

True to You



TONY
CORREIA

You have to be true to yourself to be true to the one you love

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LORIMER

After a fight at school leaves him expelled, Jorge starts training to become a pro wrestler, and finds that he has the talent to make it a promising career. At the first wrestling show Jorge attends, he meets Thom, who is from a politically active upper middle-class family — and opposites attract.

Sparks fly between Jorge and Thom and before he knows it, Jorge has his first boyfriend. But when he adopts a flamboyantly gay “bad guy” wrestling persona, Thom calls him out for promoting homophobia. Jorge reacts violently, as he feels he’s losing everything that means anything to him. Can he find a way to be true to himself — as a wrestler, as a gay guy and as Thom’s boyfriend?

TONY CORREIA lives in Vancouver, B.C. He has worked as a waiter, bartender, bouncer, barista, receptionist, technical writer for a software company, as well as writing a newspaper column, a memoir and the Real Love title *Same Love*.



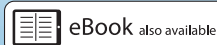
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a new collection of YA novels

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For Mette Bach.

Thanks for helping me rebuild Tara.

01 Principal's Office

AS I WAIT OUTSIDE Principal Shadrach's door, I'm staring at the bandages on my hands. This is the third time I've been here in as many months. Dad enters the office, out of breath and wearing his apron from the shop.

"I'm looking for Jorge Gomez," he says to the secretary. He pronounces it like *George* but the G sound is softer.

The secretary gestures in my direction. Dad grabs

me by the shoulders. He looks me up and down for signs I am hurt.

“What happened to your cheek?” he says.

“It’s nothing.” I look away.

“You look like you got hit by a truck!”

Principal Shadrach pokes his head out of the door. “Mr. Gomez? Jorge? I’m ready to see you.” Mr. Shadrach offers Dad and I a seat. “I’m afraid Jorge got into another fight today.”

“What happened this time?” Dad asks.

“It seems Ian Adamson was picking on another student. Jorge took it upon himself to intervene,” Mr. Shadrach explains.

“So Jorge was protecting another kid from a bully. Isn’t that your job?” Dad says.

“I don’t deny Ian has been known to pick on weaker kids.”

“Ian is a coward and a bully,” I say.

Dad puts his hand on my knee to calm me down. “I know Jorge has been in a few scraps this year,” he says to the principal. “But every time he is,

he's protecting another kid."

"We can't have a vigilante roaming the halls. I'm afraid I'm going to have to expel Jorge from school."

"Expel?" Dad and I say at the same time.

"Jorge needs help with his anger issues," Mr. Shadrach says.

"*My anger?*" I say, getting out of my chair. "What about Ian?"

"This is exactly what I'm talking about," Mr. Shadrach says. "Jorge, you have a good heart. But you need to learn to control your temper. Mr. Gomez, I suggest you take your son to a counsellor. Help him figure out the causes of this behaviour."

"Are you calling Jorge psycho?"

"Not in the least. But he needs tools that help him control himself when he gets upset. If a teacher hadn't pulled him off Ian, Jorge could be facing an assault charge."

"That bad, huh?" Dad asks.

"That bad," Mr. Shadrach replies.

Dad whistles. "I didn't know you had it in you,"

he says to me. “Thanks, Mr. Shadrach. Tell the principal you’re sorry, Jorge.”

“Sorry, Mr. Shadrach.”

“Don’t apologize to me,” the principal says. “Apologize to your parents. They’re the ones you’re hurting.”



I stand outside our van, waiting for Dad to unlock it.

“Hold on a second,” he says. He pulls out his cigarettes.

“Mom will kill you if she sees you with one of those.”

“Yeah, we know where you get your temper from. She’s going to hit the roof when she finds out you’ve been expelled.” Dad lights the cigarette and takes a deep breath. “What is with you, Jorge? You’ve been as quiet as churchmouse for seventeen years. And now you’re punching everything that moves.”

“That’s not true.”

“Yes it is. I know what your principal was talking about. Your mother has noticed it too. It’s like a light switch. All at once you go to this dark place. It’s scary.”

It’s hard to hear Dad say this. I don’t have a lot of friends. Dad is like a buddy to me.

“Is it your grades?” Dad asks. “We can hire a tutor if you’re worried about getting into college.”

“I’m not going to college,” I tell him.

“Don’t be like that.”

“Books and numbers aren’t my thing. And what for? I’m fine working at the store with you and mom.”

“Then why are you so moody? What are you trying to prove?”

I hadn’t been able bring myself to say it.

“Are you ashamed of something?” Dad pushed.

“Sort of. It’s not as bad as you might think. But it’s not what I wanted for myself.”

“Jorge, if you don’t tell me what’s going on, I can’t help you.”

I walk away from the van. Dad follows me.

“Dad, I think I’m gay.”

“But you’re the straightest guy I know.”
He looks confused. “Is this why you beat the crap out of Ian Adamson?”

“I think I would have done that if I was straight. It’s not like I want to be gay. But it’s like fighting bullies is the only thing I have control of anymore.”

“That explains a lot, actually.”

“Do you hate me?”

“Of course not. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t a little sad. It’s not going to be easy for you. But I don’t hate you. And your mother won’t either, I promise you that. But you need to control your emotions. If you can’t, you’re going to be really popular in prison. Come here. Give me a hug.”

The hug is awkward but heartfelt.

“You know Mom is going to smell the smoke on your clothes, right?” I say to him.

“She’s not going to care when I tell her you were expelled.”