



Merry Gentlemen

Josephine Myles

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'Tis the season of goodwill to all men...even the one who dumped you.

Riley MacDermott's ambitions are simple. Managing the annual Bath Christmas Market—which involves long hours in the cold and a whole lot of hassle—will secure the promotion he needs to afford to move out of his noisy, top-floor flat. Where not even his balcony is safe from an aggressive herring gull.

The last stallholder he expects to see is his ex. Riley never recovered from their break up, and five years on the old chemistry still sparkles. So does their habitual head butting.

Stan never wanted to leave the love of his life, but the pull of the woods was too strong—and Riley was firmly planted in the city. Reconnecting is painful, but Stan still jumps at the chance to stay with his old flame during the Market. And damn the consequences.

As the weeks pass, the two grow closer than ever. But despite scorching sex and cozy intimacy, they both know they face a cold and lonely future. Unless one of them can compromise.

Warning: Contains sex in a shed, a seagull with a grudge, glamping, awful Secret Santa underwear, misuse of an Abba song, and as many wood-related puns as the author thought she could get away with.

Merry Gentlemen Details

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From Reader Review Merry Gentlemen for online ebook

Irina says

Light, funny and Christmasy feel-good book.

The story of figuring out what's important in life, of sacrificing and compromising.

I especially enjoyed it being located in Bath, where I'm familiar with the layout, main squares, and streets quite well. This has warmed me to the story and made it much more fun.

It was exactly what I needed.

*****3.7 stars*****

Thank you, Sofia, for reading it with me, and Ingela, for suggesting it :)

Mark says

So, before we start. Altogether now.....you know the tune.....1..2..3...

*Jingle bells,
Stan should tell,
"Riley kiss me now!"
A seagull on the balcony,
And a Christmas market row.*

*Jingle bells,
Riley yells,
"Please Stan all the way!"
Oh what fun it is to be,
In Bath on Christmas Day!*

OK, now for the serious business of reviewing, but really? After such a joyful, lighthearted, wonderfully witty read, this is exactly the thing I need to put me in the Christmas spirit. What I love about Jo's books are the characters. Here we have two totally different characters, Stan the masculine, feral, back to nature type and Riley, the city career guy, slightly camp when he puts it on, but never short of a comment or wise-crack. Riley loves the life in the city with all its creature comforts, even if it does come with a seagull on the balcony, and Stan likes nothing better than the seclusion of the country, living in a house he's built himself miles from nowhere.

Well, you would think that these two guys could never get it together, but here's the clue. Stan is Riley's ex from two years before and left Riley exactly due to his yearning to get out of the city. Riley chasing his career in the city council was not up for ruralness, so both wanting very different things from life, the inevitable happens. They separate. Two years later, Riley is still single and has a lodger on the balcony in the form of a seagull who has taken up residence there. I loved this part of the story where Jo manages to create a sub-plot using this seagull as the catalyst to many things, but also to use it as a channel and reflection of Riley's moods. Great idea! Even the seagull grew on me in the end.

So now it's time for the Bath Christmas Market and Riley has been roped in to organise the stall owners and be on site to sort any problems out with his colleague and good friend Janine. Well, when he walks past one of the stalls on his regular market rounds he stumbles upon Stan who has a stall there and is selling wooden bowls, carvings, etc. well, as you can imagine Riley is thrown for a loop, never really ever being over the separation with Stan. Now the fun and games start, but literally.

