



## **The Boy Next Door**

*Kate McMurray*

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LGBT Contemporary

When Lowell moves back to his hometown to take care of his ailing mother, the last person he expects to see living in the house next door is his childhood friend Jase, grown up now and more attractive than ever. Jase had starred in many of Lowell's teenage fantasies, but Lowell is convinced Jase is straight. And yet, as they rekindle their friendship, it begins to look like Jase might not be so straight after all.

Jase has problems of his own: his troubled ex-wife has allowed him full custody of their daughter on one condition: he never exposes her to his affairs with other men. The arrangement works just fine until he starts falling for Lowell and a whole new world of possibilities opens up for him. But how can he have a relationship with a man and still keep his daughter?

*Publisher's Note: This book contains explicit sexual content, graphic language, and situations that some readers may find objectionable: Male/male sexual practices.*

## **The Boy Next Door Details**

Date : Published January 25th 2011 by Loose Id

ISBN :

Author : Kate McMurray

Format : ebook 141 pages

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

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## From Reader Review The Boy Next Door for online ebook

### **Lisa The Novel Approach says**

The Boy Next Door is a book about second chances—for Lowell, a second chance at connecting with his childhood best friend, who he'd lost touch with after leaving his small Connecticut hometown. For Jason, it's a chance to be with someone he could truly love.

Lowell returned to a city which was basically a great big closet full of skeletons for him. Primarily, he'd escaped an abusive father who beat him, and his mother. But he also escaped a town not so open-minded about gay people. And perhaps, he'd escaped the disappointment of losing his best friend, Jase, who pulled away from him once Lowell came out in high school.

Jase had married his college girlfriend and had a daughter. He married for the wrong reasons, even knowing then he was gay but unable to face the truth, and hoping he might be able to move past the "gay" thing. When he realized he couldn't, he found himself in a rut, divorced, only finding sexual release on the spare weekend he had free, when his daughter was with his ex or in-laws.

The best part of the story was when they came together for the first time. The chemistry was intense and the idea of a supposedly straight guy finally crossing over to the gay side is always kind of hot. In fact, all of the sex scenes in the story, and there were quite a few, were detailed and steamy.

The problem for me in this story was that both characters displayed some unlikable qualities, which made me kind of not like either of them very much. Jase loved his daughter, totally endearing and making him an amazing father, but then he caves in at every turn to be with Lowell. When a crisis arises involving his daughter, and he caves in once again, I found myself distancing from him. Similarly, Lowell was a more experienced gay man, having been out much longer than Jase. Although he wasn't a father, he had to know that pushing a relationship issue in the middle of a crisis would be a bad idea.

Had Lowell been the one to pull away, knowing Jase needed to feel the absence of something good in order to feel its loss, the circumstances would have been more realistic. Had Jase listened to his inner voice telling him not to get together with Lowell more often, withholding from what his gut knew he wanted, the tension would have built up to an explosive level. As it stands, neither character sacrificed too much, each giving into their desires and then feeling guilty about it afterwards.

All in all, this book didn't do it for me. I just found too many selfish qualities in both characters to feel really invested in their success as a couple.

Reviewed by Taz for The Novel Approach Reviews

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### **Judy & Marianne from Long and Short Reviews says**

A childhood fantasy can't be the love of your life, can he? That's what Lowell thought when he moved back to his hometown to take care of his ailing mother. Lowell's childhood friend Jase just happens to be his next door neighbor. But life has certainly changed for both men as Jase is now divorced with a young daughter. As the two men reconnect, Lowell and Jase face a lot of obstacles that test their newfound friendship and

romance.

The Boy Next Door is a sweet romance with the familiar and well loved theme of friends turned lovers. The two main characters are normal guys dealing with the every day struggles of life, jobs, economy, and a relationship in a small town. Lowell and Jase have a lot of conflict that draws out the story. There is the issue of Jase's ex-wife and custody of his child which plays a huge role in the novel. Then there is Lowell's openness about his sexuality while Jase prefers to stay closeted. These problems and more contribute to the tension about whether the two men can actually weather the issues and come out together.

