



## Beulah Land

**Nancy Stewart**

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It's hard growing up queer, especially in the backwoods Ozarks. Pickup trucks are as common as gay bashing, and there are no safe spaces for people like Violette Sinclair. However, instead of another tragic tale of woe, *Beulah Land* is a brave, refreshing novel that offers a message of hope. Endurance in the face of hate, and an inherent pride in who she is, make Violette a memorable, inspiring character.

Violette has learned early that there's no point in feeling insecure about her identity. If she took even a moment to hate herself, or doubt who she is, she'd be buying into what everyone in Bucktown, Missouri, already tells her.

Although her family supports her, they can't fight everyone who spits on Violette. More often than not, she finds it easier to disappear into the background, keep her head down, and wait until she's old enough to leave. However, when the town threatens to overwhelm her entire family—whether it's recruiting her brother to cook meth, raping her younger sister, or planning to murder her mother—Violette can no longer consider isolation an option.

Nancy Stewart has produced a tough, courageous novel that belongs on the shelf next to young-adult survival stories like *Hatchet* and *Bridge to Terabithia*. Violette's determination to see justice done drives her to the brink of destruction or danger. However, Stewart keeps her risks and the day-to-day struggle of being queer and out as a young person grounded in reality. *Beulah Land* is an accurate portrayal of what it's like to grow up in a place where your very existence is challenged, as well as a reminder that the willingness to push on wins the day, every time.

*Beulah Land* is a much needed story of queer resistance and courage in the face of bigotry and intolerance.

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