



## Country Boy

*A.E. Wasp*

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**Sometimes the toughest thing to have faith in is yourself.**

The first time Paul Dyson met Robbie Rhodes, they ended up naked in Robbie's bed. The last time they met, on the ice the morning after, Paul punched Robbie in the face and called him something he'd rather not repeat.

Two years later, they're teammates on the Seattle Thunder hockey team.

Being gay is wrong, unnatural, and there is no room for them in his world. Paul's heard that his whole life. So when it hits him that he is gay, he does the only thing he can: he shoves himself so deep in the closet he would need a map to find his way out again.

When the chance to fulfill his lifelong dream comes along, Paul can't say no, even if it forces him to share hotel rooms with the only man he can't resist. It doesn't take long for Paul to give into temptation and find himself falling in love with his brilliant, caring teammate.

But as much as he cares for Paul, Robbie is finding it harder and harder to justify hiding who he is. It goes against everything he was taught was right. He feels like he has a duty to come out to the public. He'd be the first out gay pro-hockey player.

If Paul wants to be with Robbie, he will have to turn his back on his family and everything he's believed in. If Robbie wants to be with Paul, he'll have to do the same.

It's going to take them a lot of faith to find their way together in this shiny new world.

Country Boy is a love story about figuring out who you are, who you want to be, and how to get there. It contains sweet hockey plays, a 1976 Corvette Stingray, fancy underwear, and the journey of a lifetime.

## Country Boy Details

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Author : A.E. Wasp

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### Line says

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### Anne Boleyn's Ghost says

*"Robbie scooted back, putting enough distance between them. It feels like I love you? he signed. Paul could only nod, every blink of his eyelids sending another tear slipping down. Robbie smiled. That's because I do. I love you, too, Paul signed back, grateful they didn't need to speak. What he felt was too big for words."*

3.5 stars. The story had solid bones, with an intriguing enemies-to-lovers premise, sweet and sizzling chemistry between the heroes, and well-done dialogue. However, it didn't feel as fully fleshed out as City Boy, with a sense that key details were lacking. There were also quite a few editing issues in my KU copy, but I heard that they are being corrected as I type!

Paul is struggling to find himself and accept himself. He comes from a fundamentalist Baptist upbringing where being gay is NOT okay - and that's putting it mildly. His relationship with Robbie, a fellow rookie hockey player, goes from lovers (for one night in college) to enemies (the next day, when Paul lashes out of self-loathing and fear). When they reconnect as teammates, it's back to lovers. Neither of them could deny their connection, either then or now. I was crrrrying that Robbie still wore the necklace and that Paul learned sign language. Crying. I also appreciated that they questioned the HOW – how could it feel so real and so right so rapidly – but didn't deny it and ultimately found comfort in it.

Paul's religious conflict is a significant part of the story. If religious explorations aren't your jam, I wouldn't worry because it's not overwhelming. I was sympathetic to Paul because even as he suffered brainwashing and guilt and manipulation, he also knew care and concern. He wanted faith to play a part in his life, but he had been sheltered and unsure. And while his religious angst is certainly important to the story, I felt that the relationship-building and bonding between Paul and Robbie was more prominent. I loved Robbie's influence and importance in helping Paul come to terms with his identity. In turn, being with Paul helped Robbie realize that he could no longer live a quasi-closeted lifestyle. They took risks for each other. They made each other braver. They grew together.

But as I noted above, some things felt...missing. As an example, I was miffed that (view spoiler). This may seem like a silly hang-up, but it is an example of what I found lacking: lovely little moments where they could just be together. Such an exchange would have, IMO, strengthened the story. Hockey was an important part of their relationship and I did like seeing them in action on the ice. I just wanted to see OTHER forms of action, too (and, if you're curious, don't worry – the sexual action is as hot as ever!). If Wasp ever writes short about her guys, I'm here for them!

The ending was a bit abrupt, but I'm hoping that we will see more of them in the future. All in all, this was a bit shaky but still enjoyable addition to the series.

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## **Aeren says**

Bueno, está bien para un ratín.

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## **halestostilinski says**

Loved this!

RTC

~\*~

This was soooo good. I had never read this author before this series and I gotta say, I love them now. The sex scenes??? Amazingly hot. Like, WOW. So well done. Like seriously haha.

But also this was a refreshing take, to me, on the "one is so deeply in the closet it seems like they'll never come out" trope. Because Paul is definitely that, but the way in which he gets to a place in which he can come out is different than what I've read in this past.

