



## Get Your Shine On

*Nick Wilgus*

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When his mother goes out to party one Saturday night and doesn't come back, seven-year-old Ishmael Hood is taken in by his estranged uncle Henry and Henry's live-in boyfriend, Sam. As this unlikely trio begins to build a new life together, they encounter both support and hostility in the small Mississippi town where they live. Seems like just about everybody has an opinion on the matter—and they're not shy about expressing it.

While this blossoming little family finds its feet, outside forces—and ghosts from the past—threaten to tear it apart. Henry, still trying to deal with the tragic death of his parents, finds himself hard-pressed to open his heart to this needy child.

Just as a little shine begins to come back into their lives, Ishmael's mother returns, and their world is thrown into chaos.

## Get Your Shine On Details

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## From Reader Review Get Your Shine On for online ebook

### Alona says

5 "Betterer" shining stars!!

Dear oh dear...

You have got no shame Mr Wilgus, No shame!!

Using children in your books like it's no body's business.

Thank goodness you can write so god damn splendidly, that you can do whatever you fancy and it will be gold. Pure gold!

This is my third book of Nick Wilgus, and the third one to get 5 stars, how crazy wonderful is that?

If you read Shaking the Sugar Tree and loved it, you will sure to love this one, if you did not, I'm not sure... This book has A LOT in common with the Shaking series, it's in Mississippi, a honest-to-god the most sweet boy with some special needs, two great men in love, eccentric side characters, crazy family members, homophobic/narrow minded ppl, and a little bit of political POV thrown into the mix.

I loved it all! I think Wilgus is, pardon my French, fucking brilliant!

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### Juxian says

Oh, you'll need a bag of tissues for this one. Just be prepared. But don't worry, it will be worth it.

It was the first book by Nick Wilgus I've read, and it was very different from what I expected. Well, maybe it was the cover - it's so light and bright and the guys on it are so clean and preppy. The book itself was a lot darker. Many sad and terrible things happening, dark secrets revealed in the past and in the present.

Homophobia here is astonishing. Not a violent one but even creepier - when someone can sit at one table with you, say they have your best interest in their mind - and call you a child rapist. There's also racism and religious prejudice - so much that it is almost impossible to believe people still can think this way, that it's not 1950s but 2010s.

But there is also love. In balance with all the bad there is good: love between partners, love between parents and a child, love to animals (the dogs, and even the goat are also the memorable characters of this book).

There is friendship, support, caring and hope.

I loved Henry and Sam and Ishy. Sam and Hen were an established couple and there was hardly any sex there (only in talk) but their love was amazing, powerful as well as their love and acceptance for Ishy. Seeing how Ishy changed, blossomed out thanks to their love was incredibly touching. All right, I had a bit of problem with Hen in the beginning. Well, he definitely can drive anyone mad with his bitching. But he's also kind, sensitive, caring, overprotective and vulnerable, and I fell in love with him soon, and of course it is impossible not to love Sam and Ishy.

Nick Wilgus' writing is very specific. It took me a while to get used to it. There is a lot of dialogue (like, really a lot!) and people repeat things over and over. But once I got used to it, I loved it. I think I'll probably love his other books even more because I won't need this period of getting accustomed.

Oh, and I loved the South Nick Wilgus describes, with all the good and the bad there.

## Gigi says

Fuzzy!

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## Susan says

What you're guaranteed to get when you read Nick Wilgus books: a huge slice of southern life, heart-tugs that cause all the tears, and pretty much the most lovable kids in books today.

"Get Your Shine On" could actually just be an extension of Wilgus' other series Sugar Tree. It is surprisingly similar...and that might have annoyed me in other cases, but I wasn't entirely bothered by that. Because I liked so much about the Sugar Tree books. I love the southern charm, the southern hardship, the southern struggle. I love the kids in these books...both born with defects of some kind...but so very adorable and huggable. And I'm outraged by the "that's not fair" circumstances facing these men in their lives.

