



Bitter Legacy

Dal Maclean

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Detective Sergeant James Henderson of London's Metropolitan Police Murder Investigation Team is no ordinary police officer. His remarkable gut instincts and relentless detective work have put him on a three-year fast track to becoming an inspector. When the murder of barrister Maria Curzon-Whyte lands in his lap, he finds himself drawn back into the insidious world of London's privileged elite where men like James's father possess wealth and power enough to hold the law in contempt. As James navigates the promiscuous, secretive and corrupt spheres of the rich, the murderer strikes again. Soon James begins to fear that these crimes lead dangerously close to his own heart and home. And now, he risks losing everything he's made of his life unless he can expose the sordid truths that have bred this bitter legacy."

Bitter Legacy Details

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Author : Dal Maclean

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Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Mystery, Contemporary, Crime, Lgbt



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From Reader Review Bitter Legacy for online ebook

Kaje Harper says

This is the kind of book you'd look for, when wishing that PD James's Adam Dalgliesh was gay. A solid police procedural mystery, with a handsome, educated, reserved, and honorable Detective Sergeant, whose first steps into life as an out gay man have to fit in around murder investigations.

James Henderson joined the police force in London despite total disapproval from his wealthy father, in search of something meaningful to do with his abilities. James has dedicated himself to his job - so much so that he hasn't made any time for a personal life. He's just reached the point where he needs more than the tiny flat he's been camping out in, and a narrow life with nothing but work colleagues in it.

When investigation into a murder case takes him to a nice flat, with a room conveniently for rent, he's tempted. When it turns out the flat owner and a neighbor are both attractive gay men, he's even more taken with the idea. Luckily, they are cleared enough of suspicion to let James feel all right about applying for the extra room. He moves in, and begins falling hard for his landlord and flatmate, Ben.

The murder case turns into two murders, which may or may not be related. The investigation drags on, through false leads and twists, and maybe another linked death. But while his professional life is frustrating and murky, James thinks he finally has a shot at a real personal life with Ben. Unfortunately, Ben has different ideas about what is going on between them, and what a gay man's life should look like.

James is headed for a collision of his dreams, his ideals, his job, and his newfound friends. And when he finally sees where the pieces belong, nothing may be exactly what he envisioned.

I really enjoyed this book. The characters were well done, the murder mystery was nicely twisty and filled with red herrings, and James is a very appealing main character. There was perhaps an overload of coincidences by the end, in tweaking the plot around through multiple surprise twists. But it was such a fun ride, with enough satisfying emotional depth, that I was happy to go along with it. There was a very nice balance of plot and character development, with just enough appropriately relevant sex scenes, to create a satisfying whole. Recommended for all fans of police-procedural mystery romance.

Baba says

[CHEATING (hide spoiler)]

CrabbyPatty says

I am *stunned* that Bitter Legacy is Dal Maclean's first published work. This is a complex work involving a series of murders in London investigated by DS James Henderson, interwoven with James' personal life as he navigates his first relationship since coming out as a gay man. There are no easy answers, no simple truths and nothing is as it seems.

If you are a fan of BBC police procedurals, this book is totally in your wheelhouse. DS Henderson is a young cop on a rapid trajectory within the South Kensington Murder Investigation Team. He has a quick mind and an intuitive grasp of police work and is heading up his first major investigation - the senseless murder of a young barrister. Through a weird coincidence, an address that comes up in their investigation solves James' search for a new flat, and he becomes the roommate of Ben Morgan, a black-haired gorgeous gay photographer with an entourage of friends.

I can't tell you more about the story or its impact as the plot unwinds ... and twists ... and leaves you feeling at one moment positive you know what is happening, and at the next completely stunned. James thinks at one point in the investigation:

But he couldn't deny he'd sunk in deeper with these cases than he ever had before. [...] And always in his quietest moments, something nagging at him—something he told himself he should be seeing, except it danced just outside the corner of his eye.

And that feeling holds true for his relationship with Ben as well.

