



# When Everything Feels Like the Movies

*Raziel Reid*

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## **When Everything Feels Like the Movies** Raziel Reid

School is just like a film set: there's The Crew, who make things happen, The Extras who fill the empty desks, and The Movie Stars, whom everyone wants tagged in their Facebook photos. But Jude doesn't fit in. He's not part of The Crew because he isn't about to do anything unless it's court-appointed; he's not an Extra because nothing about him is anonymous; and he's not a Movie Star because even though everyone know his name like an A-lister, he isn't invited to the cool parties. As the director calls action, Jude is the flamer that lights the set on fire.

Before everything turns to ashes from the resulting inferno, Jude drags his best friend Angela off the casting couch and into enough melodrama to incite the paparazzi, all while trying to fend off the haters and win the heart of his favourite co-star Luke Morris. It's a total train wreck!

But train wrecks always make the front page.

## **When Everything Feels Like the Movies Details**

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Author : Raziel Reid

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# From Reader Review When Everything Feels Like the Movies for online ebook

## Chelsey says

It's so difficult to rate a book when you may not "enjoy" it, but you understand the powerful message behind it. This book had a plethora of horrible characters, who do horrible things; some because they are cruel, others because they just want to be loved.

Jude, our narrator, disguises his difficult life by pretending he is the star in a film. The bullies are jealous tabloids, those who sympathize with him are his adoring fans, his small town is a Beverly Hills Boulevard. All he dreams of is getting out of the town and moving to L.A. where he can flourish in his own skin and receive all the adoration he knows he deserves. Until then, he will spend his days getting high with his best friend, Angela, fellow outcast and bohemian who loves sex and dislikes protection. Through all the terrible treatment he receives at school, Jude refuses to be silenced and pushes back on anyone who pushes him. He will wear his lipstick and nail polish, he will hit on the boys at school, laugh in the face of name-calling.

When I finally finished the book, my heart ached. Raziel Reid makes sure that no one turns a blind eye to the horrors that can happen at such a young age, and also fiercely advocates for our right to be whoever we want to be.

I've already talked three of my co-worker's ears off about this and it's not even 9am yet. I have a feeling we will be talking about this for a long time.

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## Karyn Huenemann says

One star, as it is impossible to present a negative number.

Sometimes the end justifies the means, but in this case nothing would. While I find the veiled stories of the characters Angela and Luke intriguing, the persona of the protagonist, Jude, is not just disturbed (understandably) but highly disturbing. The uncanniness of the text is largely derived from the author's inability with characterization: namely, inability at depicting characters of a consistent age. At rare times, Jude and his fellow students feel like they might be the middle-school students that they are cast as, but Angela's abortion-as-birth-control habit (she has use this method at least more than once), and the explicit drug-related and sexual language (and activities) suggest not only older students, but youth who are edgy in a way that would set them farther apart from society than Reid's characters are positioned. In this forum (goodreads) I cannot (should not) quote the novel, but opening the book at any page spread will permit readers to find evidence of the level of sexual knowledge and activity these middle-school students are purportedly engaged in.

When Everything Feels Like the Movies has just won the Governor-General Award for Children's Literature for 2014. I can't think why. It is certainly FAR from the "best English-language ... [children's] book" in Canada this year.

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## Kyle says

I don't often give 5 star ratings, but this is, without a doubt, one of the best YA novels I have ever read. This

book is essential reading for anyone that is part of or considers themselves allied with any LGBTQ community.

First, let's address the controversy surrounding this book. Winner of the 2014 Governor General's Award for Children's Fiction, this book has met constant challenges because of its head-on discussion of teenagers, sexuality, and drug and alcohol use. Before I read the novel, I thought, what a bunch of prudish censorholics, trying to tell young people what they can and can not read! But then I read the novel and gained a little more understanding for the other side of that argument. Yes, there are some passages in this novel that bear a resemblance to paragraphs that might have been published in Penthouse Letters. Yes, it is explicit in its descriptions of how teenagers view sex. Yes, it portrays drug and alcohol consumption in a kind of glamorous, enticing way. Yes, it is alarming and shocking in its frankness. Yes, it could offend many people. No, it does not embody many of the values that parents want to teach to their adolescent children today.

