

a reality show where there's no way off the island and you're always a loser" to "People leftovers last a lot longer than the food kind." Howe ultimately encourages young readers to be who they are. The publisher rates *Totally Joe* as being suitable for ages 10 and older.

M or F?

by Lisa Papademetriou and Chris Tebbetts; Razorbill, 2005; \$16.99 hardcover

Authors Lisa Papademetriou and Chris Tebbetts team up in this girl-wants-boy/boy-wants-boy story. M or F? Male or female? Marcus or Frannie? Marcus and Frannie are best friends negotiating the trials of high school. Frannie wants to be a fashion designer and has a distinct sense of style. Marcus is one of the few openly gay students at Roaring Brook High School. They know each other so well that they call themselves "brain twins."

When Marcus discovers Frannie's crush on Jeffery Osborne, the school's social activist, he encourages her to go for it. She's hesitant until the school's online chat room offers an easy way to communicate. Game on. Frannie logs in each time using an alias. At first, Marcus helps Frannie out by telling her what to say, but soon he is doing the typing for her.

As Frannie and Jeffery begin to spend more time together, instead of becoming more comfortable, Frannie becomes more nervous about trying to impress him. In an attempt to help the relationship along, Marcus starts to pose as Frannie in the chat room when she is not around. Soon, he finds himself falling for Jeffery.

The chapters alternate between Frannie and Marcus, allowing readers to follow the clever plot, which twists and turns around Marcus' deceit. While at first only Frannie is confused, soon the web is so tangled that Marcus himself can't keep up with who said what. The story keeps readers guessing to the end. While older teens might get bored with the material, younger teens should enjoy this story of friendship, trust and young love.

A Really Nice Prom Mess

by Brian Sloan; Simon & Schuster, 2005; \$14.95 hardcover

Cam is hoping for a prom night he'll always remember. What he gets is a night he wishes he could forget.

Things get off to a shaky start when he picks up



his date, a sassy, gorgeous redhead wearing a dress "with a neckline bordering on NC-17." Virginia is already drunk and pegs him as gay before they make it back to Cam's house for pictures. Cam's real date—his boyfriend, Shane—is posing as straight with the quick-witted Jane, Shane's best friend. Cam envisioned a night with the four of them spending time together, but Shane has other ideas—socializing with his football team and maintaining his "tough straight guy" facade. With Shane ignoring them and Virginia on the verge of passing out, Cam and Jane try to salvage the evening by smoking pot, which Cam purchases from Dmitri, a sexy hotel employee dealing from a stall in the men's room.

Shane is off with his friends, Virginia is asleep at the table, and Cam and Jane are enjoying a slow dance until Shane spots them and feels the need to save face. With a punch. To Cam's stomach. Jane, after all, is supposed to be his date.

The night looks all but over for Cam. He's had it with Shane, he's tired of being in the closet, and he looks set to be sent home to face his parents. Dmitri comes to his rescue, and Cam winds up at his first gay strip club in downtown Washington, D.C. But the night is still young, and a police raid of the bar sends Cam on the run with Dmitri and Buck, a deaf go-go dancer. A strange turn of events leads him back to the rest of the prom, which has relocated from the hotel to an unsanctioned after-party at the Constitution Garden.

A Really Nice Prom Mess has a little of everything—a car chase, a straight football player shaking his thang in a gay bar, men in uniform, teen angst and more. Some moments are predictable, but others are not, as Cam comes to terms with his sexuality and his relationship with Shane and his parents on this lively prom night.

Author Brian Sloan comes from a filmmaking background, which is evident in his writing. *A Really Nice Prom Mess* would make a great movie à la *Pretty in Pink*, and the subject matter is mature enough to entertain adults as well as teens. **D**

KAREN KUDEJ is a Portland freelance writer.

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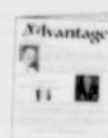
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