



# I'm Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves

By Ryan O'Connell

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This hilarious part-memoir, part-manifesto reveals what sets apart the latest generation of young people coming of age in an all-wired, overeducated, and underemployed world.

People are obsessed with Ryan O'Connell's blogs. With tens of thousands reading his pieces on *Thought Catalog* and *Vice*, watching his videos on YouTube, and hanging on to each and every #dark tweet, Ryan has established himself as a unique young voice who's not afraid to dole out some real talk. He's that candid, snarky friend you consult when you fear you're spending too much time falling down virtual k-holes stalking your ex on Facebook or when you've made the all-too-common mistake of befriending a psycho while wasted at last night's party and need to find a way to get rid of them the next morning. But Ryan didn't always have the answers to these modern day dilemmas. Growing up gay and disabled with cerebral palsy, he constantly felt like he was one step behind everybody else. Then the rude curveball known as your twenties happened and things got even more confusing.

Ryan spent years as a Millennial cliché: he had dead-end internships; dabbled in unemployment; worked in his pajamas as a blogger; communicated mostly via text; looked for love online; spent hundreds on "necessary" items, like candles, while claiming to have no money; and even descended into aimless pill-popping. But through extensive trial and error, Ryan eventually figured out how to take his life from bleak to chic and began limping towards adulthood.

Sharp and entertaining, *I'm Special* will educate twentysomethings (or other adolescents-at-heart) on what NOT to do if they ever want to become happy fully functioning grown ups with a 401k and a dog.

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## I'm Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves By Ryan O'Connell Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“Like a younger, gay version of Mary Karr's *Lit*, [*I'm Special*] earnestly details the complexities of [having cerebral palsy] while also making the kind of hilarious politically incorrect jokes you rarely hear thanks to today's outrage culture. Most importantly, O'Connell knows how to tell a story. . . . Like the best personal essayists, [O'Connell] possesses the rare talent of making the most obscure personal event relatable to any reader, and he writes like he talks.” (*Vice*)

“A special and hilarious star in a sea of same-y Millennial memoirists. I would call this book ‘fresh’ and ‘touching’ if that didn’t sound so dirty, so I’ll just say it’s great.” (Diablo Cody, screenwriter)

“O'Connell amassed a following for candidly blogging about his life on the Internet. Now he brings his sharp wit to a memoir about growing up gay and with cerebral palsy.” (*Time*)

“Ryan O'Connell is so funny that you might not notice that he’s a seriously good writer. His tales of twentysomething traumas—ranging from concealing a serious disability to surviving in a world of cutthroat internships and internet bitchiness—are made special (really) by his one of a kind voice.” (Emily Gould, author of *Friendship*)

"Impressive... addictive and easy to read." (*Publishers Weekly*)

“Ryan O'Connell has written a book that’s fun, funny, biting, confessional and necessary. It’s like the Bible, but gay. Well, gayer.” (Megan Amram, author of *Science . . . for Her!*)

“Wonderful... O'Connell’s life lessons are valuable, and his tone — which is as smart as it is smartass — is what distinguishes *I'm Special*.” (*Philadelphia Gay News*)

“Hilarious.... *I'm Special* is delightfully fun and... easy to read in one fell swoop.” (*Advocate.com*)

“This book is completely unique and painfully universal. Identifying yourself in Ryan O'Connell's writing is to understand that you may not be special, but you are human.” (Jake Shears, lead singer of Scissor Sisters)

“O'Connell finds humor in the very ordinary experiences of his generation.” (*Newsday*)

“Deeply revealing in the most casual manner.” (*Salon*)

“Brutal and delicious.” (*Readerly Magazine*)

### About the Author

Ryan O'Connell is a writer and professional feeler of emotions living in Los Angeles. He’s written for *Thought Catalog*, *Vice*, *The New York Times*, *Medium*, and other publications, as well as for MTV’s *Awkward*. *I'm Special* is his first book.

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## ✖ Preface

HEY, MILLENNIALS! YOU NEVER thought for one second that this world wasn't meant for you to use, to exhaust, to squeeze the juices out of, did you? Your whole life you've been given the privilege to fuck up, to phone in the most important moments, to sleepwalk your way to your college diploma, and throw love away like a crumpled gum wrapper. Everyone is responsible for your vague anxieties, relationship ADD, lack of direction, and crippling fear of intimacy. Everyone is responsible for you but you. So take a bow and give thanks to everything that has made our generation possible. Give thanks to the Internet, texting, Skype, Snapchat, Vine, Instagram, Grindr, and Tinder for making face-to-face communication obsolete and terrifying. Give thanks to the loneliness that radiates from a bright computer screen and the sour surprise that comes from having hundreds of Facebook friends and not a single person to go to dinner with. Give thanks to your parents, who wanted to give you more, more, more. They showered you with affirmations and praise since their own parents never did it for them. Being a baby boomer meant that when they fell and scraped their knees, they found the Band-Aids on their own. It meant that they could disappear with their friends for hours without having to check in with dear old Mom. If our parents present their love to us in HD, our parents' parents decided to go in a more lo-fi direction.

