



Reclaiming Love

V.L. McElfresh

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He'll risk it all for a new chance at life & love.

Kevin Stohler survived a violent and abusive relationship but escaped with a damaged psyche. Connor McCann walks into his life like a living dream. Kevin can't believe Connor is interested, but he agrees to a date. Connor proves to be patient, kind and truly interested.

Before they can enjoy life together, something has to be done about Kevin's ex, Josh Harding. Josh has stalked Kevin for three years, and the stalking escalates as Kevin's feelings for Connor grow. Kevin fears that loving Connor might kill him. It's a risk he's willing to take to reclaim a chance at love.

Reclaiming Love Details

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From Reader Review Reclaiming Love for online ebook

Ms. Nikki says

A good solid read of abuse and recovery. The secondary characters were used as info dumps throughout the book which at times made me want to stop reading. I felt Conner and Kevin should have communicated more amongst themselves to bring the reader closer. Although the book does have a HEA, I thought this read leaned more into drama since the romance is overshadowed by the angst of the story.

Kaje Harper says

Kevin has spent the last three years trying to heal from an abusive relationship. He had agreed to be collared by Josh Harding but instead of a safe and consensual D/s relationship he found himself owned by a man who disregarded his safewords and took pleasure in abuse. Kevin only got out when he was injured badly enough to be hospitalized. He has lost trust both in other men and in his own attractiveness and worth. But he has good friends who have been supporting him, and when he meets a handsome man in a bookstore he has enough courage to agree to a date. Well, at least when his best friend Nicki pushes him into it.

Connor is six months out from a bad break-up and adrift in a new city when he sees Kevin and is immediately attracted to him. But he soon finds out that getting to know Kevin won't be straightforward, and developing a relationship will take time.

Josh has been harassing and stalking Kevin at a distance for years, but when he sees Kevin with another man, the stalking escalates to dangerous levels.

The relationship between Kevin and Connor develops fast, particularly on Connor's part. He steps up to the plate in some major ways for someone he has just met. And there were a few times when Kevin confided his past to Connor in ways that seemed extraordinary for a man with his history and self-worth issues. (view spoiler) But it was a generally well done hurt/comfort abuse/stalker story, and both Connor and Kevin were very likable MCs.

Gigi says

Re-read September 2015 Well, the third re-read (yeah, I know...) left me cold. Kevin just bugged me this time. Time to put this one on the shelf permanently!

I read this initially back in 2011 and re-read it in April 2013. It was every bit as great as I remembered so I added it to my *favorites* shelf. It is 100% healing/comfort with MC Connor finding himself drawn to broken, devastated MC Kevin, who has been sexually, emotionally and physically abused by an old boyfriend who, after over 2 years, is still stalking him. Connor decides that Kevin is worth the extra effort a relationship with such a damaged person would entail *before* they even have their first date, so he is a true hero in every sense of the word. He quickly falls in love with sweet Kevin and the two of them work together (along with Kevin's surrogate family) to battle Kevin's demons.

I can **highly recommend** this book to all M/M romance fans who like a healthy dose of hurt/healing/comfort in their romance. You'll love this one.

justanya says

The story was good but it had the potential to be so much more. The problems I had with the story are that 1: The story mainly doted on one MC (Kevin, the abused) while Connor, the other MC was grossly overlooked. His background was just as interesting yet McElfresh, dedicated very little to Connor's storyline. I was bitterly disappointed by this. 2: aside from the MC's, There were other supporting characters that were very intriguing as well and I wanted to learn more about them. The way the story unfolds it would have been seamless for her to flesh out these characters and it would not have taken away from the book at all. 3: I know this story is about triumphing over abuse but way too much of the story was dedicated to it. She should have limited this and dedicated more time to the other characters.

Despite these shortcomings the book was enjoyable. I looked forward to how the story would end and McElfresh, did a wonderful job wrapping it up.

Kelly H. (Maybedog) says

1.5 stars rounded up because of the subject matter and because this is a brand new writer.