While the story is by turns romantic and lovely, it also tends to drag. There is some information and additional scenes that don't seem to add much to the story. Jase's best friend, a nearby bar owner, is also gay but I'm not sure how his romantic problems play into the story. If anything this distracts from the main couple. Additionally Jase and Lowell have a rocky relationship with a lot of fighting. Jase is especially fearful and often lashes out at Lowell because of this. Lowell is pretty understanding but ultimately I wasn't entirely sure that these two really fell in love and lasted.

The characters are three dimensional and come across as authentic. Their problems feel genuine and you can empathize with their issues. There are no clear cut evil villains and the story creates good tension with a definite happy ending. While this didn't always work so well for me I think some readers will enjoy the real feel to the story. Everyday men with problems and issues that aren't fantasies but find a way to true love. If this sounds like your type of book, give it a chance.

Originally posted at <http://whippedcream2.blogspot.com/201...>

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### **Melissa Mendoza says**

**Title:** The Boy Next Door

**Author:** Kate McMurray

**Publisher:** Dreamspinner Press

**Reviewer:** Melissa

**Release Date:** January 25, 2016

**Genre(s):** M/M Romance

**Page Count:** 141

**Heat Level:** 3 flames out of 5

**Rating:** 4 stars out of 5

**Blurb:**

When Lowell moves back to his hometown to take care of his ailing mother, the last person he expects to see living in the house next door is his childhood friend Jase, grown up now and more attractive than ever. Jase had starred in many of Lowell's teenage fantasies, but Lowell is convinced Jase is straight. And yet, as they rekindle their friendship, it begins to look like Jase might not be so straight after all.

Jase has problems of his own: his troubled ex-wife has allowed him full custody of their daughter on one condition: he never exposes her to his affairs with other men. The arrangement works just fine until he starts falling for Lowell and a whole new world of possibilities opens up for him. But how can he have a relationship with a man and still keep his daughter?

**Review:**

“Jase kissed him again. For someone without much experience kissing men, Jase was incredibly talented at it. It was totally worth it.”

**4 hometown boy stars!!! Refreshingly addicting!**

Lowell is back in town permanently now that he has to take care of his sick mother. And he's taken by surprise when he notices his neighbor next door is his old friend Jase. He also can't help but notice how devastatingly handsome he now is. Jase had always had a crush on him when they were teens, but now as adults, he really understands why. Lowell always thought that Jase was straight, but the more time they spend together, the more Lowell realizes he might be wrong. Jase is dealing with his own issues, an ex-wife, she will allow Jase to have custody of their daughter but he has to keep his relationships with men to himself. He's okay with that arrangement, until he starts to fall for Jase. How can he make this work?

I totally fell into this book and fell in love with Jase and Lowell!! Their relationship is cute, adorable and at times totally sexy!! The story was unique and not something I've read over and over, which is refreshing! The story was believable and didn't seem like it was totally far fetched, which made it even more enjoyable!! Overall a really cute book!

ARC provided by author in exchange for an honest review. Reviewed by Melissa from Alpha Book Club

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**Cole Riann says****Second Read - 6/7/13**

Review posted at The Armchair Reader for Kate McMurray Week!

I tried to read this book once before. It wasn't too long after I first read *Kindling Fire with Snow*, which I really liked. And... I couldn't make it through the book. Ultimately, I DNFed it and went on. I think, though I remember little of the reason now, I didn't have any real hangups with the book, I just couldn't get into it. And now that I've read all of Kate's backlist, I was eager to try it again. Chances are I was just not in the mood the first time around. In fact, that's how it seemed as I started reading this again. By the midway point, though (which is where I stopped the first time), I started to remember the reasons I had a hard time reading it. This time around, it bothered me less. Still, I'd probably say that this is my least favorite book from Kate McMurray.

Lowell moves back to his hometown after the death of his abusive alcoholic father to care for his mother and unknowingly moves into the house next door from his childhood best friend and crush, Jase. They've both grown up quite a lot in the intervening years. Lowell, the first out gay student at their high school, flew the nest at the first opportunity for the city, where he created a life for himself at NYU and then as a graphic designer. Jase, the popular baseball jock in high school, followed his sport to college where he met his ex-wife and ultimately fathered a little girl. But Layla was the only kind thing during those years. Jase, calling himself a coward, married Karen even though he knew he was gay and went on to try to live the perfect

suburban life. It didn't work out. They divorced when he came out to her just two years ago from the start of the book. Again, his six year old daughter Layla is the best thing that ever happened to him, but her mother is an absentee parent leaving him with sole custody but a mother who drops into town every few months giving her daughter false hope of a real relationship. And besides her own problems with alcohol, her bouts of outspoken homophobia to Jase are mostly a plea for a return to how things used to be an unwillingness to move on without blaming everything on Jase.