Another commonality between Wilgus' works...they're not quite romances. Yes, there men in love. But the true love story is between "father" (or father-figure and son).

Now about Get Your Shine On...there are some difficult themes here...

There's an exisiting relationship that has had some trouble in the past which led to a fear to completely trust from one MC to the other.

There's family loss...and tragedy...and some really dark secrets revealed.

There's bigotry and hate.

There's depression and a myriad of rough emotions.

But above all else, there's love...love between Henry and Sam, the couple. Love between Henry and Sam and the young boy, Ishmael. Love for an old dog. Love for a church. Love for a town. And the love isn't easy...but I think that's what makes it worth it.

Again, like the author's other books, the side characters start out funny or interesting or infuriating. But they take a turn towards over-the-top, and I generally skimmed parts that didn't focus on our main couple and their 'son'. (The parts with Larry, Sam's brother, especially got old and annoying...)

Despite this, I cried, I laughed, I hurt, and I healed. Recommended reading if you're in the mood to be emotional, but can overlook some irritating side stories...

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## Gina says

This was a hit! I loved it!!

Love I tell you!!

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## **Deeze says**

Head this warning well. I cried so hard my son came downstairs to see what the matter was lol.

Like with Shaking the Sugar Tree it took me a few chapters to really get into this one. But once I did it was hard to stop.

Hen is strange guy to make into a hero, yet that's exactly what he becomes, along with Sam, who at times made me wonder about his priorities. This couple show us the true meaning of Family.

Ishy will keep you smiling when he is not breaking your heart into smithereens.

This is much more than a romance story, although for me Sam is pretty romantic in his own way. There is so much story going on here and all of it felt far to real. In fact part of the appeal for me is that the people portrayed in this story are real. They are not cookie cutter perfect and they don't have money in the bank or even well paying jobs, but they struggle and shop at the cheapest places just like real people do.

With all the strides we are making in equality I tend to forget that there are people that still struggle to be allowed to live their lives due to the places they live in and the small minded people they live amongst. While this story shows us some of the bigoted people others have to live with it also shows us that even in small old fashioned towns there is still love and acceptance to be found. Sister Ascension is a wonderful character and one of my favorites in this story.

Despite the rather dark themes this is a story full of hope and love, it also shows that even the worse people can surprise you. A very fulfilling read. I hope we can rejoin this family soon to see how they are getting on.

But why is there a short haired blonde kid on the cover when Ishy has long dark hair?

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## **Becky Condit says**

Review Get Your Shine On

With Get Your Shine On, Nick Wilgus continues to enthrall readers with true characters of the South. Not all of them are charming, good people, but all of them are charismatic and beautifully developed for the story. Henry Hood and his live-in boyfriend Sam find themselves in charge of seven year old Izzy when Hen's incredibly damaged sister Sarah leaves little Izzy home alone and skips town. Sarah has a past that is too troubled for her to be able to function as a mother, let alone to take proper care of herself. When the root of her problems is revealed the reader's heart will break for the hopelessness of her situation. Sarah is one of society's throwaway individuals and she is not the only victim of her past.

Izzy suffers from lack of parenting, no formal education, and possibly impaired intelligence, but what he does not suffer from is the inability to love. Sometimes Hen wants to give up on trying to raise this little boy, with no understanding of how to parent on top of poverty. His boyfriend Sam, however, realizes that he and Hen have fallen in love with Izzy and vows to create a family out of these scraps of humanity.

Hen lost his parents and although he wants to salvage his sister from her own self-destruction, without the full story of what has happened to Sarah he may not have the knowledge and tools to save her. He does love Sam with all his heart and Sam loves Hen, even when Hen tries to push Sam away. Sam may be my favorite

character in this book.

The secondary characters of this story are sometimes the stars of the book. The incredibly hateful Miss Shirley stands out as a character who is unloveable as a human being. Or is she? Henry is a member of the Catholic church in the town of Vinegar Bend and one of the nuns, Sister Ascension, is determined to rescue Henry from his own feelings of worthlessness, even when the church cruelly turns its collective back on Hen. Get Your Shine On is a book you cannot put down once you begin reading. I will warn those who may be subject to triggered flashbacks that there is reference to the rape and abuse of a child. It occurs off page and the victim is treated by the author with the respect and tenderness such horror deserves. This is a flawlessly written story that presents life with humor, wretchedness, and a heavy dose of reality.