This book really frustrated me. I do understand why people would like this book if they just read it quickly and didn't think too much about it. I wanted to like it as the plot and subject are my thing. But it was awful on so many levels I couldn't. *Note to author: Please don't take this personally. I do think you have talent, and should keep writing.*

The positives were the attempt at handling such a difficult and emotionally charged subject. The awareness of how much abuse affects someone, how someone can emotionally control someone they abused, understanding why someone would go back, things like that. I also really appreciated the attempt to separate the abuse from BDSM, which is an important distinction that a lot of people don't get. I like that BDSM is treated respectfully.

The biggest problem for me was that the characters were all Kevin-absorbed people who controlled everything about Kevin without helping him get better nor helping him help himself. What they did was actually holding him back. Kevin was okay, but the characterization was so inconsistent and so wrong, that I couldn't even care about him. This is not how people in real life would act under the same situation. I'm a foster parent and have been around a lot of abused kids and I've been around a lot of abused adults, and Kevin's behavior sometimes makes sense but most of the time doesn't. His reactions aren't even consistent with his other reactions. He can joke about punishment in one scene and then be terrified about it in another.

But the friends? Oh my God, I wanted to strangle them all. The old saying "With friends like these..." applies here. His friends were so rude and pushy to Connor that most normal people would have been scared off, but not because they didn't want to deal with Kevin's issues. He didn't even get a chance to know what they were. A normal person would have been afraid that if it didn't work out after a couple of dates, the friends would come for him or he himself would have scarred Kevin for life. Connor at one point even says, "You act like I want to marry him." Yes, they did. It was ridiculous.

But that isn't the worst of it. Kevin is interested in Connor and has been on TWO dates. Then Kevin's best

friend then sits Connor down and tells him all about Kevin's abuse, without even asking Kevin or letting him know. Picture it: Think about something really personal that hurts or that you feel people won't understand. Picture meeting someone a couple of times and being interested in them, really interested. Then imagine your best friend sitting down with that person, behind your back, and telling him/her about that private stuff IN DETAIL. Wouldn't you feel violated? Now picture that your secret (assuming it wasn't) was violent sexual, psychological, emotional abuse that still affects everything in your life, but you hate it, and are desperately trying to come out of it. Would you want that to be the first thing you want your date to know about you? Would you want someone else to tell him/her without you even being there to control the conversation?

People who have been sexually abused almost always are ashamed in some way. Even though it is never their fault, there is a lot of stigma and a lot of self doubt, believing they could have done something to prevent it. Someone who is an adult who is abused by his partner who he stayed with for two years, is going to feel that for sure. Add in that he is told repeatedly that he deserved it by people who don't know him, that he is supposed to like pain, that he's in the gay community where people believe abused doesn't happen, he's a man, which society thinks can't be abused, and he's going to be ashamed. He can't find anyone to help him (which I'll get to in a moment). No one but his closest friends believe him. He has no family support. He is still stalked and harassed by the guy. He would not be in a mental place for everyone to know about his abuse. Yet he tells Connor even more on the third date once he finds out that the friend already told Connor. He's not mad at all, nor does he act like it bothers him in the least.

But people had no problem talking about it and on top of that, they were treating him like a child. Connor called Kevin's other best friend without letting Kevin know even though Kevin didn't even want to even talk about that friend with Connor. That friend considered himself Kevin's shrink and yet talked to Connor about Kevin openly and *both* felt they shouldn't let Kevin know. At one point he even says, "Without violating confidences..." and proceeds to tell Connor personal stuff about Kevin. The man is a professional psychiatrist. If he did that about a patient he would lose his license. it would be so ingrained in him that there is no way he would do that. At one point near the end (medium/big spoiler) (view spoiler) and he was a grown adult.

