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Damn Love



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Synopsis

Set in San Francisco and North Carolina, the linked stories in Damn Love introduce us to a group of characters struggling with love in all its complicated forms, including a young doctor who treats heroin addicts, a newly married gay man who tries to reconcile with his mother after years of estrangement, a trio of physicists caught in a surprising love triangle, and a soldier who takes secrets with her to the Iraqi desert. Together, these stories report from the fault lines of American life, uncertain territory where identity, risk, and desire comingle, and where resilience is found in even the most flawed efforts to connect.

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Customer Reviews

"Damn Love" is out,in every sense-- gloriously out. Jasmine Beach-Ferrara’s first work is no longer a secret, and the long vigil of her early fans ends now in "Oohs" and "Ahs" reminiscent of the crowd at 4th of July fireworks.This bright collection of interwoven narratives evokes the complexity of first conversations in a new city; uncanny revelations of a friend’s past lives; the morning you realize that

your new love interest is your college roommate’s ex.Strung like the beads of a necklace, these free-standing narratives define the contours of their neighbors without making a complete reply. The design of the whole derives from the strength of each short but is larger than all of them in aggregate. The imagination at work behind these pieces is acquainted with human raggedness but is also steeped in grace, not absolution.Don’t wait to relish this collection. Share it with friends, and then join me in a vigil for Beach-Ferrara’s next work-- Is that Faulkner or O’Connor under her fingernails?

Damn Love is an interesting collection of nine stories. They are linked by placeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •they are mostly set in San Francisco and Durham, North CarolinaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •and by characters. A minor character in one story will be the protagonist in another. Each story, however, stands alone and can be read in random order. You don’t need to know, for example, that Weasel, the drug addict protagonist in the eighth story, is a patient of Ruth, the doctor protagonist in the first story. But because characters turn up in different roles in different stories, the book gains in richness and resonance.This is Jasmine Beach-Ferrara’s first book. She has an MFA from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers, but does not suffer from what I consider the MFA-disease: glorious sentences in stories that have no content (or about young people in dead-end jobs and dead-end romances). She is a minister in the United Church of Christ and the executive director of the Campaign for Southern Equality, which promotes LGBT rights in the South. On the evidence of Damn Love she has already had a full and interesting life.The main characters, male and female, are lesbian and gay. The stories evoke the ecstasy and pain of loveÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •love unrequited, love requited, love lost, damn love. They involve love between two women, between two men, between parents and children, and between siblings. And it’s never easy. Here’s how one story begins:"In early May, Doctors Reddi and Lombardo shocked each other by confessing that they had fallen in love with the same woman. That Reddi and Lombardo were best friends and that this woman, Erin Champion, had been married to another woman for six years meant that it would be a difficult season for all of them. They knew this, and yet they could not help themselves."In some stories, the main character tells her or his own story. In others, Beach-Ferrara uses the third person point of view. In all the stories, the characters struggle with what they want, what they can get, and what they have to settle forÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •just like real life.One of the stories I found especially strong in a strong collection is "Love the Soldier." Keisha, who is gay, is a cop and a member of the National Guard about to be deployed to Iraq with her MP unit. She and her partner are trying to finally put away a Durham drug dealer and when Keisha is off duty she is trying to deal with her parents. Her mother doesn’t want

her to go, and if she has to, to get office duty. Her father is a preacher who opposes the war. Toward the end of the story, Keisha and her mother (and 1,000 parishioners) attend a Sunday service in which her father preaches about the war and his daughter's involvement in it. The lesson: As one should hate the sin but love the sinner, hate the war but love the soldier. Powerful, persuasive, and moving.

I really enjoyed DAMN LOVE. The characters are easy to relate to and because of them I wanted to read one story after another. I also liked how the stories and characters overlap. I would and have recommended DAMN LOVE to friends. Just because most of the characters are gay/lesbian does not mean that DAMN LOVE cannot be appreciated by everyone. The author's style is refreshing and her description of people, places and events makes one feel they are there, either observing or participating.

In one collection, Damn Love manages to capture the heartbreak, confusion, loyalty, hurt, and outrageous optimism of romantic and familial love. For those among you who admire the craft of the short story form, Damn Love offers that satisfying mix of narrative that is at once complete and unresolved. Because the stories are loosely woven together, you slowly grow attached to the characters without even realizing you have done so. I found myself sighing throughout (oh joy! Oh heartbreak!) and delayed reading the last five pages by three days because I just didn't want it to end.

Beach-Ferrara has produced an engrossing group of interconnected stories. The strength of this book lies in the exploration of romantic and familial relationships from multiple angles, thereby revealing their human depth and complexity. The fourth story, "An Equal and Opposite Force" is an especially deft portrayal of the sometimes halting and humiliating nature of unrequited affections. By the end of the book the reader is left both satisfied and wanting more. Definitely recommend.

A moving, eloquent page turner. I just wanted more! Lovely characters, real, flawed, alive, wounded and strong. A beautiful look - from different angels - about the different kinds and depths of love.

These inter-woven, beautifully written stories will draw you in quickly and leave you wanting more by the end. You'll care about the characters and feel like a part of their world.

So far it’s hard to put this book down. Love her writing style and depth. Rich, creative and compelling writing! I feel like I’m actually there with her!

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