



## **Dinner at Fiorello's**

*Rick R. Reed*

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Henry Appleby has an appetite for life. As a recent high school graduate and the son of a wealthy family in one of Chicago's affluent North Shore suburbs, his life is laid out for him. Unfortunately, though, he's being forced to follow in the footsteps of his successful attorney father instead of living his dream of being a chef. When an opportunity comes his way to work in a real kitchen the summer after graduation, at a little Italian joint called Fiorello's, Henry jumps at the chance, putting his future in jeopardy.

Years ago, life was a plentiful buffet for Vito Carelli. But a tragic turn of events now keeps the young chef at Fiorello's quiet and secretive, preferring to let his amazing Italian peasant cuisine do his talking. When the two cooks meet over an open flame, sparks fly. Both need a taste of something more—something real, something true—to separate the good from the bad and find the love—and the hope—that just might be their salvation.

## **Dinner at Fiorello's Details**

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Author : Rick R. Reed

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Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance, Lgbt

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## From Reader Review Dinner at Fiorello's for online ebook

### Veronica of V's Reads says

This review was originally written for Joyfully Jay Book Reviews and can be accessed [here](#).

Henry Appleby is a high school graduate with a college acceptance to NYU. He has grown up in Evanston, IL, the nearest north suburb to kiss Chicago's border, in an affluent neighborhood and living a privileged life. He is set to intern at his overbearing father's wealth management company for the summer, yet, what Henry hungers to do is work in a restaurant. And, get a boyfriend. He's not sure if the fumbling attempt with his best friend will lead to anything more.

Knowing it is unacceptable, but needing to satisfy his keen desire, Henry takes the train into Chicago to inquire about a job at a neighborhood trattoria, Fiorello's. There Henry finds the warmth and care he lacks in his own sterile home. His mother is a socialite with little interest in him personally, and his strongest connection is to his family's cook/housekeeper, Maxine. Maxine would love Fiorello's, Henry thinks, and he submits his application. The owner, Rosalie, doesn't take him seriously, however, believing that he'd only stay the summer when she needs stable workers. Still, she takes a chance on Henry—hiring him. If he thought his dad was peeved after Henry turned down his internship, that ain't nothing compared to what happens when he learns Henry's gay.

This is the second book I've read from this author, and I was just as charmed as before with his characters and the lush setting descriptions. As a native Chicagoan I could see my hometown in the pages, with startling clarity. I, too, sweated along with Henry on sultry walks and sweating 'L' rides. I've had his same sun-baked feet too exhausted to go forward. I haven't had his sudden lack of home and family, but Henry never squawks. He's determined to make his life his own, even when the convenience he's had growing up is suddenly yanked away.

Henry takes pleasure working near Vito, the large and largely-silent executive chef at Fiorello's. Vito tells a bit of this story and his piece is tragic. One car wreck stole his husband and child away, and he's not ready to open up, especially not to the blonde man-child, Henry. Still, Vito is not entirely dead inside and he makes some decisions that help Henry just when Henry needs it. I was torn with Vito, both sympathetic and frustrated, because he's so determined to stay in his miserable little shell, and lashes out at times. Knowing both sides of the story I just want him to comfort Henry and let himself be comforted, and I got frustrated when he didn't. Then again, I was overjoyed when he did.

Henry is such a kind and tender young man. He's hurt, and hurt, and hurt again by the people who should love him, and yet he's indefatigable and honorable and wonderful. Even when Vito is mean, Henry shows up to work and takes on any and every challenge laid before him. There are a few sexytimes, but they are understated and at times awkward—which is in keeping with the scene and emotional progression of the story. Henry feels he is continually used by his partners, and to some extent he is right, which meant those encounters were bittersweet. Plus, Henry is witness to more than one infidelity in the relationships that surround him, and it's a lot to absorb on top of his own personal issues. He really grows up a lot in this post high-school summer. The wrap up of this story is so freaking HEA I think I cried a little.

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## **Maggie says**

### **Cute story!**

I think I may need a better word than cute. This story was engaging, funny at times, angsty at times, overall a great story! There is nothing more sexy than a love of food that is so much a part of you its almost a sexual experience in itself. Henry is 18 and in the midst of a huge personal crisis. He decides to take a job at an Italian restaurant where he meets Vito, the chef there. Vito is snarky but is hiding tremendous grief and sadness. Through Henry's perseverance, they kind of become friends, and Vito slowly lets Henry in, breaking down his walls. Vito helps Henry through his crisis and the two of them find hope and love in one another!

