



Lost Boi

Sassafras Lowrey

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Lambda Literary Award finalist

In Sassafras Lowrey's gorgeous queer punk reimagining of the classic *Peter Pan* story, prepare to be swept overboard into a world of orphaned, abandoned, and runaway bois who have sworn allegiance and service to Pan, the fearless leader of the Lost Bois brigade and the newly corrupted Mommy Wendi who, along with the tomboy John Michael, Pan convinces to join him at Neverland.

Told from the point of view of Tootles, Pan's best boi, the lost bois call the Neverland squat home, creating their own idea of family, and united in their allegiance to Pan, the boi who cannot be broken, and their refusal to join ranks with Hook and the leather pirates. Like a fever-pitched dream, *Lost Boi* situates a children's fantasy within a subversive alternative reality, chronicling the lost bois' search for belonging, purpose, and their struggle against the biggest battle of all: growing up.

Lost Boi Details

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Author : Sassafras Lowrey

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From Reader Review Lost Boi for online ebook

K says

4.5 stars. I really loved this book and my only complaint is the editing. That's it. I might eventually relent and give this one 5 stars.

I am pretty sure it's impossible to give any spoilers for this book since it's basically an extremely clever retelling of the Peter Pan story through the world of queer/transgender leather scenes. It makes sense why Jack Halberstam blurbed the book, you know? This kind of reading gives me hope for the world of queer literature, which often seems really... well... melodramatic. This book packs an emotional punch--more powerful than J. M. Barrie's original story ever did. I know plenty of transmasculine bois who refuse to grow up and charm people into their "packs" or "families."

So thank you Sassafras Lowery. This book was an absolute treat.

Wesley says

God, I wanted to like this book. I really, truly did. As a queer transmasculine person, I've been dying for a novel involving queer/trans characters that aren't the classic "LGBT narrative" of the hardships of coming out and being abused for their identity and whatnot. I've wanted a book that allows characters like myself to have our own stories and adventures.

So of course I picked up this book in excitement. However, I quickly found that it wasn't for me. I found the "Mommy/little Boi" sexual aspect very uncomfortable, as well as the undisclosed ages of Pan and his Lost Bois. Much of the dialogue, obviously meant to fit in with the Peter Pan universe, was hard to take seriously as it came off as very unrealistic.

I wanted to like this book very much despite the D/s dynamic not being my forte, but I feel as though it fell short in a lot of ways and I just hope that it will help pave the way for other genre books involving trans characters that is not so niche.

Lark Benobi says

The blurbs on the back of *Lost Boi* seem to mostly focus on the anthem-like qualities of the novel. And the novel -is- an anthem in that it depicts a world where everyone is queer and everyone celebrates their queerness, or even takes it for granted as the way things are in Neverland.

But celebration of identity was only part of the "Neverland" metaphor for me. There was also a dark and unsafe quality to the Neverland metaphor when it's transplanted to a queer context. The "lost bois" in this novel are runaways, just as they are in Barrie's original Peter Pan story. But in a queer context, a novel about runaways also feels like an unflinching nod to the truth, that queer/trans teens make up a disproportionately large percentage of runaways and homeless youth. Wendi and John Michael are in high school at the beginning of the novel when they run away with Pan. They are still in the foster care system--so, under 18. And while the character of Pan (never "Peter Pan") is depicted as ageless, as in the original material, he feels older to me. He feels predatory. He's the only character who is called by the pronoun "he." I kept imagining

the hairy half-goat god Pan, not the little boy in green from the Disney version, and not a "boi" either. While on one level Pan acts as a guide to a world where queerness is fully celebrated, on another level he, and Neverland, felt to me like metaphors for a real-world reality where young queer runaways are in constant danger of being sexually exploited.

I have to say this was obviously my very individual read of the text. It felt gritty and disturbing and threatening to me, as well as celebratory. For me, the entire read vibrated between these two interpretations-- both a celebration of identity, and an acknowledgment of how unsafe it is to be queer. The submission/dominance themes that occur throughout the novel felt like another reflection of this dichotomy, and they increased my sense of vulnerability as a reader. This novel is an exploration of how, in the act of accepting your identity, you're also accepting that you're living in a hostile world. The characters in *Lost Boi* love their life, and they love one another. But even in Neverland it's dangerous to be queer.

Glenn Sumi says

There's always been something intrinsically queer about the Peter Pan story, from its androgynous title character – played by a woman in the stage adaptation – to its testosterone-fuelled lost boys vs. pirates battles, not to mention the campily outfitted, moustachioed villain, Captain Hook.