My real frustration with this book are Jase and Karen. For the most part, I feel like their actions and choices are based in solid history in the story, so I at least understand why they make the choices they do. Still, I have a hard time watching them play out when it seemed to create a bit of extra angst that I had a hard time with. I think mostly, though, I wished there were a better balance in this story between the despair that Jase feels toward just about every area of his life with the hope that I needed to make the story feel not to angst. I recognize that this is a matter of personal taste, so I have no qualms saying outright that it was just me that had a hard time here. I just couldn't get close to Jase. Even though I understood that he was willing to sacrifice his happiness for his daughter, there are time where he seems hell bent on sacrificing his own happiness just because of his own guilt (not divorce/broken-family guilt, but like, childhood Catholic guilt) and I didn't feel like I understood how he was raised enough to make that picture clear for me. This is what made *Four Corners* work better for me. In that book, the flashbacks give a really accurate portrayal of their childhoods, and I felt like that was missing here. I just couldn't always justify Jase's choices and I'd find myself getting angry with him. On the other hand, I felt a love/hate relationship with the character of Karen. Partly I feel like I understood the way she was but then she'd say some things that took it a little over the top for me and I'd realize that I just wasn't sure if I didn't know enough about her or if she was still a bit of an archetypical villain. I couldn't make up my mind.

It's pretty different reading this, though, on the other side of having read and enjoyed all of Kate's other work. I can see, especially from this book, where she's really grown as an author. So, please, take this review as one of the many out there because I know there are readers who really liked this book and where the things that bothered me weren't even an issue for them.

#### **First Read - 2/20/11 to 2/27/11 DNF**

DNF Reason -- This wasn't a terrible story, it just didn't do anything for me. Halfway through I still hadn't connected to the characters and I was forcing myself to read it just to get it over with. That's not a good thing. So, this one is headed for the DNF shelf. Maybe I'll pick it back up at a later date, maybe not. But, for now, I'm going to move on to something else.

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#### **S.M. Harshell says**

\*\*I received a free copy of this book to read and review for Wicked Reads.\*\*

Lowell loves living in the city but has to move back to his home town to care for his mom after his father's death. The town is very small and conservative, not extremely gay friendly. The house he buys just happens to be next to his childhood friend and crush.

Jase married his college sweetheart because he thought that's what was required of him as a man. After having a daughter and trying to make the marriage work, he couldn't fake it anymore. He refused to think of himself as gay but he's known he has an attraction to men. His ex-wife grants him custody of his daughter

with the stipulation that he will keep his attraction and any relationship away from his daughter.

Jase is happy to see Lowell again. They were once the closest of friends until they grew apart as teenagers. Lowell is out and has been for years. Jase has always kept his one night stands away from his town and his house, until he can't control his attraction to Lowell. Can he make the only relationship that's every felt right work? Or will his ex-wife use his attraction to Lowell to keep his daughter away from him?

Ms McMurray is a new to me author. I enjoyed *The Boy Next Door* it was an enjoyable quick read. I look forward to reading more from this author.

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### **Jodi Ciorciari-marinich says**

I really liked this story. I havent read anything from her before but will definitely be reading more. I enjoyed the way she told the story of 2 friends from school who grew apart once Lowell came out. Lowell's home life wasn't great and as soon as he could left home and never looked back. .

Jase was the loved jock and after college got married and had a child. Jase knew all along he was gay but one night hook ups was all he wanted. Lowell moves home when he dad dies and he needs to take care of his mother.

When Lowell moves next door and they strike up a friendship which turns into something more. I loved the chemistry between these 2 and the sex scenes were good. When something happens to Jase's daughter Layla , thanks to his homophobic x-wife, Jase has a change of heart and dumps Lowell. Jase feels if he never hooked up with him things would have never happened. Lowell is heartbroken and reluctant to let Jase go but he needs to help him keep his daughter. When the crisis is over Jase realizes he cant function without Lowell and that he needs him. They work out how to have each other and Layla. Great ending!!!