Then there was sweet Connor, the kind of guy who comes across as the nicest guy in the world until you look at him closely. He was a control freak. On the second date, took took the envelope that had been slid under Kevin's door and just opened it while Kevin was in the other room. Someone else's mail he didn't even know yet. Just opened it. And Kevin didn't get upset! At one point Kevin is practically catatonic and doesn't want to talk to the police. Even his friends get that, but Connor tells him and the officer that yes, Kevin will talk to him. He then leaves Kevin to do so. He doesn't try to reassure Kevin that maybe he can. He doesn't try to stay holding him while he talks. He doesn't try to see if the statement can wait a bit so he can figure out what the hell is wrong with Kevin at that moment.

Until the last 20% or so, he never praises Kevin without prompting, and even then they were backhanded. For example, Kevin jokes about his penis being small. Connor looks at it and sees it's actually perfectly average, maybe even a little thick. After sex, he says to Kevin something like, "It doesn't matter if it's small, it's what you do with it." He should have said off the bat that Kevin's penis was perfect. The complement after was fine except he was implying that Kevin's penis is, indeed, small.

Kevin is convinced he's fat. He's a guy who exercises every morning and barely eats anything. When Kevin looks at him he thinks to himself that Kevin's only *flaw* is that he has a little bit of "flab" around his middle, "if you could call it that." So it's a flaw, even though you couldn't really even call it flab? (And how does Kevin have that when he has to be told to eat?) But he just tells Kevin how hard his butt and thighs and something else are. He should have said, "You're perfect just the way you are." He should have said, "You're not fat, but even if you were, I would care about you anyway." But no. He doesn't even tell Kevin he's beautiful until near the end.

Another time, Kevin is in his house with almost no clothing. Connor comes home and Kevin is wearing his bathrobe. Kevin apologizes for wearing it and Connor says, "That's okay, I didn't really like it anyway." Seriously? Not, "You can wear anything of mine"? Or "I like you in my clothes," or even "That's fine, whatever you need," or something like that? No. It's okay because he didn't really like it, implying that if he did like it, then it wouldn't have been okay. Yes, I see this is a tiny thing, but when Connor *always* reacts like this instead of immediately being reassuring and kind and loving, it adds up. At one point Connor tells Kevin to look at him. Kevin doesn't, so Connor adds "command" to his voice. Command? He thinks that he should command an abused man to do anything? He doesn't just say, "Please?"

Then there was the fact that he never respected Kevin's wishes until finally he listens when Kevin tells him (medium big spoiler) (view spoiler).

But one of the things that really irritated the hell out of me was that the homophobia was over the top and completely unbelievable. This takes place in a big city with a gay community big enough to have gay neighborhoods, multiple gay bars, activities, and groups. But everyone in the book hates gays except his friends and other lgbt folks. Closer to the end there is one doctor who knows Kevin who is nice, but other than that? Even though Kevin was found nearly dead in his boyfriend's house, there is tons of evidence including DNA, the police say it's his word against his ex's and laugh at him. They won't allow a restraining order. Even when he finds one cop who will listen (small spoiler)(view spoiler) and says that getting the rest of the force to listen in this situation will be a struggle. This isn't about the man being gay. This isn't about him being raped or sexually abused. This is a man who nearly died. Even the most homophobic police force (I'm not talking about a tiny town of 1,000 people) would do something if just to prevent lawsuits. There is no way this is the first time such a thing has happened nor the last. This isn't 1995. This book takes place now.

A nurse in the hospital back when he was nearly dead said to his face in front of witnesses that fags like him deserve it. Seriously? I can see whispering it and being overheard. I can possibly see her saying something to him when no one else was around. But not with witnesses *in her place of work where they know who she is and she could be fired*. Again, this is a big city. This is a person who takes care of people for a living. She works in an ER, not a family practice or up on a geriatric or maternity ward. She's there to help people. She would not tell someone who is nearly dead that he deserved it. Even the most homophobic people don't usually think that someone deserves to be beaten to death. They just want them to be gone, or to stop, or be in jail. Even if they do want gays killed, to say that in a public place in front of witnesses? Gay bashing takes place in groups, where group mentality kicks in, or it happens in back alleys, or in corn fields, not in the middle of a busy ER. She would know that she'd be fired even if only because of lawsuits. Hell, even the NFL fired a guy a few years ago for Twittering something anti-gay.

