

Forever Man

A. J. DeWall

Interlude Press (August 2014)

Softcover \$17.99 (300pp)

978-1-941530-00-9

Anyone who has ever rekindled a relationship will instantly respond to the feelings DeWall evokes between Ren and Cole.

Forever Man, by A. J. DeWall, is a beautiful, heart-touching story of love lost and found, centering around the unexpected reunion of Ren and Cole. They felt an attraction first in their Catholic boarding school as boys; fast forward almost a decade, and suddenly they reignite their intense friendship just when both of their individual relationships are turning in to something more.

Ren (named after the *Footloose* character of the same name) and Cole have always felt attraction to one another, but lives and careers and boyfriends have shifted their lives apart. On separate jobs in the same place, they come together one more time, and their real-life plans feel in the way of their overpowering love for one another.

DeWall has been writing fan fiction, as well as plays and nonfiction, as a ghost writer. She is a strong writer who is exceptional at creating sexual tension and emotion between Ren and Cole. “He’s half dressed, slipping one arm into his button-down shirt, when he notices Cole staring at him from the bed, arm curled around the pillow under his head. Ren blushes, wondering if Cole heard him sing in the shower. ‘I like watching you,’ Cole says. Ren smiles.” In that simple scene, DeWall powerfully shows the re-budding romance between the two.

This book could have easily been a cliché with little emotion, because of the rekindled love angle, but it stays poignant and fresh due to the two main characters. Both Ren and Cole are fully fleshed-out people with their own lives and interests when fate slams them back together—particularly Ren, as he struggles with his feelings for his current fiancée and Cole at the same time.

The reunion takes place in Santa Fe, where Ren is working on the design for a house interior and Cole has come to work with a well-known singer. The first sentence of the book immediately brings the reader into the hot, dry desert and the New Mexico landscape: “Ren Warner is not a fan of New Mexico—all of that brown, and tan, and more brown. And the heat. And those ubiquitous yellow chamisa bushes that assail the sinuses.”

Forever Man is a book for anyone, male or female, who has ever felt those intense pangs of rekindled love.

LYNN EVARTS (Fall 2014)

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