

*Boy of Steel*  
by Steve Montgomery

## SYNOPSIS

It is project time in the Montgomery household. Steve and his mother are at it again, fashioning an elaborate knight costume for Steve's Cub Scout pageant. But when his father sees his son decked out in glittering tin foil and glowing orange tights, holding a lance accented with a flowing strip of orange tricot fabric, dad is not pleased. This is not the son he imagined during those joyous nine months of waiting, anticipating, longing for a boy he could teach how to use a mitt, fix carburetors, and build model airplanes. Steve seems far more interested in watching his mom fix her hair than in watching his dad fix the car. And this is Pocatello, Idaho, where conformity is rewarded, difference discouraged.

In Steve Montgomery's memoir, *Boy of Steel*, readers will root for a boy whose outsider status provides him with a unique vantage point from which to describe what it was like to grow up in a town with more Mormons per capita than Salt Lake City. Steve was a boy who liked other boys in a town where such thoughts were forbidden. The title is a reference to the armor required to endure the skirmishes of his youth, and to the strength of character he developed as a result of surviving those difficult battles.

One of the battles Steve fought was overcoming the embarrassment of wetting his bed nearly every night well into his teen years. After accepting an invitation to a sleepover after the Cub Scout pageant, Steve must deal with the consequences of his bedwetting by surreptitiously washing and drying his sheets before morning can reveal his secret.

From an early age, Steve learns to be a Keeper of Secrets. When Steve is nine, his best friend Adam teaches him how two boys can have sex. Steve sees sex as a natural extension of his deepening friendship with Adam. After all, they soon pierced each other's thumbskins in their sacred fort and declared themselves blood brothers. When Adam begins lusting after girls, Steve

doesn't understand why Adam suddenly acts ashamed of their many shared encounters. The same pattern would be repeated in high school with Charlie Woods, who always calls Steve "the next best thing" and threatens to beat the crap out of him if he ever tells anyone about their late night escapades.

This memoir is also overflowing with warmth and humor as our Boy of Steel writes about the fascinating characters who inhabit his young life: his mother's penchant for throwing Sarah Coventry and Home Interiors parties in pursuit of discounts and freebies that will soon fill their home to overflowing; Mr. Beauregard, Steve's sixth grade teacher, who hails from Louisiana, fills his classroom with exotic plants and a baby alligator, and lives with his "cousin" Bill; Kimmie Black, the disturbed, dyslexic girl Steve dates in seventh grade, only to discover that the first girl he tries to date turns out to be a stalker; Sister Brenda and Sister Denise, the Mormon missionaries who won't take "no" for an answer.

*Boy of Steel* explores universal themes that will appeal to a broad audience: being a keeper of secrets; the unique vantage point that comes from always being an outsider; striving for outward perfection in order to disguise intense inner shame and self-hatred; those first early stirrings of sexual attraction, and all the conflicting emotions that go along with that; our common desire to be loved for who we are, rather than who others want us to be.

Ultimately, this is a story of a boy who reclaims his right to be different, to write his own manifesto—one that celebrates joyous non-conformity over safe predictability, Technicolor ambiguity over black and white allegiance, life over death.