

Wanda's Tower

Robert Beatty

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The visceral novel Wanda's Tower follows two broken people through their carnal encounters—possibly toward love.

In Robert Beatty's erotic novel *Wanda's Tower*, a phone technician masters the art of one night stands and finds unexpected love.

On a family road trip when she's a child, Wanda overhears a passionate encounter in the next room of a rundown motel. That experience marks her with an indelible urge to control her life through the practiced routine of one night stands.

Wanda grows up to be a phone technician. She travels the country as one of her company's best, often completing multiday jobs in a matter of hours. She spends her off hours in tight control of her sex life: finding suitable men, enjoying passionate sex in safe locations, and leaving before dawn, with no trace for the men to follow.

Everything goes according to plan until Wanda finds a kindred soul in Chuck, who claims to be worn down by his job. Chuck hops from location to location, repairing farm equipment. Wanda's now perfected routine captures Chuck's imagination, and the two enjoy a night of intense, rigorous sex. The next day at work, Wanda discovers that Chuck is a fellow employee, and they're slated to work on a project together for the foreseeable future. Their passion never seems to dim, but Wanda itches to get back on the road and move on.

The novel goes into extreme detail when it comes to Wanda's sexual encounters, chronicling every step of each experience, from first meetings to Wanda vanishing into the night. The volume of details mutes the book's eroticism, though. Its sensual and visceral elements are buried beneath Wanda's monologues about being in control and anonymous; the backstories of her momentary partners leading up to their encounters; and other mundane information. As the book transitions from an erotic tale to a romantic drama, this overload continues.

Wanda's speech patterns are circuitous, and many of her monologues are interrupted by paragraphs' worth of unneeded backstory. Otherwise witty exchanges lose their power because of these diversions, including between Wanda and her potential partners, who are treated to the same unbroken speech: they do not need to know her name; she's leaving when she wants; she won't allow their exchanges to continue past the tonight. As she repeats herself, she sounds progressively less like she's in control of the situation.

Wanda is a limited heroine. Her primary traits are that she's a seductress and a technician; she only evolves at all after learning about her mother's health issues at home. This pivotal moment in the plot is obscured, though, by unnecessary scenes focused on Wanda's repeated sexual escapades. And the book includes two endings: one is ambiguous and comes without names, but leaves Wanda with a decision about her future; the second is more philosophical, and leaves Wanda in limbo.

With its visceral erotic scenes, the novel *Wanda's Tower* follows two broken people through carnal encounters, until they are confronted with the possibility of a romantic future together.

JOHN M. MURRAY (October 19, 2021)

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