Some people believe that part of being a parent is being able to give their child what they never had, and if that's the case, this is what the baby boomers must've lacked: Parents who acted as a pair of helicopters, hovering over their children every second of every day. Parents who poked, prodded, and engaged in the careful use of "I" statements when upset. Parents who not only bought Neosporin for you but practically lathered you in it from head to toe. The definition of what it means to be a good mom or dad has changed, and now we're all paying a special price for it one way or the other. By trying to shield their children from the messiness of life, our parents have created a generation that is bound to step in all of the dog shit.

Even if your parents took a more hands-off approach to raising you, you still could find other ways to be acknowledged. Ever since you signed up for that free trial of AOL with a dial-up modem in elementary school, you've been encouraged to share every brain fart, every hangover, every boring Saturday afternoon, so you do it! You share! Your latest tweet / status update, "Beautiful weather today. Going to eat a tuna sandwich. YUM," received six "likes" from borderline strangers, which means that people really do want to know what you're thinking all the time. They might not know it consciously but deep down they crave it. It's like a drug. HIT ME. HIT ME WITH YOUR COMMENTARY ABOUT THE WEATHER AND LOVE FOR TUNA SANDWICHES, PLEASE. I NEED IT.

You're special because whenever you date someone, you get to list yourself as "in a relationship" on Facebook. Showing your friends and acquaintances that you've finished first in the rat race for love is like giving yourself a virtual hand job, and every time a frenemy stalks your page and sees that you're taken, a little bit of your cum gets in their eye.

You're special because you have so many awards. You participated in a slew of extracurricular activities, and after each one came to an end, you were bestowed a meaningless superlative like "Most Spirited" or "Best Sense of Humor on the Kickball Team." Everyone got an award—it was the original version of No Child Left Behind—but yours held a greater weight than all the others. Afterward, you'd run home and place your new award next to your kindergarten diploma and a trophy you received for having the best ant farm in the second grade and then just sit back and smile, knowing that you were on the right track to success. Because the person who wins "Best Sense of Humor on the Kickball Team" doesn't become a fuckup. No,

sir! They become astronauts, politicians, or, at the very least, a manager of a Sport Chalet. This was a sign that you were destined to do big things. Think about it. If you aren't going to be successful, who the hell is?

You're special because you have a blog. You're special because your father used to carry you to bed whenever you fell asleep on long car rides. You're special because your ex once made you a mixtape. You're special because you saw an Olsen twin at a concert once and she told you she liked your shoes. You're special because you get five OkCupid messages a day. You're special because an overweight balding man took your picture at a party and put it on his website. You're special because 212 people are following you on Twitter and you're only following 126. You're special because you did really well on the SATs and one of your teachers called you precocious. You're special because you grew up believing you could do anything you wanted and couldn't imagine thinking any other way. You're special because there are TV shows about you and your friends and because the New York Times won't stop publishing essays about twentysomethings. You're special because everyone is paying attention to your generation, wondering what kind of mark you'll make, and you like feeling noticed.

I know why you're special: because I'm special, too. In fact, if you looked up Millennial in the Urban Dictionary, you'd probably see a heavily filtered selfie of me. I've dipped my fingers in every cliché twentysomething pot imaginable. Helicopter parents who are obsessed with my every move? Check. A constant need for validation on the Internet? Check. An on-trend addiction to prescription pills? Sadly, check. I dated all the rotten boys, took all the internships that led to nowhere, drank all the wine, and swallowed all the drugs. I treated my life like it was a grand experiment, and then I had the audacity to be surprised when everything blew up in my face. Pretty dumb, right? Well, that's probably because, on top of being a typical young psycho, I'm retarded. No, really. I am. I was born with mild cerebral palsy (or, as I like to call it, cerebral lolzy), which means I walk with a limp and have little sprinklings of brain damage. So I'm not only special in the delicate snowflake kind of way, I'm also "riding the short bus" special! But despite my disability, I really am just like you. I'm someone who's trying to stop binging on poisonous penis and pad Thai delivery and learn how to actually, you know, love myself. It's not easy! Millennials have been told repeatedly that we're a giant failure of a generation and, unsurprisingly, many of us have started to believe it. But if you look back on history, you'll notice that every generation has been scrutinized and stereotyped—paging slacker Generation X and Reality Bites—so try not to sweat the criticism! Tell your insecurities to GTFO and just accept that our legacy might be a little un-chic. Once you do that, you can stop worrying about being the person the world expects you to be and start figuring out who it is you actually are. It may seem like an overwhelming journey, but I'll be right there with you. And if sharing any of my mistakes makes you feel less insane and alone, then I guess I don't regret anything I've done. Actually, that's not true. I regret running into oncoming traffic and getting hit by a car. But more on that later.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Sylvia Cunningham:**

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book titled I'm Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can smarter than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have some other opinion?

**Mary McClellan:**

In this 21st hundred years, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make these people survives, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that oftentimes many people have underestimated that for a while is reading. Yeah, by reading a publication your ability to survive increase then having chance to endure than other is high. For yourself who want to start reading a book, we give you this I'm Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves book as starter and daily reading book. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

**Willa Killeen:**

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**Danielle Rucks:**

Now a day those who Living in the era where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources in it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each details they get. How many people to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Looking at a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information specifically this I'm Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves book since this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the info in this book hundred percent guarantees there is no doubt in it everybody knows.

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