



The Men from the Boys

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Jeff O'Brien - bright, good-looking, and inching dangerously past thirty, is caught between two generations, the Baby Boomers and Generation X. He's been with his partner, Lloyd, for seven years now, but when Lloyd announces that there's no passion left between them, Jeff is sent into something of an existential frenzy. Desperate not to end up alone, Jeff haunts the dance floor and roadside rest stops, finding both the sordid and the sublime in anonymous encounters. But it's love he's after, so ultimately it's his bittersweet romance in Provincetown with Eduardo, twenty-two and a vision of gorgeous, wide-eyed youth, that lingers in his mind and seems to hold the answers he seeks. This is a story of a man coming to terms with the accelerating ambiguity of his world, where men die young but old age is actively devalued. It is the story of gay life today, the life being led by thousands of men trying desperately to keep up, and to discover if anything really unites gay men other than desire. It is the story of how the truths of gay life are handed down from gay generation to gay generation. It is the story of what separates the men from the boys.

The Men from the Boys Details

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From Reader Review The Men from the Boys for online ebook

Andrew Chidzey says

This was a challenging and confronting book that covers broad themes which dictate the way our lives play out: love, friendship, passion, relationships, family and death. I found the style of writing added to the overall emotion that the various storylines evoked from me. I did find that my attitude towards Jeff, the central character, changed several times throughout the book as at times I could relate to him completely and at other times I found him frustrating and annoying. I expect that if I read this book at different stages in my life it would have different meaning for me and evoke a different reaction. Overall, the book is one that will stick with me for many years to come - it is one of those rare stories where one walks away with more questions than answers

Jon says

Really, really enjoyed this book. I started reading Mann's Where The Boys Are and kept hearing so much about Alister that I had to stop midway through and pick up the first book. Excellent writing, current and remarkably "real" for the circuit boy types...a must read for any gay (or straight) man...

Hendecam says

After finishing William J. Mann's novel, The Men from the Boys, I couldn't tell if I liked it or not. Yes, there are certain passages that clearly show Mann is (or, at least can be) a talented writer. Yet, there was a lack of any real depth with the characters and the plot.

The story centers around Jeff and Lloyd, who find their relationship falling apart once Lloyd exclaims that there's no passion left. The book jumps back and forth in time, alternating between a past summer in Provincetown and the present in Boston. This structure, which showed what was happening for the main characters at two very different, yet equally important times of their lives, worked well and is quite creative.

Jeff and Lloyd enjoy an open relationship, which might turn some off automatically. For me, it wasn't so much that they had an open relationship that left a bad taste, but, at times, it seemed like the author was writing an essay on why open relationships are better than monogamy; or, it seemed like he was really reaching to defend the idea that monogamy doesn't work. I can understand his argument, yet, like other ideas presented in the book, it didn't work to enhance the plot all that much. Instead of reading a good piece of fiction, I felt as if I was reading strung together essays on the nature of gay culture and relationships at times. He (not so) cleverly hides these essay-like moments behind long conversations between Jeff, Lloyd, and their best friend, Javitz, an older, mentor-like figure.

Another problem is with the main character, Jeff. While he's not completely insufferable, he's not the most likeable character ever created and doesn't seem to show any growth by the end of the book. He gets obsessed with young, attractive guys and argues that he sometimes falls in love with them for only a night. But, he seems incapable of describing his strong feelings beyond long descriptions of their sculpted abs and pecks. He's annoyingly superficial.

And yes, this youth and looks obsession in the gay community is something that exists and could be

interesting to write about ... however, it doesn't seem like Mann scratches the surface enough on any of this. There's so much more to explore behind the why of all of this, yet Mann doesn't do that at all.

Throughout the book, Jeff comes off as pretty whiny and dim as to why his relationship isn't working. As Mann seems to make an argument for open relationships, his story points out how many problems it can open up. In other words, he seems to be making an argument for open relationships while unknowingly showing the obvious problems that can arise with such a situation. At numerous points while reading the book, I felt like hitting Jeff on the head and saying, "Duh! Dude, what do you expect?"

Parts of the book are pretty cliché as well. Some characters, like Javitz, could have been really interesting if explored further. Pretty disappointing book overall.

Wendell Hennan says

An emotional read, touching and explaining so many gay life issues. Why gay couples "open" up their relationships, why gay men replace families with friends who understand them better than families, and communicate better with them than families. And perhaps most important of all, that as gays age and mature their passions become the waves of the ocean on a sunny day, the setting sun, no different than heterosexuals. A most lovely crafted story, accurately describing gay life in the 90's and making us all wish we had summered each year in Provincetown.

