



Once Perfect

Cecy Robson

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His life was never easy. Hers wasn't supposed to be this hard. They come from different worlds, but fate lures them together in a way neither expected in Cecy Robson's raw, steamy New Adult debut—perfect for fans of Monica Murphy and J. Lynn.

Evelyn Preston's future once looked perfect—until her wealthy father was caught in an embezzlement scandal and took his own life. Alone and struggling to pay her college tuition and bills, Evelyn finds a job as a waitress at the ultra-hip nightclub Excess, where she used to have more in common with the privileged private-school clientele than her fellow staff members. But something attracts her to the sexy six-foot-four bouncer and underground MMA fighter Mateo Tres Santos. Although they've led different lives, their troubled pasts bonds them in both survival and love.

Mateo is ex-army who wound up in prison for assaulting the man who harmed his sister. Now he's feeling the same protective impulse for this petite blond waitress. When Evelyn experiences a panic attack at the club, Mateo comes to her rescue. And when Mateo is wounded shielding her from a brawl, Evelyn returns the favor and comes to his aid.

As their attraction intensifies, Mateo is determined to find out what nightmares are lurking in Evelyn's past—even if that means tackling his own to save her.

Once Perfect Details

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I wish I'd have read this weeks ago. Everything about this love story spoke to my heart. From Evelyns past to her fears and strength .. all made her one of the best heroines I've ever read. She could have let her fears completely trap her into a life of solitude but once Mateo started chipping at her walls.. that's when Evie really came out and shined.

Mateo was 100% wonderful. I adored this hero. I've always loved the Latino culture. Loyalty and traditional values.. the family and closeness. The way he protected his sisters and how he always kept his word. Such passionate and sensual love scenes just warmed my heart.

Cecy really has a gift of pulling you in until you completely feel the characters emotions. Not just Mateo or Evie either. Sweet Sophie and loud and crazy Letie.. to funny as hell Brody. The other bouncers and even scandalous Sam and Elaine.. I was riveted and couldn't put it down. Total romance and I want more.

****Thank you Netgalley and Cecy ****

Sheryl says

4.5 stars

Pretty awesome, ending felt a bit rushed though and hopefully both Lety and Brody AND Sofia and Killian get their stories (coz I soooooo wanna read them!!!!)

ARC courtesy of Netgalley and Random House Publishing

Michelle [Helen Geek] says

07/24/2014 --

Overall Rating = 2.5 Stars

Book Cover / Book Blurb / Book Title = 4 / 3 / 1 = 2.5 Stars

Writer's Voice = 2 Stars

Character Development = 3 Stars

Story Appreciation = 2 Stars

Worth the Chili = 4 Stars -- [\$2.99 on Amazon]

Smexy [HEAT] Rating = Mild

272 pages

Okay .. this didn't work for me. I've gotten used to more meaty Loveswept books. This was definitely not that. More than half the book was taken up with Evie, our heroine contemplating and being fearful of Teo's big cock. I read through to the end, but books like this piss me off. So, no. This book was definitely, absolutely NOT the book for me.

You may like this one just fine. It is a very juvenile story, but power to you and good luck!

Happy Reading!

ARC provided by Random House Publishing Group - Loveswept via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Claire Robinson says

2.5 - "I'm good with my hands." Stars.

Once Perfect is the type of book that due to its subject matter/storyline, as a reader I feel a little guilty for not really liking it. This may just be me not gelling with the author's writing style, as it wasn't all bad, and I will try to pinpoint my reasons for why it didn't really work for me.

It started out pretty good, I liked Evie initially and Mateo was pretty swoonworthy with his protectiveness of her, but as the book progressed the chemistry I think I was meant to be feeling between them just didn't really materialize. I found their conversations and a lot of their interaction at points bordering on what felt like a parent (Evie) talking down to a teenager (Mateo).

"Sweetie, leave her alone. He's being nice to her."

The whole use of the word 'Sweetie' got a little cringe-worthy at times too, bearing in mind we are talking about a 23 year old guy and a 21 year old girl, this isn't a word I would equate to being used in this age group so much, and the whole writing style for me felt like an older person writing how they thought twenty-somethings would interact, and the language just didn't feel loose enough.

I think there is a fine line when you are holding a reader in suspense with regards to major plot developments, but we were well into the second half of the book before anything of interest really happened. Yes there are a few hints and flashbacks here and there as to what happened in Evie's past, as well as Mateo's familial issues and I kind of worked out where it was going to go before it was officially confirmed, but for me it just took too long to really get started.

"You callin' me a distraction."