I really enjoy Rick's writing style and he creates characters who are flawed but oh so lovable!

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## **Pixie Mmgoodbookreviews says**

4 Hearts

Reviewed for MM Good Book Reviews [click link for giveaway](#) (Ends 15th May 2015)

*This story is part of a series but can be read as a stand-alone.* Henry knows what he wants to do with his life now that he's graduated from school and it isn't what his wealthy father has planned for him, but he doesn't know if he will be brave enough to go after what he wants until he spots a help wanted ad for a little Italian restaurant called Fiorella's. Vito was blessed with a good life until a tragic turn of events took what he loved most, now he lives quietly, keeping to himself and working as the chef at Fiorella's. For over a year nothing has breached the shell he lives in until a blond 'bubble dancer' begins to crack his shell, but Vito doesn't want his safe shell shattered and Henry's life is falling apart around him. Will either man take a chance on something more or will they retreat to the safety of the world that they know.

Fiorella's is another wonderful story from Rick R. Reed that touches our hearts. Henry is the typical rich kid who has had everything offered to him on a platter except the love of his parents, his mother is cold and distant and his father is a powerful attorney who has Henry's life mapped out for him. Henry wants to take a chance of grabbing his dream though, a dream that would have him cooking for other people, a dream that his father would look down on but with only the summer free before he starts collage he decides to grab the chance he is offered. Vito is perfectly with his lonely life working as the chef at Fiorella's, at least that's what he wants everyone to believe, the loss of those he loved the most still weighs him down and he never wants to open his heart to that kind of hurt again. Having Henry come into his life has Vito tempted to live again. As Henry's life begins to fall apart and he turns to Vito, but cracking Vito's secretive shell isn't easy.

Henry is a young man who doesn't want to be caged into a life he won't enjoy, but going against his father's wishes isn't easy especially when he gets no support from his mother. As Henry moves into the world of adulthood he learns that life isn't easy or going to fit into what he wants, it's a hard world with realities he might not like and he has to grow up. Vito knows that life is far from easy; he now keeps himself to himself with no interest in love. We don't get an easy romance, in fact Vito seems to barely tolerate Henry, what we get is a young man on the verge of making his own adult decisions and a jaded man who has turned his back on life.

This is a beautifully written story, we are made to feel both men's pain in this story, Henry's pain as his life changes and his solid family base is shaken and Vito's bleeding pain as he tries to let go of the past. There are some poignant moments as Vito loses himself in his dreams and memories and as he begins to open up to Henry but we also have his anger as he feels that he's being forced to let go of the past. With Henry we get his excitement of beginning his life, the fear of going against his father, the devastation of his family not being what he thought and the twisting feelings he has for Vito. These two men need each other and it takes a large part of the book to get to that stage, but it fits as we get to know both Vito and Henry, it's the pace that suits both of them.

I recommend this to those who love stories of embarking on your own path in life, of being poked back to life and the living, of a tentative new love blooming, of grabbing life with both hands and facing the fall out, and of two men who embark on a new stage in their lives.

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### **Rick says**

This book will take you on an emotional ride - great book!!!! BUT.... I was left wanting MORE!!!! I'm thinking there is going to be a Book 2 - there is so much MORE to this story!!!! If you read these reviews Rick, PLEASE, PLEASE write a Book 2 - I've already thought of a few story outlines but you're the Author, not me AND you're so good - I'm counting on you. LOL

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### **BWT (Belen) says**

Henry Appleby is eighteen and basically has his life laid out for him: he'll intern at his father's Chicago law firm, go to NYU in the fall, and eventually become a lawyer just like his father. However, Henry doesn't *want* that life. He dreams of being a chef, and is at his happiest around food. While struggling with the possibility of disappointing his parent's expectations, he's also dealing with the betrayal of a friend, and finding out his parent's are fallible as well.

Vito Carelli lost everything one night over a year ago(view spoiler). He draws his grief around himself like a cloak and keeps everyone at arms length. He lives for three things, his mother, his two beloved dogs, and his job as Executive Chef at Fiorello's.

When Henry takes a summer job working as a dishwasher/busboy and sometimes sous chef at Fiorello's, it's not just his resemblance to Vito's lost love, but his persistent pursuit that begin to melt away the ice around Vito's heart.

