



The Catch Trap

Marion Zimmer Bradley

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Tommy Zane hates lions, a major obstacle in a family of lion tamers. But Tommy's dreams, and talent, fly higher, up in the rigging with the trapeze. When rising star Mario Santelli offers him flying lessons, it looks like the start of wonderful new life, and to Tommy's surprise, his relationship with Mario deepens even as his skill soars in the rigging. But life in the 1940s forces them to keep their love a secret, and the stress pushes both Tommy and Mario to a precipice. And as Mario flies higher and higher, Tommy begins to wonder if it will always be his role to catch Mario as he falls.

A tremendously moving tale, a rich family saga, a wise and compassionate portrait of a special love in a cruel world.

The Catch Trap Details

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From Reader Review The Catch Trap for online ebook

Mel Bossa says

This story, no matter how flawed it was at times, will stay with me forever. I adore Tommy and his loving patience and devotion carried his tortured lover Mario through their tumultuous affair with each other and the circus. How could I forget the Flying Santellis? This was a beautiful, detailed and finely crafted novel. yes, in some places it dragged and at times the self deprecating was heavy, but the lovers grow and learn and in the end the magic of the story comes together in the last few chapters making my heart soar like Mario leaping into his sauto mortale attempting the triple and being caught--always caught--by his soulmate, his muse, his lover, his fortuna, Lucky--Tommy Zane.

So many interesting side characters. So many family dramas and reconciliation, through the second world war and on, the Santellis struggle to hold their famous place under different circus canvases, and though there are fights and betrayals, losses and deaths, changes and traditions challenged, the family ties remain and the show must go on.

When the book opens, Tommy is only a boy of fifteen or so, dying to learn the dangerous and thrilling craft of flying, and when his mentor, temperamental but oh so beautiful Mario takes him under his wing, nothing could have prepared Tommy for the epic love story he was going to live.

In the end. he is a man. Toughen yet still so tender and committed to the man he's followed all of his life.

They are flyer and catcher, two halves of a whole. They will always be dressed in green and gold in my mind and swinging in perfect timing under the bright lights of a big top somewhere in a sleepy town.

They will always be young and full of gusto and zeal, sneaking away in a thunderstorm for a stolen moment of passion they had to hide all of their lives.

Imperfect but unforgettable.

Erastes says

As a fan of circus stories, and someone who has been so since a little kid, this was something I was really looking forward to. I had very few preconceptions, as I didn't know what era it was set in or whether it had a romance ending, or anything. I love films such as Trapeze (I saw the homoerotic subtext in there, even before I discovered gay romance) and The Greatest Show on Earth so as I say I was happy to jump in to The Catch Trap.

And overall I wasn't disappointed. Tommy Zane is the young son of lion tamers who realises early on that he doesn't want to follow in his father's footsteps and train the big cats, he's always wanted to fly--and before the Santellis arrive at the second-rate circus his family is working in--he hasn't been given the chance. He has, however, had a lot of experience in many related disciplines; he helps out with the aerial ballet, does tumbling and generally helps out wherever needed. When watching one of the flyers working, he's invited up onto the practice rig, and his life changes forever.

The story is—at its core—the tale of the romance between Tommy and Mario, and this takes many years to spin out, and has inevitable ups and downs, but it's a lot more than that too. Mario is working on a triple somersault, something that had, at this time (1940s/1950s) only been done by a very few people. In fact, it was, before someone did it, considered an impossible feat.

A note should be added here about the history. In a lengthy foreword, the author explains that she decided for various reasons to make the history of the trapeze and in particular, the triple somersault, an alternate history. I can see her concerns, considering the homosexual plotline, but I wish she hadn't done it, as I always like to be informed when reading, saying to myself "I did not know that!" and as she's invented the first proponent of the triple, and the men who are performing it, I didn't get that kick of real history.

After a while, Tommy is invited to train properly and moves in with the Santelli family, a vast, bickering exuberant bunch. The family Santelli is a wonderful invention, from the matriarch down to the children. The family are all flying mad, and are held together by discipline and tradition going back fifty years. At times I found the endless bickering and arguing repetitive in the extreme, and there's sometimes too much dialogue which goes nowhere, and could easily have been cut, but this doesn't spoil the story overall. Like all families, there's good and bad, and acceptance, when it does come, comes from an unexpected source, and rejection and bigotry also comes from a source you don't see coming.

