop talking like a muppet," Katy said. "Crash in Hulk's penthouse."

"And listen to him with his girlfriend? Watch everyone making out on the couch while I'm trying to sleep? No. And gross."

"Not gross. I know for a fact you made out with Sarith Singer six months ago."

I nodded solemnly. "Indeed I did." It's not that I hadn't made out with other girls, either. I had, in fact, gotten some pretty good feedback. My mother, bless her feminist heart, sat me and Katy down when we were 11 and not only told us about the birds and bees, but gave us detailed

Comment [s13]: I'm getting confused-this is adding a lot of names in a short timeframe-Scott, Mindy, Sarah, Hulk-that's not including Katy and Jackson. Also, Hulk/Brandon? Is Hulk Brandon's nickname? Last name? Regardless, you need to take it out altogether. It's too confusing trying to keep track of all of this.

Comment [s14]: I'd add to this. "Well, if you're going to keep pretending, then find yourself a girl to take and stop complaining."

Comment [s15]: Looking sheepish?

Comment [s16]: Eleven? A little young, but that's just my comment...

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anatomical descriptions of what organs went where and which areas should be caressed for maximum effect. There had been charts. And a whiteboard. Don't make me say more.

**Comment [s17]:** Funny, but I'd like it more if they were a little bit older, like 15.

"I'm sick of faking," I said. "It's not fun. Plus, Mindy will be after me all night, asking what's wrong with Sarah. I'm liable to ~~tell her~~ give her a list."

**Comment [s18]:** Changing this expression makes it obvious that he's going to talk about what he doesn't like about Sarah, as opposed to coming out and admitting he's gay

"That would be unwise. Although you could avoid that if you went with a friend..."

"You can't get a hotel room with a friend."

"You can too."

I tried another tack. "All my girl friends already have dates."

"All of them?"

"All of the fun ones. I checked. I was even considering your friend Kelly, but I heard she's already going."

"I could have told you that. Kelly's going with Lee Constance."

**Comment [s19]:** Two more names

"What?" My chair crashed to the floor.

"They've been dating for ages, didn't you know?" Katy raised an eyebrow. "And what's it to you, anyway?"

"Doesn't matter to me." I bent and rubbed my ankle. "But they're a weird couple, no? Theater boy and cheerleader?"

"They're both on the gymnastics squad. You should know."

"Right. I knew that." I'd been to every one of Katy's meets, and she'd been to most of my soccer games. Mom had an art gallery in town and worked there most afternoons, so the two of us were each other's primary cheerleaders. Plus we shared a car, so hanging around while the gymnastics team practiced wasn't unusual for me. Never mind that Scott offered me a lift home nearly every day. Fact is, I liked watching them practice.

**Comment [s20]:** I wouldn't use "cheerleaders" here when you're saying earlier that Kelly is an actual cheerleader.

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Some gymnasts more than others.

Lee more than the rest. Combined.

The writing is good, and you have a good basis for a story. I just think that this is too much backstory. My suggestion would be to start at the prom, or just before the prom, and then have all of this unfold. They meet friends, take pictures, etc, while he's thinking to himself, I don't like so-and-so, etc. Then we're in the action and slowly figuring out how Jackson is affected by all of it and figure out he's gay through actions/thoughts rather than just telling us.

Also, be careful of how many names you introduce in a short period of time.

Keep writing!

Susan

# Jenn's Comments

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**Summary: Closeted high school junior double-dates to Prom with his sister's best girl friend's girlfriend, said best friend, and his secret crush. Chaos ensues.**

**Closeted high school junior Jackson takes a lesbian friend, Kelly, to the prom. Kelly's girlfriend takes Jackson's secret crush. Chaos ensues.**

## CHAPTER 1

Life was still off the rails. Prom loomed.

Four more shots, and I'd crush my record.

I mopped my forehead with the hem of my t-shirt. My brows did nothing to keep the sweat from trickling into my eyes, as I squinted at the soccer balls lined up in front of me, my chest heaving.

