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Harper Fox

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Genre: LGBT Action/Adventure Paranormal

John Griffin has fallen hopelessly in love. He's trying to hide it, because the man he loves is also his partner in a renegade counterterrorism agency, and John loves the job too. Michael, the most loyal of friends and partners, doesn't return John's passion. Nor that of anyone else, as far as John can see. Sexy and handsome as hell, Mike is a chained-up man, haunted by memories of a mission gone wrong during his time in Russia for MI5. Their one sexual encounter only drives them apart: Mike's guilt has left him needing a violence John isn't prepared to deliver.

Enter Anzhel Mattvei, a charismatic secret-service agent who held Mike captive in Russia and has now apparently changed sides. The psychological programming he instilled soon has Mike in sexual thralldom, fighting for possession of his will and his soul. Only John's love can call him back from the brink. The Russian war criminal Anzhel serves has hidden a nuclear device in London, and Anzhel has set Mike up to detonate it. John must find a way to help Mike overcome his programming, or millions of lives will be the price.

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

Last Line Details

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From Reader Review Last Line for online ebook

Dani says

This book was very annoying.

It started out with an eerily warped, dreamlike recollection of Michael's imprisonment and torture. Then it turned to the three-years-later special-agent-normalcy of best buddies and partners Michael and John.

Good enough, an interesting premise.

Then it went on and turned into a totally convoluted, illogical, inconsistent, immature whack-fest. And not in a good, playful way.

Characters doing stupid, out-of-character things, seemingly top-notch special agents behaving like pouty high school boys, special-agent-commander-masterminds taking on previously hostile agents and letting them act unsupervised, laughable mind-control and reprogramming scenes.

And worst of all (view spoiler)

. Because god forbid any of the "good" characters are morally ambiguous. Either they are too innocent to be true for their line of work or they were forced and warped by evil-mind-control. I'd say, if you try to go down the dark road, don't chicken out and make everybody psychologically inconsistent and unbelievable just to make them "likeable".

It's a bit of a pity because the author sure can write.

Sammy Goode says

Last Line by Harper Fox was not an easy read—oh don't get me wrong—it is a BRILLIANT book but easy to read?? No, not by a long shot.

The story unfolds smack in the midst of the most realistic and gut wrenching torture scene I have ever read—and that was the first time I thought to myself. “turn away—don't read this book...this is not going to be good.” I said that to myself several times: through a Non-consensual sex, torture, bloodshed, violence, more torture—this time of the mind and soul, and through one action scene after another that left me breathless. About halfway through this book I called out for help and encouragement to finish it—I had to put it down—I was too wrapped up in the fate of John and Mike (two members of the Last Line team and the MC's of the book) to even consider going on. A friend of mine on goodreads remarked, “ I love a book that you pick up, read, then have to put down so you can walk in a big circle going 'ohmygod, ohmygod'. Rach, never were truer words spoken.

Okay, this was incredibly well written. I was there—in the alleyways of London, in the nave of a church, on a farm in the outskirts of the city. I could “feel” everything these men were going through. I cried with John as he watched the partner and man he loved (Mike) descend into the miasma of a mind control that turned him into a groveling robot one minute and a mindless killing monster the next. I wanted the bad guys not only dead but to suffer as they had made Mike suffer. I wanted to hear John finally admit out loud that he LOVED Mike—and I did not want to wait until we were 85% of the way through the book to hear it said! I NEEDED these men to survive, to prevail, to recover, and yes, to love! If there were a scale devoted to angst this book would rate a firm 10! At the end of this novel I felt like I had been tortured along with Mike, held captive and left a bloody mess on the reading room floor.

Oh yes—it was a good book—a bloody brilliant book! Perhaps the only thing that niggled—that did not ring quite true was how quickly Mike recovered—he seemed to snap back too quickly—after all he had been through—I felt there should have been more of a hollow feeling to his recovery. It seemed more time should have been needed for him to allow John to be intimate in a way that only men can be with one another. Don't get me wrong—this was a small niggle—and really the end was simply beautiful, emotionally stirring and blissfully tension-releasing. We had run the marathon that was this novel and we had won—were victorious—just as Mike and John were—just as anyone who has ever loved with the fierceness that these two loved should be—sublimely victorious!

