



by Lion Christ  
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Fiction

## Sly Dog *Sauhund*

### review

*Sly Dog* is an accomplished debut, recounting the coming-of-age story of a young, gay man in 1980s Munich.

Flori moves from his small Bavarian hometown to the city, and immerses himself in Munich's gay scene. The novel explores how he navigates the expectations of others, balancing complicated friendships and family ties, alongside a looming fear of the AIDS epidemic.

The novel opens as Flori is doing community service at a care home in his hometown. The woman he looks after there encourages him to perform and dress up in women's clothes at the department store where he works. Flori gets together with local boy Gregor, driving in Gregor's car to secret spots in the woods where they mess around together on the back seat. Flori longs to have a glamorous life and to work on the stage. Eventually he is sacked from the department store for stealing, and escapes to the city in search of the glamour he craves. At first he stays with his childhood friend Theresa, but Flori's hedonistic lifestyle in Munich's gay clubs is at odds with Theresa's hardworking nine-to-five existence. Flori feels alienated and oppressed, letting Theresa down again and again until finally she kicks him out.

As the AIDS epidemic spirals, Flori starts performing sex acts for money. Consumed by self-loathing, he resolves to end his life in the

river, but is picked up by Miguel, a drag queen who lives with his partner, Armin. They take Flori in, and he lives with them for two years in a semblance of family life. Miguel teaches Flori to make up his face and style his hair, and Flori discovers a new version of himself, whom he no longer hates. He gets a job at the bar where Miguel performs and eventually his own apartment. He also makes amends with his mum, who is furious that she has not heard from him in years. Later, he meets Jakob and the pair of them fall in love. The novel ends with Jakob terminally ill, and Flori on the cusp of running away as he has done all his life, but instead deciding to return home and take care of his lover until the end.

*Sly Dog* is a highly relatable novel, showcasing the claustrophobia of growing up 'different' in a small town; the pressure from all sides to conform; and the impulse to break free and carve out one's own path. Despite his often-questionable and self-destructive behaviour, it is impossible not to be on Flori's side.

Find out more here:

<https://www.hanser-literaturverlage.de/en/buch/sly-dog/978-3-446-27747-2/>

## press quotes

*I was captivated and very moved by this coming-of-age novel about a young lost boy trying to find his way in the gay subculture of 1980s Munich. Anyone who's ever felt out of place in a parochial hometown, sought out the chaos and anonymity of the city, looked for love, longed to forget, or felt the urge to escape the ties that bind will find something to enjoy here.*

Lottie Fyfe, NBG Reader

## about the author



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Lion Christ was born in Bad Tölz, studied film and creative writing and lives in Leipzig. His debut novel, *Sly Dog*, was awarded the Munich Literature Scholarship in 2021.

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