If I made these, maybe my life would get back into shape.

I lined up the first shot, and let loose.

"MOTHer!"

BAM! (Is BAM him kicking the ball, or the ball hitting the target?)

"LOVing!"

BAM!

"JUNior!"

BAM!

Each soccer ball slammed into the center of my plywood target, bouncing the board against the dilapidated shed. Except the last one.

"PROM!"

Dammit!

My fourth and final effort — PROM! — careened to the right and shot away into the yard.

**Comment [PHS 1S1]:** I needed to draw a diagram before I understood this. I took a stab at simplifying it.

**Comment [PHS 1S2]:** I didn't realize he wasn't in front of a crowd until further down.

**Comment [PHS 1S3]:** Why?

**Comment [PHS 1S4]:** four-by-eight piece of wood



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Dammit:

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"Control yourself, Jackson," said a voice above my head. "The neighbors ~~will~~ think you're being tortured."

"Screw off, Katy."

My goth-clad sister plopped down next to me. Twin sister. Fraternal, obviously, her being a girl and all. Hard to see the resemblance, now that she dyed her hair jet-black and wore more eyeliner than a Kardashian.

"Language," she said, handing me a water bottle. "What did that poor wooden goal do to you?"

"That last shot, Sis," I said, mopping my face with my ~~TI~~-shirt. "I'd have broken my record."

"Big deal." Katy ripped one of the many dandelions from the lawn. "So you can only hit a four-by-eight piece of wood twenty-four times."

"In a row. From ~~fifty~~50 feet. And it's half as tall and only a third as wide as a regulation goal."

"Which you're generally standing in. You're the goalie, remember?" She popped the yellow flower off its stalk, aiming it at my head.

"A goalie, I remind you, must kick to his forward line with pinpoint accuracy." I batted the plant away with the bottle and kicked at Katy's black tutu. Yes. My sister wore tutus. Some kind of retro, Black Swan thing.

She swiped at my leg. "So what's really eating you?"

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0"

Comment [PHS 155]: This would be a good first line.

Comment [PHS 156]: funny

Comment [PHS 157]: Do they wear a lot of eye liner? Maybe Lady Gaga instead?

Comment [PHS 158]: I can't picture the wooden goal. Why isn't it a soccer net?

Comment [PHS 159]: You use this same phrase above.

How is the soccer kicking record symbolic of what he's dealing with?

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"Nothing." I pressed the palms of my hands into my eyes, willing her to stop talking.

No luck.

"Totally not nothing," she said. "I heard you from the house. You were killing those balls. What's up?"

"Prom," I said, my arms falling onto the grass. This was a conversation I did not want to have again. We both knew how it would end.

Clenching and unclenching her gloved hands, she started in anyway. "You know, this would be so much easier..."

"Katydid," I said, struggling into a sitting position.

"...if you would just..."

"Do not. Say it."

"Tell everyone you're gay."

I sighed, placing my hands on my chest. "You hurt my heart."

She shrugged. "Had to be said."

"Again," I muttered.

"And again," she agreed, "until you man up and tell Scott and the rest of your buddies."

I groaned. "I just want to go to the dance!"

"Understood. C'mon," she said, standing as half her mouth twisted upwards, "I'll help you find your balls." *(literally and figuratively)*

I snatched at her ~~tulle~~ *tulle*, but she somehow eluded my lightning-fast reflexes. She somersaulted out of range and took off toward the house, leaving me to trudge towards the back fence.

Comment [PHS 1510]: What about Mom and Dad?

*Is Dad still around?*

Comment [PHS 1511]: Neither of them find this phrase funny?

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In the back of my mind, I knew ~~s~~he was right. If I let my gay flag fly, or at least told my best friend, Scott, things would be simpler. I'd known I was gay since I was three, when I drew a picture of me and Katy in matching purple dresses. Mom took it in stride (not surprising for a hippie jewelry designer), but the kids on my PeeWeepeeewee soccer team were not as accepting of my skirts. By the time I met Scott in second grade, I figured out it was easier to look like one of the crowd.