The second thing that really bugged me about *Once Perfect* was the whole cliché rich girl, down on her luck - poor Latino boy from the wrong side of the tracks vibe. This trope usually works for me but what with the fact Evie came over pretty condescending towards Mateo (and his family) a lot of the time, and Mateo's stereotypical dead-beat, down on their luck family, I just found it all really cheesy. And I am sorry, but I just can't get onboard with any guy from whatever walk of life saying that "*It's not something we do*" when asked why he hasn't gone to the police or the authorities in an attempt to stop his druggie douche-bag father from beating seven kinds of shit out of his sisters, mother and himself on a regular basis. I know this is fiction but this sort of behavior and acceptance about something that is wholly unacceptable just makes me angry.

I think this book shows promise, but coupled with the above points and possibly the most clinical and unsexy blow/hand-job I have ever read, it all just fell extremely flat for me.

ARC provided via Netgalley, I am sorry I cannot give a more positive review on this occasion.

Kristen says

4 Refreshing New Adult Stars!

I love when I find a new adult book that not only takes me by surprise but also has me believing in the characters and the romance. It was refreshing to read a new adult couple that felt authentic to their background, age, and life situation.

Once Perfect isn't your average college romance with carbon-copy characters, plot, and soap opera drama. There's drama, some heartbreaking at times, but it was balanced with humor and story building. In fact, I was surprised at how much I laughed throughout the book considering the sensitive subject matter and the heartbreaking situations in which some of the characters found themselves.

The characters were what I loved the most about this story. They were so richly developed and relatable that they breathed life into each and every page. The secondary characters were just as vibrant, authentic, and lovable as the two main leads.

I had such a great time reading this book! It wasn't perfect (the heroine's dissociative disorder needed to be better explained) but it was just what I needed. This is definitely a story I will read again.

Pam says

3.5 stars

"Just breathe for me."

Abandoned and shunned, Evelyn finds herself alone with nothing left. She used to have it all until her father took his own life. While trying to stay on track on becoming a Nurse, she goes to school during the day while working at a Club Excess at night. Club Excess is where the rich kids go to live it up, drinking and getting their hands on anything they can get to go higher than high. What keeps her safe are the bodyguards of Excess, and the man who leads them all Mateo. She knows her fear of him is unjustified since he's shown her nothing but kindness, but she can't help but fear how capable he is of violence when witnessing it night after night dealing with the drug dealers and the drunks.

Maybe I still remained that princess after all, despite my confiscated tiara.

When your days and nights are filled with panic attacks, it's hard to fit in when all you want to do is hide.

Making friends is hard for her especially with how quickly everyone turned their back on them...but little by little the staff at Excess prove her wrong. Evie has never been a sexual person, she actually hates sex but something about Mateo and his raw intensity that just turns her on. The one man she fears is the one man she wants, and when he finally makes a move she can't help but fall for the man who treats her with tender gloves.

*Mateo didn't create the nightmares. He hadn't hurt me like those cruel hands in my dreams.
And he never would.*

It's clear to Mateo that they need to take it slow, Evie has some serious demons she is battling and doesn't know if she even knows who she is fighting. Keeping her safe and protected is his main focus, willing to wait it out. Evie is different, and he wants her for more than just one night, he's in it for the long haul. But what happens when she finally confronts her demons, and when his own monster comes back...can they fight it all together ???

"You broke like a piece of glass, right in front of me." He swallowed hard. "And it fucking ripped me apart. I couldn't help you, even though I'd promised to keep you safe."

Once Perfect is about a very broken girl and the man who has the patience to put her back together. This book had me wondering what happened to Evie, I had some guesses but in the end I was wrong. She wasn't a fighter, she was a survivor, one who had to much bad in her life and blocked it all away. Mateo, is just what a real man should be, passionate, tender, patient and affectionate. The way he took care of the women in his life made him completely swoon worthy. Underneath the rage and the muscles, he was a big softie at heart. I just have to say and I mean no disrespect to the family culture displayed in the book, but that is all kinds fucked up, my jaw was left hanging, wanting to bang someone upside their head for how they were forced to live. It was a great sad-heartwarming read.

ARC kindly provided by Random House Publishing Group - Loveswept, via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review .

***Quotes above are taken from the ARC version of the book and may differ upon publication.

Karla says

4 Solid Stars! The mouthwatering Mateo is a powerhouse with a gentle touch and a kind heart...delicious!

As a rule, I'm not a fan of this particular sub-genre of romance, but this was a pretty good New Adult debut by Cecy Robson. What I loved most about this book is that while Mateo and Evie faced challenges in their relationship, they didn't push each other away. They faced everything together...head on, which empowered

them as a couple and they won me over. They didn't run or play the woe-is-me card, which is a common thread in this genre of romance and one that I find annoying. That's not to say there isn't some angst, but the author dealt with in a way that I appreciated the characters and their strength.

Life hadn't initially been good to either of us. But we were good to each other. And regardless of the demons of our pasts, nothing would change that.

