

As a woman, a rower and an attorney, I began this book with great anticipation. Unfortunately, I ended the novel feeling greatly disappointed. This novel is not about rowing, it is not about gay and lesbian issues, and it is not worth the time it took to read it.

Attorney Adel Blair, who happens to be a competitive rower, takes on a sexual harassment case for the largest company in town. Her client, Vice President Lou Scarlechek of Western Town Theme Parks is a vile, power hungry sexual harasser who knows no limits in his desire for power, and power over women. The story line could be extremely interesting given that author Patrick Crowell is himself an attorney and a rower. Instead we are asked to believe cliché after cliché.

Mr. Crowell spends so many pages giving unnecessary details of skirt lines, breast size, and body configurations that after reading this novel, I felt like a victim of sexual harassment. For example, chapter 8 begins with the sentence, “[S]o how did I get so lucky?” the double-D sized temp asked as she fixed her coffee in the break room.” Need I say more? The sexist physical descriptions do nothing to enhance the story or the characters.

As a rower, I was very disappointed in the quality and quantity of the rowing content. Mr. Crowell is clearly trying to make the book accessible to non-rowers, but until one satisfying scene very late in the book where Adel is racing her boyfriend, I kept wondering if the author was a rower, or hit-up a friend for the information. Unfortunately, the very limited number of pages related to rowing are there merely as an explanation for the lead character’s physical attributes, which we hear about in great detail.

Also, Mr. Crowell does a great disservice to camaraderie of men and women at the Masters level. The rowing plot line begins with Adel being hated for winning a Men’s Masters Singles race. The race description is short and boring. And this “hatred” will ring hollow to anyone who has actually experienced the camaraderie of the racing community.

I must admit that this is personal issue, but I was sickened by the unethical behavior exhibited by his main character. Mr. Crowell leads us to believe that Adel is a strong, upstanding woman. But then he allows her to be a witness against her client while she simultaneously represents him. Adel “struggles” with this issue, but continues to withhold evidence and engage in behavior that would and should get her disbarred.

This novel has no gay characters or themes. Overall, this novel left a very bad taste in my mouth. I immediately picked up Jeanette Winterson to get my brain back on track. Too bad she isn’t a rower...