Scott and I had become instant best buds. He was in my class, and on my soccer team. He'd practically lived at my house when he'd moved here so he didn't have to listen to his parent's marriage fall apart. For me, back then, being gay didn't mean I wanted a boyfriend—just a best friend.

I wrestled one ball out of the bushes along the back fence and carried it while kicking another toward the shed. Katy met me at the door, and we tossed all four into my soccer box.

As we locked up and headed into the house, Katy asked, "Why don't you just go stag, like usual?"

"That was the plan, but Scott ruined it by getting a girlfriend." I slammed through the rickety screen door. Scott and I had gone stag to almost every dance, homecoming, and school event you could think of.

"So why the drama?" Katy asked as she followed me to the dining room table, location of most homework production, meals, and Big Talks—~~W~~hich this was turning into. "Stick with the plan."

"Because of Mindy." I threw myself into a chair and slid my backpack toward me.

"Scott's girlfriend?" Katy's upper lip twisted. "I swear, I do not understand why Scott is dating that witch."

Add how the older soccer team would also be unaccepting & clarify why soccer is important to him

Comment [PHS IS12]: Did he actually wear skirts to soccer? That's not clear.

Comment [PHS IS13]: How is this different from other children? Do you mean to say he had not developed any crushes on boys? Was this idea of a boyfriend or girlfriend still icky at that age?

Comment [PHS IS14]: Which is what? Go stag? Or g with Scott and his girlfriend?

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"She's not bad." Mindy wasn't my favorite person, but loyalty to Scott demanded a defense. "Problem is, she thinks it would be swell if I took her best friend to Prom."

Katy grabbed her throat and gagged. "Sarah Thromble?"

"Exactly. I shall not spend my prom with Satan's daughter."

"Agreed." Katy pulled a pen and an agenda book out of her pack. "We can't have that."

"Nope. But if I go stag, Sarah will be mad at Mindy, Mindy will be mad at Scott, and..."

"Got it. So find a date." Katy opened her agenda and started doodling.

"So not into girls like that." Pretty much the definition of gay. "What I would like is to go to the dance, hang in the crazy-ass penthouse suite Hulk's dad is getting him, and crash in a room at the hotel." Hulk was the oldest child of the richest man in town. That same man thought the sun shone out of Brandon's ass. When his golden boy asked, he'd ponied up enough dough to pay for the penthouse suite so his favorite son could have an after-prom blowout.

"That plan is officially toast," I said. "Scott and I got a room to share, now he wants it for him and Mindy."

"And you won't give it to him?"

"Of COURSE I will! I mean, I did. Actually, he paid for it. But that leaves me no place to crash." I turned out my pockets and leaned my chair back on two legs. "Me gots no money for me own room."

"Stop talking like a muppet! Muppet," Katy said. "Crash in Hulk's penthouse."

"And listen to him with his girlfriend? Watch everyone making out on the couch while I'm trying to sleep? No. And gross."

"Not gross. I know for a fact you made out with Sarith Singer six months ago."

**Comment [PHS 1S15]:** Don't understand this response. Is it "Sooo - yeah - I'm not into girls remember?" or is it "I'm so not into girls."

**Comment [PHS 1S16]:** Is Brandon the same person as Hulk?

**Comment [PHS 1S17]:** Why is the plan to hang at Hulk's toast? Why can't Jackson still go there? Because he doesn't want to go alone?

**Comment [PHS 1S18]:** This conversation is going on for a long time. Is Hulk significant? Can it be cut or moved later in the story. Shorten this so we can get on with the action of the story.

