



Broken Blades

Aleksandr Voinov , L.A. Witt

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Rainbow Award Winner 2016 “Best Gay Book”

They only had one night together—a stolen interlude at the 1936 Olympics. After Mark Driscoll challenged Armin Truchsess von Kardenberg to a good-natured fencing match, there was no resisting each other. Though from different worlds—an Iowa farm boy and a German aristocrat—they were immediately drawn together, and it was an encounter neither has ever forgotten.

Now it's 1944, and a plane crash in hostile territory throws them back together, but on opposite sides of a seemingly endless war. Facing each other as opponents is one thing. As enemies, another thing entirely. And to make matters worse, Mark is a POW, held in a cold, remote castle in Germany ... in a camp run by Armin.

They aren't the young athletes they were back then. The war has taken much from them, leaving both gray beyond their years, shell-shocked, and battered. The connection they had back then is still alive and well, though, and from the moment Mark arrives, they're fencing again—advancing, retreating, testing defenses.

Have they been given a second chance? Or have time and a brutal war broken both of them beyond repair?

Broken Blades Details

Date : Published September 5th 2018 by 44 Raccoons (first published February 15th 2016)

ISBN :

Author : Aleksandr Voinov , L.A. Witt

Format : Kindle Edition 282 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Historical, War, Military Fiction

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From Reader Review Broken Blades for online ebook

Aimee Brissay says

I had high expectations for this one, but I never thought it would be this good. The characters were perfectly developed, their motivations human and believable, and the world created to the smallest details. It is obvious that both Lori and Aleks have put in a lot of research writing this story. There were times where suspension of disbelief was pushed to the limit, but never once did it go beyond.

The story flows naturally and there's no saying which parts were written by Lori and which by Aleks. Kudos to both of you, you make a great team!

Highly recommend this book.

Fenriz Angelo says

Sometimes you need to be away from home to find love. Mark, an American fencer, found it in the less likely place.

Aleksandr and L.A Witt deliver a romantic historical story set in WWII. As always, their characters have an undeniable chemistry and you can feel the masterful skill of both authors through the pages. What I like most about Aleksandr's historicals is the way he describes the environment with such powerful atmosphere that you can almost see yourself there.

Don't let yourself shy away from the 'POW' camp bit. FYI prison camps commanded by the Wehrmacht were pretty different than labor and concentration camps commanded by the SS. Armin Truchsess von Kardenberg is an aristocrat German, part of the Wehrmacht, and like one, he doesn't approve the Nazi ideology nor follows their atrocities. Though, we get to meet some SS characters trying to make everybody's life miserable.

This book is about discovery, hope, struggle and love.

UltraMeital says

This is one of those books I feel like I have no words to describe. This book grabbed me and wouldn't let go. I read it yesterday until my eyes burned with tears of exhaustion only to awake half an hour later to read just a little more, then woke up early to manage a little bit more and so you see the pattern.. it's nearing midnight and finally I reached the end and all I could do is sigh.

PER-FECTION.

The first book I've read by Aleksandr Voinov and L.A. Witt was "Unhinge the Universe", which is also a Historical MM Romance novel from WWII. Yet the only thing in common, for me, was how brilliant it was, how much emotion it drew from me. I am Jewish. WWII has a certain meaning for me. Yet the word "Jew" was almost never mentioned (maybe only somewhere in the beginning), it wasn't about that which I liked, I've read enough about the Holocaust, and frankly I'm less inclined to read fiction concerning what happened in this horrible war, there are enough REAL stories to be told (though there are very few who are still alive to share them).

This story gave me a sense I don't think I ever had about how this war felt for someone from the inside who hates every moment of it. A German, a commander, in charge of prisoners of war. In a sea of insanity, hatred and violence, some people maintain their humanity. That's Armin for you. Simply a man. I had so much respect for him, for who he is, who he didn't allow himself to become and how much he valued his morals of protecting others even at the risk of his own life.

