

REVIEWS

MEN ARE PIGS BUT WE LOVE BACON: NOT SO STRAIGHT ANSWERS FROM AMERICA'S MOST OUTRAGEOUS GAY SEX COLUMNIST
by Michael Alvear; Kensington, 2003; \$15 softcover



Got wood? Then you're a typical gay man. In knots about your wood? Then Ask Woody or, better yet, read *Men Are Pigs but We Love Bacon*, a collection of Woody Miller's popular sex advice columns, which appear in more than 20 publications nationwide.

For three years, syndicated gay writer Michael Alvear, who pens the column "Slouching Toward Gomorrah," has been pseudonymously writing the entertaining sex column "Ask Woody." Alvear is finally identifying himself as Woody and is "throwing caution to the winds the way many readers throw their legs in the air—with wild abandon."

"Ask Woody" was conceived three years ago when, ironically, gay sex columnist Dan Savage's syndicator refused to sell his column, "Savage Love," to queer papers. When the editor of *The Washington Blade* asked Alvear to write about sex, he replied: "Fine. Send me your cutest employees, and I'll get started."

Alvear has assembled hundreds of readers' letters and his hilarious answers into this anthology of useful tidbits on gay sex, dating and relationships. And, while his advice is medically correct, it is rarely politically correct, as Alvear delights in excoriating everyone from "Safe Sex Nazis" to "Monogamy Mommas."

In fact, while he's in favor of moderate drug use ("There are three things that men will always play with," he writes, "fire, drugs and themselves"), he is firmly opposed to obesity ("lard ass sex") because of associated health problems. He believes that everyone who is overweight puts their health at risk but that only "irresponsible" drug users do.

It's a curious blind spot and one that could damage his credibility with some readers. But, as Woody would say, "I only say I'm sorry when I've done something wrong, like forgetting my boyfriend's name, which I unfortunately tend to do when we're in bed."

Alvear's caustic, ribald humor comes through in *Men Are Pigs* ("Alcohol isn't a problem solver unless that problem is a potential trick having second thoughts"), and the book is divided by topic into chapters like "Safe Sex Doesn't Mean a Padded

Headboard" and "Kink: Putting the Fuck Back into Fucked Up."

Sometimes offensive, always delightful, *Men Are Pigs* should be required reading for all meat eaters.

—Floyd Sklover

WHERE THE BOYS ARE
by William J. Mann; Kensington, 2004 edition; \$16 softcover



William Mann's fourth book, *Where the Boys Are*, claims to be the first novel about circuit boys. Let's hope it's also the last.

The overlong story, coming out in paperback next month, takes place over the course of a year as a group of circuit boys ("my sisters," they call each other) travel from party to party across the country. Its first-person narrative revolves among the three main characters, Lloyd, Jeff and Henry—all virtually identical with similar things to say, leaving the reader to constantly refer back to the section heading to remember whose turn it is.

The plot (which, considering the length of the book, is remarkably thin) revolves around Lloyd and Jeff, ex-lovers who have gone separate ways but desperately want to be together again. Lloyd has purchased a bed and breakfast in Provincetown with a friend who turns out to be psychotic, and Jeff, a blocked writer, wants nothing to do with the inn or the friend. Meanwhile, Henry is in love with both of them.

At the same time that Lloyd and Jeff pine away for each other, they also desperately miss their mentor/lover Javitz, with whom they lived in a polyamorous relationship. (While Javitz died of AIDS complications, one suspects he was also bored to death by their narcissistic musings.)

Where the Boys Are is a particular disappointment after 1998's *Wisecracker*, Mann's page-turning biography of openly gay Hollywood film star Billy Haines. But, unfortunately, he's not a storyteller or a novelist. There's never any doubt in the reader's mind that Lloyd and Jeff will end up together again, and (worse) we don't care.

Mann has interesting theories about the circuit and gay life in general, which he presents as the interior monologues of his protagonists, but the dialogue never rises above the level of afternoon drama, and his characters fail to display the complexities his theories imply.

—FS j

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