



Close to Me

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Blue finds pleasure in playing pet to Derek, but is eager to pursue goals outside of their relationship. When Blue starts GED classes and expands his social circle, Derek affords him room to grow, trusting their love is enough to keep his restless pet in line. That love is put to the test when Cameron Carter reappears in Blue's life. An abusive crush from Blue's school days, Cameron is a reformed adult now and seeks absolution for old wrongs. While Blue must find it in his heart to forgive Cameron, the greater challenge lies in keeping his unrequited desire for the former bully at bay. Derek's torn between enforcing boundaries and allowing Blue closure to heal old wounds. Meanwhile, Cameron struggles to forgive himself for the pain he once caused the boy he secretly loved. As Cameron and Blue begin the road to recovery, the sizzling chemistry between them can no longer be ignored. Caught between two strong-willed men, can Blue prove his loyalty to one while denying his attraction for the other, or, is it maybe just possible that Blue can have them both?

Publisher's Note: This book contains explicit sexual content, graphic language, and situations that some readers may find objectionable: Anal play/intercourse, BDSM (including tethering, humiliation), male/male sexual situations, menage (m/m/m), strong violence.

Close to Me Details

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From Reader Review Close to Me for online ebook

Elaine White says

**** THIS REVIEW MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS ****

Okay, so I have mixed feelings about this story. Really, it's a 3.5, but I'm marking it up to 4, because I love Derek and Blue so much.

I'm not a fan of cheating in books. Especially not in developed relationships that I've invested time and emotions into, like here with Derek and Blue. I also don't like characters justifying kissing or anything more than that, but less than sex, as not cheating. It is. At least, it is to me.

I was kind of disappointed in Blue, in this story. It's not his fault, because I could see why he was doing the stupid things he was doing. The disappointment came from not knowing or understanding his previous relationship with Cameron well enough. In book 1, we had a flashback mentioned, never shown and we never really found out all the details about it. That didn't bother me, when I thought it wasn't that important. Well, it's important to this story and we still don't get all the details.

I don't understand this intense attraction to Cameron, because I never saw them interacting back when he was being a bully. There's no justification for Blue's feelings except that he fancies the pants off a guy who used to treat him like dirt. That part of the story doesn't work for me.

Also, the 'crime' element, which I'm guessing is a theme throughout the series, is a little weird. I love a crime element and I love how it was done in book 1. I had no clue what was going on there or who to suspect. Unfortunately, I did suspect the person in this book, though it was a little...shall we say ridiculous? I'm really not sure what other word to use. Far-fetched might be better. It made no sense and there was no logic or history behind it, other than one mentioned event in the past that was downplayed. That didn't make any sense to me, either.

I'm also a little disappointed with Cameron, who was hyped up by Blue, after they met again. Cameron kept saying he imagined things, that he was being silly -> who wouldn't get angry with someone who kept saying that? Especially at the important moments that Cameron does. Yet, we see no mention of Derek believing or not believing him, which was a disappointment. I choose to believe that Derek knows him well enough to know that he's not a naturally over-reactive person.

But, saying all of that, the relationship between Derek and Blue is just as great as before. I'm hoping that this Cameron thing has made it stronger (and that we never see Cameron again - sorry, but I don't like him). I'm looking forward to seeing how they recover from this event and who the copycat killer is, because I know Blue is right and there's one out there. :)

Tara says

So, I'm torn about how to rate this book. Mostly because some of the things that happened in this book would make me rate it very low, but the writing was fine.. so I compromised and rated it a 3.

This second book begins just a few weeks after the events of the first one. Derek and Blue are still trying to regain some normalcy after everything that happened. Then Blue is ready to get on with his life, get his GED, go to college, get a job, in general he needs to feel like he is a contributing member of his relationship. While going to his GED prep classes he makes some new friends, and is faced with Cameron Carter, the boy who made his teen years unbearable and contributed to the broken boy Derek found months before.

(view spoiler)

Whatever. There is also a mystery in this book. Someone is killing young male prostitutes in the area. The mystery is pretty easy to figure out and is really a small piece of the overall plot.

Wendy Ann says

It's all Blue's fault that this rating ended up as 3 stars. Part of me wanted to rate it lower because I was so disappointed in some of Blue's actions in this second book, and part of me still recognized that the writing was better than 3 stars to make me care. I'm settling on 3 as a compromise.