And these two were cute - and hot as fuck - together. I loved how they both challenged each other's world views and they both came to understand each other's world growing up without ever having to change their views on something like religion - a big topic in this one - or trying to force the other to see their way of thinking, or demand they stop believing what they believe.

Not that they didn't get frustrated with each other, or hurt - especially Robbie being hurt by Paul because of the indoctrination he experienced by the church he grew up at. But Paul, after believing in God all his life, didn't all of the sudden become an atheist, he just found a better God for himself, and much more accepting belief system, and Robbie never all of the sudden believed in God either. I appreciated that so much about this story.

Anyway, those are some big topics, much more suited to be talked about in a debate or politics, so I'll move back to these two and their relationship.

These are two young guys, 24 and 21 years old, I believe, and while they didn't always have it right, they were also a lot more mature than men generally are at these ages - I believe - and it felt like they were a lot older at times.

Also, there is this SUPER hot scene (view spoiler).

We didn't get much of Paul's sister, but I really loved what little we got of her, she was awesome. Even his dad became redeemable by the end, and I felt for him.

This was such a good book, with a good plot, a great relationship between these two, interesting characters all around.

LOVED IT <333

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## Emily Seelye says

3.5 stars

I generally liked this book about hockey teammates falling in love, but there were too many typos and missing words to warrant a higher rating.

\*ARC provided by author

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## Virginia Books says

**I've enjoyed the hell out of this book.** It's kinda a **second chance romance, mixed with some enemies to lovers**, and those two things make this book a better read than it's predecessor, City Boy. Or at least, for me, it is a more appealing and enjoyable story even if I wanted the "enemies" part to be longer.

Country Boy is a **good sport romance** that tells us the story between Robbie Rhodes (we met him in book one) and Paul Dyson, a southern hockey player whose drawl drove Robbie (and I) crazy. Seriously, what's the matter with me and southern accents? I'm a junkie. It's hear it and I enter a lust-induced haze that is difficult to leave.

So our MCs spent a night together two years ago, before they went pro (we live it through a very well executed flashback) and now they are in the same Hockey team having to deal with each other after an ugly confrontation (also told in that flashback)

Robbie is a sweetheart and I loved him since the beginning. He is out even if he doesn't divulge his love life and he has the support of his parents, team mates and friends.

But, on the other hand, our lovely Paul has some issues. Serious and very rooted beliefs. He is a southern baptist raised in the belief that he is going to hell if he is gay. And he truly believes it is the wrong thing, and it's not just the sinful part. At first Paul is convinced that life as a gay dude would be pure ostracism and anonymous blowjobs in a bar. Sad perspective. Super sad.

And that's the setup of this story. From there we have a **sweet, hot love story with good relationship development and likable characters**.

I also enjoyed the dual POV in relatively short chapters since it helped with the pace of the story.

The love between Robbie and Paul flows easily, **there's a lot of chemistry and I felt the love story as a very natural one.**

**And what about the smutty, sexy scenes?** Well, these two are scorching hot together and not just in the literal act. The UST and the sexual frustration are huge and delicious. They also share a lot of cute and sweet moments and that's a perfect combo and IMO perfectly balanced too.

**Important advise to readers:** one of my biggest pet peeves in literature is bigotry. I have serious problems with books with hateful parents who defend to love someone, but do not respect or accept them as who they are.

I'm a mom and even if my kids are too young to see myself in a "*I accept you as you are*" situation, I have no doubts about my future support and unconditional devotion . I love my girls with everything I am and, there's no love without that respect and tolerance.

I'm not even blaming religion here. I have very catholic friends and very atheistic ones. I respect both as they respect me. To me is like being in rival soccer teams. Really. As simple as that. That's the importance I give to people's beliefs if they are tolerant, open and don't hurt anyone for and with them. BUT PLEASE don't mess with love and respect for your beloved ones. When we talk about LOVE threats and intolerance are out of the equation.

So yes, bigotry and religion are present in this book. But it's also true that it is more centered in Paul and the way he can deal, or not with it. It's easy to read. Very. Even with the bigots and church in the way, because I could read it and face these issues my way. Which way is that? Vir's way:

## **Recommended!**

\*\*\*\*\**ARC generously provided by the author in exchange for an honest review*\*\*\*\*\*

Reviews for Book Lovers

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### **~Mindy Lynn~ says**

4 STARS!

I'm going to skip over all the grammar errors and misplaced names because in the end I really enjoyed the story.

