

***Strings Attached***

Nick Nolan

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Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (9/06)

Jeremy Tyler, at seventeen years of age, has a lot of issues on his plate. First, Jeremy, when he was a toddler, lost his father. Now there is a question as to whether or not it was murder. Then Jeremy's mother, who trapped his father into marrying her by getting pregnant with him, has a major addiction problem. She almost fatally overdoses and has to get sent away to a drug rehabilitation program. Jeremy is sent to live with his super rich great aunt and uncle. This sounds like the easy part, but he has to adjust going from poverty to wealth. Having lived in extreme poverty, Jeremy has to overcome his feelings of lacking self-worth. He also now has many expectations of greatness placed upon him because he is a "Tyler." During this time, Jeremy is also dealing with his attraction to guys. He denies his homosexuality and feels that if he meets the right girl, she will erase these thoughts and feelings. He does meet the perfect girl, but he still has these issues to deal with.

Jeremy is fortunate to have the family butler, Arthur, take him under his wing. Arthur is gay and recognizes that Jeremy is as well. Arthur provides support and guidance on many levels and is able to be a mentor to Jeremy. Jeremy's aunt and uncle definitely are not accepting of the idea of him being gay. They see it as a weakness and a character flaw. Jeremy's uncle also seems to be involved in illegal business activities. Jeremy's mother thinks that he was involved with his father's death. At first, Jeremy wants to trust the uncle, but then he begins to have his doubts too.

This novel was really enjoyable on many levels. First of all, the mystery surrounding Jeremy's father's death and the dysfunctional family issues make it a great story. Then Jeremy's discovery of his sexuality and how it affects his friends is also a compelling drama within itself. The author, Nick Nolan, does an excellent job of taking the reader inside Jeremy's head and his heart, as he tries to figure himself out. It is hard enough being a teenager, but when one also has to deal with the issues that attach themselves to being a child of an alcoholic, not being raised by a father, and sexuality issues, one really has a lot to overcome. Jeremy doesn't do it perfectly, but he does do it well and he tries to maintain his integrity and honesty along the way. Jeremy is really a good person.

Nolan has written this adult story with the underlying theme of "Pinocchio." I love how he incorporates references to Pinocchio's story into his own. Not having read Pinocchio in years, I missed many of the clues, but in a section on the author's notes at the end, Nolan fills you in. He also adds some special touches to show you that Jeremy has some contact with his dad on the other side. This adds to the richness of the story. I really loved this book and highly recommend it.