I highly recommend this book and give it 5+ stars. Read this book stick with it when you are ready to give up ... keep with it as it breaks your heart.

I received an ARC of this book from the publisher, Blind Eye Books, in exchange for an honest review.
Review also posted at Gay Book Reviews - check it out!

Judith says

5 Stars.

I've seen this one around a lot lately, I bought it a while ago but didn't immediately start it and I really don't know why because it's brilliant. I don't think I've read anything in a while that completely captivated me and once I started it I couldn't put it down. It's definitely one of those where you think, one more chapter and you're still reading it hours later.

For me, this was such a refreshing change to the MM books I normally read. Some of the characters are so flawed, so damaged but that just made it all the more compelling.

Jamie is a Detective Sergeant in the London Police Department. One of the good guys, he cuts quite a lonely figure. He knows he's gay but has never been with a man..... that's about to change, in dramatic fashion, when he meets Ben.

Ben is stunningly beautiful and flirtatious. Men are drawn to him like a moth to light and once he's entrapped them they are powerless to resist and Jamie is no exception. When the current murder investigation Jamie is working on leads him to the apartments Ben lives in, Jamie is almost instantly captivated by Ben. Ben is looking for a flatmate, Jamie is looking for a new apartment so they find themselves living together.

Ben is highly promiscuous and is very open about it but the more Jamie is around Ben his common sense is non-existent, he simply can't resist him. So when they become an item Jamie, stupidly, expects monogamy even though he knows exactly what Ben is like.

This was painful and heart breaking to read at times and while I was really enjoying it, at one point I did consider not going on with it..... Now the contentious issue....*cheating*

Was it cheating? Ben was totally upfront about his sexuality and never made any promises about being exclusive, but it still hurt to read.

Running along side the two men's relationship was an extremely good murder/mystery plot and just when I thought I'd worked it out, I found out I was wrong. The writing and story telling was truly captivating. Right up until the end I had no idea which way their relationship would turn out or the murder investigation.

This book is just brilliant, definitely one of my favourite reads so far this year.

Highly recommended.....

Lena♥Ribka says

Update:

I'm so glad that this book made a finalist of the 29th Annual Lambda Literary Award in the category Gay Mystery. And my review was the first one posted on GR!!! Congratulations, Dal!

WOW! WOW! WOW! What a brilliant debut!

Honestly, I didn't expect to love this book as much as I do, when I started reading it. Already at 50% I knew it was a 5 stars read, at 80% I lost my connection to the outside world, at 90% I wanted to rush to find out what happened next and at the same time I didn't want this book to end, and at 100% I felt sad...because it was over.

Dear Mrs. MacLean, please, don't stop writing. With your brilliant book- I really can't believe that it is a debut novel!- you captured my heart and surely won a new fan.

It's not a secret that English is not my first language. (Here it will be a suitable opportunity to beg your pardons for all my orthographic and grammatical errors, but believe me, I always try to do my best), but I explained often enough, that my reading English is much better than my writing English, and normally I seldom use a dictionary while reading books in English. *Bitter Legacy* put my vocabulary to the test: I don't remember EVER, well at least for the last ten years, to use a dictionary that often as I did while reading this book. But instead of becoming frustrating and annoying by many interruptions of my reading process - especially at the beginning, because it took me some pages to get used to the author's writing style, or better to say, to accept my *questionable* British(?) English knowledge - I was falling more and more in love with this EXCLUSIVE and beautiful writing, and I'd like to thank the author very sincerely for educating me in such a great manner.

This book is RICH in many many things: In language, wording, plot, emotions, intensity, character's development, atmosphere and last but not least, in literary quality. In EVERYTHING.

I.LOVE.EVERY.MINUTE.OF.IT.

It is not easy to review a mystery book, to talk about the plot without spoiling anything. In this book a mystery part and a romance part are so closely intertwined with each other that it is almost impossible to separate them. I am pretty sure that this book will satisfied both lager: an experienced gay mystery reader, as well as a passionate MM romance reader. It is one of those rare books where a quality of a mystery part throughout the whole story remains on a very high level while a romance part, a relationship DRMA (I mean it, really, but ONLY positive in this case!) becomes slowly but surely a dominant theme.

