



# You Can Make Him Like You

*Ben Tanzer*

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## **You Can Make Him Like You** Ben Tanzer

Ben Tanzer's third novel is an adventure in being a grown up, in facing relationships and jobs, friendships and parenthood. A true exploration of what it means to live in our world, saturated with pop culture in the midst of real life struggles.

## **You Can Make Him Like You Details**

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Author : Ben Tanzer

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## From Reader Review You Can Make Him Like You for online ebook

### Kate says

Ben Tanzer = pop culture  
Ben Tanzer = PopRocks! of literature  
Ben Tanzer = rock star

Ben Tanzer is all these things but most importantly a phenominal writer that I am glad to know.

Once I started this book I couldn't put it down. If I was a dude, Keith would be me (minus his political views) and since I'm going through life changes, this book came at a perfect time.

Ever since I turned 30 the questions have turned to 'so when are you getting married?' 'when are you having kids?' 'don't you know your biological clock is ticking?' My answer is what if I don't want any of those things, is that really so bad? However, going on Keith's journey with him in the passanger seat really opened my eyes and I came to the realization that even though I might not ever be ready to be a mother, I'll always be a super 'aunt' to all of my friends kids. Honestly, that isn't so bad, right?!

I also came to the realization (after a google search) that The Hold Steady is a real rock and roll band, one that I most certainly need to listen to.

Thanks Ben for opening my eyes to the chaotic world of parenthood and for giving me a new band to listen to. I can't wait to read your other books and see you around at other readings too.

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### Ann says

I took an almost immediate liking to the protagonist in Ben Tanzer's "You Can Make Him Like You" when I learned that he, like me, is annoyed by neighbors. In his case, it's the endless collection of next door neighbors--who move in and out at a vicious pace--and their variety of noise making. Music, loud sex, whatever. (If you're curious, in my case, it's barking dogs.) It is up to Chicagoan Keith, a late 30-something dude (and yes, he can only be called a dude) to visit, to beg, in the most Midwestern way (that is to say kindly and yet with private resentment) to please keep it down.

Keith is married, works in advertising (I understand this is a rite of passage in Chicago) and his wife wants a baby. He's not sure. There's quite a Peter Pan-esque quality to Keith, as if he is stuck with a fifteen-year-old's sex-addled brain. He looks at most women as sex objects, makes any excuse to get out of a difficult situation--usually by numbing himself alcohol or drugs, and doesn't seem to realize that there is music outside of the realm of heart-wrenching hipsterdom. Despite these shortcomings, or maybe because of them, Tanzer does an effective job of creating a narrator at once pitiable and yet kind of hopeful. I felt an anxiety about Keith as I read, as if I was cheering for him to grow up and figure out that it's okay to love his wife and that, really, at his age, he is allowed stop worrying about what his (admittedly horrible) parents think. He's smart enough to truly fear parenthood, to fear a lifetime of commitment, and to be wary of but still love his friends, who mingle into his daily life and are ultimately both flawed and kind-hearted. You get to Keith's age, you learn this about people.

Frankly, I don't read nearly enough modern-day pop culture novels. Do you? Feels like every day I'm only offered upmarket literary novels with excessively trick-making plots or the experimental novel written in dense prose that is good for me (like, say, spinach) and yet, admittedly, I can only handle in very small

doses. Sure, those have their place and I wouldn't dismiss them. But the world needs more novels like this one, slightly satirical, funny, emotive, a reflection of life itself. Sometimes what appears the easiest—just living, just working, having a family—is enough to make a quite complicated story.

