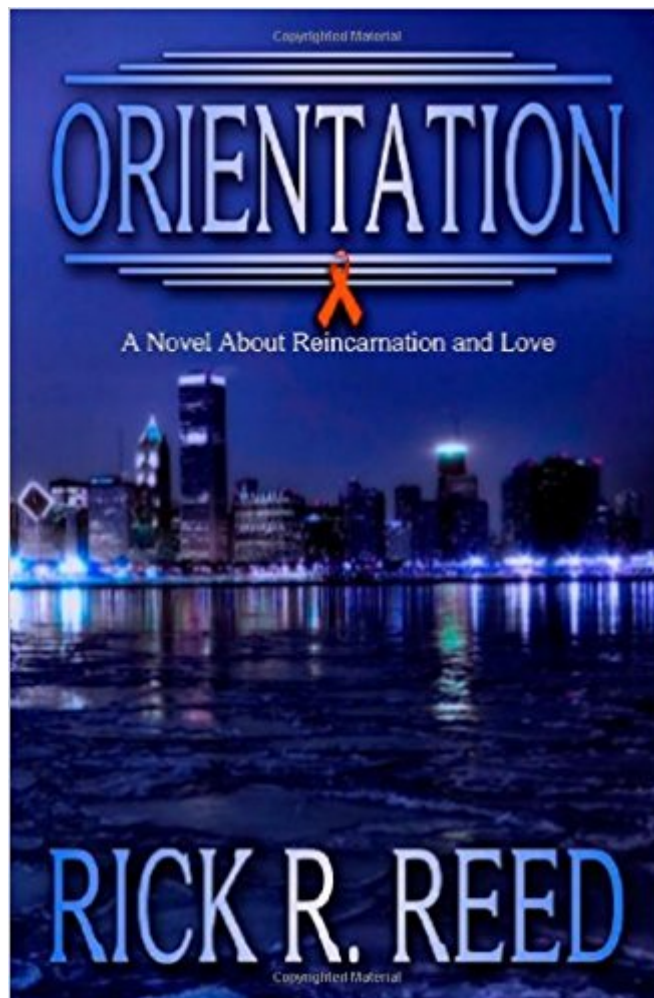


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# Orientation



## Synopsis

Christmas, 1983: A young man, Robert, tends to his soul mate, Keith, who is dying from AIDS. Robert tries valiantly to make this a special Christmas for his lover, but loses the fight late Christmas night. Christmas, 2007: Robert ventures out late Christmas night and finds a young girl about to fling herself into the unforgiving waters of Lake Michigan. He rescues her, and the two form a bond forged from an odd feeling they share of familiarity, and even love. Neither understands it, since Jess is a lesbian and Robert has never been attracted to women. But there's more...Jess begins having strange dreams, reliving key moments she couldn't know about in Keith and Robert's life and courtship. Robert and Jess begin to wonder if their inexplicable feelings might be rooted in something much more mystical than a savior/victim relationship. As the two move toward and pull away from each other, Ethan, Robert's younger lover, plots the unthinkable. His crystal meth-addled mind becomes convinced there's only one way to save himself, and that is through Robert's destruction. Christmas 2007 spirals downward to a shattering climax in which both love and lives hang in the balance. There's a murder attempt...salvation...redemption...and a new love is born...

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Filled with extraordinary characters that keep pages turning and emotions churning...blends heartbreak and hope into a potent literary brew. With a sure and descriptive touch, Rick R. Reed sets grief against the false glitter of Chicago Christmases, ultimately demonstrating that the power of love can heal, no matter what the form. Keep the hankies ready and be prepared: this book will

stay with you long after the last page. --Amy Wolff Sorter, author of Soul Obsession

Rick R. Reed has a knack for creating compelling characters with intriguing histories. His storytelling style is fresh and his plots are innovative. Well-known for his dark fantasy, horror, and suspense, Reed has branched out recently to add mystery and dramatic novels to his résumé. The resulting books...are terrific, must-read novels. --Lori L. Lake, author of Snow Moon Rising

Orientation is a romance, but, as one would expect from the celebrated author of suspense and mystery, it is not just your run-of-the-mill romance. There's a murderous subplot and plenty of agonizing over the rights and wrongs of one's actions, and some of the best writing Reed has done yet--but what he really serves up here is a beautiful Christmas present of a love story, all wrapped up in lavender ribbons, and with a splendid surprise in store for the reader when the last wrappings are peeled away. Forget the gay/straight labels. If you savor Miracle on 34th Street and sniffle through It's a Wonderful Life, put this at the very top of your Christmas list. --Victor J. Banis, author of Longhorns

This book came well recommended -- I praise Rick for his work and marvel at his talent in creating vivid scenery and characters that were brought to life through awesome storytelling. I was glued to this book and strongly recommend it. I'm looking forward to reading more of Rick's work.

I found "Orientation" to be touching, romantic, thrilling and a very satisfying read. Rick captured certain behavioral patterns in gay life with an accuracy that made me shiver. Horrifying at times, intensely loving and romantic at others, it is an exciting premise few would ever even consider, yet it works. It was very hard to put this book down.

