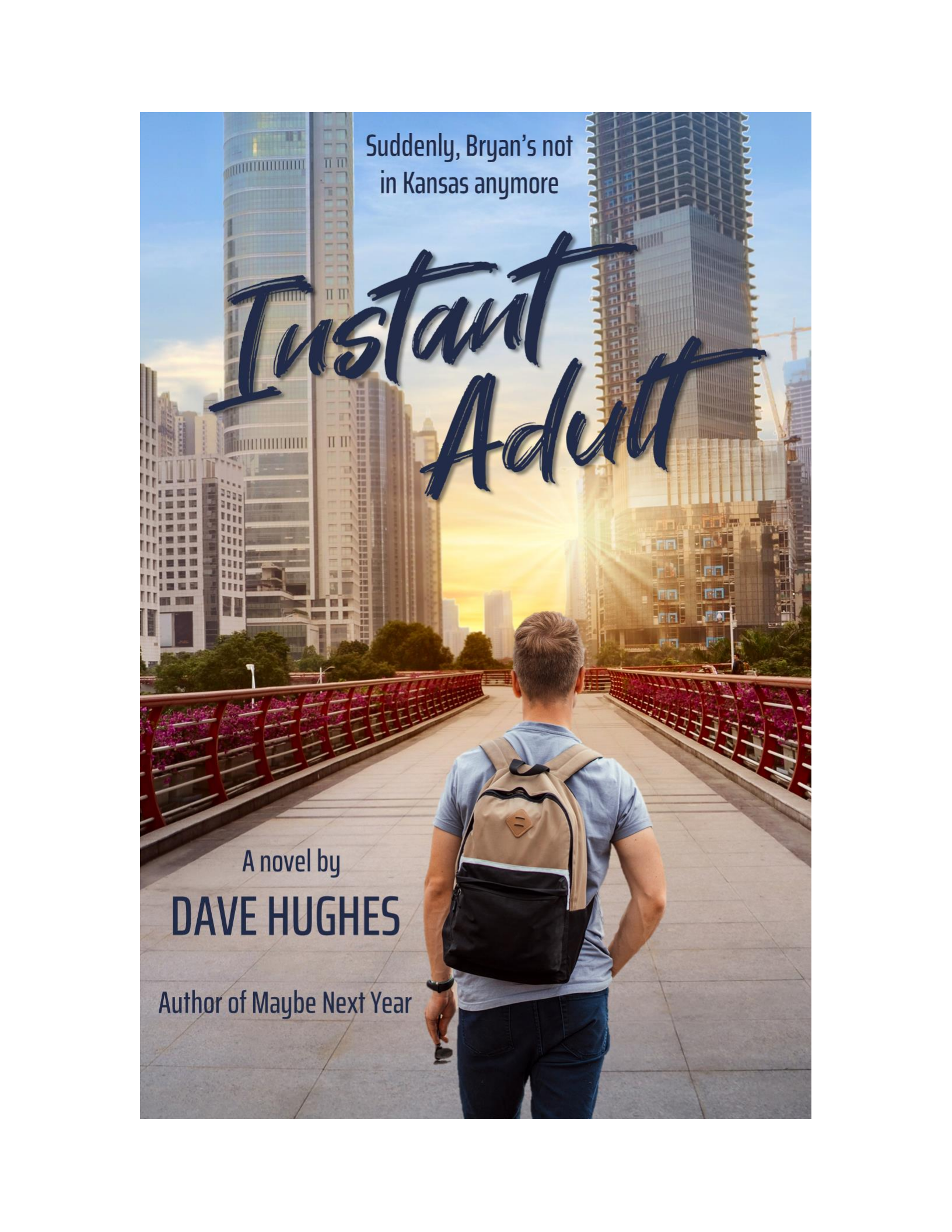




Suddenly, Bryan's not
in Kansas anymore

Instant Adult

A novel by

DAVE HUGHES

Author of *Maybe Next Year*

An excerpt from

INSTANT ADULT

A novel
by Dave Hughes

Prickly Pair Publishing
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National Coming Out Day

Thursday, October 11, 2007

After weeks of planning and preparation by the Gay-Straight Alliance, National Coming Out Day had arrived. As lunchtime approached, Bryan grew apprehensive. He and several other members of the GSA would be staffing an information table in the hallway outside the cafeteria. The school newspaper had run an article explaining their new “I’m an LGBT Ally” campaign, and they hoped a lot of kids and teachers would stop by the table to pick up the stickers they had printed, and perhaps engage in some conversation.