It was nice to learn much more history behind Blue and Derek's lives in this installment. I enjoy the D/s aspect of their relationship and look forward to reading more in Book 3. As in Book 1, trouble seems to find Blue like a homing beacon. He gets into Trouble (with a capital "T") on more than one front, and this time it's hurtful to Derek. I realize Blue is relatively young, but young doesn't have to mean stupid or incapable of restraint. Oh Blue, I really question whether you do love Derek – it seems he's the one doing all the giving and you're the one doing all the taking!

I'll give the boys another chance as I move on to Book 3, but I'm on my guard!!

Indie Reviews says

In *Blue Ruin 2: Close to Me* author Katrina Strauss continues Derek and Blue's story where it left off in Book 1 *Some Kind of Stranger*. It is some two-weeks after Blue's kidnapping and close encounter with death at the hands of a seriously disturbed predator. They've been holed-up in Derek's loft, where Derek has been taking care of Blue while he recovers both physically and emotionally.

Blue is feeling much better and ready to begin living again. They haven't had the kind of pain and pleasure sex that Blue craves since before the incident and Blue is feeling frustrated. He's also restless and wants to

pull his weight by contributing to the household expenses. Problem is, as a high school drop out all he can probably get is menial work. Blue decides to go back to school and get his GED. Derek doesn't want to let him out of his sight and suggests online courses instead, but Blue's made up his mind ~ he's going to night school to get his diploma and then probably on to a local college or technical school.

On his first day of class, Blue meets a very interesting girl named Jodi with amethyst-colored eyes and matching hair who loves all things Japanese and they quickly become good friends. Blue also comes face-to-face with his nemesis, Cameron Carter, the football jock from high school who was cruel and brutalized Blue causing him much physical and emotional pain, while at the same time serving as the main source of Blue's sexual fantasies as a teenager.

Seeing Cameron again causes Blue much angst, bringing back all the horrific memories of the torture that Cameron and his cronies had inflicted on him. But Cameron is no longer the bully that Blue remembers. He's changed and has come to a few life-altering revelations of his own. He also wants Blue's forgiveness. While Blue is trying to come to terms with whether he can grant Cameron absolution, he also can't deny their strong mutual attraction. Blue finds himself caught in a triangle - he loves Derek and has vowed to be with him forever, but he also wants Cameron. However, the time that Blue and Cameron spend together may in the end cost them both their lives.

In *Blue Ruin 2: Close to Me* Katrina Strauss delves deeper into both the characters of Derek and Blue and by extension their relationship, while at the same time expanding their universe with the introduction of new characters to the story. There are several themes running through *Blue Ruin 2* that make the second installment in this series a rich reading experience in terms of plot and in particular in respect of character development.

The most obvious character growth is with Blue. We know from *Blue Ruin 1: Some Kind of Stranger* that Blue's submissive role in his relationship with Derek is not all consuming. Blue has a strong sense of self and a curiosity about people and life that outside of the bedroom manifests itself in Blue's need to not rely solely on being taken care of by Derek and to contribute in some way to their household and ultimately to their relationship. At the same time, Blue is maturing and attempting to make emotional inroads with his estranged parents. In this context, Strauss writes the progression of this character naturally and in-keeping with the foundational attributes she ascribes to Blue at the inception of the series.

Strauss also delves deeper into the character of Derek. After almost losing Blue at the hands of a mad man Derek comes to the realization that he is in love for the first time in his life and begins to reveal more and more of himself and his past to Blue. He is also very possessive of Blue and although he should be proud of Blue's independence and his need to make something of himself there's a part of Derek that wants to keep Blue all to himself. These dichotomous feelings serve to further expose Derek's underlying vulnerabilities and their origins.

“He knew he needed to support Blue, that it was unrealistic of him to keep Blue at home with him forever. Yet a part of him was scared to let Blue out of his sight. While his thoughts shifted instantly to the night Blue had been kidnapped, a deeper memory inexplicably hit him full force.”

“Bundled in his scarf and coat, clutching his mother's hand as she'd hefted a suitcase in the other. The studio had been freezing, the radiator gone cold that day after the landlord had shut off access to the boiler room.”

