

Kosher Meat

Lawrence Schimel, Editor

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“The writers in *Kosher Meat* lay bare their souls to reveal their innermost thoughts, desires, passions, and anxieties about both sex and Jewish identity.” Schimel has put together a collection of ten essays and short stories that are diverse in nature, yet unified to the theme of the work.

Contributors range from award winning poet Michael Lassell to author and '70s gay porn star Rick Sanford. Schimel is a full-time author and anthologist who has published more than forty books. In 1998 his anthology *PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality* won a Lambda Literary Award. He is also a contributor to this particular anthology with his short story “The Minyan,” which describes Simon’s thoughts and reactions to participating in his first sex party with a group of men from his congregation. Simon finds himself glad to become part of something bigger than himself: “A Minyan of desire, men who no longer needed to congregate in clandestine secret to worship, but who could love and pray without shame.”

Lassell’s story, “My People,” compares and contrasts losses suffered due to the Holocaust and AIDS. Michael and David meet for the first time and end up sharing their thoughts and experiences while touring the Holocaust Museum.

Through their interaction they discover the need to live and love in the present. “Mein Yidishe Tate,” by David May, also explores the connection between two people, but with more of an erotic tone. In his story two lovers discover their secret language of desire—Yiddish. In “The Good Son,” Brian Stein relays what it is like to be in a “mixed” relationship. Patrick meets Noah’s family for the first time when returning home for his father’s funeral.

At times the impact of the writing contained in *Kosher Meat* can be lost on the non-Jewish reader, but fortunately there is a glossary of terminology contained at the back of the book.

Schimel has proven himself to be a talented editor by bringing experiences to the gay Jewish reader who may be feeling lost with the lack of representation in literature, as well as providing insight for the non-gay and non-Jewish reader into the lives of their lovers, friends, and family. Historically, gay men have focussed on the larger picture connected with the struggle for recognition and acceptance. *Kosher Meat* is an opportunity to learn some of the individual differences that make this community distinctive.

PAUL J. WILLIS (September / October 2000)

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