You could say that the plot in many ways is already decided, ex meets ex and after some shenanigans they end up together, realising that they really have never stopped loving each other, but had to find common ground where they could meet and be happy. Well, you would be correct in thinking this, nothing new here really, but to coin the lyrics of another song, *"It ain't what you do, but the way that you do it."*

Jo sets up a lovely Christmas scenario by using the Christmas market in Bath. You can smell the mulled wine, taste the lebkuchen, and Christmas hangs in the very air. Also mustn't forget the obligatory office Christmas party with all the embarrassing antics that invariably occur. With this scenario it would all be too easy to get into deep emotions, complicated and heartfelt conversations; but no, Jo creates two wonderful, real, true-to-life and down to earth characters, the mood is kept lighthearted and comical on the surface, but never trivial. The very subtle humour that runs through this book is fantastic and very British in its essence. Riley, who is a typical fashion conscious queen has to wear a Santa costume while doing his rounds on the market, well this alone caused for enough funny pictures in my head. He then ends up doing something that attracts all the shoppers in the market out of concern for their safety. Here I lost the plot with laughing, I could just imagine it! I had tears rolling down my legs with hysterics. I can't say anymore here as it would spoil the fun if you read the story. This was really the stuff a good sitcom is made out of, well it definitely struck my funny bone anyway. I was also educated in the field of nipple daisies! Another moment that had me laughing out loud.

The market closes and Stan leaves and goes back to his rural idyll and Riley stays in town. After Riley makes himself a media spectacle at the market and becomes the local hero he gets the promotion he wished for. However, it's exactly this that makes him realise how phoney and lonely his life has become and what he really misses. After a very poignant moment of talking to the seagull on his balcony, he gets an idea that will bring him and Stan together and sets off to bring Stan back into his life once and for all.

I enjoyed this read so much. This needs to go on everyone's Christmas reading list or in their stocking.

So to finish with.....ready? After three.....one.....two.....three.....

*God rest ye merry gentlemen,
No seagull should dismay,
For Stan and Riley realise,
There is no other way,
They find their love and happy end and leave the town behind,
Glad feelings of Christmas in Bath,*

*Christmas in Bath,
Glad feelings of Christmas in Bath*

Jo will be joining us on our blog for an interview and giveaway on 14th November, come and join us.

Bev says

5 stars from me for this heartwarming Christmas read, full of British humour, sayings and slang. I loved it

This story is set in the wonderful World Heritage site City of Aquae Sulis, or Bath as it is known today....

Royal Crescent.....

Pulteney Bridge.....

AND of course the famous Roman Baths which feature quite prominently in this story.....

The story revolves around Riley and Stan, and strangely enough, neither of them are British, Riley or Ri as he's known is Irish and Stan (Stanislav) is Slovakian (oh, and thanks Jo for the Slovakian glossary at the back of the book, useful words and phrases to know if I ever get to Slovakia). They used to be a couple, and a really great match reading between the lines, but unfortunately Riley's career ambitions and Stan's wish to get back to nature and work with wood got in the way and they split. Stan moved away from Bath, started a business with money from his father's estate and is happy (but lonely methinks) working with wood and looking after his land. Riley has stayed in Bath, and has been appointed Manager of the Bath Christmas market which is extremely popular. They've both had other guys since the split 5 years ago, but neither can forget the other, Riley in particular still thinks about Stan all the time and unfavourably compares every other bloke he dates to him. He's having a particularly bad day one day...he feels he's being 'stalked' by one seagull in particular, and as I commented in my status updates, to me this was very reminiscent of Miss Amy Hardwood (of Blackadder fame) and her unreasonable hatred of squirrels....however, I digress....being splattered with seagull droppings is obviously **not** very pleasant, but Riley has further surprises awaiting him when he takes a walk around the market and meets the stall holders. I loved Janine's character, the token girl best friend, and there were some really funny lines and incidences in the story....imagining Riley dressed as Santa doing 70's disco numbers to distract a crowd of shoppers was hilarious!!

Can Riley and Stan ever find a way to combine their diverse wants and needs and be together, cos that's what they both want, they really do love each other? Read the book for yourself and find out, it's well worth it.

Anke says

Great read! Love Riley:) and great writing. Ms. Myles managed to pull the reader into the British setting with only a few words - awesome.

The seagull - priceless:) Riley's development throughout the story was wonderful. I would have loved to read

Stan's POV, but we only saw him through Riley, so for me he remained a bit aloof, nevertheless I liked him very much as well. Realizing what he wanted from life and then changing his old life accordingly, even if it meant to leave his love behind *sigh*. And then we followed Riley, while he realized as well that the way he lived and the goals he had, well, that wasn't important for him any longer. Yes, I loved this story.

