



By The Currawong's Call

Welton B. Marsland

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A small town, a new arrival, and a love that is as undeniable as it is unlawful...

Victoria, Australia, 1891

Anglican priest Matthew Ottenshaw receives his first posting in tiny Dinbratten, two days' ride from his Melbourne home. Determined to honour his calling as best he can, he throws himself into the footy mad, two-pub town, navigating the dusty streets, learning the gossip, and striking up a friendship with Jonah Parks, the resident police sergeant and local bona fide hero.

A police officer and a priest often find themselves needed at the same place, and Jonah and Matthew's friendship deepens quickly, as they set about their business of protecting the bodies and souls of Dinbratten's residents. When a bushfire threatens the town, and Matthew's inexperience with fire endangers the church buildings, Jonah comes to the rescue, and a reckless kiss in the midst of the chaos takes their friendship to forbidden.

Neither Matthew nor Jonah can go back to the way things were before, but continuing their relationship puts everything at risk: their jobs, their friends, even their lives. In the outback town of Dinbratten where everyone knows everything about everyone else, how can they ever expect to keep a secret this explosive?

Praise for BY THE CURRAWONG'S CALL:

"Told with an old-fashioned, authentically Australian wink and a smile...*By the Currawong's Call* is also a tale with a very timely message: people in love will marry whether it's legal or not." - Australian author Kim Kelly

'What a lovely book! *By the Currawong's Call* is warm and sweet and sympathetic and respectful, with skilled and lovingly descriptive prose. A really satisfying read for a rainy day when you want to feel like there is love and hope even through trying times.' —Plain Brown, NetGalley

'a great love story in a historical setting ' —Sophie Wittlinger, NetGalley

'I loved this book. Amazingly moving, so very realistic.' —Jeannie Zelos, NetGalley

'This was beautifully written and full of love and hope.' —Ashley Broome, NetGalley

'The book is beautifully written and Matthew and Jonah's developing love has been depicted in a warm and very compelling way' —*Louise Faldon, NetGalley*

'The author gives rich descriptions of the environment and the time period.' —*Melissa Reuter, NetGalley*

'If you like Aussies and a forbidden love trope, this book is for you.' —*Book Reviews, NetGalley*

'I thought the story was really beautifully written. It is very evocative in the way that it transports the reader to life in the outback town.' —*Ije Books, NetGalley*

'I was rooting for these men to get their HEA. I read every beautiful word of this book and just soaked it all in.' —*Suzanne Brennan, NetGalley*

'I am a lover of historical romance and found this book to be a good addition to this genre.' —*Donna Blank, NetGalley*

'It was a good read, and very well written, I enjoyed it.

By The Currawong's Call Details

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Author : Welton B. Marsland

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From Reader Review By The Currawong's Call for online ebook

Cristina says

Compelling, romantic and even militant, By The Currawong's Call by Welton B. Marsland was a delightful discovery.

Set in a very small village in the Australian Victoria around 1891, the book chronicles the encounter and relationship between Anglican priest Matthew Ottenshaw and police Sargeant Jonah Parks. I won't give any details of the plot away here because it's really worth it to discover on your own the tentativeness, fears and ultimate rebellion that Matthew and Jonah enact upon in the story.

I think it'd be enough to say that both characters really touched my heart - Matthew, apparently more indecisive, is portrayed as honest and true to his deepest beliefs but also ready to reconsider things and decisions in the light of the momentous events that take place in his life after meeting Jonah. And Jonah himself is a true force of nature, his commitment to Matthew steadfast and unwavering from the very beginning.

If Matthew is the voice of caution and spiritual thinking, Jonah is a modern and rational thinker who's capable of assessing their situation - and the unwelcome intrusion of state and church into private matters - with a clarity and articulation that make him sound well ahead of his time. This slight anachronism appeared to me as a willing disregard for historical accuracy on the part of the writer and responds well to the militant tone that acts as an undercurrent throughout the novel and it's reinforced by the book's Epilogue that - although a bit contrived - celebrates the contribution of "invisible" queer people in the history and making of a nation.

