



The Music of Your Life: Stories

John Rowell

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With a voice that is both sophisticated and deeply Southern, first-time author John Rowell evokes the memory of the great Truman Capote in this wonderful collection of short stories, peopled with unforgettable, endearing characters and filled with wry insights.

Drawn from the emotional well of a young man who grew up in love with the glittery, glamorous world of music and movies and theater -- far removed from his own more prosaic life in North Carolina -- and informed with honesty and compassion, the seven short stories that comprise *The Music of Your Life* mark the impressive debut of a remarkably gifted writer.

Compulsively readable and always accessible, each story takes the reader into the mind and heart of its central character, whether a young boy suffering from Lawrence Welk damage and teetering precariously on the edge of puberty ("The Music of Your Life") or a not-so-young-anymore man for whom fantasy and reality have become a terrifying blur and who finds himself slipping over the edge toward total meltdown ("Wildlife of Coastal Carolina").

Nostalgia plays a part in these stories as a somewhat jaded New York film critic looks back on his life and the movies that shaped him ("Spectators in Love"), and an aging flower-shop owner ruefully assesses the love he found and lost when, as an eighteen-year-old, he embarked on a Hollywood career that never soared but did include one particularly memorable appearance on the *I Love Lucy* television show ("Who Loves You?").

Sex and sexual identity are also major factors in these stories, as a choir director finds one of his altos trying to play matchmaker for him with a recent divorcée ("Saviors"), and a group of forty-something men find themselves in the awkward company of a lusty bunch of twenty-somethings ("Delegates") and reflect on how surely they were never that age.

These stories, along with "The Mother-of-the-Groom and I," a wonderfully wry look at a failed New York actor who has come home for his brother's wedding and who is given the task of helping his mother find the proper dress for the event, all create entire worlds within which the characters live and struggle to find their way.

Funny, touching, serious, and tender, these are tales sure to appeal to anyone who has ever known the awkwardness of being "different," and while life is often harsh for the stories' characters, the bold determination with which they persevere offers inspiration to all. Crafted with affecting sincerity, *The Music of Your Life* marks the beginning of what is certain to be an extraordinary career.

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