I have enjoyed all of Rick Reed's books. This one is good, too, and well written with great character development and good story. My big problem when I finished reading the book was that I wasn't sure what story I was reading! The story was supposed to be about the reincarnation of Robert's lover and soul mate Keith in the form of a young woman called Jess. Instead, well over half the book is about Robert's live-in; a drug addicted young man who uses Robert's money, (left to him by Keith) to buy drugs and have sex with strangers at bath houses. It could have been a separate book. When Jess finally enters the book, and we see the visions that Keith's soul inhabits Jess..the book is over. I didn't feel Jess's visions were explored enough. Touching moments was the tenderness Robert and Jess felt for each other instantly. I wish this was explored more too. Too much about Ethan and his drugs; and not enough about the reincarnation and Jess's visions. I thought the ending was also very anti-climactic and over all too soon. I won't spoil it, but to me, it didn't make sense and to me

was almost comical and hard to believe.

4.5 heartfelt stars This is the first book I've read by this author, and wow does he have a way with words. The first chapter ripped my heart to shreds. In the 80s I worked with the most awesome man who succumbed to AIDS so this story hit home something fierce. Chapter two begins twenty-four years later, and thus begins the story of Robert, his live-in much younger partner, Ethan, their tumultuous relationship, and the introduction of Jess. While the leading characters in this story are gay, the story is about so much more than sexual orientation. Ethan has a huge drug addiction and sees Robert as nothing more than a sugar daddy. While high he carries out many dangerous acts, including partaking in club scenes, etc. For a longtime I couldn't fathom why Robert didn't kick him out. Further on, I got it. Jess is an interesting character, close to despair when a chance encounter, (or is it by chance?) puts her in the path of Robert and the two form a close bond. The story is told from four point-of-views, so you get into the heads of Robert, Jess, Ethan and around the 60% mark Ethan's dealer, Tony. I personally could've done without hearing the drug dealer's POV. The reason I say that is because once I'm privy to a character's thoughts and feelings I want to know more, and he kind of drops off before the curtain comes down. I saw this story tagged as paranormal and worried it might take a turn for the unbelievable. However, the issue of whether Jess was Robert's lover reincarnated, or not, was more fascinating than weird, least for me. Even though the ending felt a little rushed, and the resolution rather unorthodox, the fact the leading characters were happy left me smiling and sated. \*\*\*Copy provided in exchange for an honest review. Original review posted on Love Bytes same sex book reviews.\*\*\*

Rick Reed is a prolific writer whose books include many genres and I'm just starting my journey into his incredibly complex mind. This is a love story but it's not your typical love story because for Rick Reed there is always a twist as his stories are unusual, and even if you feel that they are too incredible for words you can't help but be caught up in his evil and inventive mind. Orientation begins Christmas Day 1983 when we meet Robert whose lover Keith is dying of AIDS. As he takes care of Keith, perhaps for the last time, Robert tries to make Christmas a day to remember because he knows it would be Keith's last. What really touched and saddened me about this scene is the picture of Robert scurrying around to make elaborate preparations, knowing that no one else will see them or eat the food. We flash forward 24 years later and there's a new man in Robert's life, Ethan, one of

his many lovers over almost two and a half decades, but he knows that this last relationship has ended although he can't quite bring himself to throw him out because he's afraid of confrontation. As Ethan goes out Christmas night on yet another unexplained tryst, Robert decides to take a walk along the shores of Lake Michigan to figure out what to do, and it is there that he sees Jess as she is about to kill herself. He saves her, after convincing her that suicide is not the answer to her problems, and brings her home. This is the start of a new phase in Robert's life when he realizes shortly after, that inexplicably Jess is reliving his and Keith's life when they first met. There is no logical explanation other than somehow Jess has a part of Keith's soul inside her. I really love Orientation which is exactly the kind of story one expects from Rick Reed - engrossing, mind blowing, emotional, eerie and any other word that you wish to choose. Personally I wanted more of the story devoted to Jess and Robert in the same space, including an exploration of their symbiotic relationship with Keith, Robert's former lover. However, that was not the story that the author wanted to write and this one is quite riveting in parts, and in some ways touching, as we journey into Ethan's befuddled mind that's gradually losing its grip on reality. Turns out that Ethan has a major drug problem and he's in a hole that he can't get out of; his unabated desire for the drug and risky sex with strangers is now pushing him to the point of contemplating murder. It's clear that the author did a lot of research into the world of crystal meth. and its victims and he gives us a graphic picture of how dependency destroys human beings in a short space of time and changes their orientation. Orientation is an incredible piece of writing, from the strange and unexplained loving relationship between a gay man and a lesbian to the descent into hell which is what Ethan's life became with his dependency on Miss Tina as he calls his drug of choice when he smokes, slams, and snorts his new mistress. The story also gives the reader an excellent portrayal of Robert's character as he is incapable of facing the truth of Ethan's addiction, the signs of which are quite clear, and he can't make the decision to kick him out until it's almost too late. The book is a gem and you won't find characters like these anywhere else. It's a compliment to Reed's writing that I stayed up all night to find out what would happen when the worlds in his story collided, and the ending is as unusual as those of the other stories I have read by this author because he didn't cop out. This is not a light read but if you're looking for an intricate plot and multifaceted characters who bring an array of complex human emotions to their story, then look no further. The characters will move you -- to anger, pity and a whole range of other reactions. The love story here is Robert's and Keith's as it plays out in the background like a wonderful melody, because even though Keith is long gone Robert keeps his memory alive through his love for the man who will forever hold his heart. We get to experience Robert's evolution from his early twenties, in the throes of his first love affair, to a

middle aged man hanging on to a young lover who is slipping through his grasp. The plot is compelling and the characterizations are superb - there are no perfect people in this book - each character is flawed, some more than others, but in the end there is redemption. Looking for a totally different book with all the elements that will keep you on the edge of your seat? Try Orientation.

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