

IS THERE A BOY LIKE ME?

KERN CARTER

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Private Bag 94407, Botany, Manukau 2163, New Zealand

Scholastic Children's Books
1 London Bridge, London SE1 9BG, UK

www.scholastic.ca

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: *Is there a boy like me?* / Kern Carter.

Names: Carter, Kern, author.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20240323599 | Canadiana (ebook) 20240323602 |
ISBN 9781443198424 (softcover) | ISBN 9781039710054 (EPUB)

Subjects: LCGFT: Novels.

Classification: LCC PS8605.A777825 I82 2024 | DDC jC813/.6—dc23

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CHAPTER 4

What's your idea?" London asks Naya.

"Okay," Naya sits down beside London in front of his computer. "So you obviously like reading and telling stories, right? And you know how to draw and create all these different characters."

"Okay."

"And you said your dream is to write graphic novels, right?"

"Yeah, but—"

"Wait, let me finish. This is so basic. I don't know why you never thought of this already."

"Thought of what?"

"Making your own graphic novel."

London looks at Naya like the mind blown emoji.

"Think about it. What's really stopping you? You

got everything it takes. All you have to do is do it.”
London leans back in his chair.

“My own graphic novel.”

“Easy, right?”

“But what would it be about?”

Naya spins London’s chair around so they’re looking at all the books on the shelves.

“Umm, you read like a thousand books. I think you’ll figure it out.”

The walls of books suddenly come alive in London’s mind. It’s like all the stories he’s ever read spin through his mind like a carousel.

“How come I never thought of this before?”

“Because you’re not me.”

Before London can think of a clever comeback, he hears his front door close.

“Oh, I forgot. Chris messaged me. Said him and Tyler wanted to come by.”

“And you said yes? But you can’t stand Tyler.”

“I know, but he was with Chris, and I was like, whatever. Doesn’t matter. They won’t stay long.”

“Why you kickin’ us out already?” Tyler asks. He’s just outside London’s game room door with Chris hidden behind him.

London grabs his iPad from Naya and puts it screen down on his desk.

“What are you guys up to?” Tyler says. “Or do I even need to ask?”

London ignores Tyler, but Naya isn’t in the mood.

“Are you always an idiot or do you ever take time off?”

Tyler shrugs. “Why are you even talking?”

“Why are you even here?”

Chris looks at London and Naya and shakes his head.

“I knew this was a bad idea,” he mumbles to himself. Tyler’s been to London’s house more than once before, always with Chris and sometimes with other friends.

“I don’t know why you hang around with this loser, London.” Naya’s still hyped up.

Tyler ignores her and takes a few steps toward London’s desk. “What’s on your iPad?”

“None of your business,” London says. “Let’s just get outta here. Let’s go play ball at the park or something. I don’t wanna stay inside anymore.”

“We’ll go as soon as you show me what you guys were looking at.”

“He already told you it’s none of your business,” Naya says.

Tyler laughs like an actor auditioning for the role of a villain.

“That’s cute. Your girlfriend is defending you. I’m so scared I’m gonna run away and hide under a bed.”

“Tyler, chill,” Chris says. “London’s right. Let’s just get outta here.”

Tyler would have to push through London to get to the iPad. As much as he and London have gotten into it, it’s the first time Tyler feels like London will actually hit him if he tries to make a move.

“Okay,” Tyler says. “Let’s play some basketball.”



On the walk over to the court, London and Naya are far enough ahead of Chris and Tyler that their conversation can’t be heard.

“I know I say this a lot, but Tyler is not your friend. You shouldn’t be hanging out with him.”

“It’s whatever. He’s just stupid sometimes. Anyway, I think I like your idea.”

“You do?”

“Yeah, I do. But I think I’m just gonna do it like a webcomic. Graphic novels are too long and I wanna post it on TikTok. If I do a webcomic, it’s mostly illustrations with just a few words.”

Naya can’t control the smile on her face.

“So you’re really gonna do it?”

London doesn't answer right away. Hearing Naya say "do it" triggers something in him that makes him want to forget the whole thing.

"Who's really gonna care about this though? Can I really think of a story that's gonna be better than the books I read?"

Naya peeks back to make sure Chris and Tyler are still far enough away before she talks.

"Maybe you can, or maybe you can't. But you're never gonna know unless you put it out there, so put it out there and see what happens."

It's usually hard for London to say no to Naya, but when she's this excited about something, it's impossible.