Once Matthew and Jonah get together, there's really no doubt about the solidity of their love and all the uncertainty encroaching their relationship comes from the outside in the form of unwanted intrusiveness that could ruin not only their reputations but their entire lives. There's no shattering sense of guilt, no excruciating doubt in them - just quiet acceptance and constant growth and I really appreciated this aspect of their story.

The historical reconstruction of the Australian province and of Melbourne at the end of the 19th century is very interesting and really transmits a sense of stifling conformism and social scrutiny (despite some beautiful figures of rebellious women such as the Campbell sisters in Dinbratten or Myrtle in Melbourne) that makes you wish for a quick and definitive escape.

I really recommend this novel and Welton B. Marsland is a writer that I'll certainly continue to follow.

Shelby says

So I was with this story most of the way through, but the end went off the rails for me a little bit and it knocked it down a star. The final confrontation was a little absurd and the epilogue chapter didn't help the story one bit in my opinion. I would have much rather enjoyed a epilogue with the guys in their new life.

That being said I did like these two guys together. Matthew and Jonah were really sweet together. I liked

watching them find their way to each other and around Matthew's faith. Simple story really and I wish it had stayed that way, the emotional turmoil was enough for me.

Truuss says

5+++

Imagine : 1891 a small Australian town, a police officer and a priest, a love.... forbidden.

Extraordinary read. Written in such a way while reading I could easily imagine the whole picture, the noise, smell...included all the feelings...

It was more than beautiful it was exquisite..the way of writing was deep emotional, sometimes desperate because of those circumstances.

Both kind and free spirits, understanding each other's opinions.

In a thoughtless moment, after some exhausting work against fire, in the back of the church father Matthew kisses his friend Sergeant Jonah and Jonah deepens it with his own mouth.

After that Matthew withdraws and it takes some time to reconnect...

Jonah is just so delicious shocking blunt and open toward Matthew....and Matthew....opened up instead of closing down and that was delicious too.

There is no hurry in this read. The steps they made...the realization of little endearing gestures were just so intimate, I felt sometimes like a voyeur and held my breath...

There were endearing funny parts I laughed and chuckled again and again.

I will not start about a sore face and a certain beard...and a falling helmet

‘That’s a lot of bloody buttons.’ ‘Thirty-nine,’ Matthew confirmed. ‘One for each of the Holy Articles.’

Always easy going, kind and humorous together they fit perfectly... equal in everything.

They explored each other bodies thoroughly and were blissfully at every discovery.

The love between them getting stronger and stronger, was so so right and beautiful....

I cried my eyes out at the end, thank you for giving them a HEA. I would not survived my broken heart.

It was an outstanding, overwhelming good written story. A diamond between all the books I read. All the stories entwined through this journey were just so well done.

This whole journey just took my breath away.

Their love, forbidden by law but, so right for human kind.

I can't say it enough.....Highly yes HIGHLY recommended.

Kindly received an ARC from the publisher through Netgalley.

K.J. Charles says

I tweeted about how I wanted historical romance that wasn't UK/US, and this was one of the first books

recced to me, a m/m set in 1890s Australian outback town. Local policeman discovers he's bi, new priest who already knows he's gay but has never acted on it. (Needless to say author doesn't use modern terms.) Both white, strong sense of how white Australian-ness is a very new thing still.

I really enjoyed this overall. Matthew, the priest, is a lovely character, compassionate but clear-sighted and hard working, courageous and honest. I adored his spiritual journey, as he makes peace between his sexuality and his faith without denying one or losing the other; the sequence where his dark night of the soul transmutes into a new certainty of God was beautifully done. I didn't like Jonah's role in this plot strand so much, in that he comes across at a couple of points as a mouthpiece for a familiar-to-moderns set of arguments against Christian homophobia. Not a bad thing in itself, but could have been integrated a lot more subtly. Otherwise Jonah is a lovely character, plain spoken, practical, and straightforward about who he is and what he wants, so it's a shame the editor didn't shake those few sequences up a bit more.

I thought the setting was very well done. It had a ton of small-town atmosphere and a sense of the outback and touched on racism against indigenous people and from white immigrants to Chinese immigrants. However, once Jonah and Matthew get together the centre of the story becomes a string of love scenes--I say this rather than sex scenes, because their relationship builds emotionally and physically at once--and it felt like we were contracting down to them in a room. That's probably exactly what the author intended, because as the story spools out, we realise that law and bigotry will indeed cut them off from the town around them, and their true lives can only really be the two of them in a room. So, that works, but I slightly regretted losing the wider context just because it was very well done and interesting.