The sexual tension and a sloooooow build up between the main characters are exemplary! I honestly didn't expect this mystery novel to turn into such an intense love story.

MIND BLOWING.

A short insight into the story:

Detective Sergeant **James Henderson**, twenty eight, is very attractive. He is a very talented investigator with a mysterious background. (I'm not going to spoil you anything, but my guess at the beginning was that he had come out to his family and they threw him out. My suggestion was not completely wrong, though it turned out to be more complicated than just a coming-out-topic.)

In spite of his excellent investigating skills and remarkable instincts, he seems to be a bit out of place, a bit too *posh* within the walls of the Metropolitan Police. Who is this young man? A secret aristocrat or simply an intellectual cop?

What though is clear from the very first pages: he is committed to his career, he is a gay *newbie*, he lives in a shithole outside from London, and he tries, still without success, to find a new living possibility in the city he can afford. We all know how extremely expensive London is!

When Maria Curzon-Whytea, a young barrister, is brutally murdered at the entrance of her house, James Henderson has been assigned to the case, that attracts immediately a lot of media attention. But the case

proves to be extremely difficult: the killer leaves no traces behind, it looks like whoever it was, is probably “forensic aware”, and James’ Murder Investigation Team checks every single lead they can get. Like a handwritten note with an address in a noble neighborhood of London. It appears to be a dead end again. Two of three tenants have never met the victim (at least it is what they claim), and the third one is out of country. But. There is a room to rent. And there is...**Ben Morgan.**

...twenty-eight, an openly gay freelance photographer, who makes most of money working on fashion shoot, and who happens to rent out a room in his apartment to pay the mortgage and who mistakes James for a visitor from his LOOONG list of those who interest in the room.

Now I have to stop.

I want you to find out yourselves what happens next. I want you to WANT to know what it is about. I want you to read it and I want you to love it. Oh, and...I want you BADLY to feel it. Like I did. I LOVE THIS BOOK SOOOOOOO MUCH, now it is your turn.

This book goes DIRECTLY to my favorite read-shelf.

I can't believe it is a debut novel!

I can't recommend it highly enough.

BRAVO MRS.MacLean!!!

ARC provided to Gay Book Reviews by the author in exchange for an honest review.

K.J. Charles says

[he inflicted a lot of pain on people who loved him throughout, so I couldn't quite believe in the turnaround to HEA. (hide spoiler)]

Renée says

This is a debut novel????

What the hell did I just read? I'm still kinda gobsmacked if I'm being honest. Well done, Ms. Maclean. Well done, indeed.

I thought I knew where it was going; every chapter I'd change where I thought it was going. And I was sometimes right, but mostly wrong. Talk about keeping me on the edge of my seat.

But see - at first I put this on my "**Nope**" shelf. The reviews say rampant cheating, and that is pretty much an automatic emphatic

But then more reviews started rolling in. And then some more. And everyone said "it's worth it." Right after they gave this book 4 or 5 stars. So I decided to take the leap. And my girl, Ele, totally held my hand while we read this together. Thank fuck for friends, cuz there were times where we were both imagining our Kindles in shattered pieces at the bottom of the nearest wall.

Was it worth it? Hell yes, it was. This book was anything but perfect. It's **not** all tied in a nice, little bow at the end. But was I satisfied? Abso-fuckin-lutely.

Jamie is a London homicide detective. And he needs a new flat. After moving in with Ben, he falls for him pretty instantly. What starts as a crush, giving into those feelings and lust, turns to more.

Nothing is ever easy, though, is it? Jamie is a serial monogamist, and Ben.....isn't. Let me be clear. Ben is upfront about this from the beginning. And Jamie is also upfront with Ben about what he wants in a relationship. You can, and probably **will** blame Ben for pursuing Jamie after everything initiates from Jamie's side. If he doesn't want to be monogamous, he shouldn't go after a guy looking for a relationship. Especially when that guy is a **friend** and roommate. You could also blame Jamie for being a doormat, knowing what to expect from Ben, and having unrealistic expectations for Ben anyway.

