

# OPEN BOOKS, CLOSED SETS



a novel

**DAVE HUGHES**

An Excerpt from  
**OPEN BOOKS, CLOSED SETS**

A novel  
by Dave Hughes

Prickly Pair Publishing  
Chandler, Arizona, USA

This book is a work of fiction. All names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is purely coincidental.

Also by Dave Hughes:

Maybe Next Year

Instant Adult

Watch for the next book in this series:

If I Seem Quiet...

Visit [AuthorDaveHughes.com](http://AuthorDaveHughes.com) to learn more about Dave, gain background information and insights into Dave's books and the writing process, and receive advance notice of upcoming book releases (and subscriber early-bird discounts). You will receive Dave's short story, *Cruise Virgins*, free when you subscribe to his bi-weekly newsletter.

If you would like to contact the author, please send an email to [dave@AuthorDaveHughes.com](mailto:dave@AuthorDaveHughes.com).

Cover photos:

Student: G Stock Studio (licensed from iStock)

Bedroom set: [CoCo Studios](http://CoCoStudios.com), Atlanta, Georgia. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design: Dave Hughes

© 2023 by Dave Hughes. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, scanned, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission by the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023903783

ISBN: 978-0-9970017-9-2



## On the First Day

Monday, September 22, 2008

At 7:00 a.m., Ryan Robertson sprang out of bed, eager to begin his first day as a freshman at UCLA. He was already familiar with the campus. For the past year, he lived in a house a few blocks away in Westwood, where he and three other gay men named Ted, Darnell, and Ricky rented rooms from attorney and UCLA alumnus Hal Morris.

Until today, he had been a visitor, a future student, a Bruin wannabe. But today, he was a full-fledged UCLA student. Today, he *belonged* here.

After lunch, he headed over to Schoenberg Hall where his 1:00 class, Music Appreciation 101, would take place. Ryan had played trumpet in various school bands since fifth grade. He enjoyed many genres of music, especially jazz, so he figured this course would be an easy A.

He entered the combination auditorium/lecture hall and scanned the room for a good seat near the front. As he walked down the aisle, faces gradually replaced the backs of heads. His enthusiasm tanked when he spotted a face he hoped he would never see again: that of Jordan Harrington.

Jordan had been Ryan's nemesis during his senior year at Westwood High School. Jordan's jealousy and disdain toward Ryan culminated in an ugly incident at the holiday concert when Jordan smeared Vaseline throughout the valves on Ryan's trumpet, rendering the instrument unplayable. While Ryan spent 20 minutes in the restroom trying to clean the Vaseline off his valves, Jordan played the first trumpet parts and solos in his place.

At their graduation ceremony, Jordan apologized. And while Ryan felt his apology was genuine and he accepted it, he didn't relish the thought of seeing Jordan around campus for the next four years.

Ryan spun around and headed for a seat several rows behind Jordan, hoping Jordan hadn't seen him.

After class, Ryan bolted for the door. But considering his 6'6" height and wavy dark blond hair, he knew Jordan would see him. He knew he would be unable to avoid contact with him for an entire semester.

\*\*\*

Sure enough, Jordan caught up with Ryan after class on Wednesday. "Hey, Ryan! What's

up, man?"

"Oh, hi. Just getting settled into college. How 'bout you?"

"Same. I didn't know you were going to go to UCLA!"

*Well, it's not like we had anything to do with each other last year,* Ryan thought. "Yeah. It's one of the reasons I came to LA when I left home. I'm glad I actually got in."

Jordan said, "Oh, come on, Mr. Valedictorian. Seriously? With your grades, of course, you were going to get in."

"Yeah, I guess. I didn't know you were coming here, either."

"Yeah. My dad's the head of the English department, so I just kind of assumed I'd go here. So how was your summer?"

"Pretty good. I worked a lot. How 'bout you?"

"It was okay." Jordan's demeanor, which had been strangely upbeat given everything that happened last year, turned more somber. "Actually, it was kind of rough. My mom and dad are getting a divorce, so things aren't great at home."

