



Collide

J.R. Lenk

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Being bisexual is cool now—unless you're a boy. Or so it seems to invisible fifteen-year-old Hazard James. But when he falls in with bad apple Jesse Wesley, Hazard is suddenly shoved into the spotlight. Jesse and his friends introduce him to the underworld of teenage life: house parties, hangovers, the advantages of empty homes, and reputation by association. So what if his old friends don't get it? So what if some people love to hate him? Screw gossip and high school's secret rules. There's just something about walking into a room and having all eyes on him when just last year nobody noticed him at all.

For a while Hazard basks in the attention, and before he realizes the depth of the waters he's wading, he and Jesse strike up a "friends with benefits" routine. It could be something more, but what self-respecting teenage boy would admit it? Not Jesse—and so not Hazard, either. Not until it's too late. Hazard and Jesse have collided, and Hazard's life will never be the same.

Collide Details

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From Reader Review Collide for online ebook

L'marie says

I loved this book and it would make a great movie with a kick ass soundtrack. Collide will definitely take you back to high school. Oh yes, all those wonderful, tearful and cringe worthy moments will be remembered. I bet everyone knew someone like the MC's or the side characters back in the day. Hazard (aka Danger) and Jesse are very frustrating characters. You can see their truth even when they can't. They are good boys who feel lost and alone. They make some really bad decisions in order to feel connected to anything they view as solid. I still loved both MC's and the side character even when they did and said horrible things. The bond between the MC's and each member of their group is very strong. I cared about all of them. Let me stop. I already feel myself wanting to ramble so I'm going to do a self-intervention and advise you to read Tina's review. This book is very real and authentic. Please don't be put off by any of the sex. You will not feel icky reading it because I don't believe it was meant to be hot or sexy. It's just part of their story like the drinking and smoking. I thought it was handled very well. I would love for there to be a sequel.

MsMelbourne says

It's hard to describe this book. It's incredibly, incredibly intense. It's painful at times, it's frustrating, it's depressing, it's desperately sad. It took me back to every crappy part of high school - the peer pressure, the clicks, the overwhelming desire to want to fit in somewhere. It made me think about how bloody hard it is to not really even know who you are and what you want. I never really knew what was going to happen next in the book - there was no underlying implication that a HEA was in the cards.

The love between Haz and Jesse was one of the most heart-aching stories of any book I've read. It was so raw and painful and hopeful. It made me cry.

It made me jump onto iTunes at 2 in the morning to listen to the songs they were talking about in the book because - as with all brilliant stories - I felt like I was there with them. I was absolutely gobsmacked when I discovered that the author was only 17 when he wrote the book. As I said - intense. Couldn't put it down. Maybe grab some tissues and block out some serious time because you're not going to want to put this one down.

Andreja says

"We all collide. It made him think of Newton's third law of motion: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction."

Can I give this book more than 5 stars? Five is not enough for this book.

Jesse and his crew are the cool kids in Bethany High. Hazard (yes that's really his name) is a freshman who has a best friend named Emery and his little group of friends that mostly go unnoticed. One day everything

changes and Hazard is invited to the cool kids table and he starts going to parties, starts drinking and making out with people. Even with Jesse. The parties sort of have a motto “what happens at a party stays at party”. They start a “friends with benefits” relationship because it’s fun, but they are definitely not gay, maybe bisexual, but there is no way they are in love. The problem is the more they deny it and try to push each other away the more they collide. Eventually the shit hits the fan and then it’s full on angst time. (view spoiler)

Well fuck.

This book nearly destroyed me. I had to put it down a few times to take a deep breath and to calm down. It’s a roller coaster and you’re sitting in the front wagon and just pray you’re going to survive this ride. Because I can promise you this it’s going to fuck you up.

In all honesty I just can’t stop thinking about Hazard and Jesse. When you’re turning the pages you just silently hope they are going to be OK because otherwise you don’t know how you’re going to survive this. I don’t know what I was hoping this book was going to be, but it definitely surprised me and it made me think about all the other amazing books and all the characters that are just waiting for you to find them, that are out there and you know you will never have the time to read all of them. Now that is sad and depressing. I'm just glad I accidentally found this one and it was an amazing ride.

