



BOOK RESUME: Man o' War

BOOK SYNOPSIS

An achingly honest and frequently hilarious coming-of-age novel about an Arab American trans teen fighting to keep their head above water in a landlocked Midwestern town.

Man o' wars are not jellyfish, and River McIntyre is not happy. River doesn't know why they're unhappy—though perhaps it has something to do with the way they relate more to captive marine life at the local aquarium than to the people around them. That is, until they have a run-in with Indigo "Indy" Waits on the annual class field trip. Face-to-face with an affirmed queer person, River leaps out of the closet and into the shark tank. Literally. What follows is a wrenching journey of self-discovery that spans years and winds through layers of coming out, transition, and top surgery, promising a free life for River with so much more than happiness: A life that's full of trans joy and true love.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "A beautiful and relentless current of emotion." – *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "A thoughtful, nuanced exploration of what it's like to feel trapped—and how to make it out." – *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "McCarthy engages with every aspect of River's life to create an extraordinary story with incredible depth.... [F]erociously resists the idea that coming out is a simple or straightforward process." – *BookPage*, starred review

★ "In this intimate and deeply character-driven story, the exceptional writing exquisitely captures River's cutting but self-protective voice. McCarthy makes it clear that there is joy and love to be found in moving from the captivity of anger and pain to the liberation of being able to be exactly who you are. Equal parts heartbreaking and heartwarming, this is a poignant, affirming story." – *School Library Journal*, starred review

"This gorgeous story of self-discovery is a triumph." – *Buzzfeed*

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- A 2023 Stonewall Honor Book
- A 2023 ALA Rainbow List selection
- Vermont Green Mountain Book Award selection

Updated 3.25.2024

Penguin Random House

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*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

- Maine North Star YA Book Award selection
- *An Autostraddle* Best Book of the Year
- *A BookPage* Best Book of the Year
- *A Buzzfeed* Best Book of the Year
- A Chicago Public Library Best Book of the Year
- *A Kirkus Reviews* Best Book of the Year

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Discussion Guide](#)

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