Many are concerned about how heavy the organize religion was in the book. I say it wasn't that front and center as I thought it would be. It was there in the beginning and then at the end. Was Paul religious? Yes. He believes in God and in prayer. Good for him. I can't even pretend to understand what it is like for someone raised in a church and where that church has such an influence on how you live your life and the choices you make. But there are people out there who will read this book and fully understand Paul's struggles. This book is not based on religion. It is about a country boy accepting he is gay and tearing down all the walls of hate his church and father drilled in him. But it is not the vocal point of this book. The vocal point is the growing relationship between Robbie and Paul. Paul coming to peace with being gay. Robbie struggling with guilt of being privileged while others suffer. Of feeling inadequate when his parents bring up fellow parents children making a difference in the world and dismissing his career. Paul struggling to understand what he is feeling as to how he has been told to feel. The emotions are high and the angst is low. Paul's issues didn't bring the story down. Like I said before, it was more of Robby and Paul finding their feet in a relationship. Falling in love. Being scared. Being out. Taking steps to be true to oneself. I loved these boys together and enjoyed every minute they were together on page. The chemistry was off the charts and

the sexy times were steamy. I absolutely enjoyed the ride.

I admit I liked this one a bit more than the first one. I highly recommend it.

Happy reading dolls! xx

**\*\*I was given an ARC by the author for exchange for an honest review.\*\***

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### **Gigi says**

Guess what? There is actual hockey playing in this book! Yay! A lot of hockey romances have hockey players in name only, no action. Nice!

Unfortunately, Country Boy is a book that relies heavily on organized religion and the guilt that follows it as the main plot. Oh, man! I cannot **STAND** the righteous assholes who believe their god would send a gay person to hell. I hate it in real life and I hate it in my books. My review of Keira Andrew's A Forbidden Rumspringa goes into more detail if you are interested.

But the boys were sweet and the portions of the book where religion wasn't in-your-face were cute and fluffy.

If you can handle homophobic religious characters as evil protagonists, you will enjoy this. I did give this book more stars than I probably would have, but since it was *my* pet peeve and not the book as a whole, 3.5 sounds fair.

*This review is also posted at Gay Book Reviews*

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### **Cadiva says**

3.5\*

There's a really good story here but it's suffering under the weight of some editing and proofing lapses, there's odd tenses, missing words and at one point, one of the MCs's father's name changes in the same paragraph.

As this is an ARC, I'm hoping they'll be ironed out before release as AE Wasp has a real talent for putting some serious messages in the heart's of her story telling.

This one surrounds the insidious way religion is used by a (thankfully small) minority to persecute and terrify the life out of those who don't conform to heterosexual norms.

Paul has spent his whole life being told gays will go to Hell and that it's wrong, a perversion, so he doesn't react well after spending a night with college rival hockey player Robbie.

The proverbial hits big time though when he's transferred to the same professional team a couple of years later and all those feelings of attraction are still there.

There's a lot of complex emotions being dealt with in this book, as well as the sweet romance, and sometimes it gets itself all caught up in trying to do too much.

Robin's inattentive parents and their disregard for his career, his transgender pseudo aunt Georgie playing college football with Paul's dad and knowing there's something off about his extreme religious views, should have been dealt with separately really.

It muddled up the narrative at that point so it felt like the big reveal from his past was there as a specific plot point.

However, the very sharp reminder of the terrifying events of the 1980s with the AIDS crises was very well done.

I don't think people who weren't alive at that time can quite understand the horror and the fear which was projected around the world including here in the UK as the "gay plague" saw people dying in their hundreds, then thousands.

I felt for Paul throughout but I also wanted to kick him up the backside but i accept it's difficult to change a mindset which has been drip fed to you for so long.

Both characters are quite young but they read as fairly mature, both were able to communicate, albeit at times in sign language, so there was no misunderstanding plot here.

The ending is really lovely and there are more potential pairings set up in this for a third book.

*#ARC received from the author in return for an honest and unbiased review.*

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### **Elsa Bravante says**

Un típico sports romance sobre jugadores de Hockey, problemas entre la condición sexual de uno y las creencias religiosas, los posibles problemas al declarar la condición sexual en un mundo del deporte muy conservador, etc... Nada fuera de lo normal, nada nuevo, pero ha estado entretenido. Me han gustado los personajes, el ambiente y su historia de amor es bonita. Lo que menos me ha convencido es el arco argumental del padre del MC con homofobia internalizada y un background religioso, ha sido excesivo y resulto de una forma demasiado fácil al mismo tiempo.

Recomendado para aquellos que disfrutan de los sport romance. Aunque, me gustaría terminar señalando los graves problemas de edición que una vez más me encuentro con esta autora, hay faltas, nombres mal puestos y palabras que faltan, este tipo de problemas le restan mucha credibilidad a un autor y su obra.

