



The Geography of Pluto

Christopher DiRaddo

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Twenty-eight-year-old Will, a teacher living in Montreal's gay village, has spent the last few months recovering from a breakup with his first serious boyfriend, Max. He has resumed his search for companionship, but has he truly moved on? Will's mother Katherine - one of the few people, perhaps the only one, who loves him unconditionally - is also in recovery, from a bout with colon cancer that haunts her body and mind with the possibility of relapse. Having experienced heartbreak, and fearful of tragedy, Will must come to terms with the rule of impermanence: to see past lost treasures and unwanted returns, to find hope and solace in the absolute certainty of change. In *The Geography of Pluto*, Christopher DiRaddo perfectly captures the ebb and flow of life through the insightful, exciting, and often playful story of a young man's day-to-day struggle with uncertainty.

The Geography of Pluto Details

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From Reader Review The Geography of Pluto for online ebook

Esil says

I was very happy to win this small press book from Goodreads. I doubt that I would have had a chance to read it otherwise. This was a very sweet book. The main character and his life experiences were depicted without romance, with all the rawness and naiveté of someone that age trying to make sense of life . His relationship with his mother was especially compelling. And it doesn't hurt that the setting is Montreal in the 1990s (I think).

Angélique (MapleBooks) says

Some books are able to put you in the shoes of their protagonist, however different this character might ever feel from you. They make you see the world from their eyes, experience life from their point of view, and ultimately show you that we all share the same few fundamental needs. *The Geography of Pluto* is one of these books. With this novel I spent a day and a half – that's how fast I devoured it – beside Will Ambrose, a gay man reaching his 30's, the partygoer I won't ever be, and shared with him the pain of a failed relationship, the terror of impermanence and the crave for love.

“How can you lose something you thought was forever?”

The premise of *The Geography of Pluto* is simple: Will and Max were together until recently, when the latter abruptly ended their relationship with a few words of painful honesty that should have open Will's eyes but only threw him into denial. Will is shattered. He goes from incredulity to anger, from cold and recoiled depression to deluded hope of getting Max back.

During this time, Will somewhat re-invents Max and forges memories of an idealized relationship that has little to do with reality. The rejection and sudden loneliness created the illusion that his former boyfriend used to provide everything that Will is needing now.

“My current state had erased and rewritten his [Max's] character flaws and turned them into poetic mannerisms for me to mourn.”

Actually, Will seems trapped in some limbo similar to grief: stunned by the sudden loss of someone close to his heart and angst by the unjust pain it causes him. Shooed away from the path he had planned to follow, he's left lost and confused: “What do I do now?”, “Where do I go?”.

Worst, his memories – real or fake – become a jail: Will focuses more on what he has lost and this clinging prevents him from going ahead.

“I had thought I was getting better, but I had underestimated Max's power. And when I closed my eyes I could still feel his gravitational pull across time and space, holding me within his

orbit.”

Another important aspect of the book is the relationship between Will and his mother, which brings additional depth to *The Geography of Pluto*. First of all, Will shows his difficulty to come out, even to a close parent, and how his being gay is the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about, some kind of shameful secret:

“An unspoken truth that would weigh upon her until she was ready to confront it: that she was the mother of a gay man.”

However, Will’s mother will also push him to learn and grow up. When her life is threatened with cancer, Will suddenly makes giant steps as an individual. He conjures the strength to tell her he’s gay, feeling that she must know him and he must dare coming out before it’s too late. Furthermore, it makes Will sense the pressure and unavoidability of impermanence. Sickness makes you feel powerless: it threatens and sometimes take away your loved ones, force on you a terrible loss that you can’t do anything about.

“I was hoping to stop things from changing, to have some control over the present. But I can’t. No matter how hard I try, I can’t stop the world from moving forward. I can’t stop anyone from leaving...”

Loss, grief, mourning, *The Geography of Pluto* explores the emotional pain of separation with a simple story and beautiful writing. It brought me so close to Will, makes his experience so vivid to me, that I forgot several times that this novel was a fiction. Will Ambrose feels so real, so ordinary, and his struggles so terribly familiar, that everyone will recognize a bit of himself in *The Geography of Pluto*. I can’t recommend this book enough.

