It is 1978 in the Twin Cities, and Kevin Doyle, a high school senior, is a marginal student in love with keggers, rock and roll, and unbeknownst to anyone else—a boy in his class with thick eyelashes and a bad attitude. His mother Eileen died two years earlier when her car plunged into the icy waters of the Mississippi River, and since then Kevins relationship with his father Patrick has become increasingly distant. As lonely women vie for his fathers attention, Kevin discovers Patricks own closely guarded secret: he had planned to abandon his family for another woman. More disturbingly, his mothers death may well have been a suicide, not an accident. Complicating the family dynamic is the constant meddling of Kevins outspoken Aunt Nora—who will never forgive Patrick for Eileens death—along with Patricks inability to stay single for very long. His loyalties divided between his father and his aunt, between his internal reality and his public persona, Kevin is forced to reevaluate his notions of family and love as painful truths emerge about both.

AUTHOR BIO: Brian Malloy is the development director for The Loft, the largest independent literary arts center in the U.S., as well as grants director for Open Book, a community center for the literary and book arts. He lives in Minneapolis. The Year of Ice is his first novel.

My Personal Review:
Brian Malloy tells his story with simple words but memorable, wholly fleshed-out characters. He puts us inside the mind of Kevin Doyle, a 17-year-old Irish boy in Minnesota in the 1970s, who is gearing up for his eighteenth birthday and adulthood. In reading this story, I learned not only about Kevins struggles to cope with late adolescence, but also about myself, as the story forced me to look back and re-examine my own late teen years. Im a 23-year-old young black man in Georgia who is reading this, so that should tell you something about the stories universality. However, dont get the impression that its a typical coming of age novel. Its hardly anything like the other books that have been put out there.

Apart from both being gay and both having been teenagers, I guess you could say on the surface-level that Kevin and I dont have that much in common. But, though our lives may have been lived quite differently, with different types of drama, I still see myself in this story. Malloys talent is that he writes the way a 17-year-old boy would actually think. In this way, he appeals to a broad audience.
Malloy helps bring back youthful, vibrant memories of what it was like to once live at that age. Feelings of school daze and invincibility pour off the pages. Kevin, as we shall find, it just like any other teenager, only hes a little bit different in way that will soon be big and wild for him. But dont worry, the story doesnt center too much time around him being gay. The author does well in giving him a whole life apart from that.

The novels material is appropriate for any 17-year-old, but it can be read by older adults. I dont want to give away the plot, but I will say this... It is one of the best novels Ive ever read. The characters seem real and not like their serving in token roles. The author surprises you with the turn of every page and you never know what to expect. There are times when I laughed, times when I cried, and times when I felt angry.

Malloy has remarkable talent and thank him for writing this book and allowing me to have this experience. Ill definitely be getting a copy of his next book, whenever that comes out.

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