The endgame here is brilliant. Serious spoilers follow. (view spoiler)

One thing I didn't like: an epilogue, a transcript of a reality TV show with a famous celebrity descended from someone Matthew and Jonah saved doing a genealogy programme and finding out about them. It feels like the author planting a flag against the erasure of LGBT people from history and I couldn't agree more with that as a principle, but it didn't work for me as an artistic decision here. It felt a bit obtrusively point-making in the way the religious debate segment did, and I think the author could have trusted the character and story to do that work in both cases without spelling it out.

Overall a strong and interesting m/m histrom, as you can see because I seem to have written an essay, and I will be there for what the author does next.

Giedre says

4.5/5

By the Currawong's Call is a surprise hit of a historical romance between an Anglican priest (Matthew) and a police sergeant (Jonah), set in a tiny town not far from Melbourne. The year is 1891, so the growing romantic relationship between the two has to be a secret for obvious reasons. It's no wonder *By the Currawong's Call* is rather a quiet romance. It slowly sneaks up on you. You start caring for Matthew and Jonah, whose differences make them compliment each other in a beautiful way, and then you can't help but root for them with everything in you. I thought the ending/epilogue to their story was particularly well done. It's satisfying without losing sight of the realities of that time in history. While I wish the writing could have been a little bit less episodic in places, I really quite loved this book.

Rachel says

6/1/18 Currently 99c via Amazon US <https://amzn.to/2lIMoxp>

5 Stars

Consider me wowed and wooed by this lovely story. “By The Currawong’s Call” is author Welton B. Marsland’s debut novel, and it was just awarded the **Bi Writers Association’s 2018’s Bisexual Book Award for romance**.

“By the Currawong’s Call” is set in a small 1890s Australian outback town and features a police hero who discovers he’s bisexual, and an Anglican priest who is gay.

This is such a gentle, warm, and hopeful story. The small Victorian country town setting is fascinating, and there is a real sense of history and place shining through the narrative. At the start of the story, both reader and newly arrived Anglican priest Matthew Ottenshaw are given a tour of the tiny town by the resident police sergeant, Jonah Parks, as he goes about his daily walking patrol of town. Visiting the blacksmith (the town is too small to have a local doctor), the general store, the hotel/pub, and the police station (“cop shop”), and meeting the local residents, charmed the historical romance reader in me with all the interesting historical flavor.

Both MCs are admirable characters, and their burgeoning friendship is a delight to watch unfold. They connect right away, and I enjoyed seeing the plain-spoken and blunt Jonah engage with the more cultured and thoughtful Matthew. Neither man has been in a romantic relationship with another man before. The romance is slow burning, but once the two men decide to explore a sexual relationship, their clandestine meetings become passionate, sensual, and loving.

“Are you truly saying that I’m what you want for yourself? That I could be your ... happiness?”

Both Matthew and Jonah are broadminded, liberal, forward thinking characters who demonstrate tolerance and compassion for others. Religion is a strong element in the story, but it does not overshadow the romantic narrative. Matthew has deep religious convictions, and his romance with Jonah forces him to re-examine and, eventually, make peace with his sexuality and his faith.

The HEA is slightly bittersweet as both men are forced to make compromises with their dreams, but I was smiling and a bit misty eyed at the close of the story. This is a romance that I look forward to revisiting as a lovely comfort read in the future.

Highly recommend.

Ije the Devourer of Books says

Beautifully told and evocative.

It is the turn of the 19th century in a small Australian outback town. The Reverend Matthew Ottenshaw has arrived in Dinbratten to lead the local parish church. Life in a small outback town is new for him but he is determined to work hard and be a compassionate priest. Matthew is determined to do right by his parishioners and he feels blessed to be fulfilling his vocation. He busies himself getting to know the town and its people and one of the first people he meets is the local police constable Sergeant Jonah Parks.