Jordie.R says

THIS. This book was one of the best things I have read this year. I'm torn between wanting to read it all over again right now and to never read the words again. I felt like I was Hazard. I felt his pain. Ya know that feeling of being unsure of where you stand with your friends? That awful feeling that maybe your best friend likes someone more than they like you? That maybe the person you are in love with and love more than anyone else in the world is gonna leave you? That awful sick feeling in your stomach cuz you know it's about to happen and you're gonna be alone? Yeah, that feeling. I know all that makes this sound like a dark and heavy story , and it is. But is soooo good. I just wish I had the words to explain how much I loved this book. It ends with a HFN but for me it was a good ending and I'm happy with it. But like someone else said, I want more, I want to read everything this author has ever written. This was just that good.

Laxmama says

I don't know where to begin with this review - excuse my ramblings, memories and scattered thoughts, this is a book I cannot get out of my head. Although it is a story centered around high school kids, for me there was much more involved in this. I am a mom of kids the same age as the two M/C's, yet this clearly brought back so many HS emotions. I lived so much of all these kids lives, the non-existent parents, raising myself, both M/C's being only children with no parent care/supervision in the book (as I was) that was really never touched upon , the extent of their lack of supporting home life IMO contributed to both characters need for dependancy. This showed how they made bad decisions and the consequences of their actions - mostly when drinking too much. Reading this book about growing up, coming to terms with your feelings, being

confused, the pressures of HS - this was a really bittersweet, difficult story.

The relationship - (view spoiler)

Tina says

Ok. I don't know where to begin. Being a middle aged heterosexual woman, one would not think that this book would resonate with me. One couldn't be more wrong. The story is about a 14 year old misfit and a 16 year old "cool" misfit. That is a very simplistic description.

I WAS Hazard. I know, the straight, woman thing. But I was a misfit. Like Hazard, I didn't really fit in any one group in school. I often felt completely alone and lonely and unloved and unlovable and jealous that my one friend liked someone else more than me and willing to do anything at all no matter how self-destructive to gain the closeness I craved with SOMEONE. I think that is what made me so uncomfortable at times, but so deeply moved more often. I have a 14 year old son. I didn't identify this book as his story, but as mine at that age and at this age.

J.R. Lenk crafted characters with so many layers, you'd need a jackhammer to get to the delicious tootsie roll center. Hazard's eventual revelation about his mother was astounding and required insight rarely attained at such a young age. I had a similar revelation about my mom very recently. The way his and Jesse's parents treated them made me squirm. Then I realized how much I am like Hazard's mom and how much most parents in this time in history are just like either Hazard's or Jesse's parents. The depictions could not have been more accurate.

I loved this book. I want more. I want a sequel. I want anything else penned by this author.

All that disgusting fawning said, Collide is not for everyone. There was sex. There was sex between boys, yes boys not men. It was delicately handled and not graphic in nature, but still, it was there. I felt that it added to the story, but didn't take over the story. It clearly illustrated that physical closeness was the only way that Hazard and Jesse knew of to find the acceptance they needed.

The bottom line is that Collide is about the misfit in all of us. Even the cool, rich kids and their parents have at least a little bit of that desperation inside them to fit in and truly connect to another human being. It's time for a new tat. "We All Collide".

? Todd says

A full **FIVE YEARS AFTER READING** and I still remember & think about this very touching YA novel from time to time, so it deserves a status bump.

It's so full of genuine feels and the book is full of song titles & band names, so I strongly suggest YouTubing the songs as they're mentioned, as they take the reading experience to a whole other level.

4.5 well-deserved stars, rounding up.

Maggie Simms says

4.5 awesome stars

This book was simply sensational. It was such a roller coaster. All the characters (with the exception of Emery as he was perfect) were so beautifully FLAWED. Nothing was black and white and no character was two-dimensional.

The book was so RAW and just BEAUTIFUL. It had me guessing the entire time where the story was going. No predictable plot here. Can't wait to read more by this author.

I highly recommend this book to anyone that enjoys m/m YA or even just m/m stories.

Kiki says

Sometimes engrossing, sometimes dull, and eventually left me feeling depressed ... The depressed feeling is from the pacing, I think. If the story had continued past the "hopeful" ending and given me more time seeing the characters interact in a positive way, I think I'd have had a better reaction.

Brandon Shire says

Enjoyed. A more realistic book about what teens go through than the white-washed PC versions of dribble I normally find in this genre. Teens have sex, they do dumb things, they experiment with drugs and make irrational decisions. That is a part of growing up.

Recommended.