When Bryan started this school year, he decided he wasn’t going to hide the fact that he was gay. But up to this point, the only kids who knew for sure were the other kids in the GSA. Today, when he staffed the table, he would be officially out to the entire student body. Of course, kids had no way to know for sure whether he was gay or a straight ally, but either way, he was putting himself out there. It would be interesting to see how he was treated by the other kids after today.

The GSA members who were going to staff the table were given permission to leave their third period classes 20 minutes early to set up their table and put up the signs they had printed. Between second and third period, Bryan stopped by Mr. Perez’s room and picked up the Ally stickers.

When he arrived at the table, no one else was there. A couple of minutes later, LaTanya arrived. “Hey, LaTanya. You all ready to spread some tolerance and acceptance?”

“I hope. We’ll see. I wonder where the others are.”

“I’m sure they’ll be here in a couple of minutes.”

LaTanya brought a large bag of rainbow-colored Skittles and started pouring them into small plastic cups – the kind fast-food restaurants provide for the ketchup pump. Mr. Perez had suggested that people might be more inclined to approach the table if there was food or candy. Hopefully, he would be right – but if not, there would be plenty to divide among the volunteers. Bryan taped the posters up on the wall behind the table.

The bell rang, signaling the end of the third period. LaTanya and Bryan were still the only GSA members at the table, but Bryan felt sure that several of the others would join them as soon as they could make their way there.

Students poured into the cafeteria, passing the GSA table with barely a glance. LaTanya and Bryan looked at each other. Bryan said, “Everybody just wants to get a good place in line. We’ll probably get more people on their way out when they’re not in such a hurry.”

“Maybe. I wonder where the others are.”

Bryan and LaTanya stayed on their feet as the rush of students entered the cafeteria. Once the traffic had slowed to a trickle, they sat down. Bryan got out the lunch he brought from home. “You wanna go get something from the cafeteria?”

“You think you can handle the masses on your own?”

“I think I got this.”

“Be right back.”

Bryan and LaTanya sat at the table by themselves for the rest of the lunch period. As students started leaving the cafeteria, some at least glanced at the table as they walked past. Nobody stopped to talk or pick up an Ally sticker, or even grab a little cup of Skittles.

The next morning, when Bryan turned the corner of the main hallway, he saw a cluster of people gathered around the student bulletin board. The GSA members had come in early on Monday morning to put up their display of famous LGBT people. All week, most people walked past and ignored it, just as LaTanya had predicted. But for some reason, there was now a crowd gathered around it.

As Bryan approached, he could see that the display had been defaced. Someone had scrawled ‘FAG’ or ‘DYKE’ across each of the pictures with a thick black marker. They had stapled pieces of paper onto the bulletin board with messages such as ‘God Hates Fags,’ ‘AIDS Cures Homos,’ and ‘No Queers Here.’ Mr. Sanchez, the head custodian, had started to remove the display, but LaTanya was arguing with him to leave it in place. Bryan weaved through the group until he reached the front.

Mr. Sanchez said, “I’m just doin’ what Mrs. Rodriguez told me to do.”

LaTanya replied, “Well, I belong to the group that put this up. This is our display, and I’m telling you to stop.”

“You’re not my boss. Mrs. Rodriguez is my boss.”

“This is not your display, it’s my group’s display.”

Once Bryan figured out what was going on, he said, “Okay, just hold on for a few minutes. Let me go get Mrs. Rodriguez.”

