

Dear Reader,

The idea for *Ultraviolet* came from my tween son and his friend, who wanted a story like *The Moon Within* from a boy's perspective. They yearned for a book that reflected their inner lives and offered intimate conversations around puberty, first crushes, gender, and rites of passages—conversations that echoed their reality as cis Latino boys.

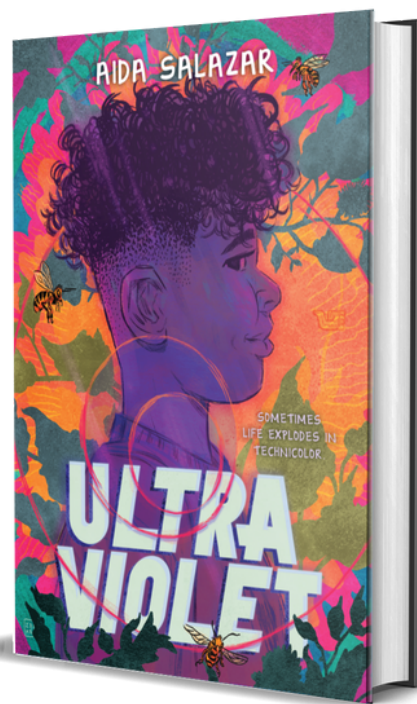
After some research, I soon discovered there are few fictional stories that address head-on how boys today deal emotionally with leaving childhood and entering adolescence. Few stories that help them navigate these new big feelings with tenderness and understanding. Most especially, brown and Black boys and other boys of color.

As I dug deeper into my research, I was dismayed to find just how much we, as a patriarchal society, have failed our boys emotionally. We don't allow them space to explore vulnerability, love, anger, rejection, grief, and hormonal confusion. They are raised to bury feelings—to be “macho” and “man up.” We rarely provide safe spaces and strategies for them to move through tough feelings or offer guidance on how to rise above them. It is a tragedy of epic proportions, really. When boys deny this very human aspect of themselves, it deeply impacts their relationships as they grow into men. And in that loss, in that wound, they sometimes treat others with the same hurt they feel or worse. Girls and women often bear the brunt of that wound, as evidenced by the violence in our society today. As a feminist and the mother of a boy, I want to offer boys examples of how they can find strength through fostering their vulnerability and sensitivity.

Ultraviolet explores one boy's journey through the complicated landscape of falling in love and being heartbroken, through puberty and early adolescence as he tries to define his place in the world. But it is also about toxic masculinity, consent, and how we unconsciously or intentionally perpetuate patriarchal behavior. Because those in-between years (ages 11–13) are about exploration, arguably more so than others, it is ever more important to have stories that help boys navigate complicated emotions and learn to respond in positive, loving, life-affirming, and healing ways.

Only then can they fully embrace the beautiful complexity within them and carry that beauty with dignity, respect, and peace into the future.

With love and solidarity,
Aida



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