They meet for the first time when Mark came to Berlin from the US prior to the war to compete in the Olympic games as a Fencer. They shared one steamy night together and then went on their own way. It was obvious for Armin that war is nearing and also that his homosexuality will cost him his life and so he gave up on Mark. I'm not sure how much Mark knew about his sexual orientation but what he felt for Armin was something he never experienced before. Though they walked away from one another, they still remembered with fondness the time they shared, though they never expected to meet each other again, especially not the way they did - Mark a prisoner of war and Armin the commander of the camp (or rather a castle) occupying other British and American prisoners of war.

This time around it's even more difficult for Mark and Armin to keep their mutual interest in one another and yet acting on it is purely madness. Though Armin is in charge, Homosexuality will still get him shot, and when a SS officer comes to "check" on Armin and his castle, their situation becomes even more complex, and yet they manage to build something between them in the little time they DO spend together. It was pure oxygen in a poisonous land, even for me as a reader. The interaction between them, and not only that, the whole situation in the prison and the human and compassionate decisions Armin made in favor of his prisoners was heart warming and even sweet. All I could ask is for him not to be hurt in the end, for everyone around him who is not Mark to realize what an amazing person he is, and how much he was willing to do to make sure everyone and I mean everyone would be as safe as a war can allow.

I loved everything about this book. It was impossible to put down, though I did (when life interrupted..). The romance was sweet and crushing at the same time, it seemed impossible and yet somehow I had hope, maybe because of the way Armin managed everything around him I hoped for "fair", for some opportunities for them, for happiness in the most hopeless time and place.

A MUST READ. Though it's Historical MM Romance I don't think it matters AT ALL if you're into either Historical novels, Romance, and more specifically MM Romance (truthfully there aren't a lot of sexual scenes), it's simply a heart breakingly beautiful story about the worse time for men to find companionship and I dare say even love.

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Elyxyz says

Voto: 4.5

Anche se amo i romanzi storici, cerco sempre di evitare quelli ambientati durante le Guerre Mondiali, perché mi toccano certe corde interiori che mi fanno star male.

Ho deciso di fare un'eccezione per questo libro, perché amo la Witt e ormai ho letto ogni cosa che è arrivato di suo in Italia, e poi perché volevo 'assaggiare' lo stile di Voinov, di cui ho sentito tanto parlar bene.

Tirando le somme, sono contenta di averlo fatto, perché è indubbiamente un bel libro.

La guerra e le sue conseguenze sono il substrato su cui l'amore di Mark e Armin si ritrova a dover poggiare, a combattere per sopravvivere. C'è un sacco di angst e tensione, che permeano tutto il racconto, la disperazione e la speranza che fanno a pugni, la fame, il freddo, il dolore, i traumi fisici e mentali di una

guerra logorante, ma c'è anche umanità e insperata gentilezza.

Mark e Armin si conoscono nel 1936, durante le Olimpiadi di Berlino, in una Germania che comincia già a fare i conti la corrente sotterranea nazista, ma ben nascosta ad occhio esterno.

Il nobile Armin e il campagnolo Mark sembrano completamente diversi, ma li accomuna la bravura per la scherma e la passione di una notte li segnerà per sempre.

Otto anni dopo, quasi alla fine della guerra, i due uomini si ritrovano – prigioniero e carceriere – con questo sentimento mai svanito e il rischio che ciò che provano li porti alla morte.

Ha poca importanza che le scene esplicite non siano numerose o minuziose. Ogni bacio e ogni carezza fra loro sono stati raccontati con maestria e traspare un sacco di sentimento e amore.

È un libro che conquista e ti fa spasimare fino alla fine.

Anche tutta l'ambientazione del campo di prigionia è molto realistica, nelle varie relazioni tra prigionieri e fra nemici; la resa italiana, per finire, è pressoché perfetta.

Consigliato agli amanti degli m/m storici, ma anche a chiunque cerchi un libro appassionante.

Loederkoningin says

In spite of Voinov's signature awesomeness, Broken Blades never quite managed to hold my attention.