~☆~Doni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~☆~ says

3.5 stars

Not too angsty! Not too sweet! Two hot boys and a grumpy seagull at Christmas time in Bath...what's not to like?

I thought perhaps Riley's epiphany regarding his job vs. Stan came too easily, but I was still very happy to get a real HEA for these two, because they clearly belonged together.

Sheri says

Second chances.

Are you a believer? I am. My life would be very different if I wasn't. Actually, I believe everyone deserves a second chance.

Third chance? Not a hope in hell, but I'll freely give seconds.

The thing about second chances is you gotta work for it, you gotta mean it, and you gotta prove it.

This can be a glorious thing to witness; for Riley and Stan it was, and I appreciated the journey getting there.

Breaking up is hard to do...

Riley is adorable, amusing, and an absolute idiot.

For reals. I wanted to stuff his fake beard in his mouth more than once. What made him so endearing was he knew he was a babbling fool and was the first to take a swift kick at his own ass.

Misunderstandings, misconceptions and mistakes broke Riley and Stan and kept them apart.

When their paths crossed unexpectedly there is no denying the fire still burns...hot.

Riley is a city boy through and through. Take away his ideals of the finer necessities in life and you might as well lock him up. Fresh air, a star packed sky and silent nights are considered cruel and unusual punishment in Rileyland. He is a man on a mission and does his best to convince himself that he still desires the climb up the ladder even if he reaches the top alone.

Stan was suffocating and losing himself in his attempt to hold onto Riley and the life they built together.

When he realized he could no longer live the lie, he walked away. Ranking his happiness over his relationship was not an easy choice, but the only one.

It's true... you can't make someone else happy if you are unhappy yourself. Sometimes the hardest part is not only finding what makes you happy, but holding onto it.

Their reunion was bloody spectacular.

The pieces snapped back together again.

It was sweet, charming, and smile contagious.

A fantabulous pursuit of happiness embracing gulls, carols and a lumberjack.

Jo Myles is a solid fave of mine, and this book soars to the top of my list. Perfect to cozy up with during this holiday season.

4.5 afire-again-and-always stars

****for a chance to win this book and half a dozen other pimping reads vote here**

Josephine Myles says

I finally did it. I wrote a Christmas novella!

The seed of the idea for Merry Gentlemen revolves around hearing tales of urban gulls who have persecuted certain people, and from my own unpleasantly icky encounter with a large herring gull in the centre of Bath. Narrator Riley foolishly makes an enemy of bird on the same day he runs into his ex, Stan.

This is a lighthearted tale of old flames reunited, and it's set in Bath where I lived for many years. There's something utterly magical about the Bath Christmas Market, so I wanted to set a story there. Plus it gave me the ideal opportunity to write another sex scene in a shed!

Stan is Eastern European. I live in an area with a large Polish community and I often hear negative things from the right-wing British media about the way economic migrants from that part of the world are coming over here, stealing our jobs and not bothering to learn the language. With Stan I wanted to present a positive picture of a Slovakian who has fully integrated with the British way of life. This isn't in any way a political book, but I wanted to recognise in some small way the many people from Eastern Europe who I'm proud to call my friends.

Merry Gentlemen will be out on 12th November from Samhain Publishing.

Mandy*reads obsessively* says

3.75*

I liked this one. Riley is a character, he's funny and inventive and entertaining to read about.

I mean, anyone who gets sexy undies as an office gift *every year and models them* for the whole office, is alright in my book.

Stan, yes, I get him, he knew what he needed to be happy and all, but maybe a peek into his POV would have helped me, I never quite got over the feeling that he didn't really compromise as much. I didn't see what happened 5 years ago, but I really would have liked him sitting Riley down and trying to find some way to be together. Instead it felt as if it was all on Riley, Stan's way or the high way..

I did enjoy this story though, about losing and finding your true love again, about compromise and maturity, about deciding what's important and what will truly make you happy.