But Brooklyn-based writer Sassafras Lowrey takes things to the entertaining extreme in *Lost Boi*, a queer punk BDSM reimagining of the J.M. Barrie tale that says as much about gender fluidity as it does the disenfranchisement of queer homeless youth.

In Lowrey's unnamed urban landscape, Neverland is a rundown squat inhabited by Pan and his lost bois – each of whom was orphaned and/or thrown out of home. Occasionally they engage in some playful sparring with the neighbouring leather pirates, which includes flying – i.e., being bound and strung up to have sex – and any number of role-playing games. And then there are their marginalized comrades, the Mermaids, a group of femme prostitutes who work the lagoon. Everyone tries to avoid the seductive jaws of the Crocodile, a menacing euphemism for heroin.

When Pan meets Wendi at a spoken-word night, he convinces her to come to Neverland to become a Mommy to him and his bois. This upsets the balance of power, and provides the book with its only narrative tension.

While *Lost Boi* is occasionally disorienting and flat – so many characters introduced at once! too much telling rather than showing! – Lowrey subtly interweaves fantasy elements with harsh reality. There's an especially strong look at how difficult it is for homeless people to integrate into so-called normal middle-class society.

And there's no judgment about gender and sexual activity. The BDSM scenes are cleverly written so a lot's left to your imagination. At heart, the book's about living among people who accept and understand you for who you are, not who you're supposed to be.

Even Disney would approve of that.

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Originally published in *NOW Magazine* here

Jess says

You guys. I think this book completely ruined my childhood. And I'm not sure that's a bad thing. *At all.*

Also... I am suddenly, *painfully* aware that I am one vanilla, hetero, prude, married, cisgender person. I might be too much of all of those things to have been completely emotionally and psychologically prepared for this book. But again: I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. Reading this queer, punk, contemporary retelling of *Peter Pan* was a bit like getting thrown in the deep end of a pool full of Tabasco flavored ice cream, dildos, and literal mermaids. It was weird and wonderful and slightly uncomfortable and sweet and I'm pretty sure I lost another form of virginity through the experience.

But I'm totally burying the lead. Because this is a QUEER, PUNK, CONTEMPORARY *PETER PAN!* And that makes *so much sense!* Like, the kind of sense that makes you feel kind of dull for not thinking of it sooner. The metaphor is frighteningly, brilliantly organic and natural. And that's Sassafras Lowrey's real genius.

Let's get one thing out of the way: if you are easily shocked... maybe give this one a pass. And if you are at all uncomfortable with or disapproving of people of atypical gender identities and sexual orientations, then definitely give it a pass. Actually you know what? If you fall under the latter category, then I don't even want to know you so you can just see yourself out of my Goodreads review at this time. Thanks much.

Pan and his lost bois are a gang of youngish polyamorous transmen, lesbians, and gender fluid people. Hook and his pirates are a crew of older leather daddies into S&M role play. The mermaids are a group of femme sex workers. And Wendi is the 18-year-old femme lesbian foster child who becomes the group Mommy fetish of Pan and his lost bois. Everybody fucks. As previously stated, I am a vanilla pearl-clutcher and yet I enjoyed the hell out of it.

The story is told from the point of view of Tootles, Pan's second-in-command and a young transman who endured homelessness and abuse before Pan took him under his wing. And the beautiful thing about Tootles's narration is it's completely honest and matter-of-fact yet sensitive. There are no euphemisms for sexual acts or fetishes. There is no shying away from the realities of their squatter lifestyle nor emotional tribulations. And yet there is also no over-explaining. Never does Tootles take a moment to say "Ok well Pan and I are both FTM, pre-surgery transgender men and we are also polyamorous and pansexual..." Instead Tootles shows us his breast binders, the ace bandage Pan wears, his tentative exclusive relationship with Siren the mermaid butting up against his close polyamorous bond with the other lost bois and his totally sweet devotion to Wendi. Writing Tootles as the narrator rather than Pan, Wendi, or Hook was a brilliant choice by Lowrey.

Let me assure you: this book is not all about the sex, though I maybe have made it sound like that so far. Rather, it makes a really interesting, delicate, rather heartbreakingly point about the nature of changing relationships and growing up. Pan really is the perpetual child, enforcing draconian rules on his lost bois to keep the fantasy from blowing away in the wind. He literally "forgets" lost bois when they "grow up" by deciding they're done with the squatting commune of Neverland. We are never told how old Pan or any of the lost bois are, but every character is definitely over the age of consent. And it's clear that Pan doesn't want

anything to change: he wants to keep the lost bois, the pirates, and the mermaids all frozen in time so he can engage in his preteen age play for as long as he wants. And when Wendi---who he had counted on to perpetuate the fantasy---inevitably shakes things up, he pushes back with heartbreakingly emotional violence.

