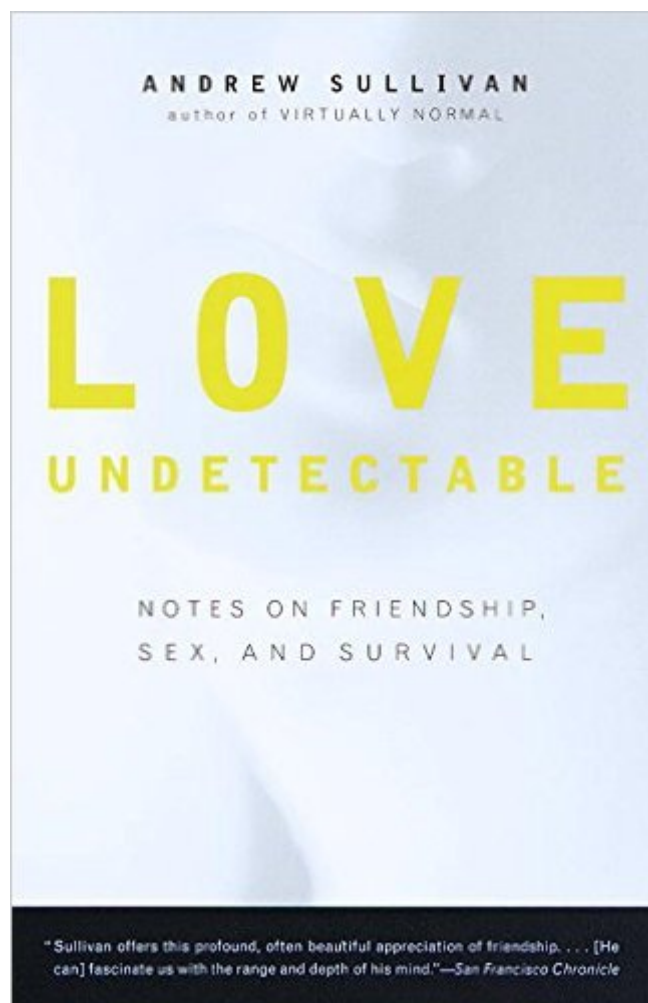


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Love Undetectable: Notes On Friendship, Sex, And Survival



Synopsis

"Sullivan offers [a] profound, often beautiful appreciation of friendship. . . . [He can] fascinate us with the range and depth of his mind."--San Francisco Chronicle
A New York Times Notable Book of the Year
"One of the great pleasures of this book lies in watching Sullivan's mind at work . . . [his essays] are filled with a passion and heat that most cultural criticism lacks." --Katie Roiphe, The Washington Post
When former New Republic editor Andrew Sullivan publicly revealed his HIV positive status in 1996, he intended "to be among the first generation that survives this disease." In this new book, a powerful meditation on the spiritual effect AIDS has on friendship, love, sexuality, and American culture, we follow Sullivan on his path to survival.
A practicing Catholic, Sullivan reflects on his faith in God, and expresses his bittersweet joy upon learning about new AIDS treatments that he believes led to the virus's recent transformation from a plague into a chronic illness. He revisits Freud to seek the origins of homosexuality and reviews the works of Aristotle, St. Augustine, and W. H. Auden to define friendship for a contemporary, post-plague world. Sullivan's last essay extols the virtues of friendship, elevating platonic love over the romantic, as he memorializes his best friend, who died of AIDS.
Intensely personal and passionately political, Sullivan's essays are not just about his own experiences but also a powerful testament to human resilience, faith, hope, and love.
"Sullivan has found meaning in chaos. . . . With its paradoxical sense of beauty amid pain, *Love Undetectable* has something of the quality of a war memoir."
--The New York Times Book Review
"On display here are all of the author's many strengths--compelling, poetic prose style, some keen observations on faith. . . . Sullivan offers a moving defense of the open gay male urban sexual culture and his participation in it."
--The Boston Globe