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## **Len Evans Jr says**

I loved this book except for the parts that almost killed me and even those were well done. Ms. Wasp managed to one-up City Boy (book one) cuz even though it was awesome this one tops it easily! Ok, from the very start this was a hard book for me to read. Paul story is just a bit too close too home for me to be able read about his upbringing and family life with out it bringing up a lot of very painful memories. There were I number of times in the book where statements that Paul made expressing what he had been taught were almost verbatim of things I had heard for years. Though I didn't know anything about sex at the age of 7, I did know emphatically that I was gonna marry a boy when I grew up. It confused me to know end that my Mom kept telling me I couldn't say things like that. Then when I was at church when I was 13 for the first time I realized that the abomination the pastor was talking about was me. Needless to say I identify with Paul closely. Once I realized how hard this book was gonna be for me I almost decided to just not read it. But I'm stubborn and figured it would not be too bad so I continued... the end result is it stirred up a heck of a lot of crap I had thought buried for good or that I had worked through. However, I am glad I kept going cuz it was a bit cathartic. I didn't get Paul's happy ending, my parents still don't seem to have a clue how to deal with having a gay son and I'm 52. Anyway, this story is so well done I can only assume that the author did her research thoroughly and talked to those who have had these types of experiences cuz her telling of it was perfect. The quote I added from this book about hating oneself is so dead on... I still struggle with it every day. One last thing I gotta say. Even if our society has come a long way from where in was 31 yrs ago when I cam eclose to killing myself it still has a long way to go till homophobia and hate are gone and no more young men and women kill themselves because they were born gay.

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## **Bárbara says**

\*ARC provided by the author\*

Even though we saw relatively little of Robbie in City Boy, I was really invested in him from the start- I was dying to read his story since I finished the ARC for the first book: it was the most painful couple days, having to wait until I got my hands (metaphorically speaking cause, you know, kindle) on this.

I'm more than happy to say this didn't disappoint! Robbie and Paul's story had a rocky but precious journey, and all kinds of feelings were involved in the experience: it ranged from the giddiest of happiness to hardcore sadness, utter heartbreak for our precious, stupid boys. I just couldn't not root for them at all times (side note: the ASL thing was the most adorable thing ever and I just about outright melted every time it was there).

The team was, as they proved in City Boy, a true delight- but (and he really needs to stop doing this- just kidding: never stop, we love you Bryce!) I have to admit that Bryce undoubtedly steals the thunder every scarce second he's in a scene. I loved seeing him and Dakota- and also Nikki (just in case I forgot to mention in my review for City Boy, that woman deserves all the awards: she's so awesome).

While I did enjoy the way the biggest conflict played out, I have to say I'm not sold on how Paul's father was involved in the mix- there was this twist that I found a bit unnecessary and, frankly, I would have appreciated his character much more if he hadn't had that "excuse" (cause most people who share his behavior don't). I think there would have still been ways of introducing the matter that was introduced on his talk while driving with his son, but without having him so in the center (I know I'm not making sense but it's late and I'm too

sleepy to add the spoiler tags and talk freely ugh).

So- in general, I loved, loved, loved! This. The pace was ugh! Just perfect. It was sort of the kind of story I was needing to read (which goes to show cause I read it in ONE SITTING).

I know this is an ARC so things may not be final and all, but I do think this needs some revising and editing, cause some things (typos, missing/misplaced/out of order words, punctuation errors) were a bit distracting. But other than that, I have practically no objections. I was indeed really happy with this! Can't wait to see what the author comes up with next!

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### **Anke says**

Just finished. As I liked the first book of this series very much, I preordered this book and payed 2.99\$.

It started out ok although I realized that I'm over stories about young guys being gay and living in fear of their homophobic parents. That's on me and not the book, yap.

But what is on the book is that I got a copy with many missing words and especially from chapter 35 til the end this whole thing went bonkers. There were unfinished sentences, no idea who wanted to say what, it read as if it was the version where the author jotted down ideas how to finish the story, it jumped around like crazy only to then end in fragments and the reader, me, had to guess what the final product was meant to be, but sadly I didn't get to read it.

Therefore 2 stars. Yes, I'm rather furious.

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### **BR11 says**

This book was good! Robbie and Paul don't have it easy. Paul's extremely religious background is not easy to overcome. So this book has all the angst the first one lacked.

But I enjoyed it and liked Robbie in particular. He was understanding without being a doormat and without compromising his own values.

This book has plenty of steam and lots of interesting secondary characters. I'm so looking forward to Sergei's and his "twink" (as Jake calls them).