Nick Wilgus is an author who knows and writes about the daily joys and tragedies of Southern small towns with all their flawed characters. I will read anything he writes without even looking at the blurb or cover, just because he's that good. This book, like all of his works is highly, highly recommended.

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## **Susan65 says**

### The Blogger Girls

This is my second Nick Wilgus book and both have knocked my socks off by his creative and brilliant dialogue. One of the most important aspects of any story for me is the dialogue; the more the better, less tell and more show, and his are so genuinely real that I easily fall into the story and become vested in the characters.

As with the first book of his that I'd read, *Shaking the Sugar Tree*, this story also takes place in the south. A place I've not spent much time, but one that I now believe I understand pretty well, and am not wanting to move there anytime soon. Maybe that wasn't the purpose of his storytelling, but the closed-mindedness that comes from the bible belt is not my idea of utopia. I was like, run, move north, go someplace more accepting. But, of course, that never solves anything.

Hen (Henry) and Sam are an established couple who have no plans to take on a little boy to raise. Hen is well aware of the community's standing on gay men, let alone gay men near children. Of course, they say they "love the sinner but hate the sin", but some of these "well meaning" people are simply horrific human beings. Hen has a sister with major drug problems, and even more personal problems that are uncovered throughout the book, but as a mother, she scores a zero on the chart that starts with a one. I've never read about a sadder excuse for motherhood than this girl, but her history was created for her, not by her so it was hard to hate her.

This is such a heartbreaking and traumatic story, but it is also very beautiful and loving, a perfect combination of love and life and realism. Nick Wilgus blew me away with all the feels in his first book, *Shaking the Sugar Tree*, but he proved to the reader that he was consistent, creative, and a brilliant storyteller when he backed it up with, *Get Your Shine On*. I highly recommend both books and look forward to more.

Overall Impression: I loved it

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## **Tina says**

4,5 stars.

Get Your Shine On isn't a part of the Shaking The Sugar Tree series, it's different... but somehow the storyline is similar: two guys caring for a little boy. Not that I minded. :)

Loved how Henry and Sam take little Ischy, Henry's nephew, under their wings to give him warmth and security... and love, so much love.

**"You've got no shine," I said.**

**"What's that, Uncle Hen?"**

**"Shine? You know. When you're happy, you shine. Your face shines. But you—you've got no shine. It's like someone came along and took it away. You've got to get your shine on, kiddo."**

I love Nick's writing style, every time I read one of his books it feels like coming home, I like the southern charm in Nick's stories, they always radiate the love he feels for his home and the people living there even though it seems there's always a bunch of religious fanatics hanging around. Do those people grow on trees over there in Mississippi?

Yes, there is hatred, bigotry, ignorance and prejudice but Henry and Sam don't take the easy option and move away but rather try to live their life and care for Ischy... and 'get their shine on'.

The story has a great cast of secondary characters. Sister Ascension, Larry, Sam's brother (I'll never see a jar of peanut butter the way I did before), and the dirty old man Mr. Cotton and his songs.

**"Things are changing," I said.**

**"I only wish I could be around to see it. That was the thing about disco, Hen. You could see it—you could see the love. Everybody pumping and grinding and dancing and getting down. There was no black, no white, no gay, no straight. We was going to change the world..."**

All in all, Get Your Shine On was a really great book, it was emotional, it was painful, yes, but there's always hope shining through, and love, so much love.

Highly recommended!