There were two things I loved about the story: first, is the vivid imagery Reed uses in creating this world. Chicago is like another character, and the food is so lovingly detailed that I was hungry through most of Joel Leslie's narration. Which brings me to the second thing I loved, which is Leslie's narration. He drew me in and kept me captivated. I could practically smell the foods, or feel the 'L' train rumbling.

As for the story itself, I was confused as to whether it was a new adult contemporary novel or a romance. From the blurb I thought it was a romance, but it doesn't play out that way for more than 78% of the story. Then, in the end, it's a rushed romance that felt inauthentic and not organic to the story that was being told.

Also, the story contains two things that generally annoy me. First, when there's a, to me, unnecessary build up of a "terrible thing from the past" that's alluded to over and over again, without letting the reader in on it until late in the story. That just drives me nuts. Second, when the "romance" comes out of left field with no previous groundwork built.

In this case Henry has some trouble with boundaries, following Vito home, standing outside his apartment for hours, snooping in the apartment once he's invited in, stripping naked and getting into Vito's bed uninvited...they were troubling things to me that are glossed over in the story. There's also a lot of telling, and almost lyrically so, but not so much with the showing. The two men barely have a few conversations before suddenly they're moving towards a relationship. It was jarring for me, and I didn't believe the romance that did suddenly pop up only in the final chapters and weak epilogue with a nebulous HFN.

All in all, the writing is lovely, with wonderful descriptions of places, and people, and food. The narration is well done, with great character voices and accents. However, the romance of the story left me cold and disappointed.

*Audio copy of Dinner at Fiorello's provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange of an honest review.*

*This review has been cross-posted at Gay Book Reviews.*

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## **Tom Scruggs says**

Rick R. Reed does it again with "Dinner at Fiorello's!" Once again, we see Reed's excellent character development, plot development and movement and general storytelling. It's the story of a young man, just out of high school, just coming out and two families in crisis--one very much in the present and one that happened in the past. I won't give away any details, but it's great reading.

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## **Erica Chilson says**

### **I received a copy of this title to read and review for Wicked Reads**

\*I read Dinner at Fiorello's as part of the Feel-Good True romance bundle.

5 'the feels' stars.

Dinner at Fiorello's is a cross between coming-of-age and second-chance romance. Emotional, fast-paced, the book had an addictive, emotional quality.

Henry is a recent high school graduate, so his narration was befitting of Young Adult on the cusp of New Adult. I'm a sucker for coming-of-age. The boy has been locked-in by his father's life choices. Where he will intern, where he will go to college, where he will work as a grown adult, living in his father's shadow, by his

father's rules, never living his own life.

Henry is on the outs with his lifelong best friend. His father is a demanding taskmaster, and his mother is absentee. The only person who is in his corner is his family's housekeeper, the woman who raised him.

Henry is a sweet, caring, and giving boy, motivated to carve out his own life. So when he sees an ad on Craigslist for Fiorello's, he jumps at the chance to go into the food-industry... where he meets Vito.

Vito is almost a decade older, but life choices and harsh reality has him acting more like twenty years older, not a man in his late twenties. Vito's narration follows closely to second-chance romance. Struggling to reach out and connect with his human emotions, Vito would rather be a workaholic and hug his two giant dogs. But he has a hard time ignoring the boy who is growing on him.

Henry and Vito take a journey of self-discovery, with the romance weaving in the background. The story itself is focused on character development, not romance and between-the-sheets action, creating very lifelike, easy to relate to, and highly emotional characterizations.

Dinner at Fiorello's is one of the reasons why I adore Rick R. Reed. I highly recommend to those who love an emotional journey featuring all the hurdles MM Romance generally provides.

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## **Angel says**

The thing I love about Rick R Reed's work is that it does not disappoint, mentally or emotionally. It is real and fantastic at the same time. By that I mean, there is this way about how he writes that just draws you in. I can get lost in his storytelling and not realize just how much time has passed or the fact that I am shedding tears of both laughter and sorrow over a fictional character. The books I have read all have happy endings, but the characters have to work for it. Their conflicts aren't manufactured, nor are the endings easily found. It is like life and I love that even in my escapes. There is emotion in the reading that is dramatic, but doesn't feel overwrought. Real life issues and consequences that are believable and feel natural. Wonderfully flawed characters that play perfect on the page.

D@F is no exception. Reed has crafted a lovely and almost heartbreaking story about two men coping with loss. Both of them are young, one more so than the other, but each has had his world torn asunder. Loss affects everyone and this book, dealing with the loss of family in both the physical and emotional aspects, hits its mark.