Received an arc from publisher for a review. Reviewed by Jodi for Alpha Book Club.

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### **Erica Chilson says**

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

3 Stars.

Katie McMurray is a new-to-me author, and I found the writing style enjoyable to read, but found a few scenes redundant in nature, slowing the pacing down to a crawl at a few parts.

Lowell buys a new home in his hometown to be near his ailing mother, only to discover he inadvertently moved in next door to his childhood friend. Lowell and Jase's friendship had fallen apart in junior high, with Jase moving toward being jock and Lowell coming out and turning into the town's pariah.

Fast-forward many years, Lowell feels safe to come home now that his abusive, alcoholic father has passed, only to find his old friend a divorcee with a six-year-old little girl.

For the most part, I thoroughly enjoyed the story, but there were a few things that were off-putting. Lowell

was a good narrator, with a strong characterization that never floundered. However, I felt Jase to be a weak character, as his personality wavered as the story flowed, so I never truly felt I knew him, even when I was inside his head. Most of the things he said or did was irrational, sounding more like a flighty woman who blamed all of their issues on everyone, while giving themselves permission to dwell in their problems- when the only issue Jase has is himself. The only thing in the way of Jase's happiness is Jase. No actual issues to be had, aside from boundaries with his ex-wife. Jase whined about his life but did nothing to change it, actually enabling the problems to continue and fester by apologizing for who he is.

Any and all conflict in the story was due to Jase not dealing with his ex-wife, whom I felt was written one way while Jase's narration showed conflicting arguments on her as a person. Responsible. Irresponsible. Good mother. Bad mother. Good friend and wife. Bad friend and wife. Human nature dictates that you can't be both at the same time. So I felt the author needed to find a middle ground by making sure the characterization wasn't conflicting- contradictory. Mentally disturbed, when prior she was shown to not have any such mental illnesses. Pre-divorce, Jase's narrative states his wife was a good wife and mother, attentive and loving. She divorced him, yet is written to be the spurned wife? Now she is a deadbeat, flighty, homophobic, rash actions, which Jase blames Lowell instead, who doesn't stick up for himself by telling Jase he's acting irrational.

The major conflict, I didn't enjoy because of the contradiction and the fact that I felt there was never any true closure. The ex-wife went 'away', but the problems were never dealt with, as the problem wasn't the ex-wife but how Jase kowtowed to her- actually agreed with her, blaming Lowell instead of himself, or his ex, or no one because no one was to blame. Why does anyone have to be blamed for the 'core' issue? He never apologized, and Lowell didn't stand up for himself. Yes, Jase was scared, but that doesn't give a person license to say what was said- you're at your basest when angry or drunk, those words were meant, and Lowell shouldn't be with someone so disillusioned and irrational if they truly believed them. By book's end, I wanted Jase to own who he was, and he didn't. It just ended.

*"If you hadn't moved here...*

How about take ownership in your own choices? Whether Lowell moved back to their hometown or not, the situation was still the same- the actions belong to the person committing them, and I didn't like how that was portrayed, influencing readers to not take responsibility for their own actions or to stand up for themselves. An abused boy grew up to be treated disrespectfully by his partner, as the author wrote it. Jase was no better than his ex-wife. Actually, the ex-wife took responsibility for her actions, while Jase never did.

For such a short novel, there were many redundant scenes, with many being between the sheets action. A few I felt took away from the emotional impact that was being written on the pages, lessening it. I skimmed all these scenes after the halfway mark, completely skipping one that occurred within a paragraph after an important fight. It was the wrong time, not only unnecessary, it brought nothing to the story except to lessen the emotional impact. It was in that scene, instead of sex, when the issues I outlined above should have been addressed, when the guys were having a 'moment'.

Issues aside, I do recommend this title to MM romance fans, (I must apologize, because I read a book like an editor, not a reader- wish that wasn't the case). I'd be willing to give the author another try to see if it was the plot of this book (Jase the character) or the writing style that isn't my cup of tea. Sometimes a plot or character and the reader just don't mix- hit or miss- but that doesn't mean the author isn't a good writer or the book worthy of being read.

