



# Cut Both Ways

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

At seventeen, Will Caynes is still anticipating his first kiss. He didn't expect it would happen in a drunken make-out session with his best friend, Angus. Will is sure he likes girls and isn't gay, but he can't deny he liked kissing Angus. When Will starts dating Brandy, a cute and easy-to-talk-to sophomore, he still can't stop hooking up with Angus in secret. Will feels conflicted and guilty being with both of them, but besides his new job at Time to Eat, Brandy and Angus are the happiest parts of his messed-up life. He's been shuffling back and forth between his parents since their divorce and neither place feels quite like home. His father, compulsively fixated on renovating their house, has started drinking again. His mother, remarried and living in the suburbs with a new husband and Will's twin half sisters, always hounds Will about his dad's irresponsibility. Caught in the middle, Will's on his own to figure things out. And either path he chooses, someone will get hurt . . . him, probably, the most.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Will has his first sexual encounter with his best friend, Angus, he feels happy as well as embarrassed. Explain both reactions.
2. Will can't really explain his attraction to Angus, since he has never considered himself gay. When they first kiss, why do you think Will feels like it's almost an out-of-body experience, as though it's happening to someone else?
3. After starting to date Brandy, Will feels more at ease and labels this the "Brandy Magic." What do you think he means?
4. Will describes his feelings for both Angus and Brandy as "greedy." Why does he equate his desire for both with greed?
5. Will says "home" feels like Angus and like Brandy and that he is at his best when he is with each of them. Do you think he'll be able to figure out which one is the one, or will he be unable to choose?
6. Will feels like he is "splintering into all these versions of Will that aren't quite the right thing." What do you think is the "right" version of Will?
7. Brandy worries that Will is going to break up with her since she is a sophomore. Why is she so unsure of Will's loyalty? Is this something he's doing or is it her own insecurity? What do you think about dating someone two grades younger?
8. Will admits he likes Brandy but doesn't know her, when his friends accuse him of just wanting sex. How does getting to know Brandy change their relationship?
9. Will says that divorce doesn't "end after the papers are signed and the people involved move apart." How do his parents' unresolved issues complicate his life?
10. When Garrett tells Will he's a smart kid and a good worker, Will says it's "the best thing anyone's ever said to me." Why is he so invested in his first job?
11. Will says, "You can fold anything into me and it'll blend." What does this indicate about his personality? What parts of his life may have contributed to him feeling this way?
12. Will describes a "zinging feeling" that often panics and immobilizes him. Why does he respond this way when stressed? Is being quiet about what troubles you, as Will is, the best strategy?
13. How do you think Will and Brandy would have handled an unwanted pregnancy? How would their lives have been impacted by the change?
14. As a recovering addict, Roy tells Will that a time comes when "you'll do anything to reverse the direction you're headed." Do you think Will's dad might reach that point or is he too stubborn? And do you think this sentiment could apply to Will's current path in life?
15. Will thinks he should feel happy that his dad is finishing the house as a present, but he just feels tired of "hoping for the best." Should he have more faith in his dad? Why or why not?
16. When Jay learns that his daughter viewed nude pictures on Will's phone, he feels that Will has abused his trust. Was Will irresponsible? Was this an invasion of Will's privacy?
17. While Angus has come out to the world about his gayness, Will is struggling with his sexual identity. Do you think he will eventually come to terms with defining who he is? Are there incidents in the book that make a case for one way or the other?



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