Bryan worked his way back through the crowd and ran into the office. He rushed past the receptionist and headed straight to the principal’s office. “Hi, Mrs. Rodriguez. I’m sorry to interrupt, but would you please come out into the hallway? We have an issue that needs your attention.”

“You mean the bulletin board? Yes, I saw it. I’ve asked Mr. Sanchez to take it down.”

“That’s the issue. We don’t want it taken down.”

Mrs. Rodriguez was stunned. Why would anyone want a display that had been desecrated with hateful speech to remain up? She slowly got up from her chair, then followed Bryan back out into the hall. The students parted, creating a pathway for her and Bryan to walk up to the front.

Mr. Sanchez said, “This student is telling me it’s her display, and not to take it down.”

Mrs. Rodriguez turned to LaTanya and said, “We have to remove this. We can’t have this kind of bigotry and hatred on display for everyone to see.”

“Why not? This is the kind of bigotry and hatred we have to deal with all the time.”

“Right. And leaving it up only spreads the bigotry and hatred even more.”

“Okay, so look. This is LGBT History Month, right? So having these famous LGBT people up here is nice and everything, but let me tell you a little bit more about our history. LGBT people have been beaten up, killed, fired from jobs, and cut off from their families, all because of this kind of hatred and homophobia. This is what it’s like to be queer. This is what we have to live with. So this happened, and your answer is to brush it aside and hide it. Just sweep it under the rug and pretend it never happened. Yeah, well you’re giving whoever did this exactly what they want. They want to harass us so we stay afraid and invisible. They want to keep us silent while they spew their hatred all over the place. And they won’t suffer any consequences for it because somebody will always come along and clean up after them. Look, if you want to do something about homophobia, you’ve got to start by acknowledging that it exists. You’ve got to let people see the hatred, not hide it from them. You can’t just pretend that we live in a world where everything is peachy and everybody loves everybody. *This* is the world we live in as gay people. *This* is the kind of shit we have to put up with all the time. So if you want to do something about homophobia, you’ve got to put it out there and make people deal with it. Show it to them! Let them see what it’s like for us. Then we can have a conversation about it and start to change things.”

For a few seconds, there was dead silence among the forty or so people who had gathered. Then someone started to clap. Then a few more started clapping. Before long, most of the kids present were clapping.

“Well, alright, then,” Mrs. Rodriguez said. “The display can stay.”

LaTanya walked over to Mr. Sanchez and held out her hand. He gave her everything he had already taken down. She said, “I’ll put it back up.”

The first period bell rang, and the kids who had gathered around the defaced display scurried to their classrooms.

Several times throughout the day, Bryan re-routed his usual journeys between classes to pass by the display in the main hallway. Each time, he saw kids who had stopped to gawk at the display. Some took pictures on their phones.

In his calculus class that afternoon, a girl he barely knew came over to his desk before class started and asked, “Do you have any more of those stickers you were giving out yesterday?”

“Not on me, but I can get you one.”

“Thanks.”

A couple of other kids who were sitting nearby heard that exchange and said, “Can I have one, too?”

After his last class, Bryan stopped by Mr. Perez's room. "Hi, Mr. Perez. May I have a few of those Ally stickers? I had several kids ask me for one today."

"Sure. And the faculty advisors for the drama club and the Asian Students Association asked me for some for their members."

"I wonder why people didn't pick them up at the table yesterday if they wanted one."

"Well, maybe some people were afraid to be seen walking up to the table. But I suspect it has more to do with what happened to the bulletin board today."

LaTanya was right. The conversation had started.

Thank you for reading this sample chapter. The entire book is available on [Amazon](#) in paperback and Kindle. You can read the book for free on Kindle Unlimited.

Autographed copies are available on [AuthorDaveHughes.com](#).

If you live in the Phoenix area, you are invited to a book signing party for *Instant Adult* on Friday, November 11, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. The event will be held at Exposed Studio & Gallery, 4225 N. Seventh Avenue, Phoenix. Hors d'oeuvres, wine, and water will be served. Dave will present a brief author talk at 6:30, followed by Q&A.

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