Recommend.

Free with Kindle Unlimited

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### **Jay says**

*Note: Before beginning my review of Country Boy, by A.E. Wasp, I wish to point out that on release day, the wrong draft was published on Amazon, one that was an even earlier edition than the ARC that I was given to read for this review. According to the author, Amazon now has the correct version, so if you purchased the book before this review was published, delete the copy from your device and allow it to be downloaded again.*

4.5 stars – After finishing the first book (*City Boy*) in A.E. Wasp’s Hot off the Ice series, I admit to being a little reluctant to read the follow-up because of the few stylistic and character issues I had with the first. Fortunately, the second book, *Country Boy*, suffers from none of those issues. In truth, the book has a much different feel than its predecessor. It has more angst and a heavier conflict (though neither is anywhere close to being a downer to the storytelling), and, more importantly, it is better focused on the plot and central characters. It also contains what I thought was an interesting take on the closeted-gay-professional-athlete trope. All of which improved my enjoyment over the first installment of the series.

When Robbie Rhodes and Paul Dyson crossed paths two years ago on the night between their rival collegiate hockey teams’ two games against each other, it turned into an unexpected hook-up where Robbie felt like they had made a real connection. During the game the next day, that connection turned into Paul’s fist to the face accompanied by that hateful slur all gay men hate, not the sort of “real” Robbie wanted. Now, Robbie is a rookie on the NHL’s Seattle Thunder, and though he isn’t out publicly, his sexuality is an open secret with the team. He’s mostly settled into the routine of the big leagues, but things are about to get a lot more complicated when he finds out Paul has been called up from the team’s minor-league affiliate, which means they’re about to be teammates.

In addition to the closeted-athlete trope, *Country Boy* is also about Paul’s difficulty with being gay after being raised in a strict, very conservative religious home and community. I have to admit that this type of character background often produces storylines that aren’t my favorite. Fortunately, while the religious component does play an omnipresent role in the book—Paul’s life doesn’t revolve around religion, but his belief, his faith, and his family are all very important to him, in spite of how they have created the struggle he has with his sexuality—the author does a good job keeping religion from overrunning the story she’s telling. Instead, it creates another interesting counterpoint to Robbie’s beliefs and upbringing. Instead of Paul’s tightly knit community and his family who has always supported his dream of making it big in hockey, Robbie’s academic parents have always poo-poo’d his love of the sport, a point that is only worse now that it’s his career.

Paul’s moral conflict ultimately establishes the facet of this rendition of the closeted-pro-athlete trope that I found intriguing. Early in the story—in fact, it may also have been revealed during one of the few scenes involving Robbie in this novel’s predecessor—we learn that Robbie’s last serious boyfriend broke up with him because Robbie did not want to come out publicly so early in his professional career. After Robbie and Paul get past the tense reunion and move firmly into “we shouldn’t be doing this” land, it quickly becomes apparent that Robbie, whose mindset on being the first out pro-hockey player has advanced much more closely toward doing it than when his ex broke things off, is now in the same position that he had put his ex in: Paul can’t come out without losing his family, and Robbie can’t come out without losing Paul. I love a good reversal of circumstance within a character.

This conflict definitely comes with an appreciable and expected level of angst. As with the religious component, this too doesn’t overwhelm the story, because this isn’t a story of selfish personalities creating an off-again-on-again relationship. On the contrary, it’s about two young men dealing with their feelings both as they relate to each other and to the outside influences in their lives in a satisfyingly real manner, one that felt true to their characters instead of being overwritten and overdramatized for the sake of attempting to pull some extra emotional response from the readers. It’s this restraint that I often find lacking in stories involving characters who come from conservative religious backgrounds, the lack of restraint that often keeps me from believing and enjoying such stories. This was about as well done as I could hope for.

I also have to admit that the setup for *Country Boy* included something that gave me a vested interest in its outcome. The few chapters early in the story that, by way of flashback, cover Robbie and Paul’s first

encounter take place while Robbie plays hockey in a small town at a Northern Minnesota school called Bemidji State University, which happens to be my alma mater (Go Beavers!) and is in the town where I was born and spent the first twenty-five years of my life. Happily, it wasn't just that fact that made me enjoy the story, but it certainly didn't hurt. :-D With two books of the series done and my enjoyment of the second improving over the first, which was also good, here's hoping the trend continues, for the pairing I suspect will come in book three looks to be rather interesting.

*The author and/or publisher generously provided me a complimentary copy of Country Boy in exchange for this fair and honest review.*

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