Perhaps I had anticipated another slam dunk like Unhinge the Universe. After all, there are plenty similarities between the two. At the same time, Broken Blades never conveyed the same thrill of breathless intensity and taboo chemistry against the backdrop of WW II.

If I had to pinpoint the reasons, I'd say that there are a few things that didn't work in this story's favor: whereas MC Armin is everything I've come to expect of Voinov's characters (a beautifully melancholic, life-roughened, fleshed-out man), MC Mark is painfully undeveloped in comparison, to the extent where his lack of personality sabotaged the romance between the MCs for me.

Then there's the fact that their desperate longing for each other is based solely on a fencing scene (and a quite brilliant one at that, I have to admit!) and one stolen night 8 years earlier, a FTB scene no less! That wouldn't necessarily have been an issue if they'd taken their mutual attraction to new levels upon seeing each other again. But the setting of a POW camp, with them being on opposite sides of the line, really didn't offer enough opportunities for a believable strengthening of their bond. Finally, the time spent in what has to be the most hunky-dory POW camp in the history of WW II stretches out with plenty annoying side characters, but without offering much of a 'bite'.

Voinov's works are seldom a complete miss for me, and this one definitely wasn't a miss either. I enjoy the atmosphere he creates in his writing far too much for that, but I can't say that I'll be rereading this one anytime soon, like I did Unhinge the Universe.

Bucletina says

Reseña en breve en el blog

Francesca says

Beautifully written historical set in a very dramatic period of European history.
Looking forward reviewing this in full on the blog.
As promised the full review
<https://ingloriousbitches.wordpress.com/>

Vivian says

It was a kiss like a broken blade slipping in right under the armpit or going straight through the visor and into the eye.

To give up a part of you, the best part of you and still find reason to live. People are so glib, of course, life goes on. But really, when you covet a piece, something that is the cornerstone of yourself how do you continue?

--Cochem Castle, Mosel, Germany

The setting is Ahlensteig, an officers' POW camp, which I'm sure one can imagine easily was certainly better than an enlisted camp. Combined with the nearly anachronistic Wehrmacht Kommandant gives an idealized atmosphere. One of the last few examples of noblesse oblige, modernity is harsher and crueler than Armin Truchsess von Kardenberg. Having seen it first hand, he executes his duty as he waits for the inevitable.

Mark Driscoll has seen war and been changed like all men, but he still has the drive to live when so many around him have been lost to the unrelenting death. He has his ghosts, but he still sees a future. Even if it's only one day at a time. He still wants.

Second chances were too expensive to squander. Even if there was no future, even if it was all truly hopeless.

There is this understanding between the two men of their duty. Neither expects the other to compromise their ethics. But there is a space between rabid hostility and complacency, and here is where Armin and Mark intersect. Shared history provides them with a basis for understanding and compassion. The personalities of war and soldiers is actually quite interesting, the range represented through various characters illustrates the complexity of warfare and human nature far beyond cookie cutter good and evil.

As the winter of '44 drags on the days turn darker as the SS arrive at Ahlensteig, and days of yore seem idyllic, or as idyllic as being imprisoned can be. In the last moments of war, when there's nothing left to lose either the futility is realized and things just stop or they go very, very badly. The SS weren't the sort to use reason.

Fencing is a romanticized sport for me. My father did epee and saber as martial training in a time now lost. Though hand to hand combat is still critical and being on the wrong end of a bayonet will absolve one of any thoughts to the contrary. So part of me loved this story just for the handful of matches and the athleticism.

Warily, I marched to the end-- seriously, I stopped a couple times and said to myself that I could be happy

with it ending here because I so freaking terrified I'd get my heart ripped out rather heroically or nobly or god no, stupidly-- and was rewarded for my perseverance.

Overall, the softer side of WWII with fewer labels and more compassion.

Elle Beasee says

3.5 stars.

The parallels to Voinov's *Unhinge The Universe* make it difficult for me to review this without drawing a comparison between these not-dissimilar books. I admit this simple fact influences my rating.