"Oh, wow... I'm sorry to hear that."

"Thanks. My mom moved in with a friend of hers from work, so at least she's away from him. He's kind of an asshole."

*Like father, like son,* Ryan thought.

Jordan said, "I'm still living with him because it's a lot closer to campus. But enough of that. I'm surprised I didn't see you in the marching band!"

Ryan said, "I couldn't because of work. It takes up too much time and there would be too many conflicts, especially on Saturdays."

"Ah. I'm sorry. Are you going to be in any of the jazz ensembles?"

"I wasn't planning on it. I probably won't have time for my trumpet while I'm in college."

Jordan said, "That sucks, man. You're good. The band I'm in is mostly non-music majors. The first rehearsal was yesterday. They're pretty good. You should audition for it! I think there's still one open trumpet spot."

The prospect of playing in a jazz ensemble excited Ryan, but he didn't want to be in a band with Jordan again after what happened last year. Still, he asked, "When does it rehearse?"

"Tuesdays and Thursdays at 3:00. Here in this building."

Ryan said, "I'll think about it."

Jordan said, "The director's office is upstairs. Let's go and see if he's there, and you can set up a time to audition. If I made it, you can make it." Jordan paused. "And for the record, it's totally cool if you get seated higher than me. You probably will."

Ryan looked at Jordan suspiciously.

Jordan said, "Really. I'm serious. C'mon, let's go see if he's there."

Ryan smiled. "Okay, sure. Why not? I can at least talk to him."

\*\*\*

After Music Appreciation class on Thursday, Ryan auditioned for the jazz ensemble. The director was impressed with Ryan's talent and offered him a spot in the band playing 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet. An hour later, he attended his first rehearsal.

That evening, he returned to campus for the introductory meeting of the LGBTQ+ Student Network. Ryan belonged to his high school's Gay-Straight Alliance during his senior year, and that proved to be a lifeline. After moving from Prairie Village, Kansas, to Los Angeles the previous summer, Ryan knew no one at his new school. He was a shy kid to begin with, and being gay made his assimilation to his new school all the more challenging. The handful of friends he made in the GSA made all the difference. He hoped UCLA's gay group would enable him to form friendships and enjoy a social life during college.

Ryan was among the first to arrive, but by the time the meeting began, 22 students had gathered in the meeting room. There was a nice diversity of attendees. Judging by their appearance and demeanor, Ryan guessed most of them were upperclassmen. Most of them seemed to know each other from last year.

After the meeting, people hung around and chatted in small groups. Most of them were catching up with their friends from last year. Ryan approached a group of several guys and stood near the periphery of their cluster. A couple of them stepped aside to allow him into their circle. Ryan introduced himself and the others did likewise, followed by a series of handshakes. The other guys chatted for a bit longer, until the person in charge of the meeting called out, "Our time is up for this week. We need to vacate the room for the next group."

## A Big Favor

Tuesday, October 7, 2008

On Tuesday, when Ryan sat down next to Jordan in Music Appreciation class, he said, “Hey, I have a big favor to ask. I’m going to have to miss class tomorrow. May I borrow your notes afterward?”

“Yeah, sure.”

Ryan hoped Jordan wouldn’t ask why he was going to miss class. If he asked, Ryan would just say he had to work. Hopefully, Jordan wouldn’t pry for details. He assumed Jordan heard the rumors about his occupation that circulated around their high school last spring. Jordan probably helped spread them.

Jordan didn’t ask why Ryan would be missing class. He was pretty sure he knew the answer. The less said about that, the better.

It was for a porn shoot. Ryan knew that as demand grew for his talents, he wouldn’t have the luxury of accepting only shoots that took place on Saturdays. He’d have to strike a balance between working and attending classes. Hopefully, in future quarters he would be able to schedule all his classes on certain days, leaving other days open for gigs. He realized he needed to cultivate friendships with people in each of his classes for sharing notes.