Emma Sea says

A unusual paranormal/Manchurian candidate/The Professionals mashup. I'd call it a thriller with a gay relationship; it is definitely not a traditional m/m romance. This makes it the rare beast: an actual novel that would stand alone without the sex scenes. Happily there are quite a few anyway, but they are not tender, loving sex scenes.

The MCs are compelling, and have a relationship that walks the line between gritty and tender. I think I'm fairly in love with John. All the secondary characters seem to have real lives that would continue of the page.

It was the plot that slightly let this down for me: I'm not a huge fan of this particular mix of thriller/paranormal and I would have preferred if it was just one or the other. Michael's (view spoiler).

While I wasn't gripped by the book, I was interested right up to the end. The Glastonbury setting was wonderful and I was filled with longing for a farmhouse accessed by a hawthorn-covered holloway.

3.5 stars.

Susan65 says

Way out of my comfort zone but the storyline itself was interesting. I hated it but couldn't put it down at the same time. Not sure what that says and I'm glad I finished but also wish I'd never read it too. First off, is this truly considered a romance just because it ended well...for now? If I was John I would have been long, long gone. The conditioning was just too brutal...for Mike, John and me.

I am still not sure of my 4 star rating though. So many unanswered questions. What was up with Mike's mom? There wasn't enough explanation to understand the paranormal aspects of the fire, water, lights in the sky. Plus Anzhel...if monsters like him really exist I am never leaving my house again.

With all that being said, I know many people love these kinds of stories and I wanted to take my rating into consideration and have it based on the quality of the plot, characterization and the emotion it evoked in me...as well as how well it held my attention. Yes I hated parts that I never want to read about but the rest was very worthy of its 4 star rating.

Simone says

I loved this book! I love spies and Secret Agencies and the whole stuff since I was a kid! So, Last Line gripped me from the start...

The book begins three years before the actual story takes place. One of the MC's, Mike - at that time MI5 Agent - is held captive in a Russian province by a war criminal and tortured (both physically and emotionally) by one of his henchmen.

Three years later, Mike works for a secret organization called Last Line and is partnered with John. They are the secret agents' secret agents, how John named it. Both are best friends and John is secretly in love with Mike. You get the feeling, that Mike returns his love, but is reluctant to follow up on it. During a sexual encounter, the reader comes to know, why. Mike needs pain to get off and John is unwilling to give it to him.

Things start to get more difficult between them. Especially, when their boss coerces them to work with a liaison from Russia, which turns out to be the henchman, who tortured Mike at the beginning. Apparently, he jumped ship and is now a faithful servant for the secret police of the Russian province, to bring down the war criminal, he worked for years ago. John finds out, that nothing is what it seems and gets the feeling, that he doesn't even know his partner anymore. But even he doesn't realize, that Mike is a significant pawn in a game that started three years ago.

Yes, Last Line is not an easy read. The torture may be something not for squeamish souls and the book gets darker with every page. It's about mind control. It's about respondent conditioning. What starts as a Friends to Lovers story, turns out to be a more complex and - most of all - more complicated matter. The love between Mike and John is meant to be, but the solving of this mystery comes later on. The paranormal aspect is at first rather subtle, but towards the end it becomes much clearer and will be more pronounced in the sequel (so I've heard). Initially, it only shows in John's disturbed relationship to any electronic devices and in the fact, that he survives a thirty-foot-fall with no more than a few scratches.

I loved Mike and John. I wanted to hug Mike and tell him, that everything's gonna be okay, because he seemed so lost at times.

Now, I'm looking forward to read Ring Around the Sun (Last Line #2)!