While Cameron is a secondary character, he practically steals the show and this is wholly attributable to the manner in which Katrina Strauss has written this character. Given his back-story, Blue's reminiscences and the fact that he is a key source of tension and possible divisiveness between Derek and Blue, Cameron is not necessarily a character that would at first instance evoke empathy. And yet, Katrina Strauss has written this character in such a way that the reader cannot help but have empathy if not outright compassion for him. Cameron demonstrates courage, maturity and as Blue puts it "humility" in his quest for not only absolution but also for redemption. Cameron fascinates me not only in terms of his relationship with Blue, but also in terms of who and what he is and I make no bones about the fact that he is a character for whom I have developed a great affinity.

In many respects, Blue's need for a level of independence is the initial catalyst that encroaches upon Derek's fantasy to both physically and emotionally cocoon his relationship with Blue. We see glimpses of this in *Blue Ruin 1* and it is a constant theme throughout *Close to Me*. But it is the arrival and role of Cameron in their lives that brings with it Derek's realization that if he holds on too tight the fragile balance between their private and public relationship will be broken, possibly threatening their relationship altogether. The reintroduction of Cameron into Blue's life obviously creates conflict between Derek and Blue. But instead of taking the easy way out the author blurs the lines of this triangle in such a way that it creates delicious complexities, tensions and ambiguities that heighten the richness of not only the interaction between these three characters, but also of the overall story itself. And while there is more drama within the context of the story's backdrop with yet another killer on the loose it is the characters and their relationships that dominate in *Blue Ruin 2*.

As a sequel *Blue Ruin 2: Close to Me* more than lives up to the promise of the first book. I can honestly say that while I thoroughly enjoyed *Blue Ruin 1*, I enjoyed *Blue Ruin 2* even more. Katrina Strauss leaves the door open wide enough that the tenuous balance in Derek and Blue's relationship will continue to be an issue in books to come and that the happily-for-now agreement that Derek, Blue and Cameron reach in respect of their intersecting lives remains equally fragile. Luckily for us readers there's more to come.

While *Blue Ruin 2: Close to Me* can be read as a stand-alone book I strongly recommend reading *Blue Ruin 1: Some Kind of Stranger* first in order to fully appreciate the complexities and subtleties of the relationships of the primary and secondary characters in this story.

NOTE: This review was originally published online by Rainbow Reviews on December 13, 2009.

Tina says

Book 2 of the wonderful Blue Ruin series. Review to follow. :)

Mandy Beyers says

[I was glad to see Blue forgive Cameron, but it was hard to see Derek lose part of his heart to someone who did not deserve it. It also bothered me that there was quite an undercurrent of sneaking around and lying (by omission and otherwise) rather than just facing the problems. I also disliked Cameron's willingness to try to force Blue out of his established relationship when Blue had made it clear that he wished to be faithful

regardless of his

F. says

Another great instalment with Derek and Blue. Cameron is now added to the mix, it will be interesting to see if this ménage is carried on through the rest of the series. The baddy in this was easily picked but apparently he has a copycat so no doubt that will be where future books go. Will read further in the series but not right now.

Elisa Rolle says

I should confess, I was uncertain. Even if I liked a lot Blue Ruin 1, I don't like very much menages (even if they are M/M/M menages), and so when I saw the new cover of Blue Ruin 2 I was perplexed (even is it's a wonderful cover by the very good cover artist P.L. Nunn): I will like this new ones like the previous ones? And the answer is yes.

Close to Me is a little less yaoi then Blue Ruin 1, and maybe because Blue, the uke and pet of the first book, in this one is growing and is forming a own personality apart from his seme and master Derek.

After Blue was kidnapped in the first book, Derek is worrying for him a bit much; he also restrains himself during lovemaking and treats Blue like a porcelain doll. This is not something Blue can accept and after proving to Derek that he can still hold on thier pleasure/pain games in the bedroom, he wants also to prove him that he can be independent. This leads to him returning school to obtain his GED. And here he meets again Cameron.

Cam was Blue's nemesis at high school. He is the boy who always beat Blue, sometime with severe physical consequences for the smaller guy. But now Cam seems a different guy, and he wants to apologize. Worst he wants to be with Blue, since he has finally admitted to be gay and that all his violence in the past was only a way to hide his feelings toward Blue.

Blue is torn. He loves Derek, he has also vowed a commitment to the man, but he can't deny his feelings for Cam. He has long admitted that even if the boy treated him like a punching ball, he was drawn by him in the past. And now he has the chance to be with him. Don't forget that Derek was Blue first man, and Blue is a almost naievee 19 years old guy, where Derek is a 30 years old man with a very long lived past. I think Blue's uncertainty is very understandable, and also Derek's reaction at first is so: he doesn't want to share Blue, let alone leave him go. So what can he do to keep the boy with him?