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### **Steve Karas says**

*You Can Make Him Like You* is such a cool, pop-culture-infused Chicago novel. It's 2008, Obama versus McCain, and Chicago is "the center of the universe" for this brief period of time. There's The Billy Goat Tavern and Mike Royko, Kyle Orton and Carlos Zambrano, Castaways and Mothers and Five Faces and Metro and Oprah, of course. And within that Chicago world, Tanzer resurrects Sister Hazel and Chumbawamba and TiVo and Beverly Hills Chihuahua and The Bachelorette with DeAnna. Then there's Keith, most importantly, who's struggling with his fears of impending fatherhood, monogamy, and facing his own childhood demons. Keith trying to become "anti-Keith," the universal struggle we all face at some point, don't we? To be better people, and finding it easier said than done. Tanzer has the gift of writing characters who are believable and flawed. Characters you feel like you know, feel like you've known for years in fact, that you may talk shit about with your spouse or other friends, but still love nonetheless and will always love. Tanzer's novels are so easy to digest in part too, I think, because he writes such realistic and engaging dialogue. The last quarter of the book was probably my favorite, the madness that is the first few months of life with a firstborn, especially a colicky one as is the case with Jones, the son of Keith and Liz. Tanzer captures the insecurity and exhaustion, and the love that ultimately conquers. He writes, "We stare at the ceiling trying to ignore the errant thoughts and nagging questions running through our heads, questions of fairness, of when all of this might end, of what's wrong with Jones and what's wrong with us, about why we aren't better parents, and why we even wanted this in the first place, because we don't want this anymore, and we hate our lives, there is no way out. And Jones keeps screaming." What shouldn't be lost is how funny Tanzer is too. Some of the bar scenes are among his best. In one scene where Keith has a run-in with a Burt Reynolds look-alike, Tanzer writes, "Burt stands up. He's not much taller than me, but he's thick, Chicago thick. Southside, this used to be hog butcher for the world, Go Sox, I fucking claim the parking spot in front of my home with two chairs and a brookstick, and know the Mayor's, brother's, cousin's, ex girlfriend's, mother kind of thick, all fat and gristle, fuck you, thick." In another scene he writes, "And then the bachelorette party chicks from Wisconsin came in. With the dildo necklaces and frosted everything. The short skirts. All married and all kind of hot in their big hair way. Well, except for the one with the weird nose. They massaged our shoulders. They told us how great their kids were and how being a parent was a gift. We did shots with them, super cheesy, bachelorette party shots, Buttery Nipples and Sex on the Beach, Chunky Monkeys and Kamikaze's, endless Kamikaze's." This is among Tanzer's best work, and that says a lot.

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### **Caleb Ross says**

*You Can Make Him Like You* is definitely the best thing I've read by Ben Tanzer. And considering I've read, and really enjoyed, just about everything this man has written, my opinion comes both well-informed and well-deserved.

This is one of the best, if not the best, depictions of the transition from empty childlessness to fatherhood I've ever had the opportunity to experience. Tanzer has succeeded in imbuing every interaction, every situation, every political pot-shot with the metaphorical acceptance of fatherhood. The point being, simply,

that to be a father means to be changed, whether you want to or not.

For example:

1. Constant questions: the first-person narration is built as a series of questions, some rhetorical, some honest, all answered by the very voice that asks them, which gives us an economical yet satisfying understanding of Keith, the 37-year old prisoner of extra-marital fantasy. The self-reflection and internal Q&A plays well into his imagined events— sex with secretary, winning a bar fight, and on and on. This is a mid-life crisis Corvette in his head.
2. Inability to concentrate: A series of loud neighbors prevent discourse between the to-be parents, Keith and Liz. The neighbors are always there, for better or worse (usually worse), to diffuse every building verbal explosion.
3. Inability to accept change: *You Can Make Him Like You* takes place during the run-up to the 2008 presidential election between John McCain and Barack Obama. Keith, a McCain supporter, is unable to dodge his impending role as father, just as he is slowly learning that he is unable to dodge the election of Obama (whose campaign discourse of Hope and Change adds to Keith's hesitation to appreciate either Hope or Change as a good thing).

Perhaps no interaction better and more concisely describes *You Can Make Him Like You* than a quick dialog toward the end of the book, between new parents Keith and Liz. Liz, after a tense meeting with Keith's parents, says to Keith, "that went well." Keith responds, "I think you're right, it's not like we came to blows or anything. Of course, my dad would kind of need to be in the room if we were going to have a fight, yes" (pg 151)? Keith is simply a man learning to be a father without ever having had a worthy point of reference. This is a book that every to-be father should read.

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### **Patrick Wensink says**

Once in a while a book comes at the right time in your life. Tanzer's book of a 30-something guy dealing with his maturity and a budding family arrived perfectly timed.

It's eerie how well Tanzer dissects the mind of a married man with wit and love and uncomfortable truth.

\*The only drawback was a good chunk of spelling errors, which are really copy editing complaints, not an issue with the author.

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### **Adam says**

I sincerely, deeply Related to this book and its main character, which fact troubles me. I never thought of myself as being so like a married 37 year old white guy from Chicago who works doing non-PR PR stuff for PBR. But this book could've been written in my voice. It's absolutely not just that he's into *The Hold Steady*, although *The Hold Steady* is among those few things I love and cherish above all else. It's pretty much everything other than his political views. So that was weird.