But, as a librarian, would I remove it from the shelf? No. Absolutely not.

As a librarian, would I warn parents and young people of the subject matter? Yes. Readers should be aware that this book may greatly offend and that reading this book might expose them to ideas that are extremely challenging. It's kinda what makes this book so important.

If this book had found its way into my hands when I was twelve, it would have changed the outcome of my life. A book like this simply did not exist for gay teenagers when I was of that age. Had I read this novel back then, I imagine I would have experienced profound relief that there were others like me somewhere out there in the world... that other people were writing about the thoughts and experiences I was having every minute of everyday would have changed my entire perception of the small-town world around me. I would have had SOMETHING to relate to, to grab onto, that didn't make me feel like I was a mistake or that I was alone. This book validates the struggle of gay teenagers and, even though it uses strong language and 18A description, it does so with a dignity that allows a young person to directly relate.

I'm certain that this book will make every reader pause and give serious thought to how real the struggle is for LGBTQ youth. And for that, I feel the value of this book vastly outweighs any of the objectionable swear words or drug scenes or sexual encounters that are described in its pages. It is a truly brilliant piece of writing, deserving of all the awards and accolades that have been thrown its way, and equally deserving of all the criticism and challenges it has received. In an age of Twilights and Divergents, it is VITAL that books like this remain on the shelf.

Reading it is MANDATORY.

5/5

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### **Scott Robins says**

A difficult book to read and an even more difficult book to review. I came to *When Everything Feels Like The Movies* after hearing about both its award accolades and its detractors for the unflinchingly brutal content. This was a bleak read and for the first 2/3rds of the book I was ready to give this book a bad review - the writing felt shallow, far too immersed in extremes and shocking for shocking's sake. The characters felt utterly unlikable. But then something shifted for me the last 3rd of the book. The relentless attacks on Jude from all sides (his family, his friends and his fellow students) and his own ways of combating this started to make sense and I could really understand his desperation. My own personal reaction to this book was mainly - "why are people still writing these kinds of bleak books where queer kids are getting so abused" - the

reason is...it still happens. And this is why a brutally honest and raw book like this needs to be published.

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## Jackie says

I was really looking forward to reading this book based on the theme alone and I really, really wanted to like it but I just found it overly-provocative and disturbing. (A new trend it would seem in books and on screen.) And, call me naive, but there's no way that I could believe that the characters were from middle school. They definitely read like they were seniors in high school, not kids in grade 8. It was disappointing because I believe it could have been an important book for this day and age but, unfortunately, I found that it's message was lost in the unnecessary, overly-sexualized details. I really just want to ask the author to try again, but since the book won the Governor General's Literary Award, I doubt he'd be interested.

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## Erik Fazekas says

Toto je kniha o trans/gej chalanovi. Moja prvá.

Siahol som po nej, lebo vyhrala kanadskú cenu "Governor General's Literary Award - Children's Literature". Samozrejme sa v Kanade vzniesla vlna kritiky, že prečo vyhrala kniha o trans chalanovi... no tak reku, že sa na to kuknem. Zvedavosť mi nedala.

Kebyže sa ma spýtate vďaka čomu, keď som bol na strane 100 zo 172, tak vám poviem, že je to ukrutná blbosť, na prstoch ruky si môžete vymenúvať zaradom všetky klišé, ktoré všetci autori bez ladu a skladu drbú do každej jednej knihy o gej deckách.

Keď som však dočítal posledné kapitoly, tak pohľad na celú túto knihu sa akosi-dosť výrazne zmenil. (Ešteže má kniha len 172 strán, a tak som si povedal, že to dočítam dokonca!)