Vio says

4.5 stars

I asked for gritty and that's exactly what I got, a taut, fast paced thriller with wrenching twists and turns. It was emotionally intense, so much anguish, god this story had a way of making me feel things I didn't want to feel. With every page read I dreaded what was ahead and as the story unfolded the nail biting and heart stopping moments started. At times I wanted to smash things (Anzhel especially) the pain and torment that Michael had to endure was devastating. The smiling monster was all the more chilling, the devious, evil bastard was diabolical. John and Michael were true heroes, courageous and committed, I adored them, wonderful characters, the one shining light that kept me reading this rather grim story. So forget sweet and light, think dark and disturbing. I can't say I am looking forward to the next book but I do want to know more about John, Michael and Quin's mysterious abilities.

One of the quotes from Michael where the tears started.(view spoiler)

Snowtulip says

4.5

This was one of those sitting on the edge of your seats, biting your nails waiting for the next thing to happen type of book. I also think I read most of it holding my breath because of the pain and trauma coming from Mike (who I love). This is a hard book, it is difficult to see someone else's will taken from them and feel helpless. Fox does an amazing job once again by keeping a strong plot and building such a beautiful love story that has you hoping with all your might for a HEA. I love Mike, John, and Quin. And yes, evil has a name Anzhel (shudder). I can't wait to get some answers in the next in the series. Definately recommend!

Kaje Harper says

This story introduces two fascinating MC's. Their complex relationship is derailed by Michael's unacknowledged and mainly unremembered traumatic past. That past comes back to haunt them both. I was totally caught up in the story and could not put it down. The one star I took off is because the plot becomes complex and less than logical toward the end. I had to stop and reread and still don't think it made total sense. But I was so in love with the characters I could forgive a lot. It is a dark book, with torture and non-con sex. The emotions are intense and the writing lucid. I hope there will be a sequel, that may pull together some of the plot threads that currently are dangling.

Smith Barney says

I was kind of utterly spellbound by this aggressively-intriguing erotic-suspense thriller.

Except. Super-paranormal or mind control? Which one were we going w/here. I guess if it was longer it would have been great to have both for conflict but not at this short length. But even though brief, the story had excellent pacing and was very engaging. Intensely drawn characters.

Very thrilling ride.

Nikyta *Miss Forgetful* says

This was a... hard book to read. In some respects, I can see the appeal of it. It can be an entertaining and dark read depending on the reader. But if you have hang ups like I do? This story is just a struggle to get through.

For me, it dragged considerably. Even from the start it was hard for me to really get into the story. Right when I was starting to like it, though (probably about half way in), Michael's ex shows up. From there, the story went down hill again because Michael and John are just starting to move their relationship past friends and then all of a sudden, John barely exists to Michael. I was not amused or entertained.

More than that, I was confused half the time. I probably understood one out of every five words either of them spoke but the story was just a mess. It starts out as contemporary and then ends with a paranormal twist? With nothing to lead up to that? Almost as if the author decided to write the story one way then halfway through decided to up and change the whole genre without caring to go back and add some details to connect the dots. It was like everyone was normal then all a sudden, all these people had some type of ability that wasn't elaborated on. Just hints here and there that Michael *liked* fire or that John *liked* water (they could manipulate these elements). *And then*, Quin walks through a gun fight without getting hit?! Or how he survived getting hit by a grenade?! Seriously?! With no explanation how that was possible? *On top of that*, nothing is resolved in the end. The bad guys who were supposed to be dead? Just vanished and are apparently still alive. *Even though* Michael saw both of them die. So many loose ends that just made me even more annoyed than I already was. Added to the fact that I felt like John was an extremely weak person and didn't even make Michael grovel! *Come on!* I did like Quin but I seriously disliked John and Michael.

With that said, Harper Fox seems to love to bring in a guy's ex and shake things up. Personally hating that type of conflict, I think this will be my last story by her. I might have enjoyed the book a bit more if the ex hadn't been so thoroughly thrust (literally!) into Michael the story. No point to keep trying an author when they constantly (at least in all the ones I've read) write something I really hate. I do freely admit though that there was a time or two that my heart jumped in anticipation of what was to come in one of those gun fights but then I got disappointed in the almost anticlimactic resolution to those intense moments.

Simsala says

I can't remember the last time I've felt so much compassion for a books main characters - especially Michael - and so much hate for a villain.

