

The 57 Bus by Dashka Slater

Sasha and Richard didn't know each other. They had grown up in Oakland, gone to school in Oakland, lived in Oakland for most of their lives, but the only thing that connected them was the 57 Bus - and the crime committed on it.

On November 4 2013, Richard flicked his lighter over Sasha's skirt, and it went up in flames. From that day forward, the two teenagers' lives would never be the same. For Sasha, they had weeks in the hospital and years of recovery ahead of them. For Richard, months of uncertainty and years in jail.

Written by famed journalist Dashka Slater, *The 57 Bus* is a fascinating look at what it takes to make a crime, and what it takes to recover from one. It explores the ideas of crime, identity, self-expression, recovery, family, justice, restoration, and being kind even when it doesn't make sense to all within Richard and Sasha's lives.

I've never read a book quite like *The 57 Bus*. It was informative, thoughtful, and thought-provoking. I couldn't set it down, but read it straight through. There's something deeply likable about the people in the story, and you root for them as they work through the tragedy as it unfolds. It is a story that is, at its core, about empathy and kindness being extended at all times. While this book is a heavy read, that also makes it an uplifting one.

The 57 Bus is a 2020 Abe Lincoln Award winner. I'll give *The 57 Bus* a rating of B-MA for some occasional language and mature topics, though they are covered gracefully and professionally, and wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to any high schooler.