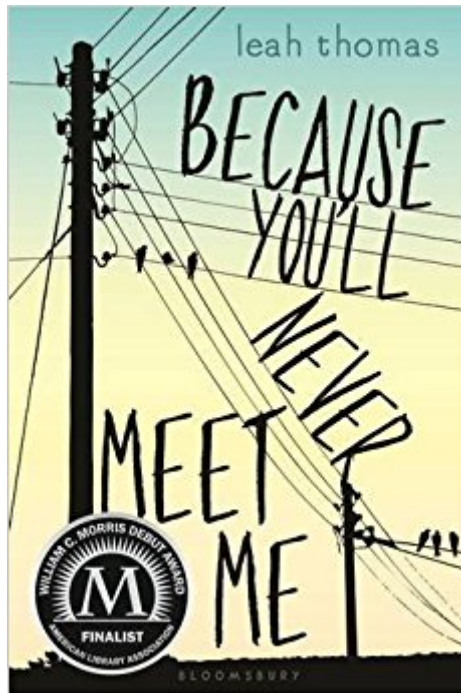




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Because You'll Never Meet Me



Synopsis

In an acclaimed literary debut, two boys on opposite ends of the world begin an unlikely friendship that will change their lives forever. Ollie and Moritz are best friends, but they can never meet. Ollie has a life-threatening allergy to electricity, and Moritz's weak heart requires a pacemaker. If they ever did meet, they could both die. Living as recluses from society, the boys develop a fierce bond through letters that become a lifeline during dark times--as Ollie loses his only friend, Liz, to the normalcy of high school and Moritz deals with a bully set on destroying him. But when Moritz reveals the key to their shared, sinister past that began years ago in a mysterious German laboratory, their friendship faces a test neither one of them expected. Narrated in letter form by Ollie and Moritz--two extraordinary new voices--this story of impossible friendship and hope under strange circumstances blends elements of science fiction with coming of age themes, in a humorous, dark, and ultimately inspiring tale that is completely unforgettable. A William C. Morris YA Debut Award finalist A Carnegie Award nominee

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up - Ollie and Moritz are at the center of a unique and oddly compelling friendship in this epistolary debut. Ollie has a form of epilepsy that renders him "allergic to electricity," while Moritz, born without eyes, has a pacemaker to help control his cardiomyopathy. Both boys live in reclusive isolation, but when they begin to exchange letters, they find an unexpected opportunity to share their hopes, challenges, sorrows, and the tragic secrets that unite them. Ollie and Moritz are

memorable characters with engaging and often humorous voices, and the dual narration creates tension as they reveal more of their lives to one another—including their struggles with loneliness, self-acceptance, brutal tormentors, first love, and the weight of the past. The story flirts with several genres before settling into science fiction by its close. Coupled with the questionable reliability of its narrators, this lends it a quirky, almost whimsical feel even as Thomas grounds it in heartfelt and often painful emotion. VERDICT Despite shades of melodrama and a few plot contrivances, this will intrigue readers with its unusual premise. —Lauren Strohecker, McKinley Elementary School, Abington School District, PA --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"The pacing is impeccable, as letters move from sunniness (Oliver) and bemused distance (Moritz) to both writers exploring their darkest fears, experiences, and worries for their futures."

★ starred review, BCCB "A witty, unusual take on friendship and parlaying weakness into power." ★ Kirkus Reviews "Ollie and Moritz are memorable characters with engaging and often humorous voices. . . . A quirky, almost whimsical feel even as Thomas grounds it in heartfelt and often painful emotion." ★ School Library Journal "The two may be eccentric outcasts, but their conflicts, heartbreak, and eventual bond form a relatable and engaging narrative."

★ Publishers Weekly "This semi-sci-fi Bildungsroman has some surprising twists and turns--well worth the suspension of disbelief it requires." ★ VOYA "It's the distinct, deeply memorable voices of Ollie and Moritz that make this novel an affecting page-turner."