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I nodded solemnly. "Indeed I did." It's not that I hadn't ~~ever made out with girls~~. ~~made out with other girls either~~. I had, in fact, ~~I gotten~~ some pretty good feedback. My mother, bless her feminist heart, sat me and Katy down when we were ~~eleven~~ and not only told us about the birds and bees, but gave us detailed anatomical descriptions of what organs went where and which areas should be caressed for maximum effect. There had been charts ~~and~~ a whiteboard. ~~Don't make me say more.~~

"~~I'm sick of faking!~~" I said. "It's not fun. Plus, Mindy will be after me all night, asking what's wrong with Sarah. ~~I'm liable to tell her!~~"

"That would be unwise. Although you could avoid that if you went with a friend ~~and~~."

"You can't get a hotel room with a ~~girl~~ friend."

"You can, too."

I tried another tack. "All my girl friends already have dates."

"All of them?"

"All of the fun ones. I checked. I was even considering your friend ~~Kelly~~, but I heard she's already going."

"I could have told you that. Kelly's going with ~~Lee~~ Constance."

"What?" My chair crashed to the floor.

"They've been dating for ages, didn't you know?" Katy raised an eyebrow. "And what's it to you, anyway?"

"~~Doesn't matter to me!~~" I bent and rubbed my ankle. "But they're a weird couple, no? Theater boy and cheerleader?"

"They're both on the gymnastics squad. You should know."



**Comment [PHS 1S19]:** Well if he's faked it before why won't he fake it for prom? What's different now?

**Comment [PHS 1S20]:** Tell her that he's gay, or tell her why he hates Sarah?

**Comment [PHS 1S21]:** I think you're introducing too many characters in the beginning.

**Comment [PHS 1S22]:** Can be a girls or a boys name. Pick something that makes it clear it's a boy or a girl. Same with Sarith. I didn't know if it was a boy or girl at first.

**Comment [PHS 1S23]:** If Lee is his secret crush then make this clearer. It's from Jackson's POV so no need to hide this fact from the reader.

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"Right. I knew that." I'd been to every one of Katy's meets, and she'd been to most of my soccer games. Mom had an art gallery in town and worked there most afternoons, so the two of us were each other's primary cheerleaders. Plus we shared a car, so hanging around while the gymnastics team practiced wasn't unusual for me. Never mind that Scott offered me a lift home nearly every day. Fact is, I liked watching them practice.

Some gymnasts more than others.

Lee more than the rest. Combined.

Mary, I like these two characters a lot. They are fun and their dialogue is great. I think their conversation should be a bit shorter so we can get on with the story. You introduce a lot of characters in only 6 pages. Probably too many. I think Jackson is likable and readers will root for him to find happiness.

**Summary:** Closeted high school junior double-dates to Prom with his sister's best girl friend's girlfriend, said best friend, and his secret crush. Chaos ensues. ☺

?

CHAPTER 1

Ed

Four more <sup>goals?</sup> shots, and I'd crush my record. <sup>of...</sup> details, so we know what to <sup>root for</sup>

I mopped my forehead with my t-shirt. My brows did nothing to keep the sweat from trickling into my eyes as I squinted at the soccer balls lined up in front of me, my chest heaving. <sup>eye</sup> <sup>how many?</sup>

If I made these, maybe my life would get back into shape. <sup>-omen?</sup>

I lined up the first shot, and let loose.

funny

"MOTHer!"

BAM!

— what's the result?

"LOVing!"

BAM!

— same

"JUNior!"

BAM!

— same

Each soccer ball slammed into the center of my plywood target, bouncing the board against the dilapidated shed. Except the last one. My fourth and final effort—PROM!—careened to the right and shot away into the yard.

Dammit.

— really good.

— I get the angst, but it's not whiney.

— very funny

— I like Karty. I hope she has a life, too.

Set up in the same pattern

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still  
↑ he knows who she is  
[ ]  
“Control yourself, Jackson,” said a voice above my head. “The neighbors’ll think you’re being tortured.”

♀  
“Screw off, Katy.” My goth-clad sister plopped down next to me. Twin sister. Fraternal, obviously, her being a girl and all. Hard to see the resemblance, now that she dyed her hair jet black and wore more eyeliner than a Kardashian. ✓

“Language,” she said, handing me a water bottle. “What did that poor wooden goal do to you?”