Another time, while Kevin was getting attacked on a public street *in the gay district*>, someone walked by and says, "fucking fags." The counselor he went to after the attack had a problem with his sexuality. Who would recommend a counselor to him that was homophobic? The number of counselors who would be stupid enough to make it clear to a patient that they weren't okay with their sexual orientation is small (because they could lose their license) and he just happens to get that one? While in the hospital, the social worker doesn't suggest a counselor who would be able to work with a male victim of abuse? Oh wait, the social worker was homophobic, too. I forgot. I'm not saying these things never happen. I'm saying that this level of homophobia being everywhere he turned, not being able to find a single person willing to help him, just doesn't happen in big cities in this day and age. It can't. The majority of people in the US are pro gay marriage. Vastly more than that don't have a problem with gay people. Peer pressure is affective. So is being exposed to gay people. I even did some research on St. Louis, where this takes place, and it's no different from any other big city.

Such shock tactics make people not understand systemic homophobia. It's unrealistic in a big city with a big gay community and people aren't going to be able to connect this kind of thing with their own lives. "I would never do that, nor would anyone I know, so we're not homophobic at all." They think that all gay people have

to do is report these things and it will all be fine. Most homophobia isn't like that. It's smaller things that make people feel unwelcome or unwanted. Being stared at. People rolling their eyes, or downplaying things that are important. Making assumptions about what someone would or wouldn't do. Not getting the best service. Having to work a little harder. Not being hired. Not having the same rights, like not being able to adopt or get married.

Then there was the poor writing. The staccato sentences: He did this. They did that. This was here. That was there. They were this. Then went that way. The MASSIVE info dumps, especially about Kevin's past. That kind of thing should be revealed in pieces, not all at once over several pages with one character telling another without the abused party even there. Then there were the excessive descriptions. I don't care what steps they took to do each thing. I don't care about every single piece of furniture and wall hanging.

I especially don't care about the female best friend's clothing and hairstyles even though the first five or six times we see her, we are told in great detail what she is wearing and how her hair is styled. We only see what the MCs are wearing once or twice. I don't think we're ever told what color Kevin's hair is, just that he once had it rainbow colored. But this girl's entire outfit, and I mean shoes, skirt, leggings, shirt, jewelry, etc., her hair color and how it's styled, are all made very clear. I do not need that kind of detail in an M/F story. In an M/M story, I just don't care, especially, when we know far more about what she looks like than anyone else in the story. It's obvious that she was one of the author's favorite characters, if not the favorite, and we are supposed to love her, too. But she's not original, and although I usually love that kind of goth girl, I didn't like her at all.

Even the BDSM was off and on. Some seemed really accurate like the author knew first hand, and other stuff was strangely off. From what I've read, a sub who was collared would not beg *another Dom* to whip him, not in front of his own Dom who was possessive, controlling, and abusive, not without asking. The whole point of being collared is that you're saying you belong to that Dom and no one else, right?

I think this book would have been helped by a good content editor, particularly someone with knowledge of psychological issues, and a rewrite that toned down the extremes. Since this is the first book by the author, I'm making allowances and would consider reading something else from her.

Jo * Smut-Dicked * says

3.5 stars. I thought this one had very good tension. While I enjoyed both characters Kevin came off as very much more stereotypical female in the beginning. He did change but I was a bit worried there for a bit. I took a full star off for the drama near the end. Saw that one coming a mile away. I'd like to see some of the other characters get a story. I love abuse/hurt MC theme but here we get told it quite frequently but never really get to experience. While that may make some folks happy since they cannot handle this type of story I thought some flashbacks with how Kevin was feeling would have certainly had me more understanding of him. Loved the cop twist - and I did like that we get a HEA.

Shelby says

"Reclaiming Love" pulls the reader in with the richness of the writing, leading them along one man's journey out of darkness to find hope and love again.