Ben had the ability to make anyone feel that they were the most important person in his world at any given moment - the definition of charisma.

Ben goes from sincere and caring most moments to the cold hard slap in the face that Jamie doesn't want to hear.

"The whole heteronormative....romance...monogamy thing. It's...We don't need to do that".

And Jamie, poor sweet delusional Jamie, his ex-girlfriend told him he was "emotionally innocent." And she was right. This is Jamie's first foray into any kind of relationship as an out gay man. He thinks just like I did with my first crush/feelings for someone as a teenager. So I gave him some leeway. **Some.**

He needed Ben, more than he needed him to be faithful. And how fucking sad was that?

But he wasn't a total doormat. He does stand up for himself. For his newfound self-respect. And I was really proud of him.

The entire time Jamie and Ben are doing their push-pull game, Jamie is trying to solve a string of homicides. It's how those homicides take a turn into Jamie's personal life that had me sitting up and paying close attention.

The first half of the book was spent on character development and relationship building with Jamie and Ben, and with Jamie's murder investigations. But it's the second half, and the last quarter in particular, where the WTF moments came into play. This author is a brilliant storyteller. I can't say anything else.

Ben is not like we're led to believe. Without giving spoilers, I will say I was satisfied with the way it played out. He's not innocent, but he's not a bad guy, either. And he may or may not have a jealous streak. I so love when Ben got a taste of his own medicine.

I will share that we definitely get a strong HFN. And I believe more of a HEA, thanks to the additional coda on the author's website. I don't forgive Ben, or Jamie frankly, for everything. But I definitely understand.

This author is officially on my radar. I can't wait to see what she writes next!

~BR with my bestie, Ele, because she loves me and wouldn't make me do this on my own.~

Virginia Books says

So good. So, so good.

Greatness in the storyline and in the mystery development, with the perfect amount of clues here and there. The perfect timing to introduce each one of them too and in a era where romance and a good thriller seems to be at odds with each other, finding a terrific suspense novel with **some resemblance to Fincher's work** was refreshing and an awesome surprise.

Greatness in the couple, the angst, the exquisite rejection, the well written conflict, the unexpected in every day that goes by. You never know what James is gonna find every time he arrives home and that constant *what now?* keeps you there, invested and terrified about what is gonna happen next.

And James is gold. James is pure paradox. We have that vision of this brave cop, trusting in his guts, showing confidence and a smart attitude as detective, with a terrific instinct ... and then we see the reflection of this sweet lost man with a cute tendency to blush, naive, romantic, clueless about gay relationships... he's such a good person.

When I surprised myself thinking about the characters, their smiles, the last moment shared between them I knew we were talking serious here.

When I started plotting how to take my kindle to the shower to use some extra minutes of reading is when I knew I was way lost in the story.

When I could visualize perfectly a police station, a street, a flat and even a photograph on the wall is when I knew a great author was delivering precisely that: greatness. So the writing needs some praises too, the **oh so British writing**. It was delicious and I could almost hear the accents, smell Ben's cooking and get burned by the fire between the couple. I could picture myself perfectly in that Trafalgar pub, drinking pints, ebook in hand.

So yeah, **GREATNESS** everywhere. **A more than highly recommend read. One of the best MM books I ever read.**

I need more stories and plots like this. I need more of this kind of confrontations between my MCs. So, so good.

Reviews for Book Lovers

April 19, 2018: Christelle, this gift means so much! Thank you luv.

Gigi says

[Read the blurb for the back story. James is a gay virgin (read: venerable and naive) and falls in love with Ben after a lovely, romantic, passion-filled month. Ben cheats on James (with multiple men) and they end their relationship, but they are flatmates and continue to live together. Ben continues to bring men

Simone says

5-very-impressed-stars

First of all, if there is one thing I hate in my books it would be cheating. I could instantly name you two quite popular series I will probably never read because of this fact alone. So you can imagine that I was more than just a little bit torn about reading this book. I have read other reviews that mentioned exactly this would happen here, but two of my close friends were absolutely thrilled and I resolved –although a bit reluctantly at first- to give it a go since there is always the option to give up.