Sara says

A Christmas book that is not really about Christmas but takes place during the Christmas season that is full of witty one liners, sexy sheds, Santa Claus suits, hot men who live in the woods, camp ABBA singing and revenge seeking poop bombing seagulls? Oh yeah, that should get you ready for the wild, hilarious ride that Josephine Myles takes you down with Merry Gentlemen.

Good things can get snatched away from you without a moment's notice, and the sooner you learn that, the better. And now here I was, on the wrong side of thirty, freezing my bachelor arse off on a balcony of a one-bedroom flat, yelling at a stupid seagull. How had my life ended up so far from where it was meant to be?

I have been trying to figure out just how to review this book. I have said before the ones that hit the closest are the hardest for me to talk about. Did I love this? Yes. Did I laugh my ass off reading it? Um, see the author name for that. *wink* Did I sigh at the romance no matter how it came across the page even while watching co-workers open calendars at holiday parties? Of course. So why can't I get some words down to say what I liked? Maybe I need to break out in song? Maybe I need to not think so much? Not sure.

Yeah, all right. I was a master of excuses. Came with having the gift of the gab. I didn't just kiss the blarney stone, I snogged it senseless and gave it a handjob.

Riley MacDermott, where do I begin with this man? Firstly, I adored him. I loved reading his inner thoughts and the things that came out of his mouth made me laugh out loud. His inability to officially let go of his ex-boyfriend and his eagerness to climb up the corporate ladder makes him the perfect leading man for this story. His obsession with a seagull who seems to have it out for him just makes me want to see the whole thing in action.

"What can I say? I have a gift for pissing people off. Seagulls too."

"You used to be so charming."

"I still can be. You've just caught me on a bad day."

While at work trying to keep the proprietors and patrons of the Bath Christmas Market happy, Riley runs into said ex, the one he can't forget and with one description of Stan you can tell why. I am a sucker for blondes and Stan with his edible build, quiet charm and insane love and understanding for Riley the attraction was instant and constant. While Riley was the life of party, with or without the traditional company Secret Santa gift, Stan was the calm amongst Riley's storm. He was solid as wood (*ban pun penalty*) and exactly what Riley has always needed. But these two, while loving each other passionately, these men want different things in life and for their life. Riley wants the busy of the city and Stan wants his peace and solitude in the woods where he can think and be himself.

I suppose we always end up wanting the things we don't have. Part of the human condition.

I am a sucker for second chance romance done well. I love the history of the couple, what didn't work or what they just couldn't get passed. I love the first meeting of them again, the rush of emotion that overtakes them both; either the urge for tackle sex (*a term? It is now*) or to punch the other in the throat, I love it. I got it ten-fold with Stan and Riley. I fell so hard for them separate and together. I loved each moment they spent together and every moment of Riley over analyzing the hell out of every little aspect of their past, present and future relationship. (*Have I mentioned how much I GOT Riley? He could be my glamping doppelganger*) I wanted them to figure it out, how to be together and both get what they wanted out of life and their partner. They had me with all the feels these boys. All the feels.

What the hell was I feeling now? Was this nerves? Fear? Fury? Whatever it was, it could fuck off. I had a job to do.

Merry Gentlemen was a lovely way for me to start of my holiday reading. I love the Christmas stories that come out, the way they make me crave for the cold weather, the holiday cheer and just that feeling that the season is special and magical enough to make the impossible happen.

"That was incredible," he said, sounding every bit as bowled over as I felt. "Riley? You felt that too?"

I nodded. That must have been what he needed, because his face softened into something like the Stan I remembered. The one who'd teased me for being a wimp, but who always got the great big spiders out of the flat for me. The one who made me breakfast in bed on a Sunday.

The one who kissed me like I was the most important thing in the world.

Heller says

4.75

I don't think I've ever rooted for a pair of men to make their relationship work as hard as I did for Riley and Stan. This has it all. Humour, hardcore sex-ing and some killer angst. I loved it.