Jonah Parks is a local hero. He is a larger than life character and stories abound about his exploits. Jonah strikes up a friendship with Matthew and helps Matthew settle in. As time passes they develop a firm friendship, watching footy together, drinking together and having deep conversations together, but it is when they fight a bush fire together that they realise there is a more between them than a good friendship.

Same-sex relationships are illegal in 19th-century Australia and yet these two men embark on a gentle romance which is both comforting in its simplicity and dangerous, putting both of them at risk of imprisonment and losing their careers should they be discovered.

Neither man had ever envisaged life with another man. For Matthew his faith prevents this and for Jonas homosexuality is not something that he has ever really dwelled on. As the two men explore the depth of the feelings they have for each other, they realise that they both want much more. They continue to develop their friendship but in the deep of the night Jonas and Matthew explore their attraction for each other. Knowing that this is illegal Jonas always makes sure he leaves Matthew's home at the call of the Currawong birds at dawn.

Despite this beautiful but gentle relationship both men are aware that they need to hide their feelings for each other. Their relationship will always need to be a secret and they realise that they have to take steps to change their lives if they are to have a future together.

I really enjoyed this story. It is a gentle and slow developing romance. It is your quintessential friends to lovers story but it takes a realistic view of both men as they think about what this could cost them should they be discovered. Matthew and Jonas have to decide whether this is a love that is worth sacrificing for and what it is that will need to be sacrificed.

I thought the story was really beautifully written. It is very evocative in the way that it transports the reader to life in the outback town. Both men serve the inhabitants of the town, sometimes risking their lives for the residents there but as they wrestle with their attraction for each other they both realise they are not prepared to sacrifice their love for one another. Matthew wrestles with his faith and Jonah with his duties to the town but is there really a future for an illegal and hidden relationship in small town 18th century Australia?

The story is told realistically but without angst. I enjoyed this because the reader gets to experience the ups and downs of the hidden relationship over time and all of this is set within the context of life in a small outback town. It is interesting to read although there are a few tense moments here and there. It is a lovely story and not overburdened by unnecessary sex scenes. Instead the sex scenes actually move the story along.

I also really appreciated the way the author portrays Matthew as a priest. I am an Anglican priest myself and I loved the way it just felt so realistic and integrated with Matthew's person. The whole issue of faith wasn't exaggerated with the 'homophobic preacher yelling from the pulpit', neither was it dismissive with the character giving up on faith. Instead it was a slow steady journey to an integration of faith and sexuality. I loved this because it is what I see in the lives of so many people and colleagues around me. Even though this would have been harder in 19th century Australia, I enjoyed reading about the struggles Matthew had and the way he groped and grappled until he managed to come to some form of peace.

At the end I really wanted to know what happened next. I really wanted more. I wanted to know about their lives afterwards. I guess I shall just need to let my imagination create that for me but a follow up novella would also be nice (big hint to author).

I loved these characters. The characterisation in the story is rich. Jonah is a bold man, a loud local hero but compassionate and caring. Matthew is a quiet reflective man who thinks deeply and has doubts but who is also quite brave and determined to do right by everyone. The writing style is also evocative bringing to life the sense of living in the Australian outback. The writing gently drew me in to the lives of both men and I found myself as I read hoping for the best for them. It is a truly beautiful story but also a very satisfying read. This is the first time I have read anything by this author and I am so glad I did. It is beautifully told and very enjoyable.

Copy provided via Netgalley in exchange for an unbiased review.

Tess says

4.5 stars

I really enjoyed this historical! Felt very authentic to the time. A nice slow-building romance with some steam. Also, no unnecessary drama or plot machinations!

Plainbrownwrapper says

I received an eArc of this book through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

What a lovely book!

By the Currawong's Call is warm and sweet and sympathetic and respectful, with skilled and lovingly descriptive prose. A really satisfying read for a rainy day when you want to feel like there is love and hope even through trying times.

I enjoyed most everything about this book, starting from the very first line:

Two crows sat on the front gable of the little weatherboard church, telling each other terrible jokes.

I knew right then I was in for a treat. :-)

This is a story set in small-town Victoria, Australia, in the closing years of the 19th century. Life is lived at a slower pace, and everyone knows everyone else's business. The narrative voice fits the story perfectly --

gentle, quiet, descriptive. And although some dramatic events occur throughout the story, there's not a lot of angsting going on -- with a few exceptions, the characters just get up and do what they need to do.