Hahaha, that was a good one, Simone! *No way* I could have put this book down, once I picked it up. I was hooked from the beginning and absolute determined to pull it through, no matter what. The main reasons were the great writing style for one thing, although I have to admit that at first I had some issues with the Scottish accent of Jamie's partner. It took me a while to juggle the strange vowels into the pronunciation I'm used to. ;-)

On the other hand there is Jamie...

Hotshot Detective Sergeant with the London Police Department and on a fast-track promotion to Detective Inspector. He is working on a murder case that is getting more and more complex by the minute and ends by pure chance as Ben's flatmate while following a lead. I loved Jamie from his first appearance. He is gay, but very unexperienced on this matter and desperately searching for friends outside from work with who he can be himself. He virtually radiates loneliness and his situation leads to a kind of insta-attraction for Ben I could totally relate to, by the way. Ben's description alone made me almost drool all over my Kindle... ;-)

Jamie fells really hard and fast and initiates a sexual relationship with Ben, although he knows about Ben's affairs with other men. Of course he hopes for more and quite honestly, who would not? His struggle to make this relationship work was sometimes quite hard to take and needless to say that I was really mad at Ben for making Jamie suffer. Ben's 'cheating' was no reason for me to give up on this book, though. For me, cheating requires an established relationship to start with and at no point Ben implies being in a relationship with Jamie. We only get Jamie's POV and he simply assumes this being the case. Well, this does not make it any easier and I hated that Jamie got hurt in the process, but somehow from the very beginning I had a feeling that there is more to Ben than he lets on, regarding his personality, but also his feelings for Jamie. It felt as if he wanted to keep Jamie at distance because his own feelings were too deep and he wants to assure himself that he would be in control over his emotions that way. The only way to accomplish that for him would be to lash out. As I learned towards the end I was right and the reason for his behavior is evoked by and buried deep in his past. Of course that is no excuse, but I could empathize somehow...

As for the case, the murder investigation is just that, an investigation. You get no wild pursuits (okay, maybe except for one) and no overly nail-biting situations, but solid police work with lots of footwork, internet research, interviews of witnesses and so on. Nevertheless, I was a nervous wreck when the case hits very close to home for Jamie and the resolution of the investigation almost wrecked me. I never hated so much being right about a killer and I probably never had so much compassion for one, either. He almost broke my heart...

What I loved the most about the ending was that Jamie and Ben got a second chance at their love, even though it felt more like a solid HFN than a HEA, but still... I hope to see it turn into a HEA someday.

Highly recommended!

This review has been posted on Dirty Books Obsession

Elsa Bravante says

Brillante. Soy lectora de novelas de misterio desde hace muchísimos años y por eso suelo evitar los libros de romántica que tienen trama policiaca, lo más habitual es que sea muy débil por no decir ridícula y al final lo que haces es leer de corrido hasta que llegas a las partes románticas. Vi las buenas críticas que tuvo Bitter Legacy cuando salió, pero no me animaba, hasta que al final leí una de alguien de la que me fío mucho y decidí intentarlo. Qué buena decisión, uno de los mejores libros que he leído con trama de misterio y de romance entrelazadas.

No quiero decir nada del plot, en este caso los posibles spoilers serían más que molestos. Tan solo comentar

que el libro me ha parecido muy inteligente, muy complejo y muy emotivo. El misterio está muy bien trabajado, con mucho detalle, realista, en ningún momento sospechas todo lo que está por venir, puede que alguna idea suelta, pero nada más, hubo momentos en que me recordó mucho a los libros de Elizabeth George con toques de Agatha Christie. Por otro lado, y entrelazada de una forma brillante, la autora siempre consigue mantener la novela balanceada, está la historia historia de amor. No es una historia de amor convencional, no es lo que estamos acostumbrados a ver, me imagino que habrá muchos lectores que hayan levantado el grito en el cielo, pero yo encuentro que tanto Jamie como Ben, sobre todo el primero, es fiel a sí mismo, es fácil comprenderle, entender lo vulnerable que podemos ser, las decisiones equivocadas que podemos tomar, leyendo a Jamie debo confesar que ha habido momentos en que se me ha caído la lagrimita. Ben es más complicado, hasta que deja de serlo, hubiera sido bonito tener su POV, pero eso habría implicado que no descubriríamos todo poco a poco con Jamie, siendo su cómplice.