As I said "Close to me" is more romance than yaoi. The seme/uke relationship is less strong and also the master/pet ones. Blue is growing, and doing that he is shortining the distance between him and Derek, if not in age for sure in experience. But Blue is a clever guy and he knows how to do it right. Still it's tender to see him act like the teenager he is, sharing a kiss while eating an icepop.

I also have to make my compliments to Katrina Strauss to have written a menage that it's not really a true ones, since the main couple maintains its integrity and closeness, and above all a menage that I, who don't like this type of relationship, have read with pleasure and also enjoyed.

Kira says

This was about the same than the first book in the series. Okay in all counts, but nothing special, really.

Good, easy read, but I'll leave the rest of the series for another time.

MsMiz (Tina) says

I started this book on Sept. 10, 2010 and made it to the bottom of the first page. Why you ask? I have no idea. It might have been the cover. With all that happened in the first book, I think I wanted to have more Derek and Blue alone time. Within no time, enter Cameron, the reason Blue cannot shower and has nightmares about getting the shit kicked out of him in high school. We then get immediately embroiled with Blue having love feelings for Cameron.

Also, one of my pet peeves about stories like this is lying, or lying by omission. Blue hid his feelings and his burgeoning 'love' relationship with Cameron from Derek. The two of them are still so insecure and the trust is not 100% which makes them both to question the love. On top of that Blue does not give Derek the respect to tell him what is going on. Derek gets to hear it in dreams and also bluntly when the shit hits the fan. While all this ends up strengthening their relationship, it still had a huge cost. In addition some understanding does have to go to Blue. He is still so so young and Derek is the only person he has ever been with. So I get that, I completely do, but use your words Blue, use them, Derek will love you no matter what.

In the end this is not a true menage story. The last scene in the book was not three people having a relationship. It was two dominant men in love with one person, Blue and being able to show that love to Blue.

Even with all this relationship angst going on, there were these pesky murders of rentboys going on. This story line was just 'okay' and really was unnecessary in my opinion.

Katrina Strauss is a strong writer and I have enjoyed her work. I will continue to read this series at some point although I do not feel compelled to hurry and read them. I like knowing they are there for me, yet it is not the irresistible desert I expect in a series.

Nichole (DirrtyH) says

Someone's been watching a little too much Queer as Folk.

...well, okay, maybe that's not technically possible. :)

But Derek and Blue *definitely* have a Brian/Justin vibe going. And then there's the whole gay neighborhood "rainbow district" thing, and the distrust of the police force thing, and even the resident drag queen at the favorite gay bar...

This particular story sort of channels the whole season 2 thing where Justin left Brian for someone closer to his own age, and then realized later the good thing he'd given up.

The difference being that Derek is actually monogamous, and Blue never actually leaves him. But the story has a similar feel, at least in my opinion, primarily in the way it deals with Blue's temptation.

And there's a new character, a female friend of Blue's, who obsesses over anime and all things Japanese, and tacks on Japanese honorifics to the end of everyone's name. This made me smile because I had a friend like that in high school.

I really liked this story. These Blue Ruin e-books are fun m/m romantica. However, the BDSM aspects seem a little out of place to me. I love reading BDSM erotica, but there's just something about Derek and Blue's relationship or maybe just the overall tone of the stories that makes it weird to me. It just doesn't fit.

I would almost prefer they just have regular sex - the BDSM parts lose their sizzle somehow in the context. I really can't put my finger on it or explain why, it just doesn't seem to fit with the story and doesn't really need to be there.

Vfields Don't touch my happy! says

It's fine for what it is. It feels like an after-school special the way the challenges are solved so quickly. That being said the adventures of Derek and Blue are a good weekend read.

Jenre says

I'd read the first book in this series *Blue Ruin: Some kind of Stranger* and enjoyed it, so when I began this book I was hoping that it would be as good as the first.

