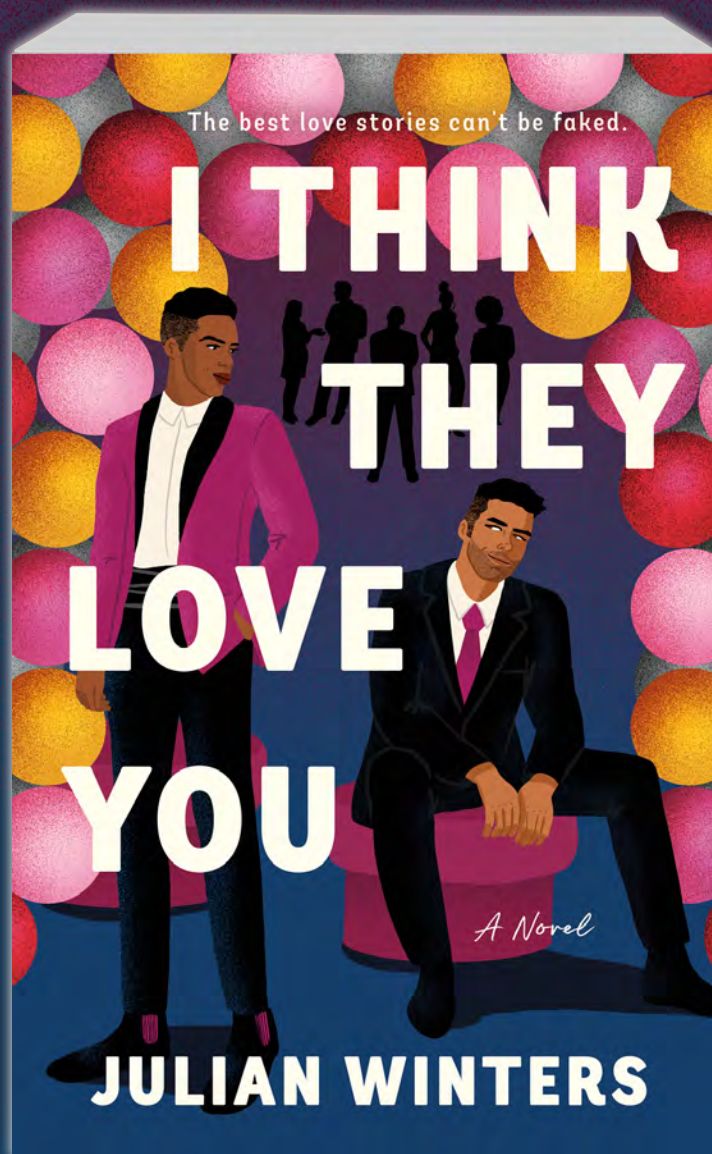


I THINK THEY LOVE YOU

BOOK CLUB KIT



ST. MARTIN'S GRIFFIN

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DEAR READER,

Growing up, I was obsessed with rom-coms. I had countless daydreams of falling clumsily in love with my best friend, my rival, the quirky bookstore employee, the farm-boy-turned-pirate, or my amnesiac crush's brother. . . . Every trope, first kiss, and happily-ever-after story lived rent free in my brain.

But what I desperately wanted was to see myself—a queer Black man—reflected in those love stories. I wanted to be the hero. To get the messy, heartfelt, fall-on-your-face-hilarious journey to discovering love.

That was the origin of *I Think They Love You*. It's a celebration of queer and Black communities. The fun and drama of big families. Second chances. The awkwardness of fake dating an ex. Healing from old wounds. Falling in love with the person you're becoming.

I wasn't the right person to write this story for my younger self years ago. But I am now. Similarly, Denz and Braylon might not have been perfect for each other the first time around, but their journey is worth the mistakes, the confusion, the heartache. It's worth the joy. The best love stories are worth a second chance.

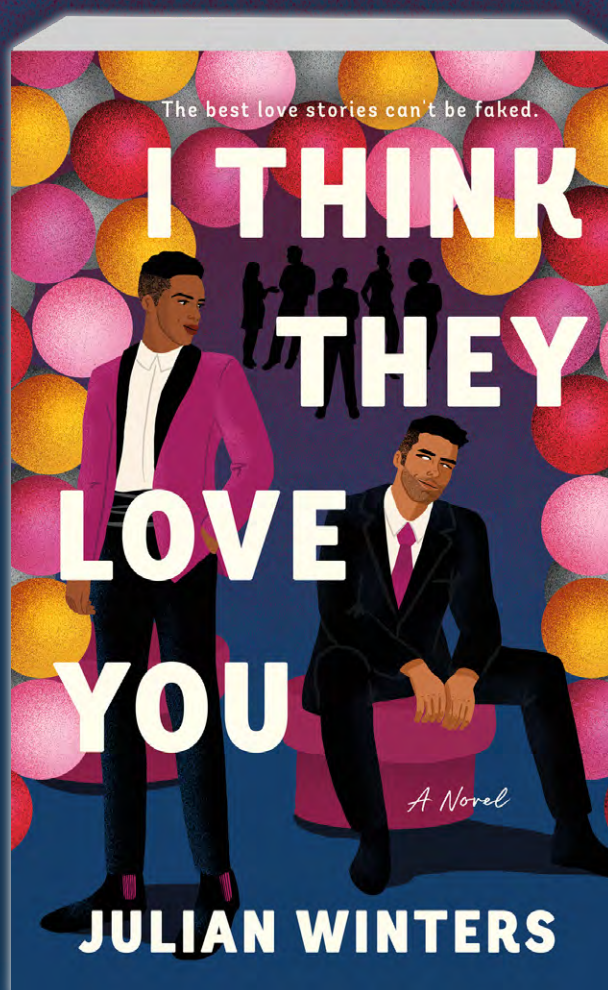
I hope you fall in love with this book again and again . . . just like Denz and Braylon fall for each other.



