



A Gay and Melancholy Sound (Nancy Pearl's Book Lust Rediscoveries)

Merle Miller

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The first book in nationally renowned librarian Nancy Pearl's new Book Lust Rediscoveries series, this lost literary classic is available for the first time in decades. As funny and entertaining as it is captivating and heartrending, *A Gay and Melancholy Sound* is a shattering depiction of modern disconnection and the tragic consequences of a life bereft of love.

Joshua Bland has lived the kind of life many would define as extraordinary. Born in a small Iowa town to a controlling, delusional mother who had always wanted a daughter rather than a son, her anger at him colors his life. His father, a compassionate drinker incapable of dealing with Joshua's mother, walks out on his wife and son, leaving a vacuum in the family that is damagingly filled by his tutor-cum-stepfather Petrarch Pavan, scion of a wealthy New York family who has secrets of his own. Playing on Joshua's brilliance, Petrarch trains him to win a nationwide knowledge competition, but Joshua's disappointing results in the finals are met with anger and disbelief by both his mother and stepfather. If Petrarch was unsuccessful in teaching Joshua the information he needed to win the contest, he had more success in instilling Joshua with the cynicism, self-doubt, and self-hatred that fill his own soul.

Enlisting in the army during World War II, he serves first as an infantryman, where his irreverent letters home turn him into a best-selling author. Then, as a paratrooper, he meets the physical challenges he thought were beyond his reach and helps free the concentration camps before being wounded as the Allied forces free Buchenwald. Back home after the war, he becomes a wildly successful producer—and all of this by the age of thirty-seven. But when his production company flounders amid critical and financial woes, the reality of who he is becomes perfectly, depressingly clear: he has had a lifetime of extraordinary experiences—and no emotional connection to any of it.

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James Drennan:

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