Speaking of the narrative voice, I was struck throughout by the warmth, sympathy, and respect that shines through the author's words. Marsland obviously cares about the characters, both the MCs (Matthew and Jonah) and the secondaries, and it shows in the way she tells her story. I was especially struck by that gentle and respectful tone in the love scenes -- I won't call them sex scenes, because they were much more than that. Sadly my ereader trashed the bookmarks I tried to save, so I won't provide any specific quotes, but they were very satisfying to read.

I only have a couple of smallish complaints. First, the discussions about homosexuality in the Bible between Matthew and Jonah were too facile and ignored important and relevant passages, which I found irritating because Matthew, as a priest, would have been well aware of them. Second, (view spoiler) was too convenient, and made things much too easy for them -- I thought it stole from the dramatic tension (view spoiler). And third, while the epilogue was interesting, I'm not sure it really worked dramatically -- its abrupt shift in tone and viewpoint was jarring, and we still didn't (view spoiler). I wanted more closure there.

But those considerations didn't ruin the book for me at all. Good book, lots of warm fuzzies. I'll be looking forward to whatever Marsland writes next.

Rachel says

6/1/18 Currently 99c via Amazon US <https://amzn.to/2IlMoxp>

5 Stars

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This is such a gentle, warm, and hopeful story. The small Victorian country town setting is fascinating, and there is a real sense of history and place shining through the narrative. At the start of the story, both reader and newly arrived Anglican priest Matthew Ottenshaw are given a tour of the tiny town by the resident police sergeant, Jonah Parks, as he goes about his daily walking patrol of town. Visiting the blacksmith (the town is too small to have a local doctor), the general store, the hotel/pub, and the police station ("cop shop"), and meeting the local residents, charmed the historical romance reader in me with all the interesting historical flavor.

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The HEA is slightly bittersweet as both men are forced to make compromises with their dreams, but I was smiling and a bit misty eyed at the close of the story. This is a romance that I look forward to revisiting as a lovely comfort read in the future.

Highly recommend.

Joyfully Jay says

A Joyfully Jay review.

5 stars

Some of you may remember me posting my excitement when I first heard about this book a couple of months ago. It was pitched to me as “Thornbirds meets Brokeback Mountain” and that is pretty much all it took for me to snatch this one up immediately. Sigh. I still remember fondly watching the Thornbirds and swooning over the handsome priest, Father Ralph, caught in forbidden love. So I was curious to see if this story would evoke those same feelings of sweeping romanticism as that movie, and I have to tell you, I was completely blown away. I finished this story with the mother of all book hangovers, and I still get an emotional pang just looking at the cover and thinking about this book.

First off, I can not say enough about the writing. The story is listed as Welton B. Marsland’s debut novel, and I am just blown away by the beautiful, evocative writing. I felt transported in time to this tiny rural town. Marsland just brings Dinbratten and its people to life, and I could feel the rhythms of this small community, isolated in the Australian bush. There is a lushness to the writing, a sweeping, lyrical feeling to the story that just drew me in and kept me captivated. I wanted to just wrap myself up in this book and savor every moment.

[Read Jay’s review in its entirety here.](#)

Helena Stone says

Every now and again I stumble across a book that takes me completely by surprise in the best possible way. *By the Currawong’s Call*, was such a book for me. It was so very well written, and brought me a touching, and beautiful story with such apparent ease, and through such clear images that I’m still in awe now, days after finishing the book.

Matthew and Jonah are both wonderful characters. Neither of them are perfect, but both of them are the sort of men you'd like to count among your friends. And together they work, despite their different backgrounds and outlooks on life, death, and religion — or maybe because of those differences?

This is the story of these two men, but mostly Matthew, through whose eyes we're experiencing events, coming to terms with something they never expected to have to deal with. And of course, with Matthew being a priest, his problem is even bigger than 'just' indulging in an illegal relationship. He somehow has to reconcile his faith, his view of God and religion, his visions for his life, with this love he feels for Jonah.

"We are a wonder together, Matthew thought. An absolute wonder."