Three years out of a relationship where he was forced to be little more than a slave Kevin still struggles every day. While he has experienced the good in a BDSM relationship he never wanted the full-time thing. Yet that was the relationship he found himself in with his ex Josh. After numerous hospital visits Kevin's friends finally managed to get him away. Now three years later, that relationship just won't leave him. Josh always seems to know when Kevin is alone and taunts him regularly; calling, sending messages, always claiming that Josh still loves him and wants him back. Kevin is struggling to get by, to heal, with the constant reminders of his past mistakes. His self-esteem is at rock bottom and he is scared to be alone.

Connor has gone into the local bookstore for a few books, but finds himself unable to take his eyes of the man snuggled in a chair, enraptured in his book. He's helpless to do anything but try to find out who he is. At Connor's approach, despite being enchanted himself, Kevin's nerves get the best of him and he runs from the store. Picking up the book Kevin was reading Connor realizes he was the author and in talking with the store owner, knows he has a way back in to get to know Kevin.

With a little "help" (a good solid shove for Kevin and a few strong warnings for Connor) from Kevin's friends this story rolls into a beautiful path of discovery. As Kevin begins to open up and find himself again, Connor has to deal with his own feelings about what happened to Kevin. All the while Kevin's ex's taunts get worse and worse.

This story has a beautiful message about trusting yourself and that you can find love again. I particularly enjoyed the fact that Ms. McElfresh didn't instantly make Kevin better as soon as he met Connor. He has a lot of issues and things he's trying to work through. None of them are going to go away over night. But, having that person who loves you despite everything is certain to help you along your path.

In spite of the almost insta-love, or maybe just insta-attraction/addiction of this book I enjoyed the way that Connor and Kevin's relationship developed over time. Each new issue was addressed and dealt with in an understandable manner. They weren't glossed over. I felt for Kevin and was rooting for him to be able to move forward in his life. I respected Connor for not running when things got heavy and for trying to understand what all Kevin was dealing with.

There were some extremely sweet moments and relationships in this book. First of all, the dancing! Great scene, I almost felt bad for Connor. I particularly enjoyed Kevin and Devon's relationship. It was so well handled. Devon being someone who was into the lifestyle that Kevin as running from, but had all the tools to be able to help him, added a lovely layer to everything. I can easily imagine Kevin curled in a chair in the dark calling Devon for comfort even if he is terrified to be around the man. The complexities of that relationship really added to Kevin for me.

The pressure cooker that Josh's antics put Kevin and Connor under really helped move the story along. It added the perfect compliment to take this from being an average story of two men meeting into a fabulously engrossing novel. While the abusive elements might not make this book for everyone I do love a novel that can show me the brighter side of all that pain. Ms. McElfresh didn't gloss over the darker elements, but she didn't dwell on them either. She maintained a lovely blend that gives the reader all the understanding that is needed to identify with her characters without drowning them in Kevin's depressing painful past. There's such hope for Kevin's redemption in the epilogue you can do nothing but know that these two got the happily ever after they deserve.

Candice says

I was debating between a 4 and 5, but I think I have to make it a 5 star read from me.

I BELIEVED Kevin. It wasn't a quick "recovery", it was slow and he's still not healed, but a work in progress.

Kevin was a in 2 year D/s relationship with Josh, his "dom". I put that in quotes because he was only acting like one. He was an abuser. Plain and simple. He emotionally, physically, and sexually abused Kevin. As like most relationships it started out wonderful and then things escalated. For Kevin to retell everything that happened to him had me curled up in a ball with a handful of tissues and a soaking wet pillow. He finally got beat hard enough and left for dead when his friends stepped in and said NO MORE! It's been 3 years since he left that house and relationship.

But, Josh couldn't leave well enough alone. He's stalked Kevin since he left. Sent letters, always calls, sends packages, but Kevin doesn't acknowledge any of it.

One day while at Left Bank Books (my FAVORITE book store, by the way! I am a frequent buyer at the location in the book :) when the "Golden God" approaches him. Kevin is still so scared he runs away. That doesn't stop Connor, the Golden God. With a little help from Kevin's friend, Nicki, they meet up for a date. Connor is so good for Kevin. He's so patient and calm. EEK! I loved him.