\*\*\*

On Wednesday, after Ryan returned from his shoot and ate dinner, he logged onto his computer and checked his email. To his surprise, there was an email from Jordan with a PDF document and an MP3 file attached. He opened the PDF first. It contained five pages of meticulous notes Jordan had taken and scanned, as well as photos he took using his phone of things the professor had written on the whiteboard. The MP3 file was a recording of the entire lecture. This was especially helpful since the professor often played musical excerpts of musical pieces during the class. That was impossible to capture with written notes.

Ryan was amazed that Jordan would go to so much trouble since he had been so nasty to him last year.

He put on headphones and listened to the lecture while he followed Jordan’s notes and photos. It was the next best thing to being there.

## The Calendar

Saturday, October 11, 2008

At the University of Maryland in College Park, Chris Robertson's college career had gotten off to a wonderful start. He joined the Terrapin Marching Band, and was elated to be participating in college football games on Saturdays. College football, played in huge stadiums and often to TV audiences, was a far greater experience than Friday night high school football.

He was making dozens of new friends, most notably fellow saxophonist Seth Barnhart, a sophomore from Glendale, Arizona. During the first couple weeks of band practices and parties, they exchanged numerous glances, brief conversations, and dropped hints. Soon it became clear to both of them, and some of their more observant bandmates, that they were becoming an item.

Chris was grateful to be living near Washington, DC. Fall, 2008 was an exciting time to be near the nation's capital. In all likelihood, the next president would be not only a Democrat but also the first African-American to hold that office. The "hope and change" Barack Obama promised during his campaign included the hope of more rights for LGBT people, the end of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, and – maybe, just maybe – nationwide marriage equality. The nationwide LGBT community also had its hopes pinned on the defeat of California's Prop 8, which would be a giant step forward on the path toward marriage equality.

All these factors gave Chris just what he needed – new opportunities and a complete change of scenery.

His senior year had been difficult. His boyfriend, Bryan, had mysteriously disappeared in late July – just as they had made the transition from best friends to boyfriends. They had talked about going to college together – maybe at UCLA, where Chris's older brother Tyler went, or maybe someplace else. The place didn't matter as long as they were together and far from Kansas. He spent three years cultivating their friendship, coming to terms with his sexuality, and then trying to pull Bryan from his closet. But shortly after Bryan's homophobic parents found out he was gay, they did something that prompted him to disappear.

Chris did his best to carry on. He applied to UCLA, even though he didn't know where Bryan was or whether attending UCLA was still on his radar. He was accepted, but he received a better scholarship offer from Maryland.

On Saturday, October 11, the Maryland football team had a week off, which meant the marching band had a free weekend as well.

Chris' roommate went home for the weekend, so Chris and Seth spent the previous night together. In the morning, they ate breakfast in the dorm's dining hall.

Chris said, "It seems weird not having a game. It's like there's a whole day with nothing

to do.”

Seth replied, “I know, right? And it’s a beautiful day. I want to get out and do something, not just stay in my room and study.”

They both ate a few bites while they thought of possibilities. Then Chris said, “Let’s go into DC. We could wander around Dupont Circle and see what’s there.”

“Sounds good! I went there several times last year, so I can show you around.”

Shortly after 11:00, they emerged from the Dupont Circle station onto Connecticut Avenue. They strolled north on the west side of the street, then crossed over and headed back on the east side. They came to the Lambda Rising book store, which had a special National Coming Out Day display in their front window, with a selection of books about the coming out experience.

Chris said, “Is there really a National Coming Out Day?”

Seth replied, “Yep, there sure is. I think they started it the year after the 1987 March on Washington, where they displayed the AIDS quilt on the national mall.”

Chris realized this had taken place two years before he was born. What must it have been like to be gay back then?

They stepped into the store and spent the next twenty minutes browsing. Chris found several books he wanted to buy. He was amazed there could be an entire store devoted to LGBT-related books. It was a far cry from the small section at the back of Book Galaxy at the Great Mall in Olathe, Kansas – or the Mediocre Mall, as he and Bryan called it.