John-Fig says

I know that this book is like those films we love the first time we see them and then, on subsequent viewings, find them nearly intolerable. There is a sweetness that I took away from reading this book and I am not about to spoil it by rereading it and finding out that it is actually poor. Nope.

Chris says

Bought and read this soon after it came out one very fun party summer long ago in Provincetown, appropriately, and forgot about it until today. Was buried on my bookshelves. All of Mann's books are fun, realistic, erotic, quick reads, and have become records of gay life as it was before Grindr changed everything.

Brad says

this is my life... well, not my life but a quarter of the way in and the writing is almost exactly like what i think in my head. slightly uncomfortable but also comforting to know it isn't just my crazy brain that feels and thinks this way.

okay, took me a while. it wasn't horrible but it wasn't great. seemed more like a self-gratifying exploration than a good novel to me.

Johnathan Alesso says

Despite an unlikable protagonist and a lack of plot, I found heart in this book. Jeff is obnoxious and creates his own problems, but given the circumstances I can understand why. I had a difficult time feeling any sympathy for such a whiny, narcissistic, attractive man. Why he should be surprised why his ill-conceived plans blow up is a mystery, and unfortunately contribute to the only semblance of a plot arc this book has. His quasi-relationship with Lloyd is head-spinning and incomprehensible. One wonders whether the two simply love their own codependent misery. Fortunately, the side character lift the book back into readable territory. Javitz is smart and uplifting, as are the various other side characters. Perhaps the best character of all is no character at all - the Cape Cod backdrop is absolutely gorgeous. I fell in love with the descriptions of summer and winter, the zeitgeist of summer on the beach.

Ruddy says

I felt so gay reading this...and I loved it.

I think this was my first gay novel. Even though I could not really relate to any of the characters (aside from being gay), I found this to be a good summer read. It might seem a little soap opera-ish at first, but it really deals with a lot of relationship issues that could happen to anyone. .

Ricardo says

Definitely entertaining in a "look at the acts in the carnival" way. Being a gay man I can understand the life of a circuit boy but unfortunately I believe that they perpetuate the same thing they want the most: acceptance and respect. If they are the first ones to "discard" people who don't look perfect and treat them as lesser beings, how can they expect anybody else to treat them as equals?

Neet says

I read this book eons ago, I think it was a time when they still had bookstores. I read it several times, and it got to the point where the poor book was worn and missing pages. So, I happily purchased the book in the Kindle format. This should be told, is a 3 part series. We meet the MC, Jeff, a self-absorbed writer in his early 30's already complaining about lost youth. Jeff, is an likeable sort, selfish, always looking for the next trick, but in a 6 year open relationship with Lloyd. The book takes place in the 90's but, Jeff foolish high risk sexual activity is maddening. This is a man who has watched friends and lovers die of AIDS, but still has risky sex. He's also a man that gets jealous at a drop of a hat at Lloyd's tricks becoming serious with him, but has no problem falling in love during the summer with a trick. The trick on this occasion at a house that Jeff, Lloyd, and his friend, ex-lover, and mentor, Javitz split the cost in rent is a young 22 year old named Eduardo. Jeff doesn't mean to, but falls in love with the young man. Javitz, who is HIV positive, tries to warn the young man about what he can and can't expect from Jeff. I love the character Javitz, he's in his late 40's and activist, a former professor who has the wisdom and maturity the younger men lack. Jeff is so infuriating, and I won't say at the end of this book you'll like him better. Despite, an unlikable MC, there's plenty to like about this book .It's a good read and highly recommended.

Robert Dunbar says

I didn't get very far in, but that's quite enough of that. Revelation: having characters suffer and die from AIDS does not automatically provide them with depth. At some level, apparently, shallowness remains implacable. On the plus side, there is a great deal of sex in these pages, though of an oddly non-erotic variety, as though sections had been culled from some fruity Harold Robbins novel, *the tawny Bulgarian fingered my serape* sort of thing. A little of this goes an awfully long way.

Denis says

A really great gay novel that is both well written and extremely true to what being gay in the nineties meant. Mann is a much better writer than one could expect, a true author who does not just tell a story but write it carefully, with style, intelligence, and wit. His character are as believable as they are interesting, and it's difficult not to get attached to them and to understand what they go through. The two sequels are equally good, and the whole series really create a vast panorama of gay life that has true social and psychological depth.

Michael says

Much better than I was expecting

5amWriterMan says

I quite enjoyed this story. It was a hurdle at first, frustrated with Jeff's character and finding it difficult to immerse myself into the story but after the first 100 pages, I couldn't put the book down! I was compelled until the final period of the final sentence...and I wanted more. Looking forward to reading the next book in the series, "Where the Boys Are." :-))