Vito, adjust to the death of his son and husband, is bitter and has closed himself off to the possibility of love and hope. Henry, young and untried, has just learned his first lesson in life that privileged doesn't always mean perfect. The two men come together in grief and begin the path to healing with one another. I love that this takes place over a summer, across a few months, and that both men struggle accepting what is happening.

The breakdown of Henry's family, the loss of his mother's leaving, and his judgmental father are an all too real thing, and it hurt to read the words Tank spoke to his son. I nearly broke down and cried when Vito was telling his story about Kevin and Sal's deaths due to a drunk driver. As well as the guilt Vito felt because of his last words to Kevin. Again, an ache but one that wasn't forced. More real life incidents that both ripped me apart and made me adore the story all the more for the normality of it.

I would have loved a bit more story before the epilogue wrapped everything up, but I think that is more about me being greedy for the characters and story than it is a complaint about the book. The short chapter details what has been happening with both Vito and Henry and leaves you with a feeling and sense of the hope both men needed.

Thank you for a fantastic read, dear author!

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## Teri says

[ falling together, being together, more of the after part (hide spoiler)]

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## Cindi says

*4.5 stars, rounded up.*

Henry, eighteen, is what some would call a golden child. He's the only child of an attorney and his wife. He lives in a nice home and his future is set. He'll be following in his father's footsteps by becoming an attorney.

*He'd always been the golden boy, doing exactly what his family expected.*

He's just graduated from high school and is set to intern for the summer before college in his father's law firm. He has money, plans, and everything else a boy his age can want – you'd think. First, there was a issue with his best friend, Kade, who got a bit closer to Henry on graduation night than he was prepared for. Strike that. Henry was all fine and good for the so-called best friend until Henry realized that they were only 'friends' when Kade wanted use him. It doesn't take long for Henry to come to his senses in that regard. Then there is the internship that Henry's father is so convinced is right for his son. Did he ask Henry what he wanted to do over the summer? Or what he wanted to study in the fall? Of course not. Tank Appleby is the king of his domain and his son will do what he says, regardless of what the boy wants. There is Henry's mother. Cold is a good way to describe Mrs. Appleby. There's no outward affection for her son, and this broke my heart early on. Later, I felt a bit of sympathy for the woman, but I got over it quick enough. Then there is Maxine, Henry's surrogate mother, who is the Appleby housekeeper. I adored Maxine at her introduction and continued to until the very end of the book. Everybody needs a Maxine in their life.

Henry doesn't want to be an attorney like his father. He wants to be a chef someday, even if that means starting at the bottom at a restaurant and working his way up. He sees an advertisement online for a position at Fiorello's, a local restaurant, and that's all he can think about. Does he risk the wrath of his parents by applying for the job? But then again, who is to say he'd get it if he applies? There's no harm in going across town to check, is there? Fiorello's isn't exactly in the affluent part of town where Henry lives with his family, so who would know if he checked it out? Finally, he gets the guts and makes his way to Fiorello's. There, he meets some interesting people, with one being Rosalie. She's the owner and takes one look at the



little rich boy and doesn't believe he's serious about working there. If she hires him she doubts he'll last a day. She offers him the job anyway – with conditions.

Vito, twenty-six, is a chef at Fiorello's. He doesn't come across as the most likable guy. Gruff, he's the type of man who Henry should run far, far away from. He can't. He's attracted the second he lays eyes on the other man and that attraction continues to grow as he (Henry) works to prove himself at the restaurant.

Vito has his own story and it brought me near tears many times as the story went on. While he comes across downright rude on occasion, the reader can tell that this is his way of not allowing anyone or any feelings to intrude on his misery. If he's rude to the kid, what of it? It keeps him from feeling and feeling is not something he believes he can allow – not anymore. He loved and lost once (in more ways than one) and opening up his heart to Henry will only bring more heartache later. He wants Henry from the moment he lays eyes on him the first time, but he refuses to act on that attraction because in his mind, it's not the right thing to do.

Now we get to Henry's family drama. His father is angry he 'embarrassed' him by working in a lowlife (Tank's words) position when he could be working under him at his law firm. His mother? Well, let's just say that she has her own issues. I mention above how I almost felt a bit of sympathy for her at one point, but it took only a few pages for any kind feelings I had for her to go out the window. Neither parent would win a parent of the year award, but Henry's mother does something that I felt was inexcusable. To take the attention off her own drama (you'd have to read the book to see what I mean), she threw Henry under the bus, so to speak. That, to me, is unforgivable.