★ Horn Book Magazine

I'd rate this 4.5, maybe even 4.75 stars. There are times I think that there are no original stories left out there, that nearly every book is a variation on a familiar theme or a retelling of something that has already been published. And then a book like Leah Thomas' *Because You'll Never Meet Me* comes along to prove that theory wrong. Endearing, moving, unique and tremendously engaging, I'm so glad I stumbled on this story and these wonderful characters. Oliver is a teenage boy living with his mother in an isolated cabin in the woods. He's deathly allergic to electricity—even the simple act of handling a cellphone or a small flashlight is enough to cause life-threatening seizures. He cannot go to school, and he must live without all of the typical paraphernalia teenagers use—iPods, television, the internet, even electricity. The only people he sees on a regular basis are his mother and his doctor, but he is desperate to know what life is like in the world around him, and he wants to understand who his

father was. In an effort to help Oliver cope and combat his loneliness (in a fashion), his doctor encourages him to write letters to Moritz, a German teenager. Moritz's heart requires a pacemaker to keep it beating, and that's not his only disability. But while the two boys develop a close friendship, they can never meet, since the electricity needed to run Moritz's pacemaker could kill Oliver, and Oliver's electromagnetism could short-circuit Moritz's pacemaker. This book is told solely in letters between the two, slowly unfurling what life has been like for these two boys who are so different from others their age. The letters uplift, amuse, and inspire the boys, as well as anger, hurt, upset, and confuse them. Both experience periods of desperate despair that the other tries to help combat, as each tries to understand the problems the other faces. And as Moritz begins to reveal secrets about another connection the two share despite living on different continents, Oliver must decide whether to continue to accept his life as it is, or try and challenge it, despite the potential complications. While obviously there's a little of the farfetched here, particularly in the boys' ailments and disabilities, it doesn't detract from this book at all. I found the characters, particularly Oliver, Moritz, and his classmates, Fieke and Owen, so well-drawn and memorable. While some of the plot is predictable, and at times I feared that Thomas was going to take the story down a path I was dreading, she also threw in some surprises that made me smile. (And yes, for those of you who know what a sap I am, I may have teared up once or twice...or more.) You never know when a person will walk into your life and change it for the better. And even if they don't physically walk in, *Because You'll Never Meet Me* is a terrific example of the power of friendship, the sacrifices we make for love, and that facing our fears can sometimes be the most difficult but rewarding thing we do. This book made my heart happy.

Because You'll Never Meet Me by Leah Thomas is a young adult contemporary novel and tells of the pen friendship between two isolated young men, Moritz from Germany and Ollie who lives in the US. Each of the two young men has a physical ailment which limits their interaction with mainstream society. These same limitations are for Ollie an severe reaction to electricity and for Moritz a heart defect requiring an electronic pacemaker which precludes their ever meeting face to face. Their friendship develops through the letters they write to each other. The novel is written in the style of letters exchanged between the two. I loved this book, which I listened to in audiobook format. What I liked The characters. I adored both Ollie and Moritz and was emotionally invested in their journeys. I was really rooting for them both. Their two differing points of view are beautifully brought out through the letters they write to each other. Each has a unique writing style which gave a wonderful insight into their characters. It is

a mark of how invested I was in the two that when Moritz finally comes back into contact after an absence of several letters, I had a big smile on my face. The friendship. The relationship between the two is wonderfully developed, starting from an initial slow building of trust to the deep bond they share. It's clear that both of them are stronger people in the end for the friendship, which encourages them to push beyond their comfort zones. The audio narration. Because *You'll Never Meet Me* is a perfect book for the audio format given that it is written in letter format. You are hearing the characters' words directly. There were two narrators, one for Moritz (with a gorgeous, slight German accent) and one for Ollie. Both narrators were brilliantly able to reflect their characters' personal growth through their performances. What I didn't like in all honesty, there was very little I didn't like about *Because You'll Never Meet Me*. At one point I did have concerns that Thomas was going to go for the real cliché in the connection between the boys, but she avoided that. I gave *Because You'll Never Meet Me* a well deserved four and a half stars out of five.

I haven't read a book composed in letters I've liked since *Dracula*, so that's saying a lot. I really adore this book. Ollie is such a fun character to get inside the mind of, and though at first Moritz seems unlikeable, you end up really caring about him too. Also, on top of the characters being so perfect, the language in the book is wonderfully written. Minimal dialogue tags, fantastic detail (especially considering one of the characters is blind), and a compelling story. Fantastic!

A great read, especially for young adults, teens, and pre-teens (or all ages of course). Ollie and Moritz each have a distinct voice that keeps you reading more. They take on middle school, bullying, and more. Thomas's narrative is engaging, and I can't put the book down once I start!

Beautifully, creatively written. Amazing voices presented in an unconventional way. I devoured this book.

Wonderful book by a wonderful person! In my counseling practice I recommend this book for my young clients (and some adults) who struggle with being different. Such an excellent message written in a way that only fits the complexity of such issues.

Great book so far, but then again I'm a little biased. I know the family of the author.

Amazing read. A fresh perspective to YA reads. It takes you through a roller coaster of emotions. Although there is an underlying sadness in the overall theme, yet you feel deeply happy and warm after reading it.

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