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### **Les Joseph says**

I always enjoy a really good coming home story mixed with a second chance at love. When a kid is involved? Well, I'm going to be all over that for sure so I was really excited when I saw the blurb for Kate McMurray's new book, *The Boy Next Door*. This isn't REALLY a new book, since it's a re-release first published back in 2011, and as such, it was a bit of a let down seeing as how the plot and attitudes in much of the book felt a bit dated. Kate's writing as always shines through, but I have to confess this isn't my favorite book of hers.

Lowell is back in his conservative hometown of Greenbriar to take care of his ailing mother. His abusive father has passed away and his mother needs help, so Lowell leaves the big city he loves to go back to the place he fled more than 15 years ago. He's only stayed in touch with one friend since leaving, and when she helps him find a new house, it just so happens it's located next to his old best friend and secret crush, Jason. Jason's divorced, a father to adorable Layla, with a job he hates and ex-wife that causes him more stress than he can handle on most days. I did enjoy watching Lowell and Jase rekindle their friendship. It was so apparent how lonely and starved for companionship Jase has been and he can't help his attraction, one that's been long buried since high school, to Lowell. He's drawn by his good looks, his vivacious personality, and the fact that Lowell genuinely likes his daughter is a huge turn on. Problem is, Jase doesn't want to be gay, and when his evil ex-wife in all her homophobic ranting threatens to take Layla away from him if he continues his friendship with Lowell, well you can guess what happens from here.

The cliched evil ex-wife, the conservative town, the blatant homophobia, the slightly, and at times not so slightly, cringe worthy actions and explanations from Jase about his feelings for Lowell all left me a bit meh about this book. I never was able to warm up to Jase and I really didn't want Lowell with him at all. I liked Lowell, liked his attitude and his personality, but Jase was just so wishy washy that it ruined their relationship for me. There's a bit of action at the end, then a nice HFN. I won't even call it an HEA because I'm not sure these two have what it takes to make it. However, this is a nice, quick read that might appeal to other readers out there.

\*This review will also be posted on <http://www.diversereader.blogspot.com>\*

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### **Matthew Lee says**

#### **So....**

I didn't like this one as much as some of her others. The second main character was just annoying and I didn't feel bad about what was happening to him

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### **Arthur says**

The theme (childhood friends become lovers) is my favorite. To a degree, the author tried to make the problem real. However, the solution that she offers doesn't seem to be one. I'm tired of reading this 'gays v.

non-gays' mentality. Apart from the closest friend that the MC has from the beginning, it seems all non-gays try to do harm to the MCs. The ones that seem sympathetic happens to be... gay also! The ending is HFN, not HEA. If I knew it's HFN, I wouldn't have bothered to pay six bucks.

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### **Heidi Cullinan says**

This book has a lovely tossed salad of tropes mixed up with some new twists, excellent storytelling, and a refreshing voice. *The Boy Next Door* was my first Kate McMurray, and I quickly went out and read everything else she'd written after reading this.

It's a book about family, about coming out, about coming home, about hard decisions and falling in love. The characters are real and distinct but allow a reader to insert herself into the scene a little and feel resonances in her own life. The situations are that of everyday life and yet are presented in a way that feels unique.

Best of all this book makes a reader feel safe and intrigued and anxious in all the right ways, all at the same time. I'll be reading this one again and again.

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### **Kassa says**

*The Boy Next Door* is a cute premise that just didn't capture my attention. The characters have some good depth and the writing is perfunctory. There are several themes that are likely to appeal to fans and some nice use of tension. The conflict is kept real and believable throughout the story, so much so I didn't actually buy into the happy ending and resolution. Unfortunately there are many issues left hanging as well with the hope that together the two men can get through them. Unfortunately I don't really believe they will so that combined with a few other issues just killed my enjoyment.

The story is as the title suggests a friends turned lovers theme. Boyhood friends Lowell and Jase grew apart in high school but now reconnect when Lowell moves back to their hometown. Lowell is dealing with an ailing mother while Jase has a young daughter to take care of. The plot is very character dependant and that's not a bad thing. If you can connect to the two men and care about their plight, this story could be a contemporary comfort read. It has all the elements of an easy, enjoyable romance for the right reader.