Mike Oaks says

How to belong

It wasn't until I got to the 50% mark in the book that I started to connect with Hazard. I wasn't feeling his need to make Emery jealous, or all the partying he was doing with Jesse. Then it hit me, Hazard was slowly falling in love. I don't think he knew it yet, and since the book is in his perspective, it wasn't obvious. The back half of the book puts the first half into perspective. There is a fight scene that was so real I felt awkward witnessing it. J.R. knows how to turn on the feels. The last few chapters just crushed me. This book will definitely stick with me. 4.75 for best friends.

Michael Bowler says

Normally I hate it when people tell me a movie or book is “the best” they’ve ever seen or read, because my expectations raise so high that I’m invariably disappointed. Having said that, I have to confess, in all honesty, that “Collide” is one of the best books I’ve ever read, and I’ve read A LOT of books. In fact, I read it twice. This book is simply amazing!

It’s an achingly poignant and bittersweet account of two painfully lonely teenagers from different backgrounds who, against their will and desire, fall desperately in love with one another.

For anyone who’s ever felt the ache of abject loneliness, that palpable, overwhelming feeling that you don’t fit into any group and never will fit in, you can absolutely relate to Hazard Oscar James, the main character. He’s a lost, confused adolescent, feeling unloved by his self-absorbed and careless parents, who feels even his best friend since second grade is pulling away from him when they enter high school.

Jesse Logan Wesley, rich, spoiled, ignored by equally careless parents, callous and hard and just as lonely as Hazard, surrounds himself with parties and booze and frivolous pursuits to mask the emptiness in his life, and in his heart.

The lives of both boys change when 11th grade Jesse smirkingly collides with Hazard one day in the school cafeteria, inviting the younger freshman to party with him and his friends. Like two magnets, they attract and repel one another in equal measure. Thus begins four years of fights and collisions and reconciliations, and the despairing realization of two boys who, terrified to admit they might be gay, fall painfully in love and mutual need, and over the course of many bittersweet moments of joy, agony and grief, finally come to understand that they simply cannot live without each other.

If two boys in love offends you, you’ll likely not enjoy this book, especially since there are brief, but artfully rendered, sex scenes between the two. For myself, other than the aching loneliness within Hazard’s confused heart, I have no personal experience with anything that happens in this book, including the wild high school partying (like Hazard, I never fit in with any group, but unlike Hazard never met a Jesse Logan Wesley to indoctrinate me into the shallow masking of pain through partying). And, just so you know, the book does not appear to condone drunken binges and wild partying for high school kids – if anything, it makes that lifestyle seem sad and empty and pathetic.

However, this story still touched me deeply to the heart and made me ache for Hazard, and even feel sorry for the hard-edged, often cruel and temperamental Jesse. These characters live and breathe with painful, gut-wrenching reality and you cannot but hope for their eventual redemption.

The fact that “Collide” was written when the author was just seventeen years old makes the accomplishment even more astounding, as the writing is mature and thoughtful, sometimes bordering on the profound. My complaints are so minimal that I hesitate to mention them, but here they are: there are so many party scenes and so many characters flitting in and out of those parties that sometimes I found it hard to keep track of them. A character would resurface later in the story and I couldn’t recall just how Hazard had met him or her, or even if he or she was supposed to be important. Also, there is (in my humble opinion) an intrusive and unnecessary, and very long, flashback chapter right in the middle of the book that jarringly pulled me out of the narrative and didn’t really provide any necessary information that couldn’t have been worked in throughout the story in more subtle ways.

Having said all this, do yourself an enormous favor: read “Collide.” Get to know Hazard Oscar James and Jesse Logan Wesley. You won’t be sorry you did. And if you feel too squeamish to read about “gay” boys, then you’ll sadly miss out on two of the most desperately touching and memorable characters of this or any year. And that will be your loss.

Nichole (DirrtyH) says

self-indulgent load of immature teenage angst with a lot of alcohol and writing on people and walls with

sharpies. anyone who misses high school will be thanking God it's over after reading this. it might be better if you are a teenager and can read this and be like " oh, that's me!" but for anyone else, this is meandering, focusless drivel.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

Holy angst-balls, batman! This book was a freaking crazy ride. I'm not sure if I loved it or hated it. I don't know what to think.

First of all, this book reminded me so much of Don't Let Me Go. If you were a fan of that, you will probably enjoy this one too.

Is this a romance book? I'm not sure I would call it that. It is more of a coming-of-age story than anything else. For me, the focus was on Hazard and Hazard alone and how he changed over time.