*"I didn't mean to tell him. It just came out when we were arguing. I'm so sorry."*

There are several things I really loved about this book. First, we have Henry, an eighteen-year-old man who is just trying to find his way. The author wrote him as an eighteen-year-old. Sure, he's forced to grow up pretty fast and he's a bit wiser beyond his years in some ways, but the reader is able to see that he still has quite a ways to go before he could be considered a 'real' grownup. Don't take that to mean he's overly immature and not ready for a relationship with Vito. That's not the case at all. Second, this isn't one of those stories where the main characters instantly fall in love or even fall into bed. Henry and Vito both have their own problems they have to deal with before a relationship of any kind can begin. Had it been written any other way, it likely wouldn't have worked for me.

The family drama is written perfectly, even if I wasn't pleased with what Henry was forced to deal with. Vito's grief over those he loved and lost was written extremely well. Sure, he was a hard ass at times (and downright rude to poor Henry) when I felt he should lighten up a little, but it was easy to see why he was that way.

I chuckled a few times.

*Come on, parents don't even have sex, do they? I mean, like a couple of times, with their spouse on birthdays and stuff and to have kids, but otherwise? Nah....*

(I've been doing this parent thing wrong for all these years. Who knew? \*snort\*)

I got teary several times.

*This is where you're supposed to hug me, Mom. This is where you're supposed to comfort. Henry stared,*

*frozen, at his mother for a long time, waiting. But nothing happened. After a few minutes, she opened her iPad. She smiled a little at something on its surface.*

I got angry more times than I could count.

*“So take a few minutes, get yourself dressed, and—” Vito smiled but knew there was only cruelty in it, like baring his teeth. “—and get out dude. I’ve done enough.”*

~

*Don’t kid yourself, kid. This isn’t about you. Henry turned away from Vito and stared at the wall. Amazing how fast a moment can turn to shit.*

In the end, everything came together nicely and exactly the way it should have. I loved watching these guys battle with themselves as they stubbornly made their way to each other.

Overall, an excellent love story.

Review can also be found at -

*This book was provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange for a fair and honest review.*

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## **Ulysses Dietz says**

Dinner at Fiorello’s

BY Rick R. Reed

Four Stars

Well, I confess I cried rather a lot during this book. If Reed’s “Chaser” irritated me with its somewhat disingenuous “love yourself for what you are” promise, “Dinner at Fiorello’s” fulfilled its straightforward prince-and-pauper-with-food story with exquisite care.

Henry Appleby wants to cook; but his overbearing father and distant, status-conscious mother want him to be a lawyer and make money. He’s not at all worried about being gay, but clearly has a few things to learn about the difference between sex and love.

Vito Carelli is just trying to avoid emotional pain, and the moment when I discovered why was when the first inadvertent sob escaped me. This is a heart-breaker, and is handled deftly to maximize the emotional impact.

This is at least the third food-related m/m novel I've read in the past few months. Can't say I mind, because all the food talk has taught me a lot about running a restaurant (something I would never, ever want to do, by the way). But the passion of chefs for food is a real thing, and Reed makes it vivid and comprehensible to the outsider (i.e. someone who just likes to eat).

Even eerier, I had just last week driven along Sheridan Road from Evanston through Rogers Park in Chicago for the first time in my life; so I had a clear sense of both places as well as the lakefront's importance.

Both Henry and Vito are nearly archetypes in the world of gay romance, and if I might possibly have rolled my eyes over the clichés, I ultimately didn't because Reed handles both characters with great affection and individuality. Henry could be callow and superficial; but Reed makes him genuinely interesting and far more complex than his pampered suburban life would have suggested. Vito is similarly layered, and his emotional honesty is at the core of why he is so appealing. Both men first see the other as a physical stereotype that attracts them; both gradually come to understand the depth that changes them from objects of lust to love interests.

And one of the things that Rick Reed can do very well is explain that emergence of a gay self-consciousness—something every gay man goes through, but which non-gay people can never completely fathom. Both Vito and Henry have different stories, each attuned to his specific background; but both stores ring true.

I was concerned that Henry's parents were going to be two-dimensional stereotypes, but they turned out to be a little more 3-D than that. Although I'd have loved some more development of his father, I appreciated that there were no miracle moments of rapprochement in this narrative; only cautious steps forward toward emotional resuscitation.

