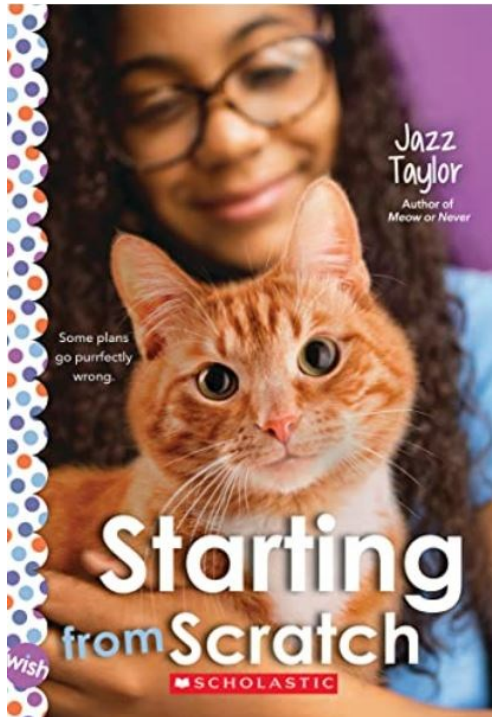


# STARTING FROM SCRATCH: A WISH NOVEL



*Juvenile*

**By Jazz Taylor**

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## **Book Summary:**

After her mom marries another woman, a young girl's life quickly begins to change.

## **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains alternate gender ideologies and alternate sexualities.

**1**  
/5

**Child Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

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35	<p>It has a new sticker on the bottom, I'm just noticing. It's a yellow, white, purple, and black flag. Dani is really particular about what stickers are on her board, so I'm curious what this one means.</p> <p>...Dani gasps and flips the board over so I can see. "Oh my god, I forgot to tell you. It's an enby flag!"</p> <p>"Oh, cool!" Dani told me she's nonbinary last year. Enby is short for the letters N and B, for nonbinary. I didn't get it at first, but she explained it like this: She doesn't feel like a girl, but she doesn't feel like a boy either. It's like gender is on two sliding scales, one that's masculine, one that's feminine, that go from 0 to 100. Some people feel 100 percent feminine and 0 percent masculine, but Dani feels maybe 65 percent feminine and sometimes 50 percent masculine. So that's why she asked me to use she/ they pronouns. "I like it! Where'd you get it?"</p> <p>..."I'm thinking about coming out to my mom and dad."</p> <p>...I'm the only one who knows she's nonbinary. Dani said she's afraid to tell anyone else, so I haven't told anyone either, and I only use she/ her pronouns at school. But I support her by using they whenever I talk about her with Mom or Keisha. Even if they figure it out, they won't be jerks about it or blab to Dani's parents. "Do you want me to come with you?"</p> <p>"I'm not telling them today!" Dani looks up and smiles. "But soon. I think I just gotta do it, you know? Like ripping off a Band-Aid."</p>
69	<p>Keisha glares at the kitchen. "Rosie, you said you told her!"</p> <p>"Oops," Mom says, laughing. She comes back into the living room and kisses Keisha's cheek. "Sorry, Janie, no movie tonight. Keisha and I are going on a date!"</p>
74	<p>Dani is quiet for a moment, and then bounces her ball too. She doesn't shoot. "Mr. Parker called us 'girls.'"</p> <p>Ah. I stop bouncing my ball. "But you're not."</p> <p>"Right." Dani sighs again. "And I know he didn't mean anything by it, but it's just—ugh. I don't know."</p> <p>I put my ball down and sit on it. Dani does the same. I don't think we'll be playing anymore for a while. "I think I get it. I wouldn't like it if everyone called me a boy."</p> <p>"Yeah. It's more than that though, you know? I don't just dislike being called a girl, it's wrong. Way wrong."</p> <p>"But didn't you say you feel more like a girl than a boy sometimes? The sixty-five thing."</p> <p>Dani is really quiet. She won't look at me, studying her shoes instead. "Well, the scales thing is only kind of true. I read that when you explain being enby to people, that's what you should say."</p> <p>..."I'm not just more 'girl' than I am 'boy.' Like, gender's not on two lines. It's more like ... something else entirely."</p> <p>I think that over. Not a line ... Not linear ... Suddenly, my head is full of math models. "It's like a third dimension."</p> <p>Dani looks up at me, smiling. "Yeah! That's it!"</p> <p>I nod, mulling that over. Dani's explanation with the scales still just used feminine and masculine. That's still binary—only two options. It's not a question of if Dani is more girl than boy; Dani is saying nonbinary is separate, and doesn't have to rely on those two options to exist.</p> <p>...Dani turns to me, her expression serious again. "Remember when I asked you to use</p>