Sunny says

4.5 stars, rounded up

A wonderful story about second chances, with beautiful characters who'll stay with you long after you've

finished reading about them.

My first thoughts of Riley were,

"Oh, no, is he going to be one of those high maintenance, high drama people?" Long, run on sentences of rambling stream of consciousness seemed to show a self absorbed, not very likeable person. But my worries came to naught.

Riley could be exhausting, and a bit misguided, but he was also sweet, and so very funny.

"Like a poster boy for camp."

No worries about liking Stan, though. The gentle giant, (well, maybe not so gentle *grins*) stole my heart at the same time he heated up the rest of me. Riley and Stan had so much chemistry together. It showed during their arguments, their sexy times, and pretty much all the other times, too.

When I wasn't fanning myself, I was laughing, or wanting to hug Riley and Stan when they were hurt and feeling vulnerable. Oh, the stupid things people say when they are mad or feeling the need to protect themselves, or the things they don't say, but should.

I liked the ending even though it came too soon for me. It also had a different feel to it, not as much laughter and steaminess but more serious and sweet. It was a good way to wrap it up, though.

A charming, feel good story that made me laugh. Thank you for the gift, Ms. Myles!

Side notes:

The market reminds me of The Holiday Shops at Bryant Park in New York City which I was lucky enough to visit one year.

I was familiar with most of the British vocabulary, but there were two words I didn't know:

As best I can gather, a tabard is some kind of apron that covers the front and back, like a smock.

Elevenes is a morning snack.

Ann says

I'm a big fan of Josephine Myles. I'm a big fan of Christmas. It would stand to reason that I should like this book. I did not like this book. I LOVED this book.

My absolute favorite thing about Jo Myles's books are her characters and these two MC's are no exception. Honestly, Riley is hilarious. I love his slightly entitled attitude. Especially for the fact he doesn't really know what he's entitled to or why, he just knows he should have more than he does. When tasked with ridding his balcony of a seagull, who really seems to have it out for him, he thinks,

"I was meant to have servants to do that sort of thing for me by now. Or at least one servant. Just a part time cleaner would have been a good start."

Oh Riley.

This is really a story about Riley and his journey to figure out what makes him happy. Riley is in that no man's land between a young party boy and true adulthood. He knows how to be a party boy but it's getting old and nothing (and no one) compares to the time he spent with his first true love, Stan. Riley is working towards a promotion. He is the manager of the Christmas Market in Bath and he knows if he can pull this off with a modicum of success, he'll get his promotion. Problem is, he really isn't sure if that is what will make him happy. He wants it because he thinks he should and it's the next logical step for his career. But will it make him happy? Riley is floundering a little but he's not really sure why.

As the vendors are setting up Riley is making his rounds and who does he see? Why Stan of course. Stan had given Riley balance but he's also the one who had moved away. Stan moved away because he had to. He's not a city dweller and in order to accomplish all his life's goals he had to go. While Riley felt he had to stay behind. Hearts were broken.

There really isn't animosity between the two, more of a wary caution, they were young and wanted vastly different things from life and looking back, they can admit they didn't communicate well about their decisions. They communicated like self-centered young men. Which, given their ages and stages in life, was completely normal and unfortunately predictable. There is still plenty of heat left from their years together though and it doesn't take long for the two of them to reconnect.

So, the two start the reconnection in the steamiest of ways, albeit temporarily as the Market only lasts so long. They're reminded why they are just so good together and yet how different they are too. Seriously, Riley and Stan really couldn't be more different. Stan is the country badger to Riley's city mouse and Riley can't help but mock Stan's country life. Stan takes it with a good natured humor, these two have great chemistry, and matches Riley quip for quip,

"Yeah, I've got myself a harem of trained badgers. They're shy, but really filthy when you get to know them."

I like Stan. I like Stan a lot.