Asi ani jedna kniha o gej deckách sa nedokáže vyhnúť rôznym klišovitým stereotypom. Nie je tomu inak ani tu. Chalan je v škole šikanovaný (veď ako inak), on to však hrdinsky trpí (musí ísť dobrým príkladom pre ostatných), ešte im robí stále napriek, no vnútri ho to strašne bolí (lebo všetci máme jemnú dušu). Najlepšia kamoška je v podstate školská štetka (to musí byť a kto iný by sa s ním mohol vládnuť?), hrdina sa vychrápe s jej bratom (brat je zamilovaný do hrdinu, of course), hrdina je buchnutý do suseda (ako inak)... a bla-bla-bla...

A potom prišli posledné kapitoly. A mne sa zavarili kolieska v hlave.

Vďaka autorov totiž odrbe záver podobne klišoidne *and don't forget the Happy-End!!!*

Tu je koniec, aký je... ale poslúži presne na to, aby si čitateľ uvedomil, že to nie hrdinovia našich kníh a naši kamoši sú klišoidní ale naša \*\*\*\*\* spoločnosť. Všetci sa budeme furt rovnako správať k LGBTI deckám, kým sa nezmení to, tak nebudú ani naši hrdinovia iní. Naše správanie totiž formuje práve spoločnosť, a aj prehnaný exhibicionizmus v knihách/realite má slúžiť len na to, aby si spoločnosť zvykla na extrém, a tolerovala šedé myšky, ktoré nie sú dosť silné, aby sa z nich stala školská *star*.

Ostal som po tejto knihe strašne smutný.

A po tom, čo sa mi v hlave uležali všetky myšlienky musím uznať, že plne chápem, prečo táto kniha dostala tú cenu. Táto kniha by totiž mala mnohým otvoriť oči, prinútiť všetkých, aby si pripustili, čo hlboko vnútri cítia a aby sa nikto nepretvaroval, len preto "že sa to od neho oľakáva". Inak nič nezmeníme.

Chcem viac takýchto kníh!

A btw. autor má perfektný štýl a jazyk, píše zľahka a priamočiaro, tak ako by mala konečne začať písať mladá generácia autorov, a nie sa pretvarovať a hrať sa na veľikánov literatúry a písať potom len veľa prázdné a nudné reči. Knihy sa majú písať preto, aby boli čítané. Nie aby vyhrávali literárne ceny. Už to prosím pochopte.

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## Emily May says

I tried so hard to like this book. A Canadian LGBT novel - taking a frank and open look at gender identity - sounds like perfection. Unfortunately, though, I found it **unrealistic and overly vulgar**.

Don't get me wrong, I am the kind of reader that likes gritty realism. Don't sugarcoat the world, because the reality is that teens swear and drink and have sex - pretending it doesn't happen changes nothing. But this book's constant vulgarity felt not only gratuitous, but completely fake. I have rarely heard anyone speak like the characters in this book, let alone middle school kids. And the few people who do behave like this are social outcasts.

I think the book sets out to be loud, proud and unapologetic. Which is great. Unfortunately, it comes across as melodramatic and unsympathetic towards the main character's transgender identity. There is no emotion or sensitivity in the novel, just a constant stream of unprotected sex, bad taste HIV jokes and drug-taking.

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## Max Baker says

**A special thanks to Edelweiss for providing me a free DRC in exchange for an honest review**

If this book is anything, it's a testament of how fucked up Generation Y is. Like, no shit. We're a bunch of self-entitled, egotistical, assholes who hate everything for not being exactly the way we want them.

I've come to learn that reviewing LGBT books is kind of hard. The main character in this book is a stereotype through-and-through. He's vain, horny, and wears makeup and heels, but the difference between him and other stereotypical gay guys is that Jude isn't just a stereotype. He's stereotypical, but far from the stereotype.

Let me clarify. *When Everything Feels like the Movies* revolves around Jude, a gay teenager living in a nameless small town. Jude's voice is so distinct and real, I can think of several people who remind me of Jude in my own life. Jude is one of those people who think they're destined for fame, despite the fact they have no real talent. He narrates the story like he's a movie star; taking directions from a director, reading from a script, and taking breaks from all the action in his trailer.