And yet, *By the Currawong's Call* is anything but an angst-driven and drama-filled story. Of course, if ever there was a time and subject matter which would make a (very) angst story-line acceptable, even in my eyes, this is probably it. And yet, the author managed to avoid that trap and provided me with a story in which issues are by no means swept under the carpet or ignored, but aren't drawn out either. Problems are dealt with, solutions, as elusive as they may appear, are found. In fact, While both the reader and Matthew and Jonah are constantly aware of the risks they are taking as a result of giving into the attraction and feelings between them, for most of the story, that's not where the tension comes from. Until very late in the story, third parties are only a potential, but never a direct, threat. If ever a story proved that love will find a way, this is it.

In short, *By the Currawong's Call* is a beautiful, understated yet evocative, and very memorable story. Welton B. Marsland will be added to my list of authors to keep an eye out for.

Jan says

Can't get into this.
Throwing the towel @37%

Jules Lovestoread says

4.5 stars. Really, really gorgeous story. I loved both Jonah and Matthew so much. <3333 Full review coming to www.thenovelapproachreviews.com !

The Novel Approach Reviews says

4.5 Stars

I knew this book was going to be special when I first saw the cover and read the blurb a few months ago. Welton B. Marsland was a new-to-me author, and I believe *By the Currawong's Call* is their debut novel, but I just had a really good feeling about it. And I was right. *By the Currawong's Call*, set in 1891 rural

Australia, is a gorgeous story of forbidden love, and the goodness of these two men, Sergeant Jonah Parks and Father Matthew Ottenshaw. It's a lovely, smart historical, with a total Thorn Birds vibe, and it was fantastic.

I absolutely adored both main characters. Jonah is truly the salt of the earth. A true, small-town hero, he is loved and respected by almost all who know him, and it's obvious that he cares for the people of Dinbratten. Originally from Astoria, Oregon, Jonah ended up in Australia after his father went there in the gold rush. He didn't have success as a prospector, but, fortunately, was good at cards and was able to send for nine-year-old Jonah and his mom. I chuckled when Jonah told Matthew that his family established itself in Australia on the proceeds of gambling. Jonah is an excellent policeman, extremely bright and astute, and a people person; all good qualities to have in his vocation. And, he is also very forward thinking, which was rare for the time, and someone in his position, but, of course, helped open him up for his relationship with the town's new minister.

Matthew came from nearby Melbourne, obviously much larger than Dinbratten, but loved his new posting and his small church in the little town. As an Anglican priest, he was more open-minded than his Catholic peers, but aside from the occasional drink—perhaps a bit more than occasional once he became friends with Jonah—he was a fairly pious man. He cherished his relationship with God, and loved performing his duties and helping the people of Dinbratten. So, it came as a shock to him when his relationship with Jonah became more than simply friendship, but he felt no guilt at what the two of them were doing together. He never felt any shame, or felt that it was wrong. He, of course, felt fear—they both did—as the things they were doing were illegal, after all. But, they both decided early on that they were willing to risk everything to be together.

“Fuckin’ hell,” Jonah murmured, giving a slow shake of his head. “What we’ve got ourselves into, eh? Pillars of the bloody community and look at us! A right pair.”

Matthew did have a moment, after a particularly heated night with Jonah, where he freaked out and thought he felt a hole in himself where God had been; but, after some heavy reflection, realized that's not what he had experienced at all. I loved this:

The absence within him that scared him so the night before was no longer devastating. He had merely experienced change. He was a good man, and the God he knew and loved would recognize that. He hadn't lost anything but his fear.

The pacing of the story is perfect. Marsland expertly takes us through the stages of the relationship, and I love where they end up. The setting is also so wonderful. I keenly felt both the place and the era. And, there were two key subplots in the story that were very well-executed and intriguing. My only point of criticism would be regarding the epilogue. It was a cool idea, and I appreciate what the author was trying to do with it, but for whatever reason it didn't entirely work for me. And, I thought it ended rather abruptly. But, honestly, that's a minor complaint compared to what was overall an amazing and wonderful story.

Definitely check this one out, guys. I wholeheartedly recommend it. I'm such a huge fan of this book, and can't wait to see what this author brings us next.

Reviewed by Jules for The Novel Approach