Stan also reminds Riley that sex, and life, should be fun and that Riley is more than just the flighty party boy and Stan doesn't fall for Riley's "flouncy grand exits". Riley knows this and in the years since Stan left he's grown up some. They both have. Riley can't help but be frustrated because they want such different things out of life. The Market ends, Riley is a success and it's time for Stan to go home. Hearts are breaking again, but, Riley is a bit older and wiser now and he really listens to Stan when Stan says as he is leaving for home,

"Goodbye Ri. Look after yourself. And try to figure out what makes you happy, yeah?"

Well, one thing that Riley is really good at, it's what got him his promotion, he is a problem solver. He just never really saw his life as a problem until he started questioning his own happiness when Stan had to leave. Riley finally realized he could solve this problem and he sets out to do just that. He channels his inner country badger and heads out for his mountain man. Riley has a plan and he's certainly not going to let any pesky nature get in his way. He's determined to make this new life work with Stan and now just has to convince Stan to let him in.

Of course he has "Riley adventures" on the way to Stan's place and Stan doesn't let Riley off the hook too easily at first. Not everyone is cut out to be a country badger, Riley especially and Stan knows this. As he puts Riley through his paces with country life, Riley starts to really appreciate the beauty of the life Stan is living, once he lets go of what he thinks he should want.

Riley and Stan grew up, and Riley finally figures out that compromise can lead to everything in the world that will make him happy.

Just a few extra bonus things that I absolutely loved in this story . . .

I absolutely have to mention Riley's best friend and confidante, Janine. I love when the "best friend" is portrayed in a really positive way and doesn't fall into stereotype. Janine was great. She was a true supportive friend, but she called Riley on his BS too. I love how he is amazed at her ability to spot another gay man without fail. He says,

“You’d think that woman had been born with her own personal Grindr app installed in her brain.”

Can that be a real thing? I'd really like for that to be a real thing.

Riley is known at work for being the guy who strips down to some fancy manties, climbs atop a desk and belts out a Christmas tune at the office Christmas party. It's what he does. So, of course, his Secret Santa gifts every year are said fancy manties. He swears this year will be different. There is a promotion on the line after all. But, after a little too much to drink coupled with missing his mountain man the ability to actually care is completely gone and he fulfills his legacy with pride. He insists on singing Santa Baby even though,

“And while it wasn’t exactly a song designed for stripping, I was of the firm belief that you could take your clothes off to any piece of music with the right attitude.”

This is why I love Riley, oh so very much.

Ingie says

3,8 Cozy Stars - fun and sweet about a second chance, a singing gay Santa and a Christmas market

I read and was both impressed and enchanted by the fun and cheeky story in *Screwing the System* by the author *Josephine Myles* earlier in the week. Another novel by her and also a winter / holiday story in *Bath* (U.K.) with a *second chance* topic, sounded like a good idea as my next reading. And it was! Yet a very pleasant and amusing M/M romance.

~~~~~

***Merry Gentlemen** wasn't maybe quite as *super über good* as the last one (the amazing good *Screwing the System* as I just mentioned ~ 5 stars from me) I read by JM, but a very fun, sweet and entertaining novel. This British author is so good at creating characters that feel believable, gay and like ordinary real people not just another book hero. The main characters here, **Riley and Stan** are two gorgeous guys which has some weaknesses but also a thousand good qualities, just as we all have.*

**It is the annual Christmas market in Bath** and Riley and Stan meet again. They haven't seen each other for five years and Riley (told from his point of view), he still has a large chafing wound in his heart. Stan was the big love of his life who left him. Stan is the big blond sexy Slovakian that all his dreams are about. But with different goals in life couldn't they keep up their relationship. Stan moved and settled far away in a house he built in the woods. Riley continued to struggle with his career and enjoying to live a fancy city life with wet party nights and full speed. But then, they see each other again...

‘Never, ever let a toppy git know just how much they turn you on, or you'll spend your whole bloody life in a state of perpetual turned-on-ness.’

**This story was particularly amusing.** I laughed and Riley is a wonderful fun guy to listen to. His little stubborn smart way gives full marks from me. His tough battle with the angry and offended *seagull* is unforgettable. (view spoiler)

To a large extent is *Merry Gentlemen* about Riley's decisions and thoughts on what is important and not in his life, and the way there. His love and lust after Stan is both touching and tender. I usually like a second chance romance, and especially when the characters are given the opportunity to mature. Maybe they needed the time apart, although it always feels a little sad, too.

‘The one who'd teased me for being a wimp, but who always got the great big spiders out of the flat for me. The one who made me breakfast on a Sunday.  
The one who kissed me like I was the most important thing in the world.’

**Perhaps is this story a little too short** (189 pages) to really get into my heart. When it ended, I was missing something. I wanted a little more, more time with Stan, with them together and a more developed conclusion. ~~// With that said, it's unfortunately so that I actually rounds down to three stars after all. Good and lovely told but could have been even a little better... But it's my feeling—so //~~ read for goodness sake this cheeky story. ~ **Now a day later, I realize** that this story actually got stuck in my mind and heart. It gets four fair stars - I was too stingy. Sorry!!

**There is certainly much more to say** about this novel but I'll settle for now. I liked and enjoyed and will soon look for more sweet gems among Josephine Myles's wonderful hilarious and sweet romantic writing. Two novels plus a shorty read - a new favorite author is on the rampage...

**I LIKE - fairly quick read, cute and funny!**

*...it wasn't snowing but this pic is so wintry and fine*

