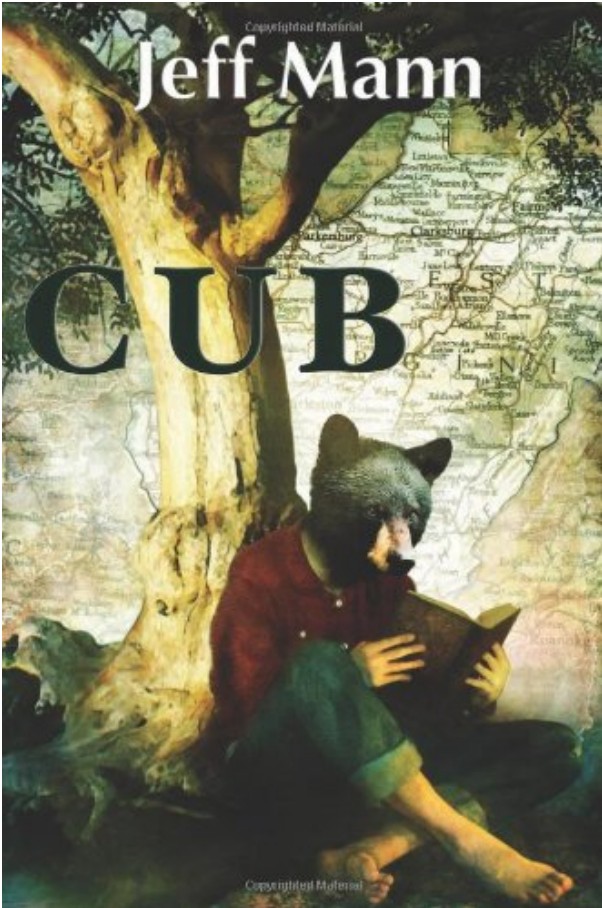
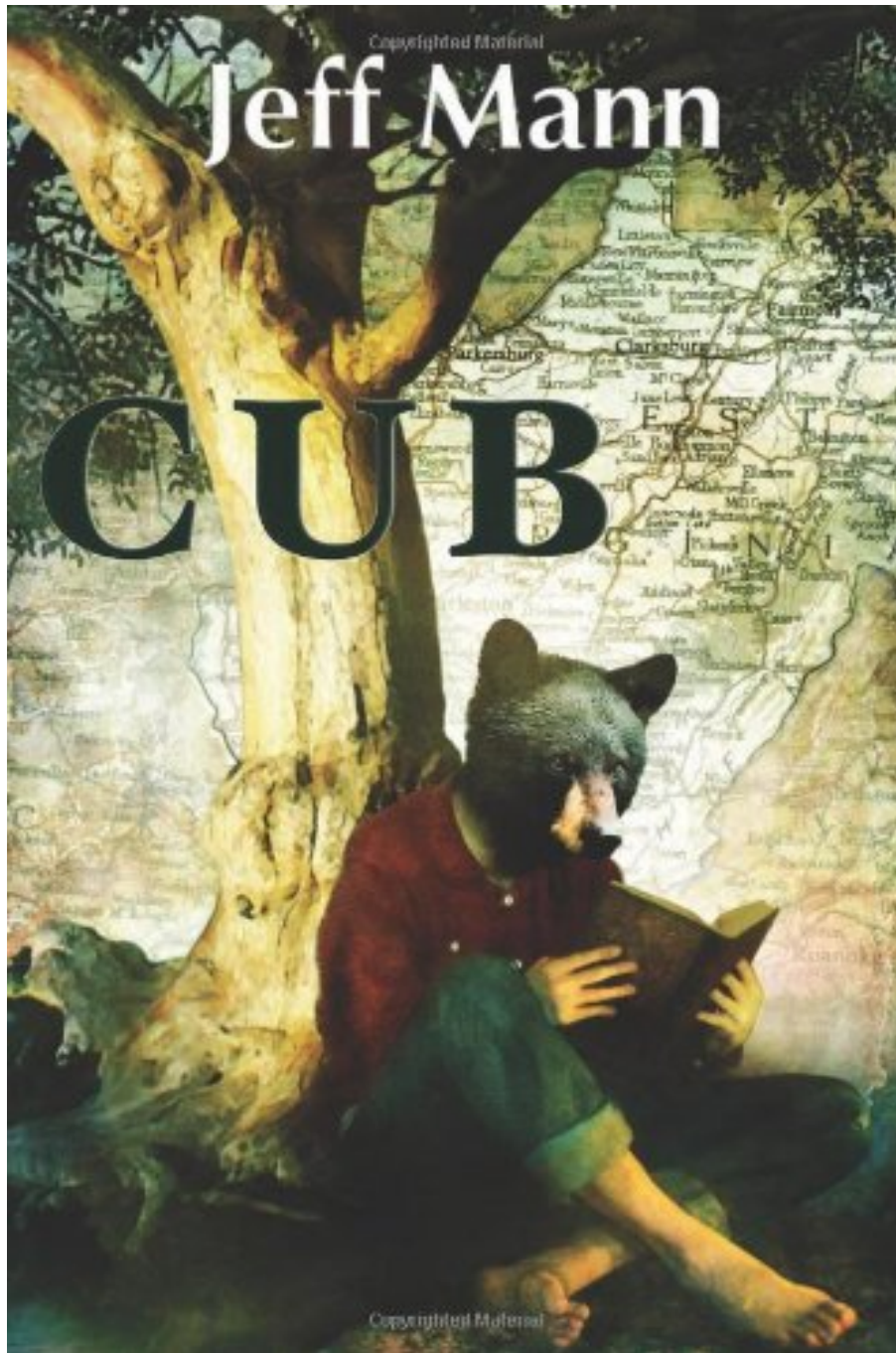