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### wesley says

This was a very difficult book to read and rate. The push and pull of things going for the better or worse was exhausting and draining. I lost count how many times I wanted to stop reading, saw red, or sobbed. I know a very dark side of humanity existed; I just didn't know it would be *that* awful. The author sure did inject a lot of societal issues which need to be addressed in reality, even at present. Religion, bigotry, racism, marriage and equality, homosexuality -- just to name a few. I thought all of these were just overwhelming to be introduced as hurdles which Henry's family need to fight. And Henry's not even the overzealous fighting kind. It pained me to see him go through all those obstacles feeling helpless. But I get it. This was a call to action. Nick Wilgus sure did make his point loud and clear in this book.

In spite of the angst and drama, it is still a beautiful book. Ishy melted my heart. The many secondary characters introduced were very crucial to the development of the story, no matter what the role they played. But, I thought Sam's character was somehow lacking despite his constant presence in Henry's life. I would have appreciated more Henry-and-Sam moments, even when their love story wasn't the focus of the book.

Still, this was undeniably a solid read. So I'd give this **4 stars**.

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### **Erika says**

This was not an easy book to read at all. Not at all. There's racism and homophobia and child abuse galore, but there's also a lot of heart and a really great family, amusing situations and a lot of great writing. Yes, there are many similarities to Nick Wilgus's previous books in this genre but, as I read on into the book, I stopped thinking about and comparing it with his previous work and started to take it for what it was: completely amazing, with characters that take on a life of their own.

I'm going to have to put this book in the top five that I've read this year so far, if not the top 3. I'm also going to have to thank the author for taking the time to write about such difficult subjects and situations while still making us think and laugh and feel. I certainly felt a lot. I was either angrily cursing people out in my head, laughing, smiling or crying uncontrollably (especially during the last 20% of the book).

Reading this book was hard, but it was also a pleasure. Thank you, Nick Wilgus.

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### **JR says**

In Vinegar Bend, Henry "Hen" Hood and Sam Rakestraw are the only out gay men. They have been together since they were 12 years old and a couple since 10th grade. Most of the town either doesn't know, doesn't care, or if they do, they make their feelings known. None of this bothers Hen and Sam till Hen's sister Sarah abandons her son, Hen's nephew Ishmail "Ishy". Suddenly, a family is born. How the two men deal with the sudden addition and the notoriety that comes with Ishy, is the crux of the story.

This is by far one of the best books I have read this year. In fact, it is one of the best books I have ever read. Mr. Wilgus is an amazing writer. If you are interested in how things are felt or how things are done in the south, his stories are a primer. As I was reading, I felt my gut clench because I knew exactly what he was writing about. At the same time, you can feel the fortitude of southerners. The story is filled with humor and love. The characters are complex, and cover the entire spectrum of humanity. The relationship between Hen and Sam makes me wish we could all be that lucky. Warning, keep the tissues close.

Thank you Mr. Wilgus for writing this, and for sharing your talent with us.

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### **Sandra says**

Nick Wilgus doesn't write romance. I knew that going in, so I didn't expect this book to be all romantic. If you're not familiar with Nick's books, read the first sentence again, and then read all of his books anyway!

What Nick writes are Southern stories pulled from real life. The characters he creates are real. They exist, somewhere, in similar fashion, in some small town in Mississippi. You've met them. You've heard them. You've seen them, in churches, in schools, in all the places.

So, romance, this is not. Oh sure, it features two men in love, in an established relationship, living together, facing all the homophobic crap the good Southern bible thumpers are wont to dish out, because, you know, the bible says so, without ever really thinking about how cruel they are to others.

You know, if you use the bible to hurt someone, you're doing religion wrong.

Anyway, in this book, which is somewhat similar to Nick's Sugar Tree series, we have Henry Hood, who, a few years after losing his parents in a tragic incident, is suddenly faced with having to take care of his 7 yo nephew Ishmael (Ishy for short), after the boy's mother disappears. Henry's BF Sam, who runs the local grocery store owned by his family, is all for taking care of Ishy, and after a few mishaps, they establish a routine.

Of course, this happening in a small Southern town, the good folks in town are not impressed. Henry's sister is labeled white trash, Henry is kicked off the music group from church, he's labeled a pedophile (because, obviously, that's what gay men are), and there's some blackmail from the good sheriff who wants to figure out what really happened when Henry's parents died.