Joining him is his best friend, Angela, a slut in her purest form. I really liked this chick and thought she and Jude made a fabulous duo. Reid really hit the nail on the head creating these characters, because they're just

so real.

A problem I've noticed in YA is that the teenagers aren't teenagers. The narrators are all pearl-clenching girls who don't act like teens. In Reid's novel, they're defiantly teenagers. They're horny, bitchy, awful, and high on whatever they can get. It's refreshing to read about teenagers who are open with their sexual escapades and drug use. There are at least two scenes where Angela and Jude are high off of something and the constant references to masturbation, pornography, and just all around sex is the teenage mind in a nut shell. These characters aren't looked down for what they do, nor are they a warning for anyone who thinks about experimenting. They're just kids, real kids.

And since we're on the subject of experimenting, let's talk about that. Obviously Jude is gay and he doesn't let that get in his way. He fully embraces who he is by wearing dresses and heels and makeup. But throughout the entire novel, Jude is never Gay Jude. He wasn't some stereotype that did those things because he was gay. Jude wore what he wore and said what he said because he was Jude, not because of his sexuality. It's a great message when people are screaming that all stereotypes are bad and not everyone is or has to conform to said stereotype.

But, those messages often forget about the ones who ARE the stereotype. This book says fuck all that shit and just rock the fuck out.

As for plot...there wasn't one. It was character driven more than anything else, but I don't think Reid really had a beginning, middle, and end planned out. I think he went, "I like this guy" and just started writing about Jude until he was over. This book was meant to show the readers Jude's world.

That world includes:

Glamour

Makeup

Pop culture references

Sex

More sex

Drugs

Discrimination

Self-Mutilation

Bullying

And to top it all off...these characters are in 8th grade.

Yep, they're in MIDDLE SCHOOL. This can be a sore point for readers who either avoid books about middle school (like me) or think that this is in no way appropriate for middle schoolers. And I guess they're right, Jude's story isn't for most middle schoolers, high schoolers defiantly, but middle schoolers are stretching it. But, again, this is an accurate portrayal of teenagers. Middle school was a cesspool of hormones and cheap highs. I liked this book so much, because it doesn't dumb anything down. It says, this is how teenagers act, deal with it. And I appreciate that.

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## **Nina Rossing says**

The strangest, weirdest, most shocking and disturbing, yet beautiful, funny, honest, surprising and

heartbreaking novel I've read in a long time.

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## **Maria (Big City Bookworm) says**

**“I didn’t know that having it all is boring. When you have nothing, you have dreams.”**

When Everything Feels Like The Movies is one of those novels that is surrounded by controversy. Many thought that the themes within the story were way too intense and mature for a young adult audience in which this book is marketed towards. Although I agree that the themes were shocking and graphic at times I found myself thinking back to when I was a teenager and I really do believe that I would not have found this as disturbing as most might think.

After re-reading that synopsis I realized that it definitely makes the book seem a little bit more campy and humorous, but I can tell you right now that this story was anything but.

When Everything Feels Like The Movies is downright graphic from the language the characters speak to its descriptive scenarios. There were definite moments within the novel that had me second guessing whether or not I had actually picked up a young adult novel or if it was rather meant for an entirely more mature audience.

**“‘Sweetheart,’ I said, ‘train wrecks always make the front page.’”**

Jude does not have an easy life. He is constantly bullied by his classmates for bravely expressing his true self and it seems as though no one cares about his well-being other than his best friend Angela for the most part. He is bullied in ways that disturbed me personally and I don’t ever want to believe this is happening in reality, even though sadly I know that this is probably the case.

As a result of this constant bullying, Jude begins to imagine himself as a famous movie star. He likes to believe that everyone is just jealous of his star quality and that those who bully him are just his jealous haters. Although some may think that he is being strong and ignoring his tormentors, I believe that his acting this way is probably some form of a mental disorder. It’s the only way that he can ignore how he actually feels and I personally believe that this is not a healthy lifestyle.