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Review

"Mann conveys the experience that most rural gays go through as they attempt to negotiate their homosexuality in a place that often discriminates against them... This novel explores rural Appalachia in another context--and makes a significant contribution to the disciplines of Appalachian Studies and Queer Studies."--Travis A. Rountree, *Appalachian Journal*

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Not every gay teen yearns for fashion and popular culture. Some boys are pure country folk and like the feel of flannel and the smell of the farm. And they're neither lithe nor muscle-bound but stocky boys, the ones who develop hairy chests, arms, and faces years earlier than their peers. One such seventeen-year-old is Travis Ferrell, shy among most of the other kids at school, but proud of his West Virginia roots. He has not yet admitted his passion for handsome guys--and his idea of what handsome is and what handsome does is not much different from him. Soon he'll learn that he's not unique; gay culture has a name for young men like him. *Cubs*. Lambda Literary Award-winning author Jeff Mann has written a touching romance for the outsider in us all.

Cub won an Honorable Mention in the Pauline Reage Novel Award Competition!

- Sales Rank: #1947018 in Books
- Published on: 2014-02-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x .51" w x 5.98" l, .74 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 226 pages

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Jeff Mann teaches literature and creative writing at Virginia Tech. His acclaimed novels, *Purgatory* and *Fog* have entertained so many men.

Most helpful customer reviews

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A New Classic of Gay YA

By Nathan Burgoine

In a word, Cub was superb.

The vast majority of small-town gay young tales generally involve the city as the goal. In Cub, you won't find the typical gay kid desperate to escape the farm for the bright lights of the city. Instead, you meet Travis: someone not at odds with his rural upbringing, a poet and a passionate young man who isn't like any youth I've read in gay young adult literature before.

Travis is gay, yes, but he's also worried that his unfulfilled penchant for kink might mean he's on the path to becoming a sociopath. He's burly and hairy and strong, not smooth and slim and toned. He longs to have power over others and yet terrified of never finding someone to protect. He's angry, horny, frustrated and confused, and well aware that the world doesn't want him the way he is.

In other words, he's seventeen.

I can't praise the psychology of this book enough. There's such a visceral reality to the thoughts and feelings in Travis. Added to the layer of "otherness" all queer kids face is his yearning for the rough/tender world of BDSM, and his intensity is brilliantly handled. This is Mann at his finest, and the potential relationship that builds in Cub is deftly handled.

Lyrical and possessing that raw honesty, Cub should be the next gay young adult bestseller. Most importantly, with Travis, Mann has given a voice to youth who haven't found themselves in the gay young adult books that have come before.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A touching story of young hirsute romance

By Ron Suresha

Cub is a heartening and engaging novel of young homomasculine romance set in the bucolic hills of rural West Virginia. Seventeen-year-olds from opposite sides of the tracks, Travis and Mike start working out together in their senior year of high school and discover their mutual attraction for another.

As Travis comes to terms with being gay and Mike comes out as a bi man, the two affirm their love (and kinky lust) for another. Just as their relationship is solidifying, the two young men are confronted by the limitations of their individual options in life.

Cub is a moving, well-crafted story of young hirsute love, and is a must-read for Jeff Mann fans.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

delightful and original book cover, plus a marvelous young adult story

By PrismBookAlliance

Jeff Mann's Cub is a charming young adult novel with Travis, a seventeen year old young man living in a West Virginia small town, as the irresistible main character. Travis is a long haired, large, bearded poet who loves living and working on his family's farm. He considers himself a Wiccan nerd, and he dreams of leaving for West Virginia University the following year, where he plans to join a small group of lesbian friends. Travis knows he's gay, but he doesn't look like most of the smooth, thin gay men he sees in most trendy media. He's also convinced he's fat and unattractive, and he's conflicted about his BDSM fantasies.

He strikes up a friendship with Mike, another muscular, hairy and bearded seventeen year old who's a high school drop-out working at a garage. Mike tells Travis that they are both "cubs," or young "bears," and that there's a whole subculture of gay men who love men who look like them. Mike helps Travis to feel better about himself physically, and stands with him in the face of harsh bullying and bigotry. They embark on a year of exuberant teenage sexual exploration, and fall deeply in love.

Cub is such an unusual delight, and the cover art is absolutely priceless. Mann has written a book that young gay men who may feel they don't "fit in" with popular gay culture can read and enjoy. They now have a splendid story to read of two teenagers who learn that gay men, similar to all people regardless of their sexual orientation, don't come in a "one size fits all" version. There are beefy, burly, muscular and delicious gay men who are just as attractive and desirable as smooth, thin men. Mann's depiction of Travis as a oversexed teenager who is insecure, and impatient to leave his small town for college, is pitch perfect. Mann's Travis is an awkward, teenage dreamer who discovers that while he may be a bit different, he's not alone and he's most certainly worthy of love.

My only grumble with this fine story is that I would like a glimpse into Travis and Mike's futures beyond the single year covered in Cub. However, perhaps Jeff Mann knows best when he leaves their futures uncertain, because at only eighteen years old, Travis and Mike's futures aren't set in stone, and the possibilities are virtually limitless. Maybe Mann will someday write a sequel to Cub ... and name it Bear! Ok ... maybe I can't name books, but I certainly can read them, and I adored reading Cub. I highly recommend Jeff Mann's Cub – read it, and you will adore it too!

Review originally published on Prism Book Alliance

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