Julian Winters



Photo Credit: Vanessa North





DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Would Deniz and Braylon have continued to be a couple if they had moved to England together originally? Why or why not?
2. What makes Deniz and Braylon's relationship different the second time around? What aspects are setting them up for success?
3. What are some ways readers see Deniz grow during his journey in the book? In what ways have his family, Braylon, and even Deniz himself contributed to or hindered that growth at times?
4. Do you believe Braylon should have had a more extensive conversation with Deniz before leaving him for England, or was he right to believe that Deniz wouldn't be receptive to going regardless? Discuss.
5. In his bid for CEO, Deniz is pitted against his sister by his own family, but while they are at odds at times, his family ultimately means so much to him and takes care of Deniz when it matters most. Discuss the idea of family within the novel and Deniz's place within his own.
6. Braylon's father passed away during a time when Deniz and Braylon were broken up. How do you think he might have felt about them getting back together? What do you think Braylon might have told him about who Deniz has become?
7. After his return from London, Braylon works at a nonprofit LGBTQ+ center, a cause close to his heart. In what ways does that shape the man he becomes? Does Deniz's time helping out at the center have an impactful effect on him as well? Discuss.
8. At the end of the novel, Deniz and Braylon have moved to a different city—together this time. How is this decision important to their futures, individually and as a couple?
9. Is there anyone else in the book whose love story you would love to see in book form? Any predictions for romantic pairings or favorite characters?
10. What was your favorite scene in the novel? What about the funniest, in your opinion, or the most emotional?



LOVE AT FIRST BITE . . .

I Think They Love You is a love story between two exes often told through the joys and comforts of food they share. One taste can reignite poignant old memories or be the transportive start of new ones. Deniz, an events coordinator for his family's famous event planning company, is used to the extravagant party life while Braylon, a program director for a nonprofit, enjoys a quiet night-in. They're the perfect mix of luxury and comfort.

You can never go wrong starting a menu off with a savory-sweet French toast grilled cheese, the sandwich Braylon cooks for Deniz in his worst moments and the one they shared while saying their first "I love you." Pair it with a side of seasoned fries—with or without malt vinegar, an argument the exes have yet to settle. For drinks: go high-end with a top-shelf lemon drop martini (Deniz's preference) or a cozy cup of your favorite black tea (Braylon's choice). Dessert is a must splurge on a decadent slice of raspberry truffle cheesecake (which is also great bribing nosy aunties to do your bidding, according to Deniz) or awaken those priceless holiday memories (like when you bring your first love home to meet the family) with a huge helping of sweet potato pie... just don't forget to ask your mom for the secret ingredient!

Braylon's Signature French Toast Grilled Cheese

INGREDIENTS

6 large eggs
½ cup milk
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
8 ounces of cheddar cut into 24 slices
8 slices of cooked bacon, cut in half
8 thick slices of brioche bread
2 tablespoons butter
Maple Syrup

Recipe by Cabot Creamery

DIRECTIONS

WHISK the eggs, milk, salt and sugar in a medium bowl to combine.

MAKE the sandwiches: top four of the slices of bread with 3 slices of the cheese, two slices of bacon, and another 3 slices of cheese. Top with the remaining slices of bread.

HEAT a large griddle or skillet on medium low heat.

DIP each sandwich into the egg mixture to coat both sides thoroughly.

TURN the griddle down to low and add the butter to coat the bottom. Place sandwiches on the griddle and cover each one with a small lid. Flip the sandwich once the bottom is browned and the cheese is slightly melted. Cover with the lid again.

REMOVE the sandwiches from the griddle once they are browned on both sides and the cheese is melted, approximately 8 – 10 minutes.

SERVE with a drizzle of maple syrup.



I THINK THEY LOVE YOU

READING PLAYLIST

1. **Twenty Something** – Nightly
2. **Hits Different** – Taylor Swift
3. **Never Need Me** – Rachel Chinouriri
4. **Nervous** – Nick Jonas
5. **Heart** – Froyo
6. **About You** – The 1975
7. **Higher Love** – Kygo (feat. Whitney Houston)
8. **Pink Lemonade** – Conner Youngblood
9. **Foiled Around and Fell in Love** – Elvin Bishop
10. **Wearing Nothing** – Dagny
11. **Leave Before You Love Me** – Marshmello
12. **Dancing Around It** – Lucius (feat. Brandi Carlile & Sheryl Crow)
13. **The Way I Am** – Ingrid Michaelson
14. **I Can't Stop Thinking About You** – The Shadowboxers
15. **Cure** – Barcelona
16. **Falling Back to You** – Florrie
17. **Don't Give Up On Us (Chill Version)** – Nick Jonas
18. **What Falling In Love Is For** – Emmit Fenn
19. **Genesis** – Dua Lipa
20. **New Year's Day** – Taylor Swift