“That last shot, Sis,” I said, mopping my face with my t-shirt. “I’d have broken my record.” of ~

“Big deal.” Katy ripped one of the many dandelions from the lawn. “So you can only hit a four-by-eight piece of wood twenty-four times.” ✓

“In a row. From 50 feet. And it’s half as tall and only a third as wide as a regulation goal.”

“Which you’re generally standing in. You’re the goalie, remember?” She popped the yellow flower off its stalk, aiming it at my head. ✓

“A goalie, I remind you, must kick to his forward line with pinpoint accuracy.” I batted the plant away with the bottle and kicked at Katy’s black tutu. Yes. My sister wore tutus. Some kind of retro, Black Swan thing. ✓

She swiped at my leg. “So what’s really eating you?”

“Nothing.” I pressed the palms of my hands into my eyes, willing her to stop talking.



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No luck. "Totally not nothing," she said. "I heard you from the house. You were killing those balls. What's up?"

"Prom," I said, my arms falling onto the grass. This was a conversation I did not want to have again. We both knew how it would end.

*fingerless?*

Clenching and unclenching her gloved hands, she started in anyway. "You know, this would be so much easier..."

"Katydid," I said, struggling into a sitting position.

"...if you would just..."

"Do not. Say it." ✓

"Tell everyone you're gay."

I sighed, placing my hands on my chest. "You hurt my heart."

She shrugged. "Had to be said."

"Again," I muttered.

"And again," she agreed, "until you man up and tell Scott and the rest of your buddies."

I groaned. "I just want to go to the dance!"

*? he does want to go? maybe qualify*

"Understood. C'mon," she said, standing as half her mouth twisted upwards, "I'll help

*I don't want to do.*

you find your balls." ✓✓

*? I don't know what this is*

I snatched at her toule, but she somehow eluded my lightning-fast reflexes. She

*hot reflexes: Let's deliberately do it*

somersaulted out of range and took off toward the house, leaving me to trudge towards the back fence.

In the back of my mind, I knew she was right. If I let my gay flag fly, or at least told my best friend Scott, things would be simpler. I'd known I was gay since I was three, when I drew a picture of me and Katy in matching purple dresses. Mom took it in stride (not surprising for a

hippie jewelry designer), but the kids on my peewee soccer team were not as accepting of my skirts. By the time I met Scott in second grade, I figured out it was easier to look like one of the crowd.

Scott and I had become instant best buds. He was in my class, and on my soccer team. He'd practically lived at my house when he'd moved here <sup>since?</sup> so he didn't have to listen to his parent's <sup>the</sup> marriage fall apart. For me, back then, being gay didn't mean I wanted a boyfriend—just a best friend.

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"That was the plan, but Scott ruined it by getting a girlfriend." I slammed through the rickety screen door. Scott and I had gone stag to almost every dance, homecoming, and school event you could think of.

"So why the drama?" Katy asked as she followed me to the dining room table, <sup>longer list: mixer, ball, the prom, etc.</sup> location of <sup>of an</sup> most homework production, meals, and Big Talks. Which <sup>this time</sup> this was turning into. "Stick with the plan."

"Because of Mindy." I threw myself into a chair and slid my backpack toward me.

"Scott's girlfriend?" Katy's upper lip twisted. "I swear, I do not understand why Scott is dating that witch."

"She's not bad." Mindy wasn't my favorite person, but loyalty to Scott demanded a defense. "Problem is, she thinks it would be swell if I took her best friend to Prom."

Katy grabbed her throat and gagged. "Sarah Thromble?"

"Exactly. I shall not spend my prom with Satan's daughter." ✓

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

“Agreed.” Katy pulled a pen and an agenda book out of her pack. “We can’t have that.”

“Nope. But if I go stag, Sarah will be mad at Mindy, Mindy will be mad at Scott, and...