No me voy a cansar de recomendarlo, y a todos los que lo habéis leído, no os olvidéis leer el Coda que tiene la autora en su web, es maravilloso leer cómo Jamie y Ben avanzan en su relación.

¡¡Leedlo!!

Shile says

5++++++ brilliant writing stars

Warning! Long review ahead Proceed with caution.

Unrequited love at its best.

This book! This fucking book!

But then he asked himself, brutally, how wanted was he when Ben had blown off their plans to have sex with someone else?

What had he thought anyway? That someone as spectacular as Ben would be as affected by James as James had been affected by him? That James, in all his embarrassing inexperience, would somehow stand out to him?

I can't believe I postponed reading this for a long time. I kept chickening out every time I started reading it. Well huge mistake!

This book is perfection, and come to think of it this happens in RL.

The writing

It was perfection, and the flow from page to page kept me glued, and to think this is a debut novel, I just can't wait to read more from this author. Fingers crossed the flawless writing continues.

That his father's generational prejudice toward homosexuality had laced through his childhood and adolescence like dripped poison, and it had stunted him. That a childhood filled with expectation and little affection had stunted him.

The Characters

-James

Oh my! what an amazing, complex, flawed, real character. I loved him. James the copper, who left his lavish lifestyle to join the police force. He is an inexperienced gay man who is just looking for a connection. So when he meets Ben during an investigation, he becomes enchanted with Ben's charisma, and his beauty. And to say that was the beginning of a disaster will be the understatement of the year. At some point I wanted to smack James so hard and tell him he deserves better, then again, I did understand him. Ben was the first guy he was intimate with, he formed an attachment that was difficult to let go. James trying to convince himself that he was the one for Ben was so heart-breaking and difficult to read.

He hadn't expected the touch of Ben's long fingers on his bare wrist, a gesture of solidarity, or sympathy. It took all of James's concentration not to stare at them, not to shake them off. The easy, casual touch felt alien to him.

-Ben

Damn! Ben! Ben! Why Ben? Why? Agrhhh! The beautiful, elusive photographer, flirty by nature character. I know guys like Ben, they are like magnets hard to resist, and James was no exception, I hated him so much, I wanted Jamie to revenge and hurt him so bad. I wanted to strangle him for treating James the way he did but I came to understand him, and I liked him a bit, he just wanted to be loved but was afraid of love. He was so insecure, self-deprecating and I pitied him. I am still not sure if I have fully forgiven him, because up to now I have not completely forgiven Jake for hurting Adrien. Maybe I will some day but for now Ben and Jake are on my shit-list of names

Ben had the ability to make anyone feel that they were the most important person in his world at a given moment—the definition of charisma. Galaxies out of James's league.

The Chemistry

It was there from the first time these two meet. I felt it. The sex scenes were engaging and hot! Sensual and hurtful at the same time.

The first kiss, oh!

It felt different from the kisses he'd had with women, chemistry perhaps, but the feel of Ben's mouth pressed against his own, the slow, liquid, confident lick of his tongue, the light prickle of evening stubble, sent a shuddering, uncompromising excitement through every cell. He'd never had a kiss that affected him so overwhelmingly, as if every hair on his body were rising to stand on end. His heart pummeled against his ribcage like a crazed bird. Everything felt unreal, distant.