Where to start... Well, I'll say what worked about this book. It felt true to life. I myself wasn't an angsty teen so I couldn't relate to this book on a personal level, but the experiences that Hazard and his friends go through felt very accurate. The characters also were extremely well crafted. They each pop vividly in my mind. I felt like I knew each of them intimately and where they were coming from, love them or hate them. I liked that each character was nuanced. They were all so flawed and messed up but also completely redeemable. There were no "bad guys", only real people.

I think what strikes me the most about this book is that it is hard to read at times. Each relationship is exquisitely dysfunctional. There is jealousy, substance abuse, some violence, and neglect. I'm not talking about only romantic relationships but also the relationships with parents and with friends. There is an element of slut-shaming and using "fag" that I found to be distasteful, but I guess the author was trying to show accurately how 14-18 year old boys act. There is just *so. much. angst.*

At times, I didn't know whether to slap or hug Hazard. I'm not sure if he is a brat or likes to start drama or what. He is not a perfect person but I was fascinated to read about him.

As for the relationship between Jesse and Hazard, you have to read this book for yourself to witness the full spectrum of co-dependence, denial, beauty, fear, and pain that these boys go through together.

I will say that this book had much more depth than I expected. I was anticipating something more shallow but this was deep and painful and real. The author did something very right to get me so invested in the story.

I wish this book had one or two more rounds with an editor. There was a long series of flashbacks at about 50% that I found to be completely superfluous and would have cut the story down by about 50 pages. I also think some of the sentence structure, especially in the beginning, could have been improved upon.

In the end, I think I really liked it (maybe??) and maybe I even loved it at times. So 4 stars.

shrugs at mostly non-coherent review

Major English (Laura) says

I love how all the reviews below relate the experiences of this book and its characters (Hazard and Jesse) to their own lives and their own teenage experience... Thank you, Goodread readers for your honesty and insight. Very refreshing. And this book will certainly do that. It will make the reader glance back at their own youth with a sort of nostalgia and with a better understanding of what it was really like to be young.

This book takes place around the year 2004 (and beyond) and I would have been in high school at the same time as Hazard and Jesse. I would have been Jesse's age. I love all the music references and pop culture references! MySpace! The bands: Panic! At the Disco and Yellowcard! The song: "I Will Follow You Into the Dark." None of these things are incredibly important to the plot, they are just mentioned, but it sure made me smile (and in the case of "I Will Follow You Into the Dark" - become sad.) These characters also made me remember the strangeness of not yet being an adult but not really being a kid anymore either... The deceptions, the rebellion... what it meant to want something so badly that you would risk anything to have it... Hell you didn't even know what you were risking... That's what it means to be young.. To just do things.. To do things because it is fun, and reckless and yes, stupid, and yes, crazy, but to a teenager, isn't that what life is all about? Of course I have *memories* of being a teenager, but this book actually helped me remember not just the moments that made up my teenage life, but what it actually *felt* like. That really is a remarkable feat to be able to be sent back in time through your own memories and to really remember what it all actually *felt* like.

This being said, why I gave the book only three stars is not so much due to its characters or overall plot, but due to the way it was written. I found it choppy in a very disjointed way. And the angst... I know it's a teen piece so angst is a must, but it stopped the flow of the story and again contributed to the disjointed feeling. Additionally, I would have loved more dialogue! So much of this story is just narration of insignificant events, it would have been nice to hear the characters' voices more often. However I may be a bit more critical of writing style than other people. I acknowledge this. I appreciated the characters, however, and what I appreciated most was how the angst was not focused around Hazard's feelings about his sexuality.... Rather, it was barely discussed.. Hazard wanted to be with Jesse. Period. It wasn't that Hazard wanted a boy specifically or was caught up in some sexual identity crisis... He just liked Jesse and Jesse liked him. I wish this was the way the world worked... Just be with someone who makes you happy. I wish that was the case, especially with high school kids. It would be nice if they could just really be themselves and not worry about what other people think...

So all this being said, this story just screams "youth" to me. Maybe it will reflect your own youth. I know that I saw some of myself in Hazard. Maybe it will be nothing like your own experiences. But either way, I think it will help you gain insight into your own teenage experiences... Did you do things out of loneliness? Were you just trying to fit in? What did all those hours spent with friends really mean? And to me these questions aren't daunting, or even that important, but at the same time, it is an interesting exercise to reflect on one's past with a deeper understanding. And I think that this story allows us to have a deeper understanding of our own experiences, which to me is one of the joys of reading... I read for pleasure, yes, but to also better understand the human condition. And through these characters and through your own reflections, you will.
