

Nets of Wonder

Robert Heylmun

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Genuine and intellectual, Nets of Wonder sojourns into a refreshing, realistic gay love story.

In *Nets of Wonder*, author Robert Heylmun traces the romantic life of Will, a gay man who comes out and comes to terms with his sexuality between 1968 and 2009. Through his successes and failures, Will learns what true love really is, and he moves from California to New Orleans and back to California in search of it.

Heylmun is a descriptive, passionate writer. From the first page of this literary romance, he draws readers into the world he has created for Will and his various paramours. In the first chapter, Will is moving into a new apartment with his wife, Ellen, and the discussion of the apartment immediately sets a cozy scene: “Will took a contented breath in this inviting room, envisioning his books lined up on those shelves along with his papers and school work strewn on the desk.” All of Will’s qualities are summed up in this short description; readers know much of what they need to know about him from that sentence.

There are many literary and cultural references incorporated into the book. Heylmun quotes heavily from Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet* and other works. There is much talk about music and composers. Once Will meets George in New Orleans, there are many intellectual discussions; and, one of the issues Will struggles with when he is with David, a long-time partner, is that sometimes their discussions are too literary for David, who is glad to be left out. Heylmun is obviously well-read himself; the book exudes the essence of an author writing what he knows.

The story begins when Will is just beginning his journey as a gay man. He is married, but he lusts after a male classmate at the university. When he acts on his feelings, he sets about a whirlwind of change in his life and the lives of others. These changes propel him into the gay world of 1968, a year ahead of the groundbreaking Stonewall Riots of 1969. Each failed relationship teaches Will another lesson, and he slowly develops into the confident, happily coupled man he is in 2009.

It is refreshing to come across a gay love story that isn’t focused on sex. There are very tasteful sex scenes in this book, but Will’s life and the lives of his gay friends do not revolve around sex, as is the case in many gay romance novels. Their lives include sex and their sexuality, but there are many other pleasures they partake in throughout the novel—food, music, company, and beautiful cities.

Heylmun’s book is a genuine, well-written, heart-wrenching, and heartwarming story of love, pure and simple.

LYNN EVARTS (December 9, 2013)

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