This book was really Blue's story, rather than Derek's and whilst we do get some of the book from Derek's point of view, we spend most of the time in Blue's head. This meant that I was able to sympathise more with Blue, than I did previously. In the first book I had several issues with Blue mostly to do with Blue's submissiveness and his lack of focus or direction other than staying with Derek and being taken care of by him. In this book we see that Blue's contentment with being a 'pet' was actually reasonably short lived as it doesn't take him long to get bored with sitting around all day in Derek's apartment and I liked that Blue recognised the need to go back to school and make something of his life. When he starts an intensive class which would enable him to finish school, he meets some people his own age and it's then that we also get to see another side of Blue, that of older teenager with his friends, larking about and essentially acting his age. This also went a long way to improving my opinion of him as he becomes less of a 'type' and more of a character. Blue's friends also go some way to breaking up the claustrophobic feel of the first book, where Blue and Derek are the main focus for much of the story.

When Blue goes back to school he meets his former nemesis, Cameron, who, as a young teenager, had bullied and beaten Blue for being gay. Blue has very mixed feelings for Cameron: On one hand he hates him for causing such misery during his school years and leaving behind deep psychological scars. On the other hand, Blue recognises that, despite Cameron's behaviour, he has always felt an attraction to him. When he sees Cameron again and learns that he is not only gay but deeply sorry for the hurts that he inflicted on Blue at school, he is even more confused. He still feels the attraction, but he loves Derek. It was this 'will they,

won't they?' that forms the main thrust of the plot in this book. Blue's reactions to Cameron, a mixture of lust, guilt and hurt, were complex and believable, as were his conflicting actions of responding to Cameron despite his love for Derek. Blue is a nineteen year old boy, who has only had one lover in Derek and so it was entirely understandable that he is ruled by his teenage hormones for most of the book.

Derek very much takes a back seat in this story. He is hurt by Blue's feelings for Cameron and yet he is also old enough to understand why Blue is acting as he is. At one point Derek even reflects that at nineteen he was less controlled than Blue is now. It doesn't stop him feeling jealous though and showing Blue that jealousy through the sex scenes. One part of the book that I liked especially is where Derek himself is tempted to stray, the results of that scene provided a lovely contrast to the behaviour of the much less mature Blue.

If I have any complaints about this book it would be how quickly Blue forgave Cameron for his past behaviour, although I can quite see that it fitted in with Blue's rather too trusting nature. I also felt, rather like the first book, that the serial killer mystery was rather over the top and perhaps a little tagged onto the main story. However, Looking at the blurb for the third book, I can see that the events in that mystery plot are going to feed into it so maybe once I've read number 3 I will feel differently about this aspect of the plot in book 2.

Overall, I really enjoyed reading this book. I felt that it built on what we knew of Blue and Derek from the first book, making them more rounded and less like yaoi stereotypes. I liked the dynamic of bringing in another man and how that impacts on the relationship of the couple, plus the added interest of Blue's friends. It was one of those books where I found myself thinking about the characters and the story even when I wasn't reading it. I highly recommend it to those who have already read the first book in the series and this gets a well deserved grade of 'Excellent'.

GirGeorge says

I am really liking this series. The 3-some threw me a bit as it was so out of character, but once I read about what lead up to it, kinda made more sense. Looking forward to #3

Rosy says

While i enjoyed the story, i truly hated what Blue did in this book. I understand that given his age, past physical experience and even the fact that he is male is pretty accurate. Yet regardless of these factors, cheating is never right in my book; when you profess to love and want a committed relationship with your partner. Add on the Dom/Sub dynamic and i have no love or respect left for the character.

Not wanting to place restrictions on Blue, when i would think it was totally necessary, shows that Derek wishes to trust his partner to make the right decisions. He trusts that Blue loves him enough not ruin what they have found on each other. That Blue thought that kissing, groping and sucking with Cameron was not cheating, made me see red. If i had not been reading the book on my e-reader, it would have ended up with a satisfying thud on my wall. I'm not even going to get into what i thought of Cameron's behavior. He is as low in my eyes as Blue, for he knew of the relationship between Derek and Blue and rather than back off after apologizing he was even more aggressive.

I have no problems with couples indulging in menage. In fact, i tend to love those stories if they are done right. It is plain though that when you indulge in such, it is not just with your partners permission but the fact that it will not ultimately hurt them to share you. One could blame Derek for giving permission, but it was plain that he loves Blue enough to suffer through it. Honestly when he cried trying to explain to Blue the ramifications of his actions, i truly wanted to castrate Blue.

So really my rating is not on how the story was told, but my personal enjoyment. It left a too bitter taste in my mouth.