I also respected the author for the way she handled the issue with Evie's ex. She took his age into account when he left her and his life as it was at that time. He was dealing the best he could, and she didn't make him out to be an unfeeling villain. I actually felt bad for him and would love to see her explore the possibility of writing him a story. Now that would be interesting!

There is an explosive climatic ending that exemplifies the cultural differences between Mateo and Evie. It also sets up the next book in the series, but no cliffhanger for our main couple. Mateo and Evie's story has a solid ending, another thing that the author did right. The reader doesn't have to wade through an entire series to see what the future holds for these two. Bravo and thank you Cecy Robson for writing a New Adult series that I can look forward too. I'm in this series for the long haul!

A copy of the book was provided by Random House Publishing-Loveswept via NetGalley

Patrycja says

[Yes (hide spoiler)]

Jonetta says

Evelyn (Evie) Preston is a waitress at a hip nightclub while at the same time attending nursing school and struggling to pay bills. It's a bit of a comedown from her earlier life as the privileged daughter of a wealthy businessman just three years ago. His suicide following an embezzlement scandal changed everything, let alone personal traumas even she hasn't fully acknowledged. Mateo Tres Santos is a bouncer at the nightclub, an imposing figure at 6'4" compared to the petite Evie. Circumstances bring these two together despite the chasm of differences but one thing they share is a strong sense of self and personal fortitude.

This book was a slow but growing burn for me. Initially I feared I wouldn't be able to connect with either character or their relationship not just because of their ages (early twenties) but also because of Mateo's underground MMA fighting. That's just not my cuppa and I've avoided those stories. However (and it's a big one), that's just background and the real story is of two people grappling with real life issues, trying to make the best of their lives and figuring out how to move forward. To say their experiences are reflective of most people's reality is understating the value of this story. I loved how both just dealt with their circumstances, struggled to create a relationship when most of those around them aren't betting on them and kept moving forward. Mateo's family values and cultural norms are a strong part of his identity and I was pleased to see that honestly portrayed. Evie's issues were tragic and what made her more authentic was how there wasn't a neat end or solution provided.

It's a tough story but I eventually came to admire and truly like Evie and Mateo. They're not stereotypes in any sense of the word and their lives and relationship are not easy. I didn't think I'd want to continue the series but now I'm too invested to stop here. The narrator did a really good job of giving voice to both characters as well as to the secondary ones. This one is a keeper.

My thanks to Kimba the Caffeinated Book Reviewer for providing me a complimentary copy.

♥? Dorsey aka Wrath Lover Reviews ♥? says

Reread: June 2017

Now available on audio!! Naturally I *had* to revisit Teo and Evie, and it was just as fantastic as the first time around.

*This was a new to me narrator, I didn't find her performance *outstanding*, but, she's good and made the audiobook an enjoyable reread.

October 2014

4.5 Fighting For Love Stars!!

I really enjoyed this story. Mateo, is an ex Marine, ex Con and current Nighclub Bouncer. Evelyn is a shunned Debutant, part-time cocktail, waitress and full time nursing student. They're both are wounded souls, trying to overcome their many obstacles.

Evelyn lead the life of privilege until her world comes crashing down with her fathers suicide and the subsequent scandal that follows. Going from riches to rags, she's now a cocktail waitress at a nightclub to support herself while in nursing school.

Mateo's is the nightclub's head of security and part-time (illegal) MMA fighter. Evie catches his eye the moment she walked into the club to apply for a job and he discreetly watches out for heryou can actually *feel* Mateo's longing for Evie.

Teo has baggage and thinks Evie won't want to accept, and sadly he thinks he's not good enough for her, he has a really messed up family situation. What Tao doesn't realize is that Evie has her own baggage, messed up family, and some pretty horrific demons that continue to haunt her.

You find yourself hoping, longing and cheering that these two lost lonely souls can find their way. Eventually when all is revealed, they overcome, and are in love. They have learned to trust *together*.....and to knock all these obstacles out of their way!!!

I have to say I am soooooo looking forward to more in the series! Lety & Brody's book is next (Once Loved Jan 2015) and hopefully Killian & Sofia's book is not too far off!!!

**** ARC provided to www.sweptawaybyromance.com by Netgally in exchange for an honest review**

XxTainaxX says

I love Cecy's writing. This story was particularly compelling because it brought to the forefront the issues that stay with us when we go through some kind of abuse whether it's physical or emotional. I loved Mateo and Evie. He was the protector. The family glue. Being hispanic myself, I get the way the family behaved with their antiquated beliefs. It's one of those things I will never understand about my people. The character growth was beautiful to see and the side characters are set up for some interesting stories. The only area that left me a little unsatisfied was the ending. It left me with some holes that I hope will be filled with a mention in other books. It's honestly a great book by a great author and you'd be crazy to miss out.