The mere thought of Bryan prompted a cascade of memories and feelings.

Chris thought about Bryan less frequently since arriving at college. It was just as well – he needed to put all that behind him and move on with his life. Still, he wondered how Bryan would react to being in a store filled with gay books and gay-themed merchandise. That time he and Bryan were in Book Galaxy and he showed him a copy of *Gay Sex 101*, Bryan freaked out. Maybe this would be different, since Bryan would be a thousand miles away from his parents and the other patrons were also gay. Or maybe this would be too much gay for him.

“Hey!” Seth called out to Chris. “You still there?”

Chris had been staring into space, lost in thought about Bryan. Seth motioned for Chris to come to the back of the store. “Check this out!”

Chris walked back to an area where they had adult-themed greeting cards with photos of naked men. They also had a display of 2009 wall calendars featuring either scantily clad or completely naked men.

Seth was glancing through the unsealed display copies of the calendars. When he finished looking through a calendar called Student Bodies which featured naked college-age men, he handed it to Chris. “Looks like 2009 is going to be a very good year!”

Chris thumbed through the first few months. “I dunno... we could be falling on hard times.”

Seth snickered. “Yeah, I bet you’d like to fall on some of those.”

“As if you wouldn’t.”

Chris reached the page for October and froze. Gazing at him from the page of the calendar,

smiling seductively in all his magnificent, fully-erect glory, was Bryan.

Chris stared at the page. All sorts of thoughts raced through his mind.

Seth leaned over to see what Chris was staring at. "Yeah, that one's pretty amazing, isn't it?"

*You have no idea*, Chris thought. "*He*, not it."

Seth gave Chris a curious look. "Whatever."

Chris returned the display copy to the rack, picked up a sealed copy, and added it to the stack of books he was carrying.

Seth said, "Are you really going to put that up in your room? I'll bet your roommate will love that."

"Who knows, maybe he will. Besides, it's National Coming Out Day. What better way to let him know he has a gay roommate?"

"Like he doesn't already know?"

Chris said, "I don't know whether he's figured it out yet or not. But I can put it up in my bedroom when I'm home this summer. And if we share a room next fall, we can put it up then."

Chris wasn't sure how he would react to seeing this picture of Bryan every day next October. But he was glad to know Bryan was still alive.

\*\*\*

Chris and Seth slept together again that night. They parted company after dinner on Sunday so they could have time to study.

After Seth left, Chris pulled out the calendar and gazed at Bryan's picture. He wondered where Bryan was, and how it came about that he had been photographed for a nude calendar. Bryan had been self-conscious about people seeing him naked. Chris couldn't fathom how he could be comfortable posing naked and hard for thousands of men to see.

Chris found the name and website of the publisher in the fine print on the bottom of the back cover. After searching online, he found an email address to contact them.

Dear Sir/Madam:

I just purchased your 2009 Student Bodies calendar. I'm looking forward to admiring the handsome men in the calendar all next year.

I'm writing to ask if you can put me in touch with the model on the October page. He was my best friend in high school, but we've lost touch. I would love to re-establish contact with him.

Would you please forward my name, email address, and phone number to him? I would be most grateful.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Chris Robertson  
chris-rob@hotmail.com  
(913) 765-4321

He pressed Send. He tried not to get his hopes up too much.

\*\*\*

On Tuesday, Chris received a response.

Dear Mr. Robertson:

Thank you for purchasing our 2009 calendar.

We regret that we do not have contact information for any of the models featured in our publications. We work with photographers, who submit photographs from their portfolios for our consideration.

I have forwarded your request to the photographer who submitted the October photo. He may or may not forward your request to the model, and the model may or may not choose to respond. Sometimes they receive a large volume of fan mail. I just want to manage your expectations.

Best regards,  
Stefan

Oh well. Chris would just have to cross his fingers and wait.

