SYNOPSIS: Girls

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Eli has recently moved to a suburban town just outside of Oslo. She makes friends with a group of girls who love manga and admire her for her drawing skills. One of the other girls in the group is called Nina. When Eli jokingly kisses Nina at a birthday party, she thinks she’s developed a crush – or wonders if she has. Because what is it *really* like to have a crush on someone? And did Nina only kiss back as a joke, or was it serious? *Girls* is a funny and poignant coming-of-age book about friendship and discovering who you are – both on your own and in relation to others.

**Chapter 1: Girls**

As Eli walks to school lost in a daydream, she imagines being chased by a beautiful, vengeful woman whom she ultimately battles. The imaginary confrontation fades as she arrives at school only to face bullying from a group of boys who mock her for being "emo." Her friend Vii excitedly shares a new chapter of her vampire novel, which Eli makes illustrations for during math class. Eli feels disconnected from her fellow classmates and finds herself envious of a girl named Camilla.

During lunch, Eli reunites with her group of friends from a different class, where we are introduced to Nina. The conversation shifts to manga, with Nina excitedly sharing her latest discovery, a “Yaoi” manga called *Lemon Garden* that features explicit content. Kris brings up their upcoming birthday party and asks if everyone will be coming the next day.

On her way back from school, Eli daydreams about fighting the woman again. When she gets home, her little brother, Martin, is playing video games in her room. Their conversation drifts toward their father's increased overtime at work, prompting them to wonder whether their family might be facing financial difficulties again.

Eli starts downloading pirated versions of some anime movies for her and Martin to watch then gets curious about the sexy manga book Nina was telling them about. She starts looking around and finds some more “Yaoi” online when her brother comes in suddenly and she hurries to hide what she was looking at, embarrassed.

The next day, Eli gets a ride to Kris’ birthday with Vii, where they play Pictionary. When Eli goes to get more cake, she finds Nina and Trine sitting in the hallway, discussing *Lemon Garden* and how it’s cool that in Japan, there are manga books about homosexual love. Nina says she’s not sure if she’s 100% straight after having read these books and Trine says she thinks everyone is a little bi and that she likes kissing girls more. She suggests they try kissing each other right now and kisses Nina. Trine says Eli can try if she wants, too, and they kiss. Eli seems to like it and is plagued by confusion while they watch a movie. When they’re waiting to get picked up, Nina and Trine jokingly kiss again, and Nina asks if Eli wants to have a goodbye kiss as well. They kiss, and Eli wonders if she has a crush on Nina.

**Chapter 2: Maybe?**

Eli finds herself questioning her past feelings toward boys. Her thoughts drift back to a conversation about crushes with Vii and Nina and she struggles to identify her top three. She’s abruptly snapped back to reality, where she's raking leaves with her brother, who’s talking about saving up for video games. She asks him how you know if you really have a crush on someone only to be teased in response.

Later, they watch a movie while eating dinner with their father, but Eli's mind keeps wandering back to her kiss with Nina. She starts reading *Lemon Garden* to distract herself but it only makes her think about it again. She begins to question her sexual orientation and wonders if she’s a lesbian.

The following day on her way to school, she grapples with conflicting emotions. While she feels a newfound sense of freedom in understanding herself better, she also worries about potential bullying. Nevertheless, she feels relieved as she realizes she no longer has to feign interest in boys.

During class, the teacher hands out some information about the fall dance. Eli starts doodling and daydreaming about being a superhero again, but this time, her nemesis, Narissa, helps save her from some crooks – and they kiss.

At lunch, Eli is awkward around Nina. They discuss the dance and the mean boys start bullying them again. The friends talk about going to Oslo to shop for dresses and manga.

On the train to Oslo a few days later, Eli wonders if she should tell Vii about her crush, but is apprehensive. They try on dresses at an edgy store in Oslo but they’re all too expensive for Eli; the only thing she can afford is a rainbow pin.

They go to the comics store to look at manga and Nina and Eli discuss Yaoi books. Eli says it’s cool that there are gay characters – and also a little “hot”. She’s embarrassed at having said this when she suddenly catches sight of the cool girl from school, Camilla, who’s begging her mom to buy her another manga book. Eli is surprised at her being here.

On the train back, Nina falls asleep on Eli’s shoulder. When they get off the train and part ways, Vii asks Eli if she has a crush on Nina and promises not to tell anyone. Nina suddenly reappears since she forgot something, and Eli is worried that Nina overheard the conversation.

**Chapter 3: The Dance**

Nina is trying on dresses for the dance and starts thinking about what happened a few days earlier, when she was worried that Nina overheard her conversation with Vii. After the incident, she and Vii went home and talked about how Eli thinks she likes girls. Vii said she also doesn’t know what she likes.

At school, Eli is awkward around Nina, but things seem normal. She starts daydreaming about Narissa again.

The next day, she gets ready for the dance and gets a ride with Vii. At the dance, two of the cool girls – including Camilla – are splitting everyone up into boy-girl pairs that they decided based on who they thought would go well together. Eli gets paired up with the boy who’s always bullying her, Simon. Luckily, he leaves without them having to dance.

Nina tells Eli that she promised her a dance, and after dancing for a little while, they go to find their friends. They start taking pictures and Trine jokes that she and Nina should kiss for a picture, then asks Eli if she and Nina want to kiss, too. They do, and Eli decides to take a chance and kiss Nina using tongue – but Nina shouts and pushes her away. Eli runs off and comes across Camilla, who says she was looking for her to apologize for her being paired up with Simon. Eli lashes out at her and runs home.

**Chapter 4: Sorry**

When she gets home, her dad and brother are worried about her, but she says she has a headache and just wants to go to bed. Her brother comes in to ask what happened when Vii shows up and she tells her everything.

Nina also shows up at Eli’s house to talk. Eli apologizes for kissing her like that, but Nina says she was just surprised, which was why she reacted the way she did. She asks if Eli has a crush on her and she admits it. Nina says all the kissing was just for fun and that she doesn’t feel the same way about Eli but wants to be friends. The rest of the gang shows up and they play video games instead of going back to the dance.

At school, Eli asks to change classes so she can be together with all her friends.

She finds Camilla and apologizes for the way she lashed out at the dance. They start discussing manga.