The book's one of those books that makes for compulsive reading and that rarely if ever *seems* like great, or

even very good, literary art, but that ends up smacking you in the face with the fact that it's pretty goddamn good. It seems so simple, so low-key, so far from a literary challenge, that I never realized entirely how much I liked it, or how sophisticated it was until I was done reading it.

It's super short (the page count is 241, but it given the font and spacing that's no indication of how long it'll take to read this), too, so even if you end up thinking it's a waste of time it wouldn't have been much time wasted. I read it on two transit trips, on the way to and the way back from seeing *Before Midnight* for the second time. That movie's unbelievably great, by the way, and still this book seemed funny and sad and beautiful and all that good stuff. The only bummer was that there are a metric fuck-ton of typos, even for a first edition from a small press.

But yeah, it's pretty alright. Stay fuckin' Positive.

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### **Jason Pettus says**

Ben is a good friend of mine, so it would be an ethical conflict for me to do a supposedly "objective" review of this latest novel of his; but I did want to at least mention that I recently read it and enjoyed it, and of course recommend it to all his existing fans. Another pop-culture-infused character-heavy relationship story, which is what Ben is best at.

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### **Jason says**

The third novel from Ben Tanzer, *You Can Make Him Like You*, is a coming of age story for the near middle-aged Republican living and working in one of the best neighborhoods in Chicago. The story is told through the eyes of a 37 year old soon-to-be-father who constantly obsesses about other women, and at times comes very close to being with other women. Yet, at the end of the day is in love with wife, but not ready to be father.

Essentially, Tanzer is exposing the secret inner thoughts of a man as he tries to adopt, grow, move at a reasonable pace through life. At times you relate, and at others you are shocked and embarrassed. This is a honest look at the process everything father goes through. It shows the importance of friends, family, and even a good life soundtrack.

*You Can Make Him Like You* is a novel for fans of John McCain, *The Hold Steady*, Chicago White Sox, Twitter, High School Musical, PBR, Diane Lane, Perez Hilton, John Hamm, Vic Mackey, and so much more!

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### **David says**

*"It's one thing to start it with a positive jam, and it's another thing to see it on through."* —Craig Finn, the Hold Steady

In a perfect world, books would have soundtracks the way movies have soundtracks. In *You Can Make Him Like You*, Ben Tanzer gets about as close as anyone could hope to in achieving the illusion in the meantime. In fact, the closing chapter, aptly titled *Stay Positive*, begs for the familiar cut-to-credits and black as the

opening chords of its Hold Steady namesake fill the theater.

The real strength in Tanzer's work here lies as much in its accessibility as it does in the everyman vernacular of Keith, the story's narrator and protagonist.

Keith doesn't live in a grand fictitious world; he isn't even necessarily the guy you've always wanted to be. But the truth is, he probably lives right there in your house and sits most days staring into your work computer until he comes home to spend his evenings watching your television and talking to your wife about what should happen next.

Or maybe he's the guy who lives in your brother's house, who calls you around holidays and on birthdays. Maybe when you pick up the phone and greet him with old standards like, "*How's everything?*" or "*Whatcha been up to?*" he answers with, "*Good*" or "*You know, same old*" even if the truth is hardly ever either.

In any case, you know him. Keith is the guy who is only somewhat secretly unsure about asking the questions everyone else pretends to know the answers to. In fact, most of us know Tanzer's characters quite intimately: the horrible neighbors, the work friends, the implacable parent, that self-centered narrator who lives in your daily thoughts who fantasizes about strangling the guy in front him or her in line.

For most of us, spending time with Keith is more like talking to a familiar friend than reading a book, which, as Craig Finn might say, is "*a pretty good feeling.*" Indeed, it feels pretty good.

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### **Ben says**

It changed my life.

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### **Brandon Tietz says**

I've met Ben Tanzer...seen him give a reading, podcasted with the guy, and even had dinner with him. This was back in February when we were both in D.C. for AWP. Only recently have I completed a novel of his. It was one of those situations where you meet someone and hope you like the work because you like them as a person. I don't care who you are, but writing positively about a book you didn't dig is damn hard. Thank God Tanzer came through on his end.

You Can Make Him Like You is one of those books that makes you consider adulthood. I say "one of those" like I've read more than just High Fidelity, but truth be told, these are the books I generally tend to avoid. Coming from a guy in his late twenties, a fear begins to settle in: of getting older and "losing your cool." Things like having your own apartment or making a car payment don't seem as concrete as having a mortgage or wife, or in this case, kids. There's a definitive transition on the horizon and Tanzer is walking us through it, like that big brother we never had.