~~~~~

*As the devoted Jane Austen admirer I am I took a chance and visited **Bath** one occasion when I was just passing by. It was a beautiful nice old town with the old Roman baths, the giant long house and of course a nice "Austen Museum". A memorable visit.*

*This story takes place in the weeks before Christmas when the annual "**Bath Christmas Market**" is running. Riley, one of the MC's, is working there and Stan is renting a market stall. Here are some nice pictures from there: (view spoiler)*

Ami says

I picked up *Merry Gentlemen* for one reason: Shirley Frances said in her review that this story was about "the one who got away". What can I say, I LOVE this theme. I love stories about ex-es and how they find a way back to one another, especially if the love is still palpable. Truthfully, Jo Myles's stories range from 2.5 - 4 stars for me, so I could say that she is a hit or miss.

This one though... was a hit.

From the moment that Riley appeared, I immediately found him likeable and entertaining -- I loved his personal war against seagulls (They *could* be scary, couldn't they? Imagine those beaks when they attack, screaming "MineMineMineMine"). I really had fun being in his company. His inner thoughts were hoot and his easy-going attitude wonderful!!

I loved the chemistry and tension that Riley had with Stan -- and I was quite happy that he wasn't all that angsty about the fact that he still thought about Stan after five years, and instead he kinda embraced it. I still thought they had great tension and chemistry though -- and my heart went all tugged when they met again.

I agreed with several reviewers regarding the solution for their problem, which would be my basis for my complaint about this story. I thought it came a bit rushed and not exactly a compromise I was looking for. I felt like Riley was the only one doing the sacrifice ... and his epiphany about his promotion was a bit too easy as a way out to solve the issue. I would like it better if the two really find a middle solution.

Having said that, since I mainly had fun with this. I guess how you judge the story will come down whether you can take that final 'solution' as a good compromise or not. Since I highly enjoyed the story and the tension between the ex-es, I can slightly let my complaint pass. I did love it and yes, it made the story fall down on my 4-stars category.

Susan says

I like Josephine Myles' style. She writes quirky, imperfect, silly, frustrating, lovable characters. And gets them shat on. And then gets them a HEA.

And there you have Merry Gentlemen.

Oh Riley. I could feel your broken heart. But I could also stand back and scream at your stubbornness. I could feel your love for Stan. But I could also stand back and laugh when the gull had it's way with you. I could feel your need to find your way. But I could also stand back and say "I told you so" when your way led you to exactly where you were running from.

Stan, thank you for being awesome. Thank you for knowing what you needed more than just what you wanted. And thank you for accepting Riley and bringing him home.

This book had so many laughable moments and happy holiday moments and sexy moments and heartwarming moments.

And now excuse me as I go to find me a yurt...