Tommy is fifteen when he's first approached sexually by Mario, so people who find anyone having sex under 18 as distasteful are going to want to avoid this. I admit I found it mildly disturbing—not because of Tommy's youth even in the times that this was set—but because Mario's first approach came over as little more than "interfering" with Tommy when he was in no position to object (they were sitting in the back of a moving car). Previous to this they had been sharing a bed, and arms had been put around each other "in sleep" and "unconscious" kisses exchanged, but this was passed off by Tommy as that Mario was asleep and didn't know what he was doing. It didn't matter to me that Tommy was accepting of this back seat advance, Mario knew that Tommy could hardly scream "get off me!" and so in this case I did, as I said, find it a little creepy, even though Tommy didn't mind.

This is actually echoed by Mario, as the first part of their relationship is peppered with a lot of guilt and disgust on his part as he castigates himself for having "corrupted" Tommy and is justifiably scared of what would happen if it was found out, as he's about 8 years older, he knows that Tommy would not—in all likelihood—have anything really bad happen to him, but it would be jail for Mario, and that's somewhere he's been before.

At times I found Mario pretty hard going, and I think that if I was Tommy I would have given up on him pretty early on, but Tommy is in love and there's little stronger than a teenager's first love. Their relationship is pretty stormy; inevitable really, considering the pressure cooker it's kept in—not being able to be openly affectionate in any way, keeping it secret despite sharing a room. Both of them have hot tempers, Mario in particular, and this is another reason why I lost respect for him, because his own self-loathing breaks into violence with Tommy on more than one occasion.

Tommy is a little difficult to get to know—he goes through a lot, but because the author rarely lets us into anyone's head, it's hard to fathom. He leaves home for the Santellis and hardly looks back, or thinks about his parents, and even when a tragedy hits him—one that I know would have poleaxed me for weeks, it's hardly mentioned after the occurrence. I'm sure the author didn't mean to make him shallow, she's probably concentrating on other aspects of the plot, but at times he comes across as such.

It's very much Tommy's story—and we follow it from his underage crush, to the state where he's grown up

and out from Mario's aggressive and over-moody wing and begins to doubt whether he can live with this man, this secret and this family any more, and what place he'll ever have in Mario's life, and how to achieve it.

What I was a little disappointed with, is that there's not enough of the life of the circus in the description. There's a good deal of the trapeze of course, and I learned a lot—the Catch Trap for example is the Catcher's Trapeze—but there wasn't enough of the daily routine, little description of the tearing down and the rebuilding of the circus, few interactions with all the varied people who must frequent such a place, and I would have liked to have seen more of that.

Anyone expecting an easy, loving romance should be aware, it's simply not that. There are very few scenes where the couple are comfortable and sweet with each other, and that's just how it should be. It's often an uncomfortable read—a book that keeps you on the edge of your seat, not only with the fear of the discovery of their relationship, or for queerbashing purposes, but because of the very real danger that the flyers face, every time they climb the ladders onto the rig. I doubt Ms Bradley ever flew, but she's certainly done her research.

I'm slicing a star off from the review for the beginning love scene, and for the uneven and often repetitive writing. It's a large book, and would have benefited from a bit of a chop here and there. But as a stimulating and thoughtful romance, forged in danger and cemented in the air, it's certainly a book that will keep you thinking about the protagonists, long after you've finished.

What's unbelievable, in these days of a gay romance boom, that this book is out of print, and copies aren't that easy to come by, and often are hugely expensive, but if you fancy a good read, then keep trying, you'll pick one up eventually. Despite the missing star, I do consider this to be an Essential Read for anyone serious about writing gay historical fiction.

Rory says

I have reread this book many many times... It takes place during the 20's and 30's in the life of a circus performer and the family that he joins to become a famous trapezee artist. This is an amazing look at circus history over several decades as well as about love both romantic and familial. It was one of the best books ever.

Jose Santos says

The best book I ever read.

Shannon says

Struggled to halfway through and could not finish. This book is about the lives of a bunch of low rent acrobats and entertainers. A 14 yo's parents allowed the kid to drop out of school in order to travel and fool around in the circus with a completely unrelated family. One of the family members who trains the kid begins to fraternize with him; actually the love story is he is an emotionally unstable pedophile who begins

to prey on the kid in his sleep, attempting to furnish him alcohol, secretly gropes him with other people present, and so on. The pedophile expresses remorse for his actions and the 14 yo (actually I suppose he's 15 at the halfway point) reassures the pedophile that it's alright and that he loves him. They fight a lot about their forbidden natures. There is also some nonsense with their continued employment, although if any adult had any sense in this story they would have shut the place down and sent the main characters both to school so they could gain a collective IQ greater than 25.