## Not a Choice

Monday, October 20, 2008

After Music Appreciation class, Jordan wanted to talk. “Last time we talked, you said that when your father found out you’re gay, he made you go to therapy, and then he was going to send you someplace that would make you straight. And then you said gay people face job discrimination and even being beaten up and killed.”

“That’s right.”

“Well, if being gay is so difficult, why didn’t you go along with the therapy so you could be straight?”

Ryan said, “Because it doesn’t work that way. I’ve felt attracted to guys for as long as I can remember. I denied it and repressed it for years. My dad preached against homosexuality in his church all the time. But back at my old high school, I had this guy named Chris who was my best friend. We met at band camp my freshman year and started becoming friends right away. Finally, at the end of our junior year, we both figured out that we were in love with each other. I tried to resist, but finally, I couldn’t deny it anymore. I knew I loved him. We went all the way only once before my parents found out and I had to run away. But it was the most beautiful, passionate, intense experience I’ve ever had. It was almost spiritual – like our souls joined together. It wasn’t just sex, it was love. I knew, at that moment, that I would always be attracted to men and it’s beautiful and there’s nothing wrong with it. It’s a natural part of who I am, like being attracted to women is a natural part of who you are.” *I assume...*

Jordan had been listening intently. “So, you found a guy you connected with. But don’t you think that maybe there are women out there you could have that kind of connection with?”

“In other words, maybe I just haven’t met the right woman. And if I did, I could be straight.”

“Yeah. Have you tried dating girls?”

“No. Have you?” Ryan couldn’t recall ever seeing Jordan with a girl during their senior year of high school.

Jordan looked hurt. “That was pretty harsh.”

“Yeah, I guess it was. Sorry.” Ryan paused to let the tension ease a bit. “Here’s another way to look at it. Let’s say you and I are walking across campus and there are people all over the place. Do you notice the attractive women or the attractive men? I notice the attractive men. I mean, I can look at a woman and appreciate that she’s beautiful, and you could look at a guy and say ‘yeah, he’s handsome,’ but it’s about who you naturally feel drawn to.”

“It’s about who you wish you could fuck.”

“I guess you could say that. But it’s not just about sex. Who do you feel more emotionally drawn to – men or women?”

Jordan thought for a moment. “Okay, so can I ask you a couple of personal questions?”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“You don’t have to answer. This might be off-limits.”

“Okay.”

Jordan lowered his voice. “So, when two guys are together, how do you decide which one is the woman?”

“Neither of us is the woman. We’re both guys. That’s the whole point.”

“No, I mean how do you decide who’s ... on the receiving end?”

“We flip a coin.”

“Really?”

“No, not really. I don’t know. Some guys prefer being the bottom, others prefer being the top. A lot of guys are open to doing it both ways.”

Jordan paused for a moment, then asked, “Have you ever... you know...”

“Been on the receiving end? No, not yet. The only time Chris and I went all the way, I was the top and he was the bottom. I wanted to do it the other way next time, but unfortunately, there was no next time.”

“Do guys actually enjoy that? I mean, I get how putting your dick in a guy’s ass would feel a lot like putting it in a woman. But I don’t understand how getting someone’s dick crammed in your ass would feel good.”

“Well, guys tell me it does. Chris sure liked it. But the point isn’t who’s doing what to whom. It’s about two people connecting. It’s about intimacy. And, of course, it’s fun and it feels good.”

“Yeah. Well, I can’t wait to see what it feels like.”

Ryan looked at Jordan curiously. *Did he just say what I think he said?*

Jordan added, “With a woman.”

*Well, you’ve got to start dating them first. But I shouldn’t say that out loud.*

Jordan asked, “Where is Chris now?”

“I don’t know. We talked about going to UCLA together. His older brother went here and liked it. We just wanted to get somewhere far away from home, where we could be more open.”

“Why don’t you contact him?”

“I guess I should. When I first ran away, I couldn’t let anybody know where I was. I was still 17, so if they found me, they could force me to go back home. Then my dad probably would have tried to send me to the gay conversion place again. Now, I still don’t want my parents to know where I am, but I guess I could tell Chris. He wouldn’t tell them.”