We all have to grow up, though. And we all have to deal with reality. Hook does not get to be the captain with impeccably good form while he's battling "the Crocodile." Eventually he has to admit defeat to his heroin addiction, and none of his good form nor money, connections, or respect can save him. Wendi and John Michael have to admit that as foster children, the best way to escape the system is to go through it: to graduate high school and start careers and achieve true financial independence as adults.

We all have to grow up.

I thought there were a few pieces of the original story that would have been better left un-adapted. The lost bois all have "fairies" like Tink... except they're pigeons who roost in the rafters of Neverland and aside from carrying messages don't really serve a purpose in the story. (There's a dog who could carry messages. Or hell, figure out how to work a cell phone into the story?) The pigeons/fairies were a little dumb.

But I *loved* that the "urban savages"---this story's version of the horrifically racist parody of Native Americans from the source material---made only a brief cameo. They were only on the page long enough for all the characters to agree that those hipster assholes were racist and appropriative and best avoided. And they were *never mentioned again*. Which is some A+ literary shade if I do say so myself.

One thing that made me a little disappointed is that while there was plenty of glorious talk about consent and drug addiction and sexual subcultures and aftercare... there was nothing written about avoiding STDs or pregnancy. Nary a condom or diaphragm appears in this book. Or if it did, I blinked and missed it. And I almost think that's irresponsible in a story like this. There's some exposition about how Hook is a leather daddy trained in the ways of the great leather men of San Francisco from "before," which I believe is alluding to the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. But after that, the issue of STDs is wholly glossed over. And maybe that's as it should be in what is essentially a fairy tale (uh... pun not intended). But it also seems a mite irresponsible in a book that gets sexual relationships and identities so, so right otherwise.

Needless to say, I was completely charmed and intrigued by this story. I finished it in a single day, mostly during an international plane flight. I think it's a very clever exploration of identity and the changeable nature of relationships. It's one of the few examples I can remember that is totally unapologetic about sex and also completely positive and correct in its depiction of consent. The denouement is too bittersweet to ruin, and it caught me by surprise despite knowing the source material. It made me uncomfortable (in both good and bad ways), it made me smile, it made me glad that growing up is something I came to terms with easily, if not happily.

Kaeli Wood says

not necessarily valid, just something you could write or publish

Siavahda says

I really don't know how to talk about this one. It's been nearly twelve hours since I turned the last page, and I'm still raw over it. It feels like bleeding.

This is a queer retelling of Peter Pan; specifically a *genderqueer* retelling, with heavy D/s themes and a brutal examination of the realities of social services and life on the streets. I found the dialogue pretty weak but there's very little of it; the book is narrated by Tootles, Pan's right-hand boi, and Tootle's voice is wonderful. You'll be amazed and delighted with how cleverly Lowry has taken the elements of the original story and re-imagined them for this world, where Neverland is an abandoned warehouse and the lost boys are really lost bois, a host of genderqueer submissives to their Sir Pan; where Wendy - now Wendi - is coaxed out the window not to play Mother but a D/s Mommy; where Hook is a strict Traditional Top and the Crocodile is a drug. It's wicked and witty and delightful, and amazingly true to the original tale in ways I wouldn't have believed possible had someone told me so before I'd read it.

It's a beautifully readable book - I flew through it in about five hours - not least because it's very difficult to put it down for more than a few minutes. But beyond being a great story and a wonderful re-telling, I've come away feeling that *Lost Boi* is also a vitally *necessary* book. Lowrey is writing about some of the least-accepted minorities in the modern West, and about the homeless kids we try to pretend don't exist, and all the ways our society fails them, over and over. It's a beautiful book but a bitter one, full of magic and hope that is unbearably tempered by the unremittingly harsh reality. In a lot of ways it's an uncomfortable book, but it's the uncomfortable stories that most need telling, and reading, and I'm both grateful than Lowrey wrote this and that I managed to find it.

I still don't know what to say about it. I guess I'll finish by saying that this is one of those books I wish I could make compulsory reading in schools, for its wide-eyed look at reality and its unrepentant queer core, for its honesty and its fantasy, its beauty and its ugliness. It's stunning and painful in equal measure, and I think that's what a treasure is supposed to be.