A.M. Riley says

I'm interested in what other writers of GLBT think of Marion Zimmer Bradley. I feel almost as if a piece of her got blown into my heart a decade ago. Like a dandelion gone to seed.

The Mists of Avalon was the first Arthurian legend based book that answered the need I had to see strong female characters in my favorite myth. Poor old Lord Tennyson had pretty much destroyed the women of the Round Table for me. Mindless idiots and evil witches. The Mists of Avalon was a sort of redemption.

Bradley was incredibly prolific and I haven't read all of her books. I'm thinking I may get myself down to a local used bookstore and find a few that I've missed.

This one reads, at times, like fan fiction. There are thousands of tiny story arcs shooting off into space while we follow the main three: Family, Flying trapeze history, and illegal love.

The last is handled with such insight and sympathy I am stunned every time I read it. She describes the loneliness, self-hatred and fear. The anger at having to hide this one true and beautiful thing in ones life, as if one is ashamed. And she does it simply and subtly, not hammering it home or making too much of it.

I think it adds to the book to know that one of her husbands was a gay man with whom she had a child. They were eventually divorced, but he and she remained friends. Bradley's deep compassion and love for human beings permeates all of her books. Her women and men are strong, sympathetic, and filled with mutual respect for each other.

The book is over 600 pages long. I've read it twice now. Towards the end, I find myself slowing and reading every page, savoring the world and the characters. This time I waited a week to read the last twenty pages, just to make it last.

I wish I could have met her. Her voice, nonetheless, is one of those that lives in my head.

Calen says

This is hands down, the best book I've ever read with gay men as the main characters. It's honestly a masterpiece of gay literature. This is the story of love and romance between Mario and Tommy, two circus flyers, and everything that happens around them. It's so original, so creative, and so expertly written. The details and descriptions put into this are excellent and reading it was almost surreal. I was in love with it

from the first chapter and didn't want it to end. I wish there were more books like this out there. It gets my highest recommendation.

João Roque says

Tanta, mas tanta coisa a dizer sobre esta obra prima de Marion Zimmer Bradley e eu pouco vou dizer. Apenas que "Salto Mortal" é um dos mais admiráveis livros que já li, me emocionou e empolgou totalmente. É um "grande" livro, e em todos os sentidos, pois se antes de iniciar a sua leitura, o seu tamanho me intimidava um pouco, no final o único incômodo das suas mais de 800 páginas foi o volume do livro não o permitir ler da melhor forma em certos lugares, nomeadamente na cama.

Quando conseguir arrumar melhor as minhas ideias sobre o livro irei publicar um texto "como deve ser" no meu blog "Whynotnow"...

Um livro assombroso!

Erulisse says

I was recommended to read this as an early entry into LGBT literature. Knowing that I have enjoyed other books by this author, I was looking forward to it. I never dreamed how much I would enjoy this. It's not erotica, most of the sexual escapades are not explicit at all. But the relationship that she develops between the two main characters is human, fallible, and rings true. They are each other's lifelines, and when they fully realize that along with their place in each other's lives as well as the larger family, then things will go well. When they forget that, or turn their back on it, things crash.

If you have any interest in groundbreaking LGBT literature, read this along with *The Front Runner*, *The Charioteer*, and *The Song of the Loon*. These authors wrote mainstream M/M literature when people were barely coming out of the closet and homosexuality was illegal and often led to serious injury or death at the hands of homophobes. In the short list of early M/M literature, *The Catch Trap* stands at the top of the pile as outstanding in all aspects.

Read on my NookColor.

Samantha says

I loved this book.

Set in the late 1940s/early 1950s, the story revolves around two central characters: Tommy Zane (through whose eyes most of the story is told) and Mario Santelli (aka Matt Gardner). Tommy wants to learn how to fly - on the trapeze - and Mario, the star flyer with the Flying Santellis, takes him under his wing. Soon Tommy becomes one of the family, even going by the name Tommy Santelli during the act.

Bradley does two things extremely well in this book: (1) describes circus life and especially the art of the trapeze in rich and vivid detail, bringing it to life for the reader; and (2) creates a realistic love story between two men, not shying away from all the implications of that relationship for the characters and the time.

Mario and Tommy are in love, but they have to hide it. The forced secrecy exacerbates Mario's already volatile temper and frustrates Tommy. It also creates unavoidable tension between them, and their fear of being caught makes for a sometimes dysfunctional relationship.