He illustrates this with Keith, a late-thirties social media guy that lives in Chicago. Republican. Married. Deep into sports. Drinker of gin & tonics. I think we've met some version of this guy before at one point or another, or at least seem him in passing at a bar. He's an everyman, so to speak, but what I love about this book is how relatable this guy is made through a series of flaws and internal conflicts. He struggles with

infidelity, with hanging on to those last shreds of youth, and making those trademark adult decisions of commitment. If you haven't been there yet, just wait, because it's coming. Tanzer paints an internal dialogue that's so spot-on—especially in scenes of a “should I/shouldn't I?” nature. You hardly realize it's fiction. This, combined with the events of the McCain/Obama presidential election gives *You Can Make Him Like You* a deeper root in realism. One mention of “maverick” and it was practically 2008 for me again.

Bottom line: I don't think I will ever read anything that captures the mind of the late-thirties American male the way this book did, this delicate tightrope of fearing what the future holds and hoping that the best days aren't already gone. Tanzer weaves this all together in a very non-heavy-handed kind of way, disguised in the bullshit conversations you have with friends, the train of thought when temptation lurks, and the ticking time-bomb that is childbirth. We all have to grow up sometime, and whether it's Tanzer simply recalling his experiences or something wholly conjured—I'm not sure I care. It works. I feel a little bit older, a little bit wiser, a little bit more prepared for the future... whatever it may hold for me.

Original review posted by Brandon Tietz on [www.wearevespertine.com](http://www.wearevespertine.com)  
-author of "Out of Touch"

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### **David says**

I love how the protagonist in this book is simultaneously not in touch with his own emotions and internally neurotic. This created some wonderful tension for me within the character himself, even beyond the issues he was actually struggling with. I think that was one of the aspects that really made me feel his confusion. It was just so palpable. Tanzer really gets you in there with him and what he is vulnerable to. It really is marvelously done.

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### **Kayla (kaylareads) says**

this one started with a sex scene, I like it!

I liked how quick fire the chapters were. literally going from one to the other without a break.

I enjoy a book where the characters are raw and faulty, it can get pretty repetitive reading about perfect people in perfect situations so It's nice to read about people's shitty lives.

I found the characters quite unlike able but in a 'I can relate' way, nothing was sugar coated.

It's quite hard to review this one because whilst the story seemed to be about nothing much, it was pretty deep and kept me interested. I've not heard of the author but he has an intimate writing style that can make the mundane sound interesting. Kind of like observing someone doing chores but listening to their darkest thoughts at the same time.

A four star quick afternoon read.

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### **Lori says**

from publisher/author

The always awesome Ben Tanzer knocks it out of the park yet again with his upcoming April release *You Can Make Him Like You*. The novel, published by Artistically Declined Press, beautifully captures the chaos and confusion of marriage, friendship, family, and the decision to have a child.

A big Ben fan since the beginning (*Repetition Patterns* - an eBook short story collection released through CCLaP), he consistently impresses me with the quality and clarity of his writing. He gets better and better with each book. His characters gain more depth and become increasingly more plagued and relatable. He has this uncanny habit of populating his books with people I feel like I already know.

I cannot tell you how many times I nodded along with this story's protagonist, Keith, as he struggled with what I am now one hundred percent certain ALL men struggle with: the inability to see a young, beautiful woman as anything other than a sexual object who they believe desires them just as much as they desire her. I'm sitting there, reading the book, while inside I'm screaming "I knew it! I just friggen knew it! This confirms everything! It's like reading a book of truths about men! This is exactly what all men think about!"

The insecurities, the paranoia and anxieties, the crazy male fantasies - I steal weighted glances at my husband, this newly confirmed knowledge making me poke him in the shoulder as we walk past chicks in restaurants and shopping plazas, asking him, "What do you think about her, honey? Think you would stand a chance with her?", sniggering to myself because I know he was thinking it as I was speaking it...

*You Can Make Him Like You* is a readers "insider edition" to the dysfunctional and twisted lives of Keith, his wife Liz, and their mutual friends Sammy and Tara, and John and Monica - complete with Keith's internal dialogue, which, in my opinion, absolutely steals the show! It's like reality television on paper.

Set during the Obama/McCain election, Tanzer allows much more of his own personality to shine through as he sites lyrics from some kick ass contemporary rock bands and laces up his main characters shoes as he forces him to hit the pavement.

This is what an "adult" coming of age story would look like, if there ever was such a thing. A big, long, sloppy, wet kiss goodbye to what they used to know, and a timid and frightening hello to unknown, and sometimes unbelievable, new territory.