"Dinner at Fiorello's" is a solid, well-crafted, emotionally authentic love story that deals with class and culture in believable ways. But don't read it on an empty stomach.

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## Love Bytes Reviews says

5 heart review by Dan

I can't believe this is only the second work I've read by Rick R. Reed. The first one "Matches" his Christmas Story, left me devastated. I've been waiting since then to snag another one, and this was a perfect choice.

Henry Appleby is your typical spoiled rich kid, growing up in one of Chicago's wealthier suburbs. He hasn't wanted for anything growing up....well, except for a little parental love. His dad is a cold Chicago attorney, who thinks his son will follow in his footsteps and become an attorney, go to work for the firm, have 2.5 children and be happy. His mother is the stereotypical rich housewife, who looks flawless due to a great colorist and liberal use of botox, who has always been cold and a little distant. Luckily he had the cook / housekeeper to talk to! She has always been like a mother to him, but even she he doesn't know anything about outside of her time at their house. Her personal life is vague to him, even though he knows he should know more. But after all he is only eighteen and the world is still all about him.

Henry's life is about to wobble. Henry, while fooling around at the beach with his best friend, somehow

ended up on his knees getting his first mouthful of cum. Why is his friend so distant? And what about that intern gig that his dad has set up for the summer, prior to him starting pre-law at university? Henry has other ideas. He wants to be a chef, not an attorney. When he finds a Craigslist ad for an all-around helper at a local restaurant, paying minimum wage, he decides it is something he wants to pursue.

What will happen if his dad finds out? Why is he seeing his mom in the slightly rough neighborhood around the restaurant? What will happen when Henry comes out to his parents not only about the job, but also about being gay? Can his life ever be the same? And finally, what is up with that hot, super hairy, sexy Italian chef named Vito? Does he hate Henry for some reason?

Vito Carelli is a closed book. He doesn't let anyone in. He has closed himself down to allowing only work, his dogs, eating and sleeping in his life. We know something bad happened to Vito, but don't find out what until part way through the story. Can Henry break through his icy shell to see who the real Vito is, and why he is so closed and hostile?

I loved this book. I had a serious book hangover from a book I finished yesterday that I didn't like much, and when I went to my kindle, the cover of this book jumped out at me. I hadn't scheduled it for a few more days, but I moved it forward anyway, and I'm so glad I did. I read most of it last night, and then finished this morning.

I very highly recommend it!

A copy of this book was provided in exchange for an honest review. Please visit [www.lovebytesreviews.com](http://www.lovebytesreviews.com) to see this and many more reviews, author interviews, guestposts and giveaways!

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## **Inked Reads says**

FiveStars

Wonderful Italian cooking and two beautiful, troubled men? A fantastic combination. Henry is a brilliant character - I love his independence, his spirit and his bravery. Vito - older, guarded, grieving - is equally as attractive and a perfect match for the younger man.

The secondary characters in this story are just as great as the leads. Henry's formal, traditional parents are carefully offset by the warmth of the staff at Fiorello's.

From the characters to the food, Dinner at Fiorello's is a warm, sweet and emotionally raw story of love and loss, independence and interdependence. I loved it.

I was given this in return for an honest review by Inked Rainbow Reads.

Sarah

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## **CrabbyPatty says**

I first read this book during 2015, and upon rereading it, loved it all over again! Full review to come shortly.

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## **Joyfully Jay says**

*A Joyfully Jay review.*

**4.75 stars**

This is the second book I've read from this author, and I was just as charmed as before with his characters and the lush setting descriptions. As a native Chicagoan I could see my hometown in the pages, with startling clarity. I, too, sweated along with Henry on sultry walks and sweating 'L' rides. I've had his same sun-baked feet too exhausted to go forward. I haven't had his sudden lack of home and family, but Henry never squawks. He's determined to make his life his own, even when the convenience he's had growing up is suddenly yanked away.

Henry takes pleasure working near Vito, the large and largely-silent executive chef at Fiorello's. Vito tells a bit of this story and his piece is tragic. One car wreck stole his husband and child away, and he's not ready to open up, especially not to the blonde man-child, Henry. Still, Vito is not entirely dead inside and he makes some decisions that help Henry just when Henry needs it. I was torn with Vito, both sympathetic and frustrated, because he's so determined to stay in his miserable little shell, and lashes out at times. Knowing both sides of the story I just want him to comfort Henry and let himself be comforted, and I got frustrated when he didn't. Then again, I was overjoyed when he did.

**Read Veronica's review in its entirety [here](#).**

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