Josh doesn't like that. Josh thinks Kevin is his and only his.

Will Kevin be able to trust another man again? Does Connor think all of this trouble with Kevin worth it? Will Josh finally leave Kevin alone?

Quick note: I loved that this was in St. Louis. I knew the places they were talking about and it could picture it more in my head :)

Paisley says

I tend to rate stuff pretty high on average, because I am so easily entertained. I really hate giving bad reviews because I often like books that others feel are totally lame, but then again I always use the disclaimer ***I am easily entertained***.

I guess that I thought this was going to be a more of a Cinderella theme than it was and that threw me a bit. It was really all about a guy who is being stalked by his totally psycho ex dom.

It just didn't do it for me - I went between boredom and irritation during most of the book. I did not have much empathy or even sympathy for the main character. The actual writing is pretty good I just didn't like the people the writer created for me. There were a few bright moments but they didn't shine enough to keep my attention.

Mandy*reads obsessively* says

Kevin used to play at all kinds of kink and he danced.

Then he met Josh and life eventually went to hell. Josh used the 'D/s -BDSM' to abuse, torture, torment, hurt, humiliate, isolate, control...pretty much every bad thing you can think of he did it under the pretense of D/s

to Kevin.

Well, three years after leaving Josh (which very nearly cost him his life) he is slowly, very slowly getting better. He meets Conner. Well Conner is just a knight in shiny armor. He is patient, supportive, understanding...etc..

There is a large cast of supporting and supportive characters in this story.

Well Josh just can't let Kevin move on and be happy, so there is drama added into the trauma..

I actually liked it, it was heavy and very sad in parts, cute and humorous in parts, uplifting and sweet too.

Claudia says

This book got me hooked from the first page. I almost couldn't put it down until I finished it. It was hard to see the torment and ghosts that were left in Keith's life, but it was also wonderful to see the persistence, care and patience of Connor. Wonderful book - got me hooked until the last page. very recommended... For sure a 5*

SheReadsALot says

3.75 stars- I apparently have a thing for hurt/comfort...especially if there is some sort of domestic violence. Hey some folks like tentaclesex...I like me victims. ;D

This was...good. It's about an abused submissive, Kevin, who is still stalked by his abusive ex-boyfriend Dom, Josh. Kevin is *constantly* in fear, afraid of a lot of things (ex. phone calls, letters, men, etc.) and it was believable.

Kevin has understandable issues and hang-ups. He catches the eye of sexy blonde Irish implant, Connor McCann. He's nicknamed the "Golden God" & for good reason. The story is all about Kevin and his path to relearning to love himself. I wished the POV was switched to get Connor's perspective. The two men fall for one another without miraculous cures with magical penises. :-o Consider me shocked. And these two fall in love all while Josh, the crazy ex stalker...stalks and escalates to crazy land.

Josh...I'd like to be locked in a room with him and a metal baseball bat. I'd love to crack some nuts. He's a mean mofo that needs to be taught a lesson. On the other hand, the scenes with his antics were more memorable for me than some of the gooey gushy moments.

With a great support of friends, Kevin finds his way out of his dark hole. Yay.

Thing is I lost interest around 80%. *shrugs* Can't pinpoint the moment and I'm not going to figure it out. Could've have been the 'idiot girl who knows there's a murderer on the loose but the dumb broad goes in the woods anyway by herself moment'. Just switch the idiot girl with Kevin. But he got over it, I guess.

And then I skimmed the last 10% because I wanted off the *Poor Kevin* float. I got motion sickness or something.

There was a happy ending, evil was vanquished. Love persevered. It's a good story with interesting enough characters. I wish we got more face time with Dr. Devon, the Dom shrink. He definitely had MC potential.

I still say it's readable. My reaction towards the ending shouldn't discourage.