Review first published on **MapleBooks.ca: Canadian book reviews**

John says

What a pleasure. I appreciate books that respect setting as much as character. I like to feel as though I've been taken to a new place as well to visit new people. *The Geography of Pluto* definitely does just that. That's geography, after all: people and place. Thoughtful and heartfelt, there's a strong current of irony that adds richness to the story as well. Will is a character I think we can all see ourselves in; his path is one we've all traveled in one form or another - that his story offers some unique observations makes it well worth the read. I enjoyed my time with the novel; I rather think it's one I'll revisit, too.

Don says

Very well written novel about a 28 year old gay man dealing with love and loss both in his romantic life and family life. I loved his relationship with mother and best friend. He's a flawed human being trying to make sense of the world. It's what many of us do at age 28 and throughout life. Excellent story.

Catherine McKenzie says

What a charming debut.

Jerry says

This well-written and well-structured debut novel is ultimately about five kinds of love: love of family, romantic love, love of friends, love of place, and (ultimately) self-love / self-respect.

The likeable yet far-from-perfect narrator, Will Ambrose, is a gay geography teacher in Montreal facing two relationship challenges: the need to get over his ex-boyfriend (Max), and the desire to take his relationship with his single mother deeper beyond 'surface' matters. As the novel moves back and forth in time, the reader learns about Will's friendship with Angie, which is enviably close and able to withstand all sorts of bruises. Other aspects of the novel focus on Will's experience of coming out as a gay man and discerning the boundaries between sex, love, and various in-between states. The other main character of the book is the city of Montreal, which is gorgeously depicted throughout via vivid descriptions of its climate, gay village, and (yes) geography as the reader rides along and the subway/metro and looks into the apartment windows; the book left with me with an urge to learn French, abandon my long-time home in Western Canada, and move to Montreal, a city I've visited just once.

The strength of this debut effort indicates that the author, DiRaddo, is blessed with innate gifts, and a few tantalizing threads in the closing chapters left me hoping that he is considering a sequel. Surely there's enough room on Pluto- or Earth- for such an effort.

Daniel Baylis says

One of my methods of evaluating any given book (or film) is whether or not I feel compelled to cheer for a character. In this case, I felt myself rooting for Will, a 28-year-old Montreal-based teacher dealing with the complexities of love and life. The story was graceful and humorous, gritty and tender. In fact, reading the book didn't even feel like reading at all — it felt like hanging out with an old friend.

Serge says

This compact novel about being a gay man in Montreal in the recent past won me over completely. The protagonist is very much flawed, but a good person at heart, and his life and adventures were not only

interesting, but also brutally honest.

Sarah says

I won a copy of this book as part of the Goodreads first-reads giveaway.

The Geography of Pluto is the story of a young man named Will who is a geography teacher living in Montreal. He is really struggling to get over the breakup of his relationship with his boyfriend Max. He makes half-hearted attempts at moving on, but can he? Will's mother is also facing struggles of her own. She is a cancer survivor, but the cancer looms like a dark cloud over them, always threatening to come back.

This story had me captivated. It is a novel about grief, love, and the beautiful city of Montreal. At times I found myself cheering for Will, other times he made me frustrated. It is definitely a story worth reading.

Alex Handyside says

This is a beautiful book.

It's been a long time since a book made me cry. This did so in spades.

Probably the best book I've read in the past two years.

To say it's book about love is to do the author a disservice. And love too - for you think you know all about all aspects of love. But this shows love off at its best, boldest and widest.

It's about parental love (by & for), and about the love for & by partners - partners past, present and future. It also touches on love within friendship - between those few friends who are there, unconditionally, when you really need them.

It's not a joyful book, because love can be sad, particularly when it's lost, declined or taken from us. The author explores and details it all.

I never knew such love and sadness could be put into words. Thank you Mr DiRaddo for doing so, and so expertly.

A note for the heteros out there: I knew to expect a detailed love scene. I wasn't sure how I would handle it: I was ready to squirm a little. But the author handled it beautifully. Heteros need squirm no more.

Stéphanie Amesse says

Loved it.

Cora Sire says

This novel resonated on many levels. It is both an homage to my home city of Montreal and a deep

exploration of character, the search for connection and love in a complex world. Brilliant!

Ivy Courtney says

An amazing story that is heartwarming and simply amazing. The story itself is not complicated but it never feels boring or drags, it flows smoothly and feels authentic to real life. An excellent read and a wonderful first novel. Looking forward to any other novels written by the author.