Unfortunately, I had the ending of this novel spoiled for me accidentally through Goodreads. Someone had compared it to the true story that this novel is based on and gave away a key detail that I otherwise would not have seen coming. It is a scene that I believe would have shocked me and left me an emotional wreck, but unfortunately it had been ruined for me.

I honestly believe that even though this story is gritty, dark and graphic, there is a definite lesson to be learned here. Young adults are very much desensitized nowadays and it takes a lot more to scar someone mentally than it used to. I think that young adults could definitely learn a lot from this novel, especially about the way that they treat one another.

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## **Rebecca McNutt says**



This book is very important for two reasons, the first being that it was based upon the murder of Lawrence "Larry" Fobes King, a student shot to death by another teen, and the second reason being that it's one of the most timely fiction novels for teenagers I've read in a long time. It features a lot of explicit language, which can be difficult to read through if you don't like vulgarity, but it serves a purpose, setting the scene of a typical school and the things said when the adults are out of the room. On one level glamorous and on another level shocking, *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* is a powerful story about something many adults forget - it can really suck to be a teenager, especially when you don't fit into life's picture puzzle. It's a story that could both enlighten and upset people, but nonetheless it's valuable. The LGBTQ+ themes will undoubtedly offend some, but the way I see it, maybe they should take a chance on it even if they don't agree with the content, because it really allows you to relate to these characters and put yourself in their shoes.

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## Sarah says

**May 2017 Update:** I still stand by this review (under the spoiler below) because it's an honest depiction of how I felt when I finished reading *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* back in 2015.

But I just reread the book and... I feel a little differently now. Not a lot differently, but my perspective has shifted enough that I think I need to update this review for the sake of honesty.

I'm still biased. Let's start with that. I still pick up this book determined to love it, because I'm still upset about the hoopla surrounding the content, and I am nothing if not fuelled by spite. This book forces you to pick a side, and I am firmly on the side of thinking this is a great and powerful piece of literature.

Would I love the book as much as I do without the controversy surrounding its Governor General win? Would I feel this book is brilliant if it weren't for the petition calling on the GG's award to be rescinded? Would I have read it three times if not for that National Post article? I don't know. This is a book that's impossible to separate from its controversial context.

The first [couple of] time[s] I read this book, I got a little blindsided by the content. I think it's partially because... well, the book is about a boy who gets killed for asking another boy to be his valentine. It's based on a real hate crime. I've grown up on books from the 80s and 90s where, if there are gay characters, they are sad, terrible things happen to them, and then they serve as a vaguely inspirational and touching lesson for the straight characters. Sanitized tragedy, that's what I was expecting/dreading based on my reading history.

Boy, that is *not* this book.

Jude, the main character, is brash, horny, crude, unapologetic. He is obsessed with the glitz, glamour, and shallow intensity of Hollywood. He thinks about his father when he masturbates; he describes Jesus as a naked guy in bondage. He is the most fantastically audacious eighth grader I have ever encountered in fiction.

And if all you focus on is the *shock* side of things, you miss out on the rest of the book -- or, at least, I did initially. I missed out on how the shock value and the superficiality, they're like armour, and this book explores what it means when that armour is no longer enough.

Yes, Jude is sometimes shocking, but that's the point, and his depiction is perfect. He's a prickly character who pushes people to lash out at him because, hey, any attention is good attention. When people write

hateful things on his locker, he knows that they're just obsessed with him and that's the price of fame. He can take a jeering crowd and turn it into the cheers of his fans in his mind.

That kind of image takes a lot of strength to keep up. But there are cracks in it -- his interactions with Abel, the way he protects Keefer, the discussions of Schrodinger's cat and the idea of being boxed in -- and they reveal an isolated existence that he's desperate to get away from.

And that, I think, is the great strength of this novel: the layers that Raziel Reid reveals and hides. There are so many things going on in this story. Jude's narrating from after his death; he treats everything like a film set; he's an unreliable narrator; he uses shock value as a weapon; he wants to make everyone flinch, and that extends to the readers, too.