Wrapping my arms around Ben Tanzer and his publisher Artistically Declined Press in a big ol' hug for making this copy available to me.

If you have not read Ben Tanzer, may I suggest taking a peek at his short story *Cool, Not Removed* which you can view for free? Check out my blog post for a link, as well as links to an interview and guest post with Ben, and a music video that is featured in this novel!

<http://thenextbestbookblog.blogspot.c...>

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## **Lavinia Ludlow says**

To me, Ben Tanzer's work reads like a series of precisely delivered suckerpunches, leaving me shucked against the floor disoriented, hurting, bleeding, but wanting more, always more. And throughout the years, Tanzer's been shadowboxing in the wings, waiting to unleash his next series of literary blows. Recently, he's released works such as *99 Problems* through CCLaP, and *Cool, Not Removed* through Artistically Declined Press, and again through ADP, a charming book called *You Can Make Him Like You*.

In *You Can Make Him Like You*, Tanzer introduces his protagonist Keith in a paragraph crammed with impeccable detail. We learn Keith is an insecure, yet self-aware thirty-seven-year old man, a “cock-sucker” of sorts: “Hello, my name is Keith, and I am a selfish cock-sucker. I am thirty-seven years old. I have longish black hair and what some might call an angular or Roman nose. I live in Chicago, I have a two-bedroom condo in the Gold Coast and I am generally embarrassed to admit the location. I am partial to George W. Bush, love John McCain and try to talk to my parents as little as possible...I have slept with eight people...”

In *You Can Make Him Like You*, Keith migrates through infidelity, marital tension, therapy, fatherhood, the everyday wear and tear of suburbia: a nag of a wife, a raging midlife crisis that has him sleeping with the intern, throwing fists in a bar, and inexplicably getting belligerent in a therapy session, a service which he claims he no longer needs. Think Rob Fleming’s neuroses from *High Fidelity* (without the indie music store) crossed with Patrick Bateman’s ability to attract hot women with perfect T&A in *American Psycho* (minus the chainsaw and brie). And yes, there are moments when Keith is a cocky cock-sucker, “I am on top of the intern,” but he also has quiet poetic moments, “...it is amazingly peaceful up here, the slight breeze, the occasional straggling geese, The Hancock Building and the Sears Tower lurking off somewhere in the distance and the leaves drifting and spinning like little commandos as they float towards the street.”

This is a story of a thirty-seven-year-old man-child wrestling with drab suburbia and reality of being a husband and father (the birth of his child that he seems to look forward to as much as a colonoscopy exam administered without drugs, in a sort of “I have to do this to maintain peace of mind”). As he narrates, “...I wander into the living room and look out onto the street below. Cars pass by. People walk their dogs. And others run. I watch the action for awhile and I am struck that it doesn’t matter what you do or don’t do, life keeps cranking along and you can either be a part of it or not, your call.”

Tensions are high, hooks throughout the book kept me engaged and left me flip-flopping between extremes, “did he or did he not sleep with that random lady? Does he truly love or subconsciously want to run like hell away from his wife, job, life in general? Is he or is he not a hardcore Republican? Now that he has a kid and has found a moment of peace, is this just the eye of his midlife crisis storm or has he wholly accepted his reality?”

*You Can Make Him Like You* is a coming-of-middle-age story, a departure from things like sleeping with interns and resentment toward his spouse, and acceptance of his current state, the birth of a child, finding beauty and peace in his son, Jones. I think Tanzer tries to make Keith come off as a bad guy but he’s sort of good, good that he doesn’t train wreck his life by taking off with the intern, abandoning his wife and kid, shanking someone in a bar. I suppose Keith turns into the best guy he can be, and he wants to be good, to think he is good, then in a fleeting moment he may be a douche again, but goes back to being good.

As I read this book, I had ah-ha! moments of “I never want to get married or have a kid,” to moments of, “wow, we watch ‘Intervention’ for the same selfish reasons” to extended laugh-out-loud moments: “Drugs don’t make people listen to Hootie and the Blowfish. People do...” and “I am about to answer him when Counting Crows comes on overhead and I have to pause for a moment and decide whether or not it would be preferable to drive a fork into my eye.”

Tanzer has mastered the art of introducing characters, setting scenes, and building tension in a novel made up of flash-fiction-length chapters, following all those “editor’s dream” rules without being stiff or mechanical in his voice delivery. Among writers like Brad Listi and Tony O’Neill, Tanzer’s storytelling ability is something that I covet on a daily basis. I look forward to being bludgeoned again by his future publications.

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