

## Night Creatures

**Jeremy Jordan King**

Bold Strokes Books (March 2014)

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Could vampires cure one of the modern age's most terrifying epidemics?

When Bryant moves to Manhattan, he is absorbed into the swinging 1980s gay scene— complete with bathhouse sex and bar romance. Yet behind all the fun, a then-nameless disease (AIDS) is gaining traction. The early segments of *Night Creatures* take us back to a terrifying era, and author Jeremy Jordan King renders them with dark, longing energy. But when his character contracts AIDS, he is cured by (of all things) sex with a stranger.

Even if the premise is sometimes silly, *Night Creatures* is always emotionally charged. It is a unique contribution to the growing corpus of YA-LGBT titles.

"So the Night Creature is reborn with a new purpose. He is saving man," muses one character. King's conflation of ancient evils with fresh ones succeeds on an emotional register, if not on a logical one. He writes of the "haunting dark spot in our histories" that AIDS deaths cause in unsupportive families. His imbuing of repressed grief with gothic energy feels appropriate, given the fear some families have of homosexuality.

And to clarify: *Night Creatures* is a YA novel—not middle-grade or younger. It contains explicit sexual situations and vividly wrought violence, and its themes, while often at odds with one another, are certainly for a mature palate. Overall, this is an engaging read, with some erratic plot turns and a few slow moments. King shows a great deal of creativity, if not restraint, in this work of fiction.

LEIA MENLOVE (Spring 2014)

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