The story is told in three parts. In the first part, Tommy learns to fly, becomes part of the Santelli family, discovers his sexuality in sometimes painful (emotionally) ways, and learns that life for he and Mario isn't as easy as it is for everyone else. It ends with an unwanted revelation that sets the tone for the rest of the book.

Part 2 is very short and consists of the rift between Mario and Tommy as they are forced to go their separate ways. Though brief, it hurts to read, as by now the reader is invested in the lives of Tommy and Mario.

The third part begins five years after the second part ends. Tommy returns from the Army to discover that Mario has gone missing. Finding him languishing in a two-bit carnival, their reunion is bittersweet and inevitable. Eventually they decide to team up again on the trapeze, hoping to recapture the magic they once had. In the end, Tommy realizes that his place is as Mario's catcher. The realization is symbolic, as Mario needs an anchor, someone to catch him when he falls and when he soars - on and off the trapeze. He's no good on his own; physically he's strong, but Tommy is his inner strength.

While it is a love story, at the heart of the novel lies a rich and storied family saga. Five generations of Santellis are present in the story and the complex and sometimes conflicting themes of love and loyalty make the story a realistic and intriguing tale.

The book isn't perfect. The final conflict/resolution of the story is a bit predictable and Bradley overuses a few phrases to the point of monotony. But overall, it's a fantastic story full of rich details, compelling characters, and a believable and sometimes heartbreaking love story. Oh, and it's about the trapeze. How many books can say that?

I highly recommend this book to everyone.

Cam says

The Catch Trap, AKA The Book That Ate My Life.

This is not a short book. Going by word count, it's about as long as *The Deathly Hallows*. But I devoured this book in only two days, and when I wasn't reading it, my hands itched for it. The word I would use is "ensnaring". The only time I glanced at the page numbers was out of fear for the story ending too soon, rather than tediously counting how many pages I had left to suffer through. There was never a moment that I wasn't thoroughly invested in the plot. The core of this novel is about the love between Tommy Zane and Mario Santelli, and what makes the book good is that the author never lost sight of that purpose. Tommy and Mario are first introduced within the first few pages of the book and their story carries the plot all the way to the end. This is gay literature with substance; the characters are fleshed out and come to life, as clearly as if they were people you knew. Tommy is fourteen years old when the book starts and Mario is roughly seven years older than him, the golden boy of The Flying Santellis, the only one in the family who can execute the famous "triple" on the trapeze. Mario takes Tommy under his wing and into the family business and teaches him how to fly. Conflict arises when they both must hide their growing affection for each other because of the taboo of homosexual relations in the 1940s, especially in a relationship with an age difference as great as theirs. But unlike much of gay literature, this is not a tragedy. You get your satisfyingly dense plot and

sympathetic gay characters, and you get to keep them. No bitter taste in mouth by the end.

My standards for gay novels are usually lower than most novels, both because of the scarcity of the genre and the fact that the author gets brownie points simply for writing a book about gay characters at all. But this book is phenomenal by all standards. I did not have to lower expectations or make allowances for any poor writing or storytelling on the author's part, because there was none. I just sat back and read, and loved.

Martin says

I actually read this several years ago and haven't done a proper review for it at the time.

Looking back to it now, I still remember how much this story impressed me.

Tommy joining the Santelli circus to assist Mario Santelli on the trapeze with both guys developing feelings for each other over the years in a time before gay relationships were even 'a thing' almost broke me apart.

This book is very dark at times, but mainly it is an epos about an Italian family and two very complicated people working and loving each other in a very unusual (for me) environment.

We follow them over many years and even though it doesn't have the HEA you usually expect from romance books, I loved this story dearly!

5 stars!

Zahra says

There are so many reason why I shouldn't love this book, but the simple truth is I couldn't put it down.

It's not an easy read. Tommy, the character whose POV is mostly used, is, at fifteen, young and naive, and so very much in love with Mario, his trapeze mentor who is about eight years older than him.

Mario is a hard person to love, though. He's self-destructive and full of self-loathing, despite being an immensely talented flyer and a natural teacher.

I love the time setting (forties and fifties) and I'm glad Ms. Zimmer Bradley didn't shy away from the realities of that time. Homosexuality was illegal and Mario's fear of getting caught didn't stop when Tommy came of age. Neither of them could come out to their parents and their feelings about always being careful and always needing to hide are often addressed. The self-loathing in Mario isn't covered up or glossed over. Sadly this was (and sometimes still is) a reality.