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In his book "Love Undetectable" gay political columnist Andrew Sullivan shares the pain he felt upon the death from AIDS of a close friend. The friendship was cemented when the two told each other that they were HIV positive. Sullivan weaves this story and confessions of his traumas, loves, sex life, faith and philosophies through the three essays in the book. He adds his observations of the gay world and illumines the experiences with the ideas of great thinkers from ancient and modern times. The first essay, entitled "When Plagues End", contains a slightly less optimistic version of an article Sullivan published in 1996 in the New York Times magazine. After depicting the horror of illness and death from AIDS, Sullivan describes the release from impending doom provided by the new anti-viral drugs. He draws on Camus for inspiration. In the second essay, Sullivan turns to the psychologists' views of homosexuality. He does this in response to the recent vocal claims by reparative therapists and "ex-gays". By exploring this issue, Sullivan ventures into the no-man's land between those who want to abolish homosexuality by curing it and those who won't tolerate any mention of pathology in connection with being gay. Although Sullivan seeks a "teleology of homosexuality, to answer the question, 'What are homosexuals for?' ", he devotes the essay to presentation of theories of its origin and causes. He concisely summarizes Freud's ideas and those of recent psychotherapists. Sullivan follows Freud's example by not proposing an explanation for the causes of homosexuality. He challenges the gay reader to use the presentation of various theories to spur self-examination.

Andrew Sullivan made a reputation for himself by being elevated at a very young age as a senior editor of 'The New Republic', a position he filled from 1991-1996. He continues his journalistic career by writing for 'The Times' (London) and 'New York Times Magazine', as well as contributing articles to a large number of other periodicals. At the height of his career, Sullivan made the announcement that he was HIV-positive. In saying this, he made the assertion: 'I intend to be among the first generation that survives this disease.' Sullivan has occupied a difficult position politically - tending toward conservatism that doesn't sit well with much of the homosexual community, he also tends toward political positions (such as pro-same sex marriage) that go against much of the conservative sentiment. In this first book, 'Virtually Normal', Sullivan

argued for an acceptance of same-sex marriage; he followed that up by editing a collection of essays and contributions by others on the same topic. However, his latest book, 'Love Undetectable', is a very different book. Insofar as Sullivan's life is inextricably bound up with political, historical, and sociological writing through his profession, that is reflected here, but this is a very non-political book. Consisting of three essays, it is primarily reflexions on the life of a survivor, who has yet to become a successful survivor - Sullivan himself. Sullivan is bound to alienate all sides in some ways once again with this volume. He takes on both the church and religious side and the gay liberation side in his first essay: When Plagues End. 'The gay liberationists have plenty to answer for in this.

The most striking aspect of Andrew Sullivan's latest book, "Love Undetectable," is its personal subtext. It's markedly different from his landmark book, "Virtually Normal," in that Sullivan shares with us his own life. In the first essay, "When Plagues End," he discusses his own sexual journey and how becoming HIV-positive reshaped his life. But not only that--Sullivan captures the feelings, moments and memories associated with his romances, spirituality and struggle for identity. It's a keyhole to a side of Sullivan we have never really seen, and it makes his writing more real and persuasive than ever. "Virtually Abnormal," his second essay, is not as personal, but thoughtfully and persuasively articulated. Here he delves into the most current media debate about gays--the origins of homosexuality and whether it can be changed through psychotherapy. Sullivan presents several theories and arguments, from both sides of the fence (here his writing style does resemble "Virtually Normal"). No matter where he turns, from the "genetic" to the "environmental" theory, we see that each position holds a piece of the truth, and there are no hard answers. Sullivan concludes that even though homosexuality is neither strictly "normal" or "abnormal," we should pay attention to society's reaction toward it, since "its treatment is a critical indicator of the endurance of...liberty in a free society." Friendship is the topic of "If Love Were All," in which Sullivan challenges us to reconsider and even resurrect the value of friendship. Gay friendships can be a model for straights, he says, since gay men are particularly good at forming lifelong bonds with each other.

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