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	<p>she/ they for my pronouns?" I nod. "Okay, how do you do that?"</p> <p>I frown, crossing my arms. "Well, when I talk about you with Mom and Keisha, I use they."</p> <p>"You do?" Dani's eyes are shining with hope and gratitude.</p> <p>"Yeah! You told me to!" I grin at her. "As for she ... That's what I use at school because I didn't want anyone to find out before you told them. But also ... I guess I still think of you as she." I gasp, my hand over my mouth. "But that's wrong, isn't it? Since gender isn't a line."</p> <p>"Right." Dani takes a shaky breath. "I said I wanted to use she/ they last year because I was still figuring things out. But I'm sure now. She/ they isn't for me, because I'm not a girl at all. I think I'm ready for they/ them."</p>
90	<p>Mom comes into the dining room carrying a basket of garlic bread. She puts it in the middle of the table and kisses Keisha, smiling too.</p>
102	<p>"I got in a fight with Dad." Tears well up in Dani's eyes. "I tried ... I tried telling him I'm enby. And I wanted him to use they/ them pronouns."</p> <p>My stomach sinks to my toes. I thought so. "What'd he say?"</p> <p>"He kept saying I was just confused, and this is a phase. But it's not a phase! I know how I feel." Anxiety crosses Dani's face. "Now I do feel confused though. I feel awful. Like I'm gonna throw up."</p> <p>I take a moment to think. Dani seemed so happy when we played basketball, and when they asked me to use their pronouns. It's not fair that their mom and dad made them cry. They said they were sure, and I hate that their parents made them doubt that.</p> <p>"I don't think you're confused. Not about being enby."</p> <p>"Yeah?"</p> <p>"Yeah. I think you're confused about why your dad didn't accept what you said. Like, how hard is it to just listen to your kid when they talk?"</p> <p>... "Sometimes parents suck. But friends don't. I believe you, Dani. You're enby and a great skater and a lousy singer and my best friend. If you need me, I'm here. Any time is Dani Time."</p>
104	<p>"No problem at all! I wish she'd rub off on our not-so-studious girl," Dani's mom laughs. Dani winces at the word girl, but doesn't say anything.</p> <p>That strange, unfamiliar heat surges up and I stand straighter. "Dani's not a girl," I interrupt. Everyone gets really quiet, and even though nervous heat creeps up my neck, I keep going. "They're nonbinary and you should respect that."</p> <p>No one says anything for a long second, and then Mom bursts into laughter. "Atta girl, Janie! You tell 'em."</p> <p>Dani looks from me to Mom with wonder. They smile at me and I smile back.</p> <p>...I nod, and give Dani a hug. They hug me super tight, and right before they let go, they say, "Thanks, JV."</p>
110	<p>"I wish I never met you, and I wish my mom never married your mom, and you are not my sister!!"</p>
119	<p>I'm about to cry again, but then I remember what Dani told me a while back, when Makayla first moved in with us.</p> <p>If things get too bad, just run away, yeah?</p> <p>My arms fall away from Pumpkin. I stare at all my dirty clothes, my open backpack, the schedule on my desk. I dump all my homework out of my backpack, not really thinking about anything except for Dani's words. Run away.</p>

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	I shove a few things into my backpack, including my planner, and open my window. "Bye, Pumpkin," I whisper. Pumpkin meows pitifully and it almost convinces me to stay. But I can't stay. I have to get out of here or I'll explode. I climb over the sill, climb down the tree in our front yard, grab my bike, and I'm gone.
120	I've never run away from home before. I feel kind of wild and dangerous. I also feel kind of silly.