



Until September

Chris Scully

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Two men struggle with custody issues in this memorable story about moving toward self-acceptance.

In *Until September*, Chris Scully has composed the romantic, contemporary story of an unlikely pair of new parents.

Archer Noble and his counterpoint, Ryan Eriksson, have entirely different perspectives on how their sexual identity should shape their social roles. Scully crafts believable resentment and mistrust, creating friction that will inevitably catch flame.

Notorious media critic Noble has tasked himself with breaking free from a past filled with abuse, neglect, homophobia, and racism. Scully takes a big a risk in writing a character who inhabits the legacies of Canadian colonization, and it pays off. The unexpected complexity, dark history, and depth of this protagonist adds a new dimension to the story, bringing to light questions about how we learn who deserves to love and be loved, and raising the specter of what can happen to those deemed undesirable.

The devotion felt between siblings, or by parents for their children, is a strong force in this novel. While Noble wrestles with the decision of whether to accept guardianship of his recently-orphaned niece and nephew, or to give his deceased sister's friend Eriksson sole custody, it increases the weight of the relationship developing between the two protagonists. The affection each feels for these children, and their desire to do what will ultimately be the best for them, grows through the pages of the story. It is hard not to share the heartache of someone who wants to parent and feels it's not their place, or of someone who is expected to parent and doesn't believe they can do it well.

Until September raises questions about the risks and rewards of allowing oneself to change. Importantly, the drive to grow is not one-sided; even though the transformation Archer undergoes is more dramatic, both men are tasked with adaptation. Scully gives the characters serious challenges and, while maintaining a fairly light touch, develops motivation for Archer's journey that goes beyond conformity and into the deeper territories of self-knowledge, acceptance, and pride.

The sexual scenes depict the undeniable force of attraction between these two men with enough humor and sensuality to be realistic as well as erotic. *Until September* exceeds its genre, and is a satisfying and memorable read.

PATTY COMEAU (Spring 2016)

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