Elisa Rolle says

The book starts with a frightend Kevin, a thirty old guy who can't bear to stay alone at home. He clings to a linus blanket, he tries to create "rumor" around the apartment to avoid the silence, he makes call to friends. Since the first pages the reader realizes that Kevin is a traumatized man who hasn't yet overcome his nightmare. Three years before Kevin was in a D/s relationship with a Dom who didn't respect the boundaries they agreed, and this sent Kevin to the hospital near dead. Now he is trying to rebuild his life, but his former Master doesn't give up and uses any means to scared him and at the same time begs him to come back. Without the help of his friends, a roommate who is almost a brother, a best girl friend like a substitute mother and a former lover now counselor like second father, Kevin has good chance to success.

Now enter Saint Connor; saint is the only word to describe this man, tender and caring and with too much patience. Have you present that story where everyone knows the secret of one of the main characters, but they spend all the story refusing to reveal it since it's not their right to? Usually they give hints and pushes the poor man in front of them in a abyss of total confusion letting him wondering what atrocity they are hiding? Well forget any of that. Here everyone, from the roommate to the best friend, till the owner of the local bookstore, all are ready to spill the true about Kevin's past and to warn off Connor. The poor man can't even talk to Kevin, that they are telling him that Kevin is fragile, that he probably is not ready for a sexual relationship, and Connor has not yet kiss him! A man with less patience would give up as soon as possible and instead Saint Connor smiles and vows Kevin. When the crazy man who is stalking Kevin, begins to threaten also him, he simple shrug his shoulder and ask Kevin if he is all right. When Kevin becomes a icicle the first time they try something in bed, Connor rises and goes for a cold shower. When all around him seems to collapse in nonsense, the 39 years old Connor takes the phone and calls... his DAD! Connor always does the right thing.

Connor is obviously a good man, but I like that he is not the macho man hero type. In a classical romance, poor Kevin would be rescued by the average knight in shining armour, proud and brave. It's not that Connor is not brave, but he is simple a man; he doesn't set up a show where he "magically" makes disappear all the trouble, he simple gives to Kevin another shoulder to lean when he needs to. He is willing to help, but he will not "resolve" all Kevin's trouble only due to his powerful charm. It's Kevin's task, and right, to learn how to be independent again.

Kevin is a trouble young man. He had obviously difficult childhood, with a mother who pushed him beyond his limits, and who instilled in him a feeling of never being good enough, and a father who probably was too weak to impose; Kevin's father loved him, but he probably was not the authoritative figure Kevin needed, and Kevin searched that figure in other men, like his friend Devon, and finally in his abusive former lover. Now Kevin, to be happy again, needs to realize that he is strong enough even alone; and Connor is good to him since he doesn't try to overprotect him, but he let him space to move, fall and arise again.

The book is quite angst, there are very few light moment, but even if not often, I like the impish streak that the author gave to Kevin. I also like the anti-hero character she created with Connor, handsome and gentle, but not perfect.

<http://elisa-rolle.livejournal.com/42...>

Mercedes says

I found the first half of this book not a little slow but a little difficult to get into. Kevin at the beginning of the book is really messed up, shy, afraid, emotional, insecure. He is a total basket case who feels he doesn't deserve anything and how could he not be that way after all the abuse he went through. However about 30% or so of the way his real self starts coming through which is nice to see but at the very beginning feels like he has dual personalities.

It was good to see Kevin slowly coming out of his shell and falling in love with Connor.

Lara says

Hmm, finally picked this one back up a month and a half after putting it down at 70%. I liked it enough that I didn't want it to end up in my DNF pile, but I didn't love it. There were some really nice secondary characters, but I didn't feel like we really got to know any of them very well. They were ever present in Kevin's life, yet for all their meddling no one seemed to be able to help him at his greatest hour of need. And frankly, his relationship with Devon kinda freaked me out a little. I know he was supposed to be his pseudo shrink, but it seemed he was a little too close to the situation to be able to ethically pass professional judgement on Kevin's feelings for Connor. It was obvious how safe and happy Kevin was with Connor, yet it seemed like Devon (and most of the rest of them) were constantly passing judgement where it wasn't needed. Parts of the story & characters I really liked, yet nothing completely connected me to the pages & people like I really wanted it to.