Unfortunately for me I became increasingly frustrated with both Jase and Lowell. The story does a good job of developing both characters. They're not perfect or evil but complex men with fears, flaws, strengths and weaknesses. Jase struggles the most with unrealistic expectations and a huge guilt complex. He got married knowing he was gay so when the marriage predictably unraveled, Jase feels responsible for everything and everyone. He excuses his ex-wife's behavior out of guilt and constantly says mean, hurtful things to Lowell out of fear. While I can understand this and even applaud Lowell for calling Jase on these actions, Lowell simply takes the pain and keeps going in the relationship.

There are brief moments when Lowell pretends that he's done with Jase after Jase has said and done yet another horrible thing out of fear and guilt, but Lowell always rationalizes everything due to the situation with Jase's daughter. I found this issue made both men very unlikable for me. I didn't like Jase's waffling and bad actions towards Lowell but more so I hated that Lowell never really stood up for himself. He says the actions and comments are wrong and Jase agrees but Lowell simply gives in and claims love as the

reason he continues. I was left feeling the two men shouldn't be together and actually don't really stand a chance at staying together.

Additionally there are several tangents that don't really add anything to the story. There is the subplot about Lowell's mother that seems to come in and out of the story without any real purpose; especially so when the problem is not resolved at the end. There is also the secondary character of Neil and his closeted boyfriend that is doesn't really fit with the story but all I can imagine is there is a sequel staring these two so perhaps that's why it's included now. I found both subplots distracting and not very interesting.

Overall this just didn't work for me. I didn't care for the writing very much with the rhetorical questions and very short action style of writing dominating the prose. (Ie. "He walked to the bed. He sat down. He removed his shirt.") This is strange since I've read other things by this author I liked a lot so perhaps this will hit big with the right reader.

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### **Ami says**

Lowell returns to Greenbriar after 16 years to take care of his mother. The first day he gets to his house, his realtor (and friend) tells him that his neighbor is Jason "Jase" Midland and his daughter, Layla. Jase had been the star of so many Lowell's teenager's fantasy. What will happen now that they're adults ... and Lowell finds out the real reason why Jase's marriage falls apart.

This is the kind of story I enjoy ... I love how "down-to-earth" it is. This kind of setting can be boring, because it's a *day-to-day* setting; there are no murders, no supernatural beings ... simply two guys living next door to one another, who finds themselves being attracted to each other.

The conflict is present, though, in form of Jase's homophobic ex-wife as well as Jase's own fear to pursue happiness by starting relationship with a man. With a 6-years old daughter living with him, Jase doesn't think that it's a good idea ... and this results in one scene where I want to be mad at him for hurting Lowell so much.

The declaration of love is a quiet confession but it makes impact in me long after I finished reading. I seriously hope that Ms. McMurray will return to this neighborhood; especially since I feel that the other town's resident gay, Neal, needs his own story told -- plus it will be nice to visit Lowell, Jase, and Layla again ...

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### **jules0623 says**

I liked the blurb, the writing was good, and the characters weren't cardboard cut outs despite the check list of m/m fiction cliches that I was able to tick off here.

Jase, in particular, was a character who didn't suddenly accept his sexuality with open arms, he struggled with it, and I liked that until his loyalty to his ex and determination to stand by a promise he made to her turned him into a bit of an asshole. He blamed Lowell for all his problems, made excuses for himself and his ex-wife (it was okay for him to hurt Lowell and for his ex to behave the way she was because he was

breaking his promise to her by not living in stasis), and worse, didn't even apologise for it or admit to himself he was in the wrong. He didn't really show much growth by the end of the book. Lowell was still a dirty little secret from everyone but those who already knew and, tbh, I didn't really believe that was ever going to change.

And Lowell took him back after all the blame Jase hurled at him. I liked Lowell up until that moment. I came away from the book hating Jase and incredibly disappointed in Lowell.

There was a lot of time spent on secondary characters and plotlines that went nowhere that could have been devoted to the MCs as well.

tl;dr It was pretty good up until 3/4 of the way through then I wanted to punch holes in my wall.

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### **Breann says**

I liked the premise. The writing was good. But I was left feeling underwhelmed by Lowell and Jase's romance.

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