

## Book Review:

### *The Furthest City Light* by Jeanne Winer

An ex-cop is murdered. A \$250,000 life insurance policy was taken out on his life three weeks before his death, listing his wife as the beneficiary. His wife called the police and confessed to stabbing her husband in the stomach then locking herself in the bathroom until he died. On the surface, the case seems obvious. All resources must go toward convicting the manic cop-killer, clearly a woman who had become unhinged.

Rachel Stein, however, knows that nothing is exactly as it seems. The public defender assigned to Emily Watkins' case, Rachel is immediately drawn to the defendant. Emily, she knows, did not kill her husband in cold blood.

It is 1986, years before domestic violence becomes known on the national scene. Battered women's syndrome is barely beginning to gain traction as an accepted defense. No battered women's shelters exist anywhere in the country.

Rachel knew Emily was abused by her husband. The problem was convincing a jury that an ex-cop could treat his wife in a less than respectful manner. And that the abuse he inflicted was actually responsible for his death.

The first words that Emily said to Rachel were not pleading her innocence. Instead, she quoted Robert Frost, "I have walked out in rain—and back in rain. I have outwalked the furthest city light." Instantly Rachel knew this case would be different. She threw herself into Emily's defense, visiting her client twice a week to discuss poetry, politics and rock climbing. The odds were stacked mercilessly against her, but Rachel was determined. Emily was not a coldblooded murderer.

Little did Rachel know, Emily's case would turn her life upside-down. Getting closer to Emily distanced Rachel from the only profession she had ever known.

Jeanne Winer's first novel follows Rachel on a journey that takes her from a jail cell in Boulder, Colorado to the dangerous Nicaraguan countryside as she searches for answers that are always one step away.

Winer teases out the relationship between Rachel, a hardened public defender and Emily, a smart, yet weary survivor. The story gives agency to victims of domestic violence, explaining the cycle of abuse and the conflicting emotions Emily felt during her marriage.

Rachel Stein provides a strong representation of an out LGBT legal professional. She consistently stands up for her convictions and fights for her client. Her relationship with her partner, Vickie, is depicted as a loving, committed relationship. Rachel's sexual orientation is not a distracting identification that steals the spotlight from the rest of the story; it is simply another facet of Rachel's character, deepening the novel's development and impact.

Winer aptly draws from her experience as an attorney to fully describe the trial, helping her readers understand the experience sans legal jargon. Witty exchanges between characters provide an important foil to the gloom of a murder trial.

*The Furthest City Light* portrays successful LGBT legal professionals, well-developed relationships and deep characters. It is a story of strength, understanding and love. You don't want to miss it!

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You can order a copy of *The Furthest City Light* through [Bella Books](#) or [Amazon.com](#). Visit Jeanne Winer's website at [www.jeannewiner.com](http://www.jeannewiner.com).