The Mystery

Let's just say for someone who has watched every British detective series known to man, this did not disappoint at all. It was right up my alley. Then I wanted to punch the author towards the end for what she did. It was **Ned Stark** all over again. I saw the hints, it was coming and I wished it away, I held my breath because No! No! No! just No!

My heart broke and I cried for the bad guy.. like really! I should have celebrated but instead I mourned and cursed the author.

A moment of silent for our beloved killer!

And let's not forget Ingham what an amazing boss character, I ended up loving Sir.Magnus and Ben's circle of friends.

Ok if I got through this I can get through the rest of Special Forces books. ? Ha!

Highly recommended! BUT if you cannot stand any form of cheating in a book, don't read this you may be tempted to commit character murder.

This part made me so angry at Ben for being a dick and James for being so stupid that I had to put the book on hold and stay mad for a while: ??

(view spoiler)

That's all. Oh! And this!

He'd let himself hope again. In fact—he had to face it—he'd been hoping ever since Ben climbed back into his bed. He'd even thought deep down that Ben's affection for his dog—the one he refused to replace—might be indicative of some capacity for singular, devoted love. But James had chosen to forget that dogs loved unconditionally. They didn't expect anything back.

What had just happened had been almost as cruel and brutal an awakening as discovering Ben's infidelity in the Trafalgar toilets. Now he wondered if Ben had set up both situations to show the truth to a man who refused to see or believe.

The humiliation and anguish James felt seemed his just desserts.

But he knew what he had to do.

Off to watch Isak and Even ?? videos to calm down! And get back into reading mode.??

Kat says

1.5 It's that time again! Dissenting opinion time!

My attempt to genuinely enjoy this book was effectively sabotaged by the author's writing style, both the crime and romance plot, the main character, and the book's length. And did I mention that price tag?

I go back far enough to have altered my expectations when it comes to the quality of writing in this genre. So I was pleasantly surprised when this author seemed to have made a serious attempt at writing well. Not for long. I'm fond of rich, somewhat dense writing (Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier is one of my favorite books). And rich and dense it was, but... something was off to the extent that I had trouble following the actual story; the commas and adjectives riddled sentences constantly tried to gallop away from me. Independently, each sentence was actually alright? It's when they're thrown together that you not only end up with a 250 pages too long book, but also with a needlessly exhausting reading experience.

"James had been in awe of his generosity, but Scrivenor had confided that the endless reforms imposed by the Met since he'd joined had long since left him ready to accept his career could be leapfrogged by an influx of prima ballerinas at any moment. (...)Unfortunately for him, James's attempt at cultivating a "just another copper" demeanour had never quite recovered from the ingratiating gesture he'd made on his first day at the MIT, when he'd made the basic mistake of buying a pair of expensive lattes for Scrivenor and himself, from a branch of Costa on the way to work, rather than grabbing two bog-standard coffees from the vending machine in the corridor."

Curiously enough, the author's writing style might be somewhat smarter than your average M/M romance, the actual characters and their behavior are childlike in their simplicity. The author relies entirely on two elements to bring across chemistry and push the romance between her MCs: 1) her MC's physical reaction to his love interest: he blushes & flushes and "freezes like a cornered rat" whenever he's confronted with the other guy, and 2) the love interest's "disturbing beauty". Among many other spectacularly appealing features, he has "fine-pored skin, insanely thick black lashes, full pink lips" and... you get the picture?

The author made me get it. Repeatedly.

On top of that, the love interest's friends are all "unnaturally attractive" as well. In turn, they find the MC outrageously handsome too, what with his "most amazing silver dark-ringed eyes" etc. etc. There is therefore such an—unexpected—infatuated teen feel to Bitter Legacy: it's like reading a Stephenie Meyer novel in disguise.

Anyway, I was buddy reading this book with DD and the MC got on both our nerves so much that I have depleted frustrated GIFs on Telegram. Here we have another author who makes that common mistake of creating a MC who's *told* to be a smart cookie, a high potential: he's a 28 years old cop who's on the fast lane to success. Unfortunately, whenever he so much as receives a telephone call from his love interest his face turns as red as a Baboon's butt. These are all quotes from one single page (the MC is casually being asked the apparently heart-stopping and impertinent question if he's seeing anyone).