I loved UTU; was blown away by it. It is dark, gritty and beautifully written. It hooked me from the first page through to the last: desperately hopeful at times and on the edge of insanity at others.

But Broken Blades, whilst it IS good failed to capture my attention in the same way. I found myself skimming some of the passages looking for a bit more grit, a little more action and it struggled to pull me into the darkness of WW2.

If UTU is a 5-star book (which, come on guys, it is) Broken Blades falls a little short.

Cil says

God, I loved this book! Exactly the kind of book I like. Playing in WWII, a very nice enemies to lovers theme, great sacrifices, big emotions, what's not to love?

Although I do have to admit, it took me a while to really get into the book.

I think for me the main problem was probably not enough background to the character's relationship. I usually don't like stories very much, that have an established friendship, or even worse, an established relationship. I just kinda feel cheated, if I don't get to see the beginning. In those cases the author has a much harder job to convince me of their chemistry, to make me root for them. In this book we get something in between. Although we get to see their actual first meeting, it's fade to black as soon as they decide to spend the night together. We don't get to see much interaction between them before that either. That's why I first kinda felt indifferent to them and their relationship. Of course that changed as the book moved on. But because we didn't see much interaction between them before the war, we didn't get to see that deeper connection they're talking about. So for me it wasn't really anything more than a one night stand, what made it a bit hard to believe they were still both pining for each other 8 years later. What I mean is, if we don't really get to see much happening between them anyway, you could just as well leave the whole a bit boring beginning with the olympics out and you'd still have the same story. Maybe it would have been even better, because then I could have imagined there was more between them back then than we actually saw. Generally I don't care too much if we don't get to see every sex scene. However I usually prefer to see the first one. But here, I think if the whole relationship is basically built on that single night, it would be pretty important to at least see some part of it.

Okay enough ranting. Once I got over the rather slow beginning it really started to get interesting and it had me on the edge of my seat sometimes. And yes, I did end up rooting for them very much, but it didn't happen

until about 40% in the book. Then it hit me pretty hard though. After that point I couldn't stop reading, it was just so good! It kept getting better and better and I was sad when I got to the last page.

Don't let my review keep you off reading this great book. You'd miss something! You just have to get over the a bit slow beginning. But it's definitely worth it!

So I'm giving this 4 stars because of the beginning, I didn't like very much. If the whole book was like the last 60%, I'd definitely have given it 5 stars.

Cristina says

Another compelling and wonderfully-written historical novel by Aleksandr Voinov.

Set in a German POW-camp for Allied officers in the last months of 1944, *Broken Blades* follows the complex relationship between Mark, an American pilot, and Armin, a Wehrmacht Colonel acting as the camp's commandant.

The forced cohabitation in the camp is not, however, Mark and Armin's first encounter. Both keen and talented fencers, the two men have already met each other in Berlin on the occasion of the 1936 Olympic Games and during the intervening eight years they have gone on to live a life that has left them both physically and emotionally scarred.

A Voinov's historical novel is an absolute guarantee of detailed research, believable characters and a storyline that is at turns melancholic, romantic and harsh. *Broken Blades* is no exception: the details in its reconstruction, the subtle connection between the two MCs often channelled through stolen glances and wordless conversations, the beautiful use of fencing as a metaphor for the advance and retreat in their own relationship, work together to conjure up a novel that is affecting and powerful well beyond the last page.

Truly recommended (just like their other WW2 historicals, *Nightingale*, *Unhinge the Universe*, and *Skybound*).

L.A. Witt says

Coming February 2016.