Mariann {at} Belle's Book Bag says

Cecy Robson is a new-to-me author but after reading Once Perfect, I'm on a mission to catch up with what I missed out on by not knowing about her. She definitely won me over with Mateo and Evie. Loved these two so much.

Not only is the cover OUTSTANDING, but more important, so is the story. I was immediately drawn to Evie and Mateo. It was so much fun reading them fall in love. It wasn't an easy journey for them but it was funny, sweet, heartbreaking and left me smiling at the end. Mateo..he had me from the start *sigh* He was definitely a swoon~worthy hero. It was so sad and it pissed me off how the dad treated not only Mateo, but his sisters as well and the mom wasn't any better. Evie was such a special heroine to me. I loved her from the beginning as well. She adapted to her new life and was making a way for herself even though it wasn't easy. She was so sweet but had trouble fitting in and making friends. It was hard to read her struggle with her past when she finally remembered what had happened to her. I loved how she continued to battle through it. They were so sweet and HOT together ~ loved their relationship. Loved how Mateo protected her and I loved how Evie took care of him.

Great secondary characters...Ant was so funny and I'm interested to see if he will get his own book as well as Noelle, Dee and Big Chris. I cannot wait to read Lety and Brody and then Sophie and Killian.

There were a lot of funny parts in the story as well. Ant and Mateo eating the cookies Evie made, Evie catching Sam and Diane in the kitchen and when Evie asked about Mateo's tattoo.

Such a great read and looking forward to more.

Wendy Marcus says

This book was amazingly fantastic!! I loved it from beginning to end and read it in one sitting. Mateo has made my list of top ten favorite alpha heroes!!! I highly recommend this one!

And if, like me, you don't typically read books written in first person with only one point of view, don't let that stop you from buying this book. It is sooooo well written you won't miss the hero's POV at all.

Mandy says

4.5 stars.

This book took me by surprise - I was not expecting such a heart-breaking, romantic and intense story. Evelyn and Mateo both have things from their past they are trying to work through. They both have struggled in their lives and are dealing with some really difficult issues. I really loved the way that their relationship developed and the connection between these characters. What I really enjoyed about this story was there wasn't a lot of angst or stupid drama with silly misunderstandings. This book was really interesting with a good story flow. I really enjoyed the supporting characters, especially Mateo's sisters. Mateo and Evelyn are the type of couple you really want to see reach a happily ever after. I really enjoyed this book and look forward to reading more in this series!

ARC provided in exchange for an honest review

Wendy's Thoughts says

4 Mateo and Evie Stars * * * *

Two people from totally different cultures and economic backgrounds collide. Assumptions are made but once they are stripped away... they understand they are just people who connect and are good for one another. Sounds like any romance story out there, right... except this tale had so much more to it than that.

We get the rich, privileged girl who suffers at the hands of the father's sins. He embezzled, disgraced his family and then ended things in a drastic manner. Evelyn... left alone, fending for herself with only the love and emotional support of her former housekeeper's family. She has been abandoned by the boy/man she was supposed to have married... She learned to stand on her own two feet and become something she could be proud of... a nurse. She is almost finished and will be graduating soon. She has worked her way through, waiting tables at a club some nights and weekends. It is not easy. It is not what she was raised to do. It is her life and she is learning to be her own person as best as she can.

We get a man... someone who endured a difficult childhood, survivor of the cultural ways of his family. He dealt as best he could with the violence he saw and experienced by the hands of his father. He saw the harm and acceptance of his passive mother. He wanted more out of his life and sought to get the education and training the Armed Service would provide. A traumatic event involving his 14 year old sister changed his path. Dozing out the appropriate punishment to the perpetrator, he was sentenced to prison instead of the society boy who deserved it. Mateo has done his time. He heads the security and bouncers of the club where

Evie works. He is helping his mother and sisters financially and is resigned to his life. He will take care of his family. He will fight to make the money to support them. He does not see any advancement or career for himself. This is his life.

These two connect and although each has their issues and concerns... once they commit to each other... you root for them.

This was a winner for me... The cover planted the seed of who to think about as Mateo.... here was the strong, built, caring man. He had seen so much; was sweet and careful with Evie... he sensed there were demons and she would need to work them through first before anything could happen with them. You just adore Mateo from the start and Evie, with her privileged, sheltered background, is learning to be free and open as best she can.

The story was detailed and made terrific sense. It covered numerous plot lines which meshed perfectly. You cared about these people... understood the challenges. There were secondary characters which enhanced the story and will have their own books coming I sense.

This was a good read for me and glad I was able to experience it.

A gifted copy was provided by Random House Publishing through NetGalley for an honest review.

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