“Got it. So find <sup>another</sup> a date.” Katy opened her agenda and started doodling.

“So not into girls like that.” Pretty much the definition of gay. “What I would like is to go to the dance, <sup>then</sup> hang in the crazy-ass penthouse suite Hulk’s dad is getting him, and crash at the hotel.” Hulk was the oldest child of the richest man in town. That same man thought the sun <sup>real name, Brandon--</sup> shone out of Brandon’s ass. When his golden boy asked, he’d ponied up enough dough to pay for the penthouse suite so his favorite son could have an after-prom blowout.

“That plan is officially toast,” I said. “Scott and I got a room to share, <sup>only</sup> now he wants it for him and Mindy.”

“And you won’t give it to him?”

“Of COURSE I will! I mean, I <sup>already</sup> did. Actually, he paid for it. But that leaves me no place to crash.” I tumbled out my pockets and leaned my chair back on two legs. “Me gots no money for me own room.”

“Stop talking like a <sup>stupid</sup> muppet,” Katy said. “<sup>So</sup> Crash in Hulk’s penthouse.”

“And listen to him with his girlfriend? Watch everyone making out on the couch while I’m trying to sleep? No. And gross.”

“Not gross. I know for a fact you made out with Sarith Singer six months ago.”

I nodded solemnly. “Indeed, I <sup>did</sup> did.” It’s not that I hadn’t made out with other girls, either. I had, in fact, gotten some pretty good feedback. My mother, bless her feminist heart, sat me and Katy down when we were 11 and not only told us about the birds and bees, but gave us detailed anatomical descriptions of what organs went where and which areas should be caressed for maximum effect. There had been charts. And a whiteboard. Don’t make me say more.

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

"I'm sick of faking," I said. "It's not fun. Plus, Mindy will be after me all night, asking what's wrong with Sarah. I'm liable to tell her."

"That would be unwise. Although you could avoid that if you went with a friend..."

"You can't get a hotel room with a friend."

"You can too."

I tried another tack. "All my girl friends already have dates."

"All of them?"

"All of the fun ones. I checked. I was even considering your friend Kelly, but I heard she's already going."

"I could have told you that. Kelly's going with Lee Constance."

"What?" My chair crashed to the floor.

"They've been dating for ages, didn't you know?" Katy raised an eyebrow. "And what's it to you, anyway?"

"Doesn't matter to me." I bent and rubbed my ankle. "But they're a weird couple, no? Theater boy and cheerleader?"

"They're both on the gymnastics squad. You should know."

"Right. I knew that." I'd been to every one of Katy's meets, and she'd been to most of my soccer games. <sup>Since</sup> Mom had an art gallery in town and worked there most afternoons, <sup>so</sup> the two of us were each other's primary cheerleaders. <sup>1</sup> Plus <sup>11</sup> we shared a car, so hanging around while the gymnastics team practiced wasn't unusual for me. Never mind that Scott offered me a lift home nearly every day. Fact is, I liked watching them practice.

Some gymnasts more than others.

Lee more than the rest. Combined. ✓

JULIE

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

How does Jackson dress daily? Compare to Katy's goth.  
Katy sounds matter-of-fact. Have her express empathy.  
Insert into conversation when Katy is talking to prom  
-or if she's against the concept.

What will Jackson wear to prom - outlandish or traditional? Katy? Goth?

**Summary: Closeted high school junior double-dates to Prom with his sister's best girl friend's girlfriend, said best friend, and his secret crush. Chaos ensues.**

What's Dzed like?

job?  
Similar traits - looks, personality, etc. to either twin?  
Contrast to Mom's personality/attitude

## CHAPTER 1

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If I made these, maybe my life would get back into shape.

in order

I lined up the first shot, and let loose.

"MOTHer!"

BAM!

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"JUNior!"

BAM!

Each soccer ball slammed into the center of my plywood target, bouncing the board against the dilapidated shed. Except the last one. My fourth and final effort—PROM!—careened to the right and shot away into the yard.

