

Thunder and Lightning:

Julian's Private Scrapbook, Book 4

Eldot

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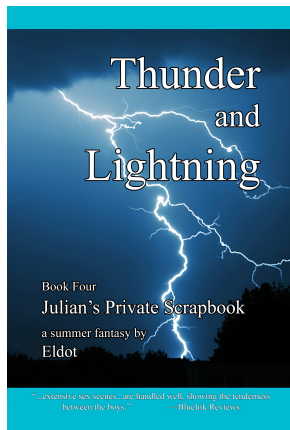
Set in the summer of 1962 at Camp Walker, *Thunder and Lightning: Book Four* is the continuing series culled from Julian Forrest's private scrapbook. Julian is a beautiful 15-year-old, irresistible young man. He is adventurous, sweet-natured, self-deprecating, guileless, and always eager to help. Beginning with *Barr's Meadow*, the series has evolved into something of an ensemble cast, with any number of narratives and situations to absorb and savor. There's Nick and Tom, Julian and Mark, Kurt and Sid, Robin and Jack, Danny and Julian, Geoff and Mark, to name just a few. Bear in mind, not all these relationships are sexual. The plot is somewhat intricate (as you might expect) with sometimes planned, often spontaneous sexual episodes, arising plausibly from circumstances. *Thunder and Lightning* captures the complications, follies and joys of male community and interaction.

Author Eldot is always meticulous when it comes to creating context. Consider for instance *Latter Days*, as opposed to, for instance, an "adult" film. The intense, yet measured, lovemaking between the two young men is more erotic, because it happens within the realms of the recognizable world. So it is with *Thunder and Lightning*. Eldot's structure never functions merely as a tenuous skeleton to connect unprovoked eruptions of robotic sex. He provides maps, synopses, dictionaries, site descriptions, commentaries, a glossary of cultural references, all to realize the experience of attending an American scout camp in the 1960s. He wants us to get what's actually going on. Here are young men cooking French toast, corn on the cob, and mac and cheese for the others. Setting up tents and digging latrines. Stripping naked to swim or play water polo. Doing morning inspections after breakfast. *Thunder and Lightning* is thorough and rich in detail.

Eldot spins an unforced homoerotica. It's never compulsory or salacious. Eldot recognizes (as any man will tell you) that teenage boys are about 90% horndog. However they navigate those treacherous waters,

hormones go spilling into the bloodstream, and it's nearly impossible to think about anything else. Eldot balances this burden and/or blessing with the everyday tasks and recreation you'd find at any boy's camp. A canoe excursion might inspire an opportunity for learning new techniques. A break from swimming might culminate in one pleasuring the other. Erections would seem to have an infectious or (if you will) reverse domino effect.

These rambunctious fellows concoct poker games and target practice that mix urgency with playful release. Connections always bend toward consideration and mutual consent. In a particularly moving scene, Tom makes genuine amends with Kurt for past exploitation. Julian is not averse to experimenting (he finds unappealing appealing) to enhance buddy Sid's ecstasy. Some guys feel unexpected tenderness and exhilaration for newly discovered lovers, while others are happy to just explore and learn from each other, without deception or chicanery. Even Geoff, the incorrigible schemer, is careful with partners, wielding excitement but taking it slow. What makes Thunder and Lightning such a pleasure is Eldot's sublime celebration of young adult maleness. It has all the insanity, all the hilarity, all the panic and sybaritism and casual combustion, depicted with a true affection for its cast of young men.



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