

# We Could Be Something

AUTHOR

**WILL KOSTAKIS**



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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Upper Secondary  
(Language, Sexual Content)

## SYNOPSIS

Part coming-out story.

Part falling-in-love story.

Part falling-apart story.

Harvey's dads are splitting up. It's been on the cards for a while, but it's still sudden. Woken by his father Ba to catch a red-eye flight from Perth to Sydney, he is barely awake when they leave. Now he's restarting his life in a new city, living above a cafe, with Ba, his Yiayia (grandmother), Gina, and Proyiayia (great grandmother)—the extended Greek family he barely knows.

Sotiris is a rising literary star. At seventeen, he's already achieved his dream of publishing a novel. When his career falters, a cute, wise-cracking bookseller named Jeremy upends his world.

Harvey and Sotiris's stories converge on the same street in Darlinghurst in this beautifully heartfelt novel about how our dreams shape us, and what they cost us.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Will Kostakis is an award-winning author for young adults. His first novel, *Loathing Lola*, was published when he was just nineteen. It sold a whopping ten copies, including the seven he bought himself. After a brief break to dabble in celebrity journalism and reconstruct his shattered dream, he returned with *The First Third*, which sold more than ten copies (possibly fifteen). It won the 2014 Gold Inky Award and was shortlisted for the CBCA and the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, among others. *The Sidekicks* was his third novel for young adults, and his US debut. It won the IBBY Australia Ena Noël Award. Will has also contributed to numerous anthologies, including the ABIA Award-winning *Begin, End, Begin: A #LoveOzYA Anthology*. He was awarded the 2020 Maurice Saxby Award by the School Library Association of New South Wales for service to children's and young adult literature and is an ambassador for the NSW Premier's Reading Challenge.

## STUDY NOTES

- The two alternate stories of Harvey and his father Sotiris are told in first person from two different narrative

perspectives. The reader is not initially aware of the connection between the two narrators, but the novel gradually reveals that they are speaking in different decades but are both on the cusp of adulthood having left, or are about to leave, secondary school. There are hints to this in the language used such as when Sotiris asks Harvey about the language he is using in his new novel: “All my characters talk like they’re almost forty,” he explains. “What’s the new lingo? What fresh words are kids using?” (p 278) Harvey makes up a word ‘Badorka’ to tease him. Another marker is the lack of digital communications in the younger Sotiris’s life. How else does the author, Will Kostakis, differentiate between the voices in these two decades?

- The novel is structured by being broken into parts, each alternately told by Harvey and Sotiris. Each part features intriguing sub-titles: ‘The gays are fighting’ (p 1). ‘The first thing you do is dig’ (p 43). Discuss these sub-titles and how they relate to the story that follows directly after them.
- Of the many characters in the novel, whom did you empathise with most? Which minor character would you like to have read more about? For example, Isabella and her mission to rescue ‘kidlets’ had the potential to generate a raft of other stories.
- The novel contains some succinct and expressive descriptions which indicate a character immediately: Isabella: ‘She can’t be much older than me, but it’s difficult to tell because her look is edgy Play School presenter—denim overall, nose ring, wavy brown bob she might have cut herself. She could be nineteen, she could be twenty-nine. Her playlist has me leaning towards nineteen. Songs I recognise from TikTok mostly.’ (p 92) Identify other descriptions which give the reader a vivid picture of a character in a short paragraph or two.
- ‘He’s a drizzle of olive oil on a kangaroo steak.’ (p 15) ‘They’re standing on almost forty years of kindling; one errant spark and they ignite.’ (p 84). What is the name of the literary device on display in these quotes? Uncover other uses or literary devices such as metaphor, simile and personification and discuss how they enhance the reading experience.
- LGBTQI+ Relationships: ‘Having gay dads comes with a lot of pressure’ (p 24). Harvey goes on to explain this statement and then concludes with: ‘In Year Nine I landed on pan as my identifier of choice.’ (p 25) Harvey’s later attraction to Isabella is evidence that he is quite comfortable with being attracted both to her and to Bradley. Sotiris doesn’t want to tell his mother or grandmother that he is gay; Harvey doesn’t feel the need to tell anyone about his sexuality. Does the novel suggest that in these two decades some social attitudes to homosexuality have changed?
  - Will Kostakis has written about the different attitudes to coming out now compared to when he was in his late teens. He laments the fact that many contemporary novels are still locked into that mindset. ‘Now it’s different. The way teenagers deal with it is very different. But we’re NOT dealing with stories like that. We’re still dealing with the gay pain and the struggle to come out. We fetishise that gay pain.’ (Osborne, 2020, p 20) Discuss this statement, and how queerness is discussed in your friendship circles.
- ‘I can only hope I write like I did before him, after him.’ (p 257). Jeremy: ‘Being with your father is my dream, Harvey. He has my all. If I leave, I leave without him.’ (p 292) Sotiris and Jeremy’s love affair has had both of them seeking a dream they can’t quite realise for nearly two decades. Sotiris has always blamed his lack of subsequent publishing success on his love for Jem; and Jem has always been conscious that he has deliberately overlooked the flaws in their relationship, because of his romantic belief in the dream of their perfect union. Is Jeremy likely to be happier without Sotiris? Is Sotiris going to be content as a struggling middle-aged writer? Is Harvey correct in concluding that they are better off without each other?
- The traditions passed down to members of a Greek-Australian family include not only food and cultural traditions, but also moral attitudes and expectations. What are the morals and ethics which Gina has passed to her son and grandson? What does Proyiayia believe in and how does she pass this on to Harvey?
  - Gina’s café is the setting for the novel and its emotional heart. What does food represent in Greek culture?
- Harvey is trying to navigate his post-school life and to decide what he should be doing with it. He doesn’t have a burning passion (like his Ba’s for writing) or a great love (like his Dad’s for Ba), so he is seeking answers by making friends with Isabella and Bradley, helping his grandmother working in the café and coming to terms with his parents’ break-up. How difficult is it to navigate the time between school and later life? What choices or decisions have to be made?
- Gina is devastated when the doctor diagnoses Proyiayia’s dementia. As a single mother, she has lived with her

mother for her entire life and can't imagine being without her. Sotiris and Harvey are also grief-stricken. How do they eventually deal with their grief? Jeremy was also devastated when his mother died and is facing a new crisis in the break-up of his relationship with Sotiris. What does this novel say about grief?

AUTHOR OF NOTES  
**CAROLYN WALSH**