Dammit.

Mention the arch of his foot, his internal feelings, etc.  
Does it ache from kicking so hard?  
Does it feel cathartic?

Julie

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

Life was still off the rails. Prom loomed. I threw myself onto the grass and screamed incoherently at the sky.

“Control yourself, Jackson,” said a voice above my head. “The neighbors’ll think you’re being tortured.”

“Screw off, Katy.” My goth-clad sister plopped down next to me. Twin sister. Fraternal, obviously, ~~her being a girl and all~~. Hard to see the resemblance, now that she dyed her hair jet black and wore more eyeliner than a Kardashian.

“Language,” she said, handing me a water bottle. “What did that poor wooden goal do to you?”

“That last shot, Sis,” I said, mopping my face with my t-shirt. “I’d have broken my record.”

“Big deal.” Katy ripped one of the many dandelions from the lawn. “So you can only hit a four-by-eight piece of wood twenty-four times.”

“In a row. From 50 feet. And it’s half as tall and only a third as wide as a regulation goal.”

“Which you’re generally standing in. You’re the goalie, remember?” She popped the yellow flower off its stalk, aiming it at my head.

“A goalie, I remind you, must kick to his forward line with pinpoint accuracy.” I batted the plant away with the bottle and kicked at Katy’s black tutu. ~~Yes. My sister wore tutus.~~ Some kind of retro, Black Swan thing.

She swiped at my leg. “So what’s really eating you?”

“Nothing.” I pressed the palms of my hands into my eyes, willing her to stop talking.

-has to be

of placement  
"only"

Not  
necessary

JULIE

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

No luck. "Totally not nothing," she said. "I heard you from the house. You were killing those balls. What's up?"

"Prom." I said, my arms falling onto the grass. This was a conversation I did not want to have again. We both knew how it would end.

Clenching and unclenching her gloved hands, she started in anyway. "You know, this would be so much easier..."

"Katydid," I said, struggling into a sitting position.

"...if you would just..."

"Do not. Say it."

"Tell everyone you're gay."

I sighed, placing my hands on my chest. "You hurt my heart."

She shrugged. "Had to be said."

"Again," I muttered.

"And again," she agreed, "until you man up and tell Scott and the rest of your buddies."

I groaned. "I just want to go to the dance!"

"Understood. C'mon," she said, standing as half her mouth twisted upwards, "I'll help you find your balls."

I snatched at her tole, but she somehow eluded my lightning-fast reflexes. She somersaulted out of range and took off toward the house, leaving me to trudge towards the back fence.

~~In the back of my mind, I knew~~ <sup>Julie</sup> She was right. If I let my gay flag fly, or at least told my best friend Scott, things would be simpler. I'd known I was gay since I was three, when I drew a picture of me and Katy in matching purple dresses. Mom took it in stride (not surprising for a

you're...."  
"gay."

elliptical  
and "gay"  
isolated  
for  
word  
effect

(could  
insert  
joke  
here)

back  
x2

JULIE

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

hippie jewelry designer), but the kids on my peewee soccer team were not as accepting of my skirts. By the time I met Scott in second grade, I figured out it was easier to look like one of the crowd.

Scott and I had become instant best buds. He was in my class, and on my soccer team.

He'd practically lived at my house when he'd moved here so he didn't have to listen to his parent's marriage fall apart. For me, back then, being gay didn't mean I wanted a boyfriend—just a best friend.

I wrestled one ball out of the bushes along the back fence and carried it while kicking another toward the shed. Katy met me at the door, and we tossed all four into my soccer box. As we locked up and headed into the house, Katy asked, "Why don't you just go stag, like usual?"

"That was the plan, but Scott ruined it by getting a girlfriend." I slammed through the rickety screen door. Scott and I had gone stag to almost every dance, homecoming, and school event you could think of.

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"Exactly. I shall not spend my prom with Satan's daughter."