Danika at The Leslibrary says

From the first couple pages, I knew *Lost Boi* was exactly what I was hoping it would be. This is a queer punk D/s retelling of Peter Pan, and it has so much going for it. First of all, the book itself looks beautiful. I love that the black cover with the gold framing and deckle edges makes it almost look like a bible, which is hilarious. I loved that it's from the perspective of one of the lost bois, Tootles. I loved the voice, I loved how well Sassafras Lowrey incorporated and reinterpreted the original story. This was thought-provoking and totally absorbing. Definitely, definitely recommended, though I have no idea what reading this would be like for a straight/cis person with no interest in or knowledge of D/s, and frankly, that's partly what I love about this book. It doesn't try to be accessible to a mainstream audience, and even when I couldn't relate or totally understand, I was so grateful for that.

J. says

This is a dangerous book. And that's a very, very good thing.

Lowrey has created a *genderqueer* D/s reworking of Peter Pan, here, and it is stunningly good. But it is not a safe book by any means, and that makes it powerful and necessary. Literature, the good stuff, the real stuff, isn't safe, isn't merely a pleasant diversion for a Sunday afternoon. Here is a literary ancestor of Delany's

works. Here is a literary ancestor for Burroughs' Wild Boys.

Punky, thrilling, sweet, dangerous...if I could give it more than 5 stars, I would. HIGHLY recommended.

Josh says

Peter Pan re-imagined, his story revised and lavished in overt sexual themes and street life struggles, yet this distinct and dastardly different story manages to remain loyal to the source material.

Reader warning - there is a clear distinction between the popular children's tale Pan and LOST BOI - author Sassafras Lowrey's book is decidedly adult, replacing motherly affection with fantasy role-play and fairies with pigeons among other switches that emphasize the sexual connotations of the original in full frontal adult narrative.

LOST BOI is a clever retelling of the classic tale. Taking every element of the well known lost boy and Neverland and transposing it into a dirty street grime tale of lost souls who only want to feel needed and loved. This results in an interesting page turner that, while won't appeal to all, will tick all the boxes for originality and entertaining storytelling.

For me, 2.5 stars. Whilst I liked the book, there were momentary lapses where it struggled to fully garner my attention.

Sinclair says

Solid, interesting retelling of the Pan myth, set in the polyamorous, queer, punk squat Neverland. Really good parallels to the story, very interesting interpretations. I like seeing some of my communities/culture reflected in the larger myths, that's really exciting.

Book Riot Community says

My expectations were so high for this book just based on the premise: a queer, punk retelling of Peter Pan. From the first page I was relieved that this was exactly the book I was hoping it would be. Lowrey's interpretation works incredibly well, somehow incorporating so many familiar elements and even lines into a whole different setting. Not only was this enjoyable to read, it also left me thinking about gender, consent, and what it means to "grow up." This is not a book for everyone: it is about living a 24/7 D/s relationship and also tackles homelessness, poverty, and addiction. But that was what made me fall in love with Lost Boi: it is absolutely unapologetic about what it is and who it appeals to, and I think that's what makes it so successful.
— Danika Ellis

from The Best Books We Read In May: <http://bookriot.com/2015/06/02/riot-r...>

Bogi Takács says

I had very complicated feelings about this one, but I'm not sure if I want to do a full-length review; still mulling over it...

Vanessa North says

Lost Boi delivers exactly what it promises: a queer, punk retelling of Peter Pan with all kinds of D/s goodness wrapped in.

It is remarkable in its originality for a derivative work, and I enjoyed seeing the classic story re-imagined in this way. The ideas--the particular ways in which Lowrey queered Barrie's work are fascinating, easily visualized, and compellingly described.

At times I felt the story was limited by a more-tell-than-show narration, and a euphemistic coyness about sex and violence, however, I would not discourage anyone from reading it because of either of those things.

Recommended for those interested in queer lit outside of the romance genre (yes, please, more please, come on publishers, we need these stories) and for those interested particularly in retellings, in queering classic lit, and so on.

Ocean says

normally, i am really really not a big fan of retellings of classic stories with a modern twist. but how could i resist this one?! i love pigeons more than faeries and this whole book is just bursting with sweetness and magic, despite the gloomy realities of the characters' lives. and it's more than just "a queer/punk/kinky retelling of peter pan," it's also a critique of the shittiness of child welfare agencies, an exploration of the complexities of serving populations that you once were a part of, a tangled heap of polyamorous love stories. the ending was particularly poignant for me, because on some level i'm living it (which i kind of wasn't expecting since this book is so much in the realm of magic/un-reality, i wasn't expecting to find my actual literal experiences in there). it's super good and gave me a lot to think about.