“You should totally get in touch with him. You might be able to get back together again. Who knows?”

“Yeah, you’re probably right. I’ll think about it. There are other factors, too.” *Like the fact*

*that I'm doing porn.*

Jordan paused for a moment and pondered whether he should ask the other question on his mind, or whether he had asked enough questions already. “Okay, so uh... Can I ask you one more thing?”

“You just did.”

That flustered Jordan even more.

Ryan said, “Sorry. Yeah, sure. Ask away.” *We just talked about guys fucking. I should be able to handle whatever else he throws at me.*

Jordan hesitated for a moment. *I don't know... maybe it would be better if I didn't say this. But I just said I had another question. Oh well... No turning back now.* “Do you find me attractive?”

“Oh God, no!” *Did he really just ask me that? I totally did not see that one coming.*

They stood and looked at each other. Neither knew what to say next. Ryan thought, *Why did he even ask that? What was he hoping I'd say? He looks hurt – or at least disappointed. Does he want me to be attracted to him?*

Finally, Jordan said, “Well... okay.”

“I take it that wasn't the response you were hoping for.”

“Well... I don't know... I guess I thought I was at least kind of decent-looking. But you just made it sound like I'm really gross or something.”

“No, no... you're not gross at all. Actually, you're a pretty good-looking guy. I thought you were asking if I felt attracted to you. You know, like if I was interested in you romantically ... or sexually. And no, I'm not.”

Jordan breathed a sigh of relief. “Yeah, I can see how you could interpret it that way. I guess I wasn't very clear. But I figured if you, a gay guy, thought I was attractive, then maybe women would too.”

“Well, I can't speak for straight women. There are all kinds of factors that combine to make up attractiveness. And everyone's looking for something different. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, as they say.”

Jordan remained silent. He looked like that wasn't the answer he was hoping for either.

Ryan said, “I'm sorry, I guess when I blurted out, ‘Oh God, no!’ it sounded kind of harsh. I didn't mean it that way. It's just... that's kind of a difficult question. It puts me in a rough spot. It's like if I say I don't find you attractive, it sounds like I'm saying you're ugly. And you're not. But if I say I do think you're attractive, it sounds like I'm interested in you in *that* way. And I'm not.”

“That's okay. I get it.”

“And just to be clear... Yeah, I like guys. But I'm not interested in trying to get straight guys. I don't think most other gay guys are, either. I might look at a guy and think he's hot, but I'm not going to try to put a move on him – at least not unless I find out he's gay. And single. And maybe not even then. It all depends.”

“So how can you tell whether a guy’s gay or straight?”  
Ryan sighed. “I wish I knew.”

---

Thank you for reading this excerpt from *Open Books, Closed Sets*. I hope you enjoyed it.

*Open Books, Closed Sets* will be released on March 24, 2023. If you live in the Phoenix area, you are invited to the book release party on that date. It will take place at Exposed Studio & Gallery, 4225 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Phoenix from 5:00-8:00, with author talk at 6:00.

The paperback edition will be available online from Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Signed copies may be ordered from my website.

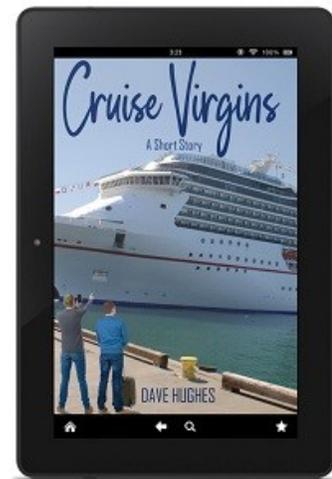
The eBook edition will be available from Amazon (Kindle), Barnes & Noble, Apple Books, Kobo, and several other vendors.

Visit my website, [AuthorDaveHughes.com](http://AuthorDaveHughes.com), for more information about my books and where you can purchase them.