Elisa Rolle says

2016 Rainbow Awards Honorable Mention: *Broken Blades*

1) A strong book set at a time that to me is still more the dominion of history lessons and horror and those childhood stories that my grandparents never, ever tell. So not exactly a time that lends itself to romance, and I admit I was sceptical when I first picked this book up. Happily my scepticism was misguided. Instead of the wartime romance I was half-dreading, this book is the story of two men struggling to stay human in an increasingly inhuman world; remembering that the enemy soldier is a human being, too, is just one part of it. Very well done. But then, everything about this book is well done: The plot is solid and gripping and although it jumps ahead in time twice, it doesn't seem episodic; the characters are all complex and layered, even the secondary characters – even the obligatory super-Nazi was interesting from a meta perspective! –

and the protagonists have a depth that is sometimes more hinted at than revealed fully; the setting was evocative and done right – at least, this German reader was very pleased to come across genuine German names as well as properly spelled and grammatically correct German sentences; the writing, finally, flowed smoothly, at a good pace, and managed to keep me up way past my bedtime because I simply could. Not. Stop. Reading. Last but not least, I quite enjoyed seeing the Germans from the American character's perspective, all those little comments and observations on manners and language, and I couldn't help grinning at the bit where Mark wonders at Armin's mood because from his tone of voice he can't tell whether Armin is annoyed or not, what with German sounding the same all the damn time. :-)

2) Writing as you wish it do be when you look for this kind of reading; well-developed characters; perfect research; and some very little flaws are covered by a gripping story, although dark, mesmerizing.

3) One of the most touching, heartbreaking beautiful story I ever read. Set in a German POW camp at the end of WWII, it is not a easy reading, the covered topics certainly leave its marks on the reader. But you won't be able to put it down, you need to know how the main characters get to their well deserved happy ending. Be ready to cry, a lot, be ready to get angry, to feel relieved. The authors managed to engage the readers describing the environment and every action with such powerful attention to detail that you can almost see yourself there. There must have been a lot of reserch behind it, a very good job. A book to read at least once in a lifetime.

4) This book wasn't at all what I was expecting. The setting is about as dramatic as it gets, but the story itself, the development of the romance and the tightly-written scenes between Armin and Mark are surprisingly easy to read. It was so engaging I couldn't put it down.

5) Full marks from me on this excellent story of two men who meet at the 1936 Olympics, have one night of passion and eight years later are reunited during World War II. Armin is the POW camp Commandant where Mark, an American airman is brought when his plane crashes. The men at first are wary of one another, but as time passes the attraction they felt eight years earlier is rekindled and their purpose becomes to save each other's lives, as the Allies close in on a defeated Germany. Couldn't put this down until I had read and savored every word. Without a doubt my favorite book of this year.

Deanna Against Censorship says

Aleksandr Voinov writes darkly mesmerizing stories. LA Witt writes wonderfully captivating stories. When the team up to write, the stories are better and deeper and emotional. This story is no exception. I could not put it down. My heart broke for these two pawns of life.

Lust burning amid the chaos of The Olympic Games in Nazi Germany. Love refusing to step aside for war. Two men on different sides of politics but on the same size of honor and love.

He rested his arm across his stomach and kept his eyes shut. He thought back to that kiss. Thought back to that first one so many years ago. He and Mark had both aged. They'd both been through hell. They were both still in hell. And yet for just a moment, they'd been young, unscathed, standing in the cramped bedroom of that bungalow in the Olympic village.

This is a story of love, trust and distrust. It is a story of despair with a small light of hope. Mark, a talented man forced by his community to live an untruth. Armin an honorable man trying to survive in a dishonorable society that had twisted all of the values of his beloved homeland. Neither ever forgetting the first contact, the first kiss. Neither ever expecting to meet again. Both understanding that to even acknowledge each other would be dangerous.

They both knew dam well this was madness, and yet all it took was a touch or a kiss to convince them to abandon all reason and try to make it happen anyway. Let it happen, that is. They couldn't force this any more than they could prevent it. It simply was, no matter how hard either of them tried to keep it at bay.

Both of these writers are automatic buys for me. This book just showed again how they can bring characters to life that demand my heart and my soul. A beautiful read.

Karen Wellsbury says

I read this as a BR , and while my fellow readers were raving about the historical accuracy, and great writing I was all, 'but its a POW camp'. I was at 37% when it all clicked into place.

It's a beautifully written and rather romantic, once I got past my personal preconceptions I read it in one go.

<https://ingloriousbitches.wordpress.c...>