Henry's sister, the drug addict, is also a homophobe, who doesn't want Henry and Sam to take care of the boy. Not that she has much choice, seeing how she's in jail. And will be there for some time.

As always, Nick Wilgus includes some difficult themes in his book, but despite those difficulties, there is one shining light.

Love.

Love for a child, love between two men, love for your parents, your church, your town. Love for you from others, love that supports. Love that isn't always easy, love that faces hardships and bigotry, love that wins in the end.

Yes, there's heartbreak too. Nick Wilgus ripped my heart into pieces, and then he patched it back together.

His stories are so amazingly real, with such realistic characterizations, and while I ranted against the unfairness of all the things in this book, I also rejoiced at the good people at the core of it.

We must, WE MUST, seek the goodness in people. We must seek to understand their motives and their reasons, if we want to forge relationships build on acceptance and trust. We must remember that at the end of the day we are all only human, imperfect in our words and deeds.

Nick Wilgus allows his characters to do that.

There were tears, of course. Dark secrets come to light and open a chasm of pain. There is unfairness and bigotry, and you just want to scream in anger at it all.

But there is love, so much love, too. And love always wins.

This is not a romance. But it is a book you should read.

Highly recommended.

**\*\* I received a free copy of this book from its publisher. A positive review was not promised in return. \*\***

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**Stella ?????? says**

**YAY!!!! Loved it REVIEW COMING SOON @Scattered Thoughts and Rogue Words**

**I can't post my full review yet so I'm going with just a few words. Nick Wilgus is one of my fave authors, everything he writes is gold to me, even if the first book I read, Shaking the Sugar Tree, was hard to me to understand due to his choice of language. Now I'm used to it and I can't have enough of his stories. they all are emotionally beautiful and so real. Get Your Shine On was no exception. simply perfect. Highly recommended!!**

**Full review**

**Nick Wilgus is one of my favorite authors, I have a soft spot for his Sugar Tree series, so every time I know he's releasing a new book, I start to hyperventilate. Even if his books are not the usual m/m books I read, most of all even if his writing is hard to read for me, I've learned to simply love them and wish for more and more of his characters.**

**Get Your Shine On was another winner to me. I didn't read the blurb because I didn't care what it was about, I just cared that it was out. I wasn't expecting this kind of story, so much (sometimes too much) emotional for me and I wasn't ready for it. Especially halfway through it when we get some heavy angst. I so hoped, until the end, that it wasn't like I suspected to be and when my suspicions became reality they were hard to take; the central part was melting, I had to stop a couple of times.**

**The style and the language are the ones we used to find in the Sugar Tree series so if you liked that books you absolutely can't miss this new one. I enjoy Nick Wilgus' writing so much especially because he talks about children, the not so lucky ones, the same ones that break my heart in almost every scene I read. He writes so beautifully about imperfect characters, in fact there is no one perfect character in all of his books. For example at the start of Get Your Shine On I despised Henry, the MC, so much. I didn't like how he approached his nephew Ishy, he didn't get the boy at all and often he was too hard to the little one to my liking. But Wilgus is great at creating well developed characters, some of them will grow in the book and become better people, for other character there will be no hope sadly. Each one of them is well portrayed, from the details, to their background.**

**What I appreciate the most (cause it's real) but at the same time I can understand it could be not easy to accept, is a specific quality of this author, so present in this book too. His books are full of crap, the MCs usually have to take it from everyone. There are a lot of homophobic people, too many times the word pedophile is said and it is just one of the nasty things that flew in the books. It's a trait of his writing that can leave the reader puzzled the first time but later will be understood as the true way to show us a world that truly exists. Moreover the icing on the cake is that all of this is surrounded by a ton of laughter. There are so many funny scenes that balanced the angsty and heavy and sad parts.**

