

Raymond and Me

Dan Reynolds

FriesenPress (Mar 16, 2023)

(312pp)

978-1-03-915580-0

Raymond and Me is a captivating memoir about a storybook romance that weathered outside challenges.

Dan Reynolds's memoir *Raymond and Me* details the flourishing and at times burdensome experience of first love.

Told over the course of thirty-five years, the story begins in 1982 when Reynolds and Raymond first met at the horse track where Reynolds worked. The spark between the two men was immediate; a relationship rapidly ensued. The pair moved with quick intensity through their relationship, going to gay clubs, sharing vacations, and moving into an apartment together.

While they enjoyed their strong emotional and physical bond, there was concern about judgment of their relationship from the outside world, in particular from Raymond's father, whose devout Catholicism and conservative views led him to denounce homosexuality. Fearing his reaction, Reynolds and Raymond chose to hide their relationship from most of their family members, save for Raymond's sister, who supported and encouraged them.

Still, the men grew together over the next six years. A new opportunity arose that would require them to either relocate (thus confirming their relationship as partners who lived together) or separate and live different lives (their identities could remain concealed). Reynolds and Raymond weighed the importance of their relationship and decided how much they were willing to sacrifice for true love and its consequences.

Reynolds's recollections from his time with Raymond are almost always positive, emphasizing the joy of their relationship. There's one instance of homophobia and occasional fear of the disapproval of certain family members, but the book focuses more on the couple's closest circle, whose members were accepting of their relationship. These positive memories result in a warm story that's more about pure love than anything else.

The prose is accessible and clear, and reads like a novel at times; it includes some recalled conversations between Reynolds and Raymond as well. Not all of their conversations are contextualized for outsiders; rather, the book tends to focus on personally vibrant details within its memories and of-the-moment realities, some of which—without the benefit of emotional analysis—may feel extraneous to general audiences. Further, the couple's final choice, which upends expectations based on their previous attitudes and emotions, is undercontextualized; a sense of true resolution is somewhat absent. Still, this is a captivating memoir on the whole, with a central relationship that reads like a storybook romance.

Raymond and Me is a moving memoir about a queer relationship wherein true love weathered hatred and difficult decisions.

ALLISON JANICKI (June 23, 2023)

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