Last Line is a tightly written, intense and dark - even frightening - thriller and the story of a seemingly hopeless love.

Definitely Harper Fox` best book.

...Shakespeare was absent this time...

Yvonne says

Well what just happened here??? The most important thing to probably know about this book is that it's reportedly part of a trilogy/series. Loose ends are not neatly tied up at the end & there is an underlying paranormal thread that is not fully explained in this first book.

Secondly is don't come here if you're looking for kisses & cuddles. This is a fast paced, unrelentingly tense (take that breath during the swimming scene--you'll need it for the rest of the story) suspenseful & harsh thriller about a very damaged man, Michael & his work partner John who both work for a hush hush counterterrorist organization. The novel zips along drifting from Michael to John's point of view, neither of which we're entirely sure is seeing things accurately. It is at the point where Michael & John attempt a more personal connection that Anzhel returns & things start going a little crazy in the story. You'll have to read it to find out as I'm avoiding spoilers here.

I wasn't sure how to really rate this as, on a technical level, this is better writing than most in this genre. I connected with the characters of Michael & John & really, really wanted things to work out for them. On the other hand, Harper Fox is hard on her characters here & I'm not sure I'd say I actually enjoyed that aspect of it. But I'm sure I'll be getting the sequel when it comes out.

Vivian says

This takes some mental acuity not to get lost between the supernatural and the brainwashing elements, but it is powerful. Watching Michael unravel and then twist and break and recoil is exhausting. As horrible as it is you can't look away. The degree of psychological conditioning and its success is terrifying. Mesmerizing, it really does play into traditional Russian folklore and the implications are devastating to watch.

And John, the partner we all dream of in devotion, honor, and action. He brings a smile even from afar.

The story is fast paced and the suspense and the characters are intrinsically woven together. There are some hard moments in the story that just ache, but you can't help but want more. It is another foray into the sensory delight of Fox's storytelling even if some of the lyricism is sacrificed to the hard edge driving the plot.

Favorite quote:

It was weird how you could go through life and never need a thing until you fell across it.

John says

Harper Fox writes, in my opinion, beautiful prose. I suspect she could make the driest subject compelling by her deft use of language. So from a purely technical point of view *Last Line* is a pleasure: beautifully descriptive and evocative. As in her other books, her characters are engaging and compelling; the plot full of action and swift-flowing. There are few moments to catch one's breath; both style and plot move at a breathtaking pace. Only at the last chapter does the reader get a chance to catch a breath.

But *Last Line* is different. It's mood is dark and dangerous, the stakes high, and at times it's acutely disturbing. We see the activity of the novel through a perspective that shifts between the main characters, Michael and John. Neither man is ordinary (indeed, Michael is the victim of torture and profound psychological abuse) so their perceptions (and therefore ours) are often surreal. Other characters aren't what they seem; events might not mean what one would think. Even reality becomes almost fantastic. What's more, we're not - completely - able to dismiss the surreal by attributing it to hallucination.

So while it's not entirely fantasy, *Last Line* isn't entirely happening in the mundane world. Straddling this line is hard to do without straining my credulity, but here, I buy it. Perhaps it's because I became sufficiently invested in the characters and in the themes Fox works with. Perhaps it's because the magical bending of reality isn't gratuitous. It's equally possible that the characters through whom we see this are as skeptical as we would be; as they have no choice but to accept an alternative reality, so are we.

At the end of the book, what it all means is a little hard to say. This is the first part of a trilogy, so it's appropriate that the books puzzles aren't wholly solved. Even so, the thoughtful reader will find much to ponder at the finish. I very much doubt I will be the only reader eagerly awaiting the next instalment of Michael and John's adventure.

Johanna says

Wow. This book is fierce! Not by any means an easy read, but oh, so gratifying. The story is extremely emotive and thought provoking — very capturing with troubled, strong, mysterious, compelling characters.

I always enjoy hugely reading a Harper Fox book and this one wasn't an exception. Yet it had some elements in it that I wasn't expecting at all and that made me enjoy the reading experience even more. :)

To say it shortly: I'm hungry for more Michael, John, Quin and Anzhel!