2 postrophe placement

b-word?

word choice  
love the  
word  
"swell",  
but not here



JULIE

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

"Agreed." Katy pulled a pen and an agenda book out of her pack. "We can't have that."

"Nope. But if I go stag, Sarah will be mad at Mindy, Mindy will be mad at Scott, and..."

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Who is Brandon?

"ass" 2x necessary?

Not a muppet. A character in "Oliver"?

necessary?

JULIE

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

"I'm sick of faking," I said. "It's not fun. Plus, Mindy will be after me all night, asking what's wrong with Sarah. I'm liable to tell her."

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OK. NOW, I KNOW THE OBJECT OF JACKSON'S AFFECTION.  
GRAB THE READER'S ATTENTION SOONER.  
INCLUDE SOME TWIN/SIBLING EMPATHY.

## YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

Mary-

*This is a worthy topic to bring out in the Y/A arena. I guess you need to figure out if it's a serious topic or one that lends itself to a humorous treatment. In this excerpt, we find a lengthy discussion over the problem over a high schooler coming out to his friends. It has the tone of a tv sit-com.*

*He fears the immanent censure and ridicule from those close to him. Early on, the reader must know what treatment you're going to give this difficult discussion. Good luck with your decision. No matter how you treat the problem - serious or humorous - you'll have detractors.*

*The second aspect of this piece that you might want to consider is: here we have a long discussion about the problem rather than have the reader follow the reason for Jackson's reticence toward coming out. (I'm not sure of his first name.)*

*They discuss problems rather than the reader living with the problem.*

*It's difficult to be emotionally involved with a character by only hearing about him and his difficulties, rather than seeing and being with him. For instance, when a silly situation happens and you try to tell the story and no one gets it. You end up saying, "Oh, I guess you had to be there." This is the same situation. Your job as a writer, is to take us there and have us understand what he is going through.*

*The biggest challenge for you is to bring the situation closer by having the reader witness the emotional leap he's got to make.*

*Good luck with this worthy story.*

*Dave*

*Ps. I have very few line edits here because there are not many glitches with the writing. It's the presentation that is the difficulty.*

**Summary: Closeted high school junior double-dates to Prom with his sister's best girl friend's girlfriend, said best friend, and his secret crush. Chaos ensues.**

### CHAPTER 1

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Clenching and unclenching her gloved hands, she started in anyway. “You know, this would be so much easier...”

“Katydid,” I said, struggling into a sitting position.

“...if you would just...”

“Do not. Say it.”

“Tell everyone you’re gay.” ~~(Not sure I knew he was a guy until this point.)~~ My bad!

I sighed, placing my hands on my chest. “You hurt my heart.”

She shrugged. “Had to be said.”


“Again,” I muttered.

“And again,” she agreed, “until you man up and tell Scott and the rest of your buddies.”

I groaned. “I just want to go to the dance!”

“Understood. C’mon,” she said, standing as half her mouth twisted upwards, “*I’ll help you find your balls.*” *(Is this a play on words? If so, kinda cruel.)*

I snatched at her toule, *(No idea what a toule is)* but she somehow eluded my lightning-fast reflexes. She somersaulted out of range and took off toward the house, leaving me to trudge towards the back fence.

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*(The preceding paragraph might be a good place to start the story. Right off the top, the reader knows the difficulties the main character is dealing with.)*

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I wrestled one ball out of the bushes along the back fence and carried it while kicking another toward the shed. Katy met me at the door, and we tossed all four into my soccer box. As we locked up and headed into the house, Katy asked, “Why don’t you just go stag, like usual?”

YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

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YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY Mary Newton Lima

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“I’m sick of faking,” I said. “It’s not fun. Plus, Mindy will be after me all night, asking what’s wrong with Sarah. I’m liable to tell her.”

“That would be unwise. Although you could avoid that if you went with a friend...”

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*(Maybe reconsider the main thrust of the story. It seems to have drifted away from the coming out to a gossipy conversation about the prom and the dating for the prom. I guess you’ll have to decide where you’re going with this.)*