



**Sharlach, Jeffrey**  
**RUNNING IN BED**  
Two Harbors (291 pp.)  
\$14.95 Paperback  
May 15, 2012  
ISBN: 978-1937293482

A resonant debut featuring a closeted young advertising apprentice wrestling with the undertow of burgeoning homosexual feelings.

Journalist and attorney Sharlach's vibrant, accomplished debut introduces Josh Silver, a young, handsome Cornell University graduate at odds with his sexuality and desperate to dip his feet into the boy pool. Evocatively set in late '70s Manhattan ("the Emerald City at the end of the yellow brick road"), it's not long until Silver's 22-year-old jitters dissipate, he grows a mustache, moves in with some dicey housemates and dives right in by visiting a gay bookshop, then a gay bar. From there, it's onward and upward through a lengthy procession of randy men from Christopher Street to sex-frenzied Fire Island to do what comes naturally. Searching for that elusive one true love, however, proves more of a challenge until he sets his sights on Tommy Perez, a troubled, muscle-bound hustler who steals Silver's heart away on Christmas Eve. Sharlach provides some textured, nuanced scenes with the narrator's cautionary family and his loving rehabilitation of former rent boy Tommy, and offers many nostalgic, gimlet-eyed observations about gay culture in the halcyon days of the '70s throughout. All the fun and games, however, eventually succumb to the dour, encroaching specter of AIDS as the novel moves into a melancholy denouement that wraps things up grimly yet gracefully. Those with a particular affinity for gay fiction will be refreshingly satisfied with Sharlach's storytelling acumen, his descriptive talents and the authentic dramatization of a gay man in search of love and laughter amid the ashes of a decimating plague.

An undeniably charming, well-written first effort—and hopefully not Sharlach's last.