If you peel all of that away? You're kind of left with your own heart breaking.

(view spoiler)

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## **Katie says**

Two pages into this book, I thought I'd have to put it down and not finish it. But because I'll be in the audience for the first day of Canada Reads in March (this book is one of the competing titles), I really wanted to read it beforehand.

I finished it, but every page was honestly a struggle for me. I'm no literary prude, by any means, but this book was so, so explicit, crude and vulgar. I'm really surprised this is marketed as YA fiction, because it seems intended for a much older, mature audience than 12 - 18 year olds. And since we know younger kids tend to "read up", there are probably 10 year olds reading this. Again - NOT a prude when it comes to reading, and I truly believe that literary censorship is absolutely wrong, but I would not want my hypothetical 12 year old reading this. I think it's incredibly important that there's representative fiction for all

teens, that younger readers can discover protagonists who are more like them, from a wider range of backgrounds, sexual orientation, race, religion, etc. but there has GOT to be better LGBT YA (yikes, that's a lot of letters!) out there, right??

Also, a minor quibble in light of all the other things I hated about this book - the pop culture references. In 50 years - nay, in 10 - are readers really going to know/care about "the Hemsworth brothers"? I think this book will feel really dated in just a few years.

If this book wins Canada Reads 2015, I will lose all faith in humanity.

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### **CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says**

It might be hard to believe that a queer young adult novel written by a debut author, only twenty-four, won a Governor General's award for children's literature, especially when the said novel is about a flamboyant, gender non-conformist, foul-mouthed kid with a stripper mom and a self-described slut for a best friend. Especially when this is a novel about a hate crime that refuses to paint the queer teenager as a victim. But that's exactly what's happened to *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* by Raziel Reid.

It's no wonder people have been captivated by this novel: the main character Jude's voice is one that grabs you by the collar right from the beginning and doesn't let go. Jude spends the majority of the book painting his life in Hollywood colour, hoping to escape the mundanity of small-town life in a largely homophobic place. He wants you to believe the glossy Hollywoodizing retake of his life, and you do, even while you glimpse the harsh reality beneath the facade. For readers and for Jude, the divide between pretend and real is thin, irrelevant; as Jude says, "And it felt so real, I didn't know when I was dreaming." "If I were there [Hollywood]," he tells us, "it would be real. I would be real." His persistence in re-imagining his life is a testament to the power of the queer imagination as a survival strategy. For him, "faggot" written on his locker is simply a letter from one of his die-hard fans....

Read my entire review here:

<https://caseythecanadianlesbrarian.wordpress.com/2015/02/when-everything-feels-like-the-movies-by-raziel-reid/>

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### **Rachel Hartman says**

This book is not going to be to everyone's taste, I'd better say that off the bat. In large part, it wasn't to my taste, and YET. It was just so heartbreaking and true, and I have to tip my hat to that in a big way even if it made me squirm kind of a lot.

By weird chance, I read *The Fault in Our Stars* at the same time as this book, and I think *TFIOS* suffered by the comparison. Both are tragic (well, kinda -- *TFIOS* veers more toward the bittersweet) but *TFIOS* came across as so sterile and calculated by comparison. Which is not fair to *TFIOS*, I'm pretty sure, but there you go. Sometimes reading ain't fair.

I had been going to dock this book a star because the kids are in jr high when they seem a lot older to me, and this was causing me some dissonance. However, I have since learned that it was inspired by a true incident, of an 8th grader who was murdered after asking another boy to be his Valentine. I have to allow,

therefore, that maybe it's not implausible that these are 8th graders, but it is in fact my antique prudishness that can't quite accept it.

Anyway, this is super painful. The whole last chapter... I wanted it all to be his imagination. My mind was frantically back-peddalling the whole time, no no no, this doesn't happen, he was going to get out, I JUST WANT HIM TO BE OK, no no no. I tell you this to warn you. This is not a beautiful or redemptive book. It's bleak, but it managed to convince me that it was also necessary.

And it made TFIOS feel like a movie, distant and flickery and ultimately cold.

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