Personally I didn't have a problem with the underage sex, or the fact it was almost never picture perfect. I'm used to more explicit scenes, but even the 'fade to grey' didn't bother me (I'm a writer. my imagination came in very handy!)

Overall, the rawness of it, and its contrast to the supposedly glamorous world of trapeze artists, makes it a definite Recommended Read.

Sala Bim says

I just can't believe how disappointed I am with this book. I searched for it for so long and when I finally found it and read it I just...I can't adequately explain how I feel. I won't lament too much though & I will try not to include spoilers. I acknowledge beforehand that this is only my meager opinion.

Marion ZB was obviously a talented writer, and I have enjoyed some of her other works, but as a gay, male reader, I found this piece so poorly done, so brutal, even offensive at times, that I honestly don't think I could read anything else by her. It has just shattered the author's mystique for me. I get that the story was set in the 40s & 50s (in fact, it was a primary reason I was so excited to read it), but it was so full of self loathing and the characters did so many pointless, heartless, unforgivable things (to each other and others) that I just can not appreciate it even for nostalgic purposes. I realized about a third of the way through that I honestly no longer cared for the characters and I did not even want them to be together in the end. I just stopped rooting for their individual happiness or their Happily Ever After, which was an honest-to-goodness first for me. I am not slamming this book and I'm not just trying to be negative. I really put in some time and effort to find this piece of literature. I can appreciate that it was written in a certain time and some of the "glimpses of the past" were nice. There were a few very nicely written excerpts and some boldly tackled taboos, and I enjoyed the aspect of circus life, which led to a new interest for me. But the supposedly "romantic" aspect and the homosexual aspects were so awful for me that by the end I wished I had not started. I love lengthy novels and beforehand I saw the 500+ pages as a bonus. And to be clear, I was not bothered by the age differences and all that. I am not a sensitive reader. But it was all the self hatred (regardless of the era and societal issues), all the heterosexual dealings (there seemed to be more effort dedicated to the heterosexual aspects than the homosexual). I don't know if that was purposely done or if it was just due to the author's limitations as a heterosexual female. She almost seemed like she used the heterosexual aspects to "tow the line" on the subject matter, or balance the homosexual facets, which frankly is insulting. But there were so many other vicious moments for me (potential SPOILER SPOILER SPOILER: like Mario & Tommy, men supposedly so "in love" with each other, maliciously having sex with women (who they had just met & supposedly had no interest in) in front of each other just to prove points!) They were so cruel to each other at times. So much volatility and hostility, and quite frankly so many sadistic and brutal moments that I just wanted it to end. I guess the author was going for an epic, hard-earned love, but to me it failed miserably. It wasn't tender or sweet like I hoped, at least not enough to compensate (repeatedly treating someone like dirt, then crying and apologizing about it doesn't count).

Ultimately, I didn't believe in the author's story and I didn't believe in her characters. I kept asking myself "How did Mrs. Bradley really feel about gay people?" Regardless of her reported scandals and all. Again, she was obviously talented, but it almost seemed like this was some inconsequential story that she didn't really care about but wrote it just to prove that she could write about the subject matter. It definitely did not feel like a labor of love. I get that she put a lot of time and research in the writing, but it honestly did not come through for me. Now that I think of it, I think I may have actually enjoyed the story better if it just didn't focus on any sex or relationships at all. Perhaps if she had solely focused on the circus life and the aerial feats and such, I think it would have really been a great read for me. I felt so helpless and disappointed when I finished reading this and, with all the rave reviews, I wondered if there was anybody who felt the same. The story had such a promising premise, and I actually tried to re-read it to be sure but, alas, this one was torture for me.

Margarida says

A ficção decorre nos anos quarenta e cinquenta do século passado, numa América intolerante e

preconceituosa, sendo um excelente e dramático romance sobre o amor entre dois homens, a que se junta uma pesquisa rigorosa sobre a arte do trapézio e o universo do circo daquelas décadas.

A narrativa é fluida e a autora conseguiu captar as emoções, medos e pressões do casal de trapezistas, sendo um deles originário de uma família italiana católica.