I invite you to subscribe to my newsletter. I'll keep you informed about my upcoming books and offer them to you at a discount.

I'll share background information about the stories and the writing process. From time to time, I may solicit your input which will help make the books even better!

To thank you for joining, I will send my short story, *Cruise Virgins*. It's about two young men experiencing their first gay cruise. Besides enjoying a good story, you'll meet a few of the characters in my other books. You can sign up on any page on my website.



## **Other Books by Dave Hughes**

### **Fiction**

[Maybe Next Year](#)

[Instant Adult](#)

### **Retirement Lifestyle**

[Design Your Dream Retirement](#)

[Smooth Sailing into Retirement](#)

[The Quest for Retirement Utopia](#)

[AuthorDaveHughes.com](#)

## About the Author

This is author Dave Hughes' third novel. He has three more books in various stages of development.

Before writing fiction, Dave wrote three retirement lifestyle planning books, *Design Your Dream Retirement*, *Smooth Sailing Into Retirement*, and *The Quest for Retirement Utopia*. Dave created the website [RetireFabulously.com](http://RetireFabulously.com), which enables readers to envision, plan for, and enjoy the best retirement possible. In addition to writing hundreds of articles for [RetireFabulously.com](http://RetireFabulously.com), Dave's writing has appeared on US News & World Report, [lgbtSr.com](http://lgbtSr.com), Medium, Yahoo! Finance, CNN/Money, Next Avenue, Tiny Buddha, and others.

Aside from his writing, Dave is also a jazz musician. He plays trombone and steel pan in various bands in the Phoenix area. He owns an embarrassingly large collection of jazz, Brazilian, exotica, steel band, jazz/rock, and vocal ensemble CDs and videos.

Before retiring early at age 56, Dave was a software engineer for 34 years, working for companies such as Intel Corporation, Computer Sciences Corporation, McDonnell Douglas Space Systems, and NCR Corporation. Throughout his career, his assignments included software development, customer support, training, course development, and management.

Dave resides in Chandler, Arizona with his husband Jeff and their dog Maynard.

Dave is available for interviews, book readings/signings, speaking engagements, and panel discussions. You may contact Dave at [dave@AuthorDaveHughes.com](mailto:dave@AuthorDaveHughes.com).

Visit [AuthorDaveHughes.com](http://AuthorDaveHughes.com) to learn more and subscribe to his newsletter.

As Ryan Robertson begins college at UCLA, all he wants is to do well in his classes, make some friends, and enjoy his college experience.

But he soon learns that working in the adult entertainment industry to support himself and pay for college makes normalcy impossible. The scheduling demands of his profession rule out most extracurricular activities and require constant balancing with his classes. Worse, the reactions he encounters when people discover his livelihood make it difficult for him to build friendships or relationships. The elephant is simply too big for the room.

Ryan lives in a house near campus owned by Hal, a gay attorney. His housemates are Ted, a hunky Marine veteran with post-war baggage; Darnell, a fabulous Black drag queen with an amazing voice; and Ricky, a hard-partying porn star. This colorful crew, Ryan's family of choice, provides love and support as he navigates college life and adulthood. Their adventures add important dimensions to the story.

Ryan's heartwarming coming-of-age journey is filled with hilarity, drama, challenges, and growth. He discovers that sometimes, life's most important lessons are learned outside the classroom.

---

Dave Hughes' novel *Open Books, Closed Sets* is the third in a series that will follow these young men on their journey from high school, through college, and into early adulthood. It continues the engaging stories introduced in *Maybe Next Year* and *Instant Adult*.

In addition to writing fiction, Dave is the author of three retirement lifestyle planning books, *Design Your Dream Retirement*, *Smooth Sailing Into Retirement*, and *The Quest for Retirement Utopia*.

Dave resides in Chandler, Arizona with his husband Jeff and their dog Maynard.



[AuthorDaveHughes.com](http://AuthorDaveHughes.com)

© 2023 Dave Hughes.  
All rights reserved.