**As you can see I haven't talked about blurb, plot or characters, it will be your pleasure to discover them, I'm sure. I just want to mention my favorite character (apart from the little Ishy that filled my heart every time he smiled), because she deserves it. She is Sister Ascension. She was the best, so fierce**

**in her wanting to help Hen and his new family. Religion and I have a tough relationship and I can't tell you how much I appreciated the author for giving me a nun as the most positive person in this book.**

**I want to recommend Get Your Shine On cause it was emotional, funny, too many times really over the top. I can't have enough of Wilgus' works.**

**Cover art by AngstyG. It's not my favorite by this artist. Not a bad cover at all but not so eye catching. I like it but nothing more. But at the end you could have give me a blank cover for this book, I wouldn't have cared.**

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### **Chris, the Dalek King says**

Henry never expected he'd be able to raise a kid. Sure, he and Sam talked about it, but in the way you talk about 'someday...' things. His town isn't exactly at the forefront of the equality movement, and to be frank, Henry is still a bit of a mess from his mother and father's death. So, no child-rearing in Henry's future, that's for sure.

Then his druggy sister, Sarah, takes herself off for a weekend of partying and decides to leave her seven-year-old son alone at home. And come Tuesday, she is still not back and Henry gets a call from Sarah's neighbor demanding he come deal with the child. So now Henry and Sam have to look after Ishy, deal with a community that is rapidly showing its not-so-hidden colors, and hope that they can handle the fallout from some old, terrible secrets coming to light. For something that was never really supposed to happen, Henry sure does have a lot of work ahead of him.

I was going for an eloquent review full of fancy words and phrases that only get pulled out once in a blue moon...and well, an hour, and god only knows how many attempts, later, I give up. There is no eloquence to be found in me on a Sunday morning. So you are just going to have to suffer thru my usual nonsensical bouts of squee and glee.

Because hot damn was this a good book. Like it totally blew me away. I haven't read anything by Nick Wilgus before, and at this point I'm thinking of going out and buying everything he has written (if, you know, I wasn't completely and absolutely broke).

The characters here were so well written. Even the ones I (loved to) hate were well done. Or maybe I loved them so much because they were written in such a way that it felt real. These are not caricatures, but characters who came pretty damn close to resembling a fair few of my former acquaintances. They have some big damn issues (homophobia, bigotry, willful ignorance of the world outside their own little town), but they are not evil. They, like everyone, have good sides and bad sides. It is just too bad that their bad sides are the ones getting all the sun.

The part of me that ran fast away from organized religion wants to paint these characters as 'your typical Christians.' Heaven knows I have my issues with large portions of the community. But in this book we are also reminded that there is the other side of the coin. Sister Ascension is a perfect example of this.

**Her Coke-bottle glasses and stern face made her seem somewhat forbidding, like a giant grasshopper.**

But she is anything but your stereotypical nun—all stern and closed off. She is, in fact, rather kick-ass. And I loved that she continually showed love and genuine warmth towards everyone. Even the Evil Church Lady (Miss Stella), who I wanted to spork on several (dozen) occasions during this book.

And the religious aspect was hardly even a fraction of why I loved this book. If you really want to get down to it, I loved this book for the reality of life on both sides of the good/bad field. Characters are motivated by past events/prejudices, but they grow, change, react like anyone else would in life. Actions have consequences (even if unfair ones), and the life in this little town is a revolving ball of political, social, and personal struggles.

The truths we learn are sometimes hard to handle. The choices forced upon Henry are sometimes cruel. The first scene at the courthouse brought me to tears.

There is so much wrapped up in this story. It is not simply the story of a man who is thrust into taking care of a child. Or about a man who must come ‘out’ into the open about his relationship with his boyfriend (even though it is pretty much an open secret to everyone in town). At times it feels like the universe sat down and decided that Henry’s life was not quite interesting enough, so it threw the book, the bookshelf, and half the library at Henry to liven it up.

It was just a really great book. I don’t know how else to say it. It was real and painful and beautiful. It was also amusing—though gods only know how worse I would have been at parenting. \*shudders\*

*This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.*

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