Madison Parker says

Absolutely captivating. This book had me completely immersed in this fascinating world of circus performers. I've actually woken up the past two mornings realizing that I had just been dreaming about these characters; that's how completely absorbed I have become in this story. These two men and the story of their love and dedication to each other and to their art has deeply moved me. There were at least three different points in the story where I was in tears because of the emotional intensity. These boys do not often verbally express their feelings towards one another, but when they do, my God, it hits you. There were also plenty of times I held my breath in almost painful anticipation and fear of what would happen next, particularly going into the last chapter. In the end, I was smiling after turning that last page.

This book is high on my list of favorites.

Moureco says

Um livro magnífico, é o que me ocorre comentar. O trabalho de pesquisa da autora deve ter sido imenso, tal o domínio da arte do trapézio que se percebe na escrita. Os voadores Mário e Tommy apaixonam-se, discutem, lutam, desaparecem das vidas um do outro (não sem consequências), mas o amor que nutrem um pelo outro sobrevive a tudo e ao tempo em que estão separados. Além desta história nuclear, lemos a saga familiar de uma família de trapezistas, os amores e desamores dos seus elementos, os seus sucessos e dramas, e pequenas grandes tragédias. Também na família, confusa e conflituosa, o amor que sentem uns pelos outros prevalece. E neste âmbito familiar, o mais relevante, os preconceitos relativamente ao amor de Mário e Tommy podem não ser vencidos, mas estes encontram o seu lugar entre os que amam, sentindo-se e sabendo que são amados, e que ninguém os apontará ou tentará separar. Um livro emocionante até à última página.

John Goode says

I read this book every year.

It is like a vacation for me, I take time, set it aside and go visit Tommy and Matt for a few weeks. Every year it is different, every year it is the same. Every year I cry, every year I fall in love. There is so much magic in this book it's impossible to explain with just words, which is ironic since the magic was made with words but I digress.

A tale of two trapeze artists told in the backdrop of Post World War II, this book spans years and years of Tommy and Matt and their evolution from two guys fooling around to soul mates. To me at least, it is THE gay love story of the 20th century and widely unknown to most people.

Marion Zimmer Bradley of course is famous for a whole other type of book, but she had a passion for gay men and the circus. In the print book forward she explains the differences of the real and the fictional circus which only shows how much she loves the subject. You can feel the dirt on your face, hear the crowd gasp, taste the crappy concession food...and yes, you fall in love with the boys.

This is a long read, not a little skim you can dance over in a few days. This book insists on your full attention and if you cannot give it or do not have the attention span to give, do not read this book. I am reading it on my Kindle Fire this year and I feel like I am cheating a little on my big old hardback copy, but the ability to open up and BE there with Tommy and Matt in a blink of an eye...invaluable. If my Kindle stopped doing everything else but display this book, I would still think it was a good investment.

This isn't a love story where two perfect people fall in love. This is a life story about two people struggling to find the best part of themselves in someone else. So if you are one of those judgmental readers who gets all pissy when someone is an asshole, or as I put it a real person, then avoid the book. These people are real, not chess pieces for your own private imagination. Matt is an asshole and Tommy is famously weak. They are caught in a spiral of passion that threatens to destroy everything they are and at times, that means good people do bad things.

But if you like fantastic writing, incredible characters and a setting that you will look back and go, i want to see that again...this my friend is your book. Now on the Kindle, it has NEVER been easier to discover the wonder of Catch Trap.

I'll be over setting up the rigging for the three o'clock show, wave and I'll buy you a hot dog before it starts.

Jeff says

I read this as a teenager decades ago. It was the first or one of the very first, books with gay characters and positive ones at that. It holds a special place in my heart.

Stephen says

Tommy Zane is leading a life that many kids dream of in this depression era America. His Dad is a big cat trainer and he and his dad and mom are making a comfortable living as circus folk. Though Tommy must water the occasional elephant, help in the rigging of the big tents and even fill-in for one of the girls in a flying ring act, every day's an adventure. But recently Tommy is enthralled by the royalty of the circus, the Flying Santellis, the circus's world famous Flying Trapeze attraction. And when it's agreed that he may train as one of the Santelli's, he's over the moon.

But then tragedy strikes. His father and mother are killed in a tragic traffic accident while Tommy is traveling between cities with his new act. But the show must go on and Tommy attempts to fight the guilt of the "what if"s about his family tragedy and even more insidious... his growing interest in star flyer Mario Santelli... the kind of attraction that he's sure is wrong and forbidden.

This is an amazing novel that gives one a peak at a now vanished way of life and at the challenges that coming of age and coming to terms with ones sexual preference in the days before coming out was even a

term.

By all means this should be on any gay man's must read list.
