



A

André Alexis

Review By Stephanie Talbot



A, the novella by award winning Canadian author André Alexis is the story about an unsuccessful Toronto book reviewer named Alexander Baddeley. Alexander is obsessed with his favourite poet, the highly acclaimed and mysterious Avery Andrews, also what the source of Avery's inspiration is to write such poetry that Alexander can only dream of achieving. Seeking answers and hoping to learn the secrets of Avery's success and sources of creativity and inspiration that he, Alexander, can use to improve his own work, he stalks and by means of a break and enter, accidentally meets the reclusive poet. While initially suspicious of the young man Avery surprisingly not only shares but also later shows him where, and from whom, he finds his inspiration and its divine origins. Avery's intention was not to just answer Alexander's questions about where he finds inspiration but to pass the source along to him, for Avery can no longer bear it.

The story then jumps from realistic fiction to a surreal and mystical one where the reader along with Alexander are introduced to whom Avery, and later Alexander, is bestowed inspiration from. After this meeting with "the divine" and the torch of being the receiver of experiences that induce inspirations is transferred from Avery to the young man, Alexander's writing improves and his novels are also a success. Yet Alexander feels unsatisfied and distanced from his books, while they are from him, and his mind, it was only from his interactions with "the divine" and his subsequent inspirations from these meetings that his novels come forth, none of his success has been truly his own alone. While his novels have brought him fame and recognition, the experiences he must endure first for Alexander are sometimes disturbing, and this wears him down. Nonetheless, as the decades pass he continues to seek out the source of his inspiration for his writing, while also attending functions in the literary world where he interacts with publishers and fellow authors, including the author of this novella, André Alexis himself. Though the inspiration for the names of the two writers is also most likely his own. It is fascinating what can be conveyed in so few pages, while it did feel rushed during the last third of the novella overall this was a very enjoyable story, I kept my summary of the plot somewhat vague as I felt any more details would spoil where and who Avery and Alexander's inspiration is drawn from. André Alexis has recently been awarded the Windham-Campbell Prize, a monetary prize for writers that allows them to focus on their craft and not worry about the financial burden many artists are faced with. So if you are interested in the writings of André Alexis, pick up the novella A for a taste of this creative author's work.

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