

## Review: None of the Above by I.W. Gregorio



*A groundbreaking story about a teenage girl who discovers she's intersex . . . and what happens when her secret is revealed to the entire school. Incredibly compelling and sensitively told, [None of the Above](#) is a thought-provoking novel that explores what it means to be a boy, a girl, or something in between.*

What if everything you knew about yourself changed in an instant?

*When Kristin Lattimer is voted homecoming queen, it seems like another piece of her ideal life has fallen into place. She's a champion hurdler with a full scholarship to college and she's madly in love with her boyfriend. In fact, she's decided that she's ready to take things to the next level with him.*

*But Kristin's first time isn't the perfect moment she's planned—something is very wrong. A visit to the doctor reveals the truth: Kristin is intersex, which means that though she outwardly looks like a girl, she has male chromosomes, not to mention boy "parts."*

*Dealing with her body is difficult enough, but when her diagnosis is leaked to the whole school, Kristin's entire identity is thrown into question. As her world unravels, can she come to terms with her new self?*

My knowledge of intersex conditions was almost nonexistent before reading this book. For one

thing, I didn't even know there were conditions. Kristin's particular condition is called androgen insensitivity syndrome, or AIS. After her first extremely painful attempt at sex with her boyfriend Sam, she visits a gynecologist and finds out that although her outward appearance is feminine, her chromosomes are XY, her vagina is much smaller than average, and she has undescended testicles and no uterus. Kristin panics when she receives her diagnosis -- is she still a girl? Is she gay? Will sex always hurt her? Can she have children? Most importantly, how will she tell the people she loves?

Early in the book, Kristin's gynecologist explains that gender is not defined by biology, but by "one's internal sense of whether they're male or female," and reassures her that she is still a girl. She also points out that in a way, Kristin is lucky, because AIS is fairly straightforward compared to other intersex conditions. But to Kristin, her condition seems far from straightforward. When her secret is exposed, she faces Sam's disgust, her best friend Vee's apparent betrayal, suspension from the track team and the possible loss of her scholarship, and harassment from her peers, both in school and on social media. Feeling confused, lonely, and unloveable, Kristin struggles to convince herself and the people around her that her diagnosis doesn't change who she is inside.

This book does an excellent job educating the reader on what it means to be intersex, but it had surprisingly little emotional effect on me. I found Kristin likeable enough and sympathized with her situation, but I expected more depth from a story like this. We see how Kristin's diagnosis affects the most important people in her life -- Sam, her widowed father, Vee, her other best friend Faith -- but all of these characters are fairly flat. I was particularly disappointed with the characterization of Vee and Faith. When Sam finds out Kristin's secret, he dumps her, and Kristin assumes Vee told him and ends their friendship, but in the last 60 pages she finds out Faith was actually the one who told Sam, not Vee. Kristin instantly forgives Faith and apologizes to Vee for accusing her, but Vee apparently feels no need to apologize to Kristin for calling her a "freak" and a "hermaphrodite." Vee and Faith also both tell Kristin to get over herself and move on, which strikes me as an incredibly insensitive thing to say to someone going through Kristin's issues, but Gregorio tells us everything is fine between the three BFFs now, so it is.

Another relationship I felt should have been explored more was the one between Kristin and Gretchen, another girl with AIS who she befriends in the last third of the book. Gretchen makes an interest contrast with Kristin, as her experiences are different -- she's had longer to come to terms with her condition and is thus much more confident in her identity -- but I felt the relationship would have made a stronger impact if Gretchen had been introduced earlier.

I love the concept of this book, and I'm glad to have learned more about intersex conditions. Gregorio -- a surgeon who was inspired to write *None of the Above* when she assisted in an intersex woman's gonadectomy -- obviously cares about the subject matter and has done her research. But the lack of character development prevented me from enjoying it as much as I wanted to.

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**Rating:** Three out of five stars