

Book Talk #2:  
*Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me*,  
by author Mariko Tamaki and artist Rosemary Valero-O'Connell

Hi, my name is Freddy Riley. "I was named after my dad's Aunt Frederica, who died trying to save whales (pretty gay)." (3)

A little about me: "I live in Berkeley, CA. I like making things out of other things. I like the smell of strawberries, but not the taste. I'm a good kisser. I think." (3) I work at this great sandwich shop where all the specials are named after famous queer women. ("New Ellen is veal. Old Ellen is beef." You know, "because New Ellen is younger." (235))

Anyway, here's the deal. For almost a year now, I've been in love with this girl named Laura Dean. I'd always known *of* her – "she's one of the most popular people in school. Everyone knows her." (64) I assume she knew who I was too – I mean, we've gone to school together for years. "I just wasn't, y'know, on her radar." (64) But then one day in gym, we had to do square-dancing. (I know). "We were do-si-doing or something" and, "from the moment she first touched me [...] it was like a thousand heart attacks all over me." (66) "And I remember thinking, *now* we've met." (66-7).

Fast-forward to now, and not only have we dated, but she has also broken up with me. Not once, or twice, but three times. The first time was on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, when she was going to go hiking in Oregon with her parents and probably wouldn't have any phone service for a while. The second was at a Halloween party, when she thought she might want to date boys for a while. The last time was after the Valentine's day dance – the less said about that, the better, but let's just say there was some post-dance debacle. And the breakup itself happened over text. As my best friend Doodle said, "this is why modern technology will be the end of us." (22) And yeah, I *have* noticed that it always happens around holidays, and no, I don't know what that's about.

I know that my friends are "struggling to muster sympathy for my increasingly ridiculous situation." (23) And like, I know there are queer activists "who fought for centuries for me to have the right" "to get broken up with and publicly humiliated just like my hetero friends. I am progress" and all that (30-1). But that doesn't mean it doesn't suck.

I can't bother my friends about this again. So I'll ask *you* – should I take her back?

**Read-alikes:**

*Graphic Novels:*

**Bloom, by Kevin Panetta (writer) & Savanna Ganucheau (artist)**

Ari cannot wait to escape to the big city with his band. But then one day Hector shows up to work in Ari's family's bakery, and Ari doesn't feel so much like he needs to get away.

**Kiss Number 8, by Colleen AF Venable (writer) & Ellen T. Crenshaw (artist)**

Mads has never understood the appeal of kissing...until she kisses a girl. This coming-of-age story is about figuring yourself out, standing up for yourself in toxic friendships, and loving your family, in all its complexity.

*Novels:*

**You Know Me Well, by Nina LaCour & David Levithan**

After a chance meeting, two queer teens who have never spoken at school strike up a surprising friendship, supporting each other as they both navigate the highs and lows of first love.

**We Used to Be Friends, by Amy Spalding**

James (a girl with a boy's name) is sarcastic, quiet, and sporty, while Kat is loud, popular, and has a lot of feelings, but they've always been best friends despite their differences. Until a difficult senior year tests their friendship like never before.