"The "heat of his face could fry an egg", "blood flooded his neck and face", "his mortification was still so intense his skin was actually prickling like a heat rash", "his flush deepened like a Victorian virgin."

And that last line, I think, quite nicely captures the essence of the issue: the author *does* make her so-called tough copper MC into a Victorian virgin (on a side note: when someone tells the MC he's an "adult actor", the MC replies with "as opposed to a child actor?" then blushes & flushes ketchup red when he's set straight). In the real world, I'm pretty sure a tough street-wise copper + blushing & flushing boy are mutually exclusive concepts.

Also, I don't think grown-ass men who freak out when you're in close proximity and who've never even heard of the concept "adult actor" can be good in bed, but of course that's just an assumption.

Add to that the fact that the crime plot is dull as dishwater—what do I care about some Jane Doe who's murdered by some John Doe killer and a MC who's only partly invested in the investigation because of his unearthly gorgeous crush?—and I'm biting the dust.

To think that I didn't even make it to the cheating and doormat antics.

Earlier ramblings

Just when I'd paid 8 euros for this, I was pointed out this cheesy-ass quote from the book:

Ben cupped his jaw. "You're amazing."

"You're inflating both my heads," James managed.

"Someone needs to, Jamie," Ben returned. "Somebody needs to make you see you're incredible. You're wasting who you are."

Dia says

ALL THE STARS

This book kept me glued to the pages from the first page to the last. So I've read it in one sitting. I started reading it in one evening, planning to read only a little, but after a few slow chapters at the beginning I was so involved in the action that I found it super hard to put it down. I kept reading and reading until 4 AM, knowing well that I still need to go to work in a few hours. So that's how much I loved it!

I really enjoyed the suspense here. I knew the crimes had to be linked somehow and I just couldn't wait to discover the killer. Well even if I had a feeling who it might be, it still hurt in the end. So, so much! Crazy how much I enjoyed the character until the very end.

James - He was a great detective, well known for his good instincts. He was very dedicated to his work and had a non-existent personal life. His background isn't revealed until later. So I loved the mystery.

Ben - I really don't know how to explain how much I LOVED this character even if I wanted to kill him slowly so many times. There were SO many scenes that made me want to hug him and cherish him and tell him he is a wonderful photographer and doesn't need all that promiscuity to fill his life. BUT I also was murderous because of his stupidity!!! I was SO angry with him!!! He definitely had an intriguing personality, he was very sociable and likable. You just couldn't NOT adore him. BUT, when he started to hurt James, repeatedly, I wanted him out of the picture so bad!

We get suspense, we get super HOT scenes, but we also get extremely painful scenes. My heart broke for James over and over again. I might sound crazy but I understood his choices. When you really love someone you're not thinking clearly. You just want to do anything in your power to have the person you love in your life. Anyway you can. It happened to me before so I know it's wrong and it's painful, but that's how our stupid brains just stop working! So it really was hard to witness his pain and the dynamics between them.

The ending was a little abrupt. We get unexpected surprises. Some were super hard to accept.

I would have wanted Ben to grovel more. But knowing his past and everything he suffered, I kind of forgave him. Kind of. Well not completely, but if James forgave him I am not complaining.

Brilliant writing. Brilliant development of the story and characters. It's one of those books that will stay with you for a long time, even if it's because it hurt you. But I think it is worth it. For me it worked. I'll be re-reading this book at some point and I am not a fan of re-reading. I already miss James and Ben!

Mo says

4.5 stars

Some books leave me with a splitting, stress headache. This was one of them. Dear Lord, talk about being put through the wringer - yes, parts of the book annoyed me and I felt like giving up a few times. But overall, a fantastic read. Not going to say too much. Better off just going in blind, like I did.

JAMES:

BEN:

"There is a difference between not being able to love, and not having the guts to try."

Romance, a love story? It is much more than that.

Sorry if I am being a bit vague but you are better off not knowing too much.
