



Love Me Like a Rock

Amy Jo Cousins

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In art and in love, it's the rough edges that make things interesting.

Having grown up with artistic implements always in hand, there's almost nothing Austin can't make real. Except for one thing—an official relationship with his best friend, rowing teammate and occasional hookup, Vinnie.

The combination of emotional and sexual frustration fuels a spark between Austin and the nude model in his drawing class. Austin isn't used to having trouble focusing; models are merely challenging subjects to be rendered on paper. But the geology TA's direct blue gaze is powerful enough to drag Austin's focus away from his physique.

After a quick and very dirty post-class encounter, all the reasons that Austin has been waiting for his best friend go fuzzy in his mind. Sean is nothing like Vinnie. Sean is persistent, pays attention, and makes it clear he wants to be together.

But if Austin can't get his head and his heart on the same page, he could lose his friend, or his lover. Or both.

Warning: Contains rock geeks, tent sex, a dictatorial cox whose idea of a good time is drawing naked dudes, plus one naked dude who wants to be more than a good time.

Love Me Like a Rock Details

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From Reader Review Love Me Like a Rock for online ebook

Lena Grey says

“Relationships are like glass. Sometimes it’s better to leave them broken than hurt yourself trying to put them back together.” ~Unknown

Austin, of 'Love Me Like a Rock' by Amy Jo Cousins, has put his life on hold for several years, waiting for his best friend, Vinnie, to love him back. It seems to be a lost cause though, because Vinnie is obviously satisfied being just friends. Austin has grown tired of waiting for Vinnie to realize he's not getting enough from their relationship. Austin has come to the conclusion that he wants more than Vinnie is either willing or able to give him. When the opportunity comes along to be with someone else, a man named Sean, Austin doesn't hesitate to take advantage of it.

Sean is studying geology and moonlights as a nude model. He and Austin meet in the art studio where Austin is painting and Sean modeling. They have an immediate attraction, one that is quite inconveniently obvious for Sean. He's had his eye on Austin for a while now, but, because of his relationship with Vinnie, assumes Austin is taken. After being sexually deprived by Vinnie for years, Austin can't resist being pulled in by the idea of sex whenever he needs it. Sean is considerate, nurturing, and doesn't take Austin for granted. Even though they seem to be well suited for each other, Austin makes it clear he only wants a friends-with-benefits deal. Although it's not what Sean was hoping for, he's willing to try in order to be with Austin.

As Sean and Austin become closer, Austin realizes that he doesn't miss Vinnie that much or even feel guilty when he's with Sean. Sean involves him in his life significantly more than Vinnie ever did. This attention makes Austin feel wanted, rather than being an afterthought, stuck between Vinnie's research papers. Sean even takes Austin camping on a rock hunt expedition where he meets Sean's friends. They have a delightful time and Austin is painfully aware of what he's missing since he and Vinnie have no friends. Throughout all this, Vinnie seems oblivious - until Austin starts to become unavailable for their monthly sex sessions, and other occasions when he deems that he has time to give Austin his attention. The real breaking point comes at Austin's art exhibition. This show is a big deal for Austin, one Austin asked Vinnie to attend with him. Vinnie, obviously not realizing its importance, declines. Sean is there instead, proud of Austin and wanting to share his big moment. At the last moment, Vinnie decides to come and surprise Austin. When he realizes Austin and Sean are together the sparks begin to fly.

Although I understand why Austin was so frustrated with Vinnie, I don't think he did enough to promote change. Austin put up with Vinnie's ways and held his frustration in instead of trying to talk to Vinnie. It may not have made a difference, but, just maybe it would have saved both of them from a lot of pain. This story reminds me of the old adage “If you do what you always did, you get what you always got.” If you enjoy reading about art, crew, redheads, and rocks, you may like this story. Thanks, Amy Jo, for getting Austin and Sean together.

NOTE: This book was provided by Samhain Publishing for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

Ele says

4.5 stars

Susan says

2.5 stars

I just didn't feel it.

This story begins with Austin drawing a nude model. A nude model, who he can't stop admiring in a non-artistic way...

Austin and the model, Sean, hit it off after the session and start flirting with each other. This flirting leads to sex and all of a sudden they are hanging out and having sex on a regular basis.

But Austin tells Sean it can't be anything serious between them, because he is kind of hung up on someone else. That someone else is his friend Vinnie, who he has a friends-with-benefits thing with (don't worry, this is only once a month and once Austin meets Sean, he doesn't sleep with Vinnie).

I had a hard time getting a good feel for Austin. I felt so detached from him and the rest of the characters. I also thought the first half was all tell and no show (we especially get told about the friendship between Austin and Vinnie, but for the first half, we don't even see Vinnie).

I had a really hard time believing in the friendship between Austin and Vinnie. They were supposed to be very close friends, but they never hung out, and they never even talked to each other. But for some reason I was told to believe Vinnie was so important in Austin's life.

There were times I really did enjoy this story (the camping scene was great!), but overall I had a hard time liking it. :(

Kristie says

Austin... Austin is this character that I met a while back, right? He's the guy I always thought was quirky, cute, and a bit annoying with all his tension and seemingly endless supply of energy and anxiety. OMG he's not that guy! Okay, he is a little bit. But he's so much more. Austin is so complex and wonderful, I ate this book up. I love his humor, I love his mind, I love the way a huge part of his personality comes out in this book. The Austin you think you know from previous books is not the Austin you get here.

When Austin meets Sean, and they start pursuing a non-relationship relationship, you KNOW that that's not

going to last. Sean is everything Vinnie isn't. He's open and emotive. He's paying attention to all the little things about Austin that Vinnie never noticed. Sean includes Austin in his life, sharing his friends with him, his experiences that are so different. He's attentive like you'd not believe. Sean is giving Austin everything he needs. There are moments in the book where Sean and Austin shine so brightly, I thought my heart would explode with happiness. There is a scene, one where Austin does not have everything he would need to draw or paint, and when you read it... when you get to that moment and Sean solves all of this, it's truly amazing. It is so ROMANTIC.

I don't have the right words in me to explain my love for this book. The care and thoughtfulness between Austin and Sean is precious. The friendship Austin has with Vinnie is something that Austin needs to be careful of and it made me nervous. The journey they all go on took my breath away and I loved every single minute of it. I never thought I'd stop smiling, seriously.

If you are a fan of this series, and really, even if you're not you need to read this. I can't recommend it enough. It's wonderful and everything I'd hoped for and more.

Thank you to NetGalley and Samhain for the ARC in exchange for my honest review.

Aerin says

I feel like jumping with joy and doing cartwheels and all that crazy stuff that show I'm happy with this book! After the disaster that Rafi's book was (Real World wasn't that great either) I was cautiously optimistic that Austin's story would be a lot better. I wanted the same quality writing I got used to getting from Amy, and not even the fact that Austin and Vinnie weren't going to be happy together didn't deter me from giving this book a try.

The first thing that convinced me this was a turn in the right direction was the use of a ginger character; I just LOVE gingers! Apparently Austin does as well, because even though he's still hoping for a relationship with his long-time friend Vinnie, he doesn't lose the opportunity to ogle Sean, the model in his art class. Or rather, he doesn't exactly ogle Sean per se, because Austin can't take his eyes off of Sean's dick. This book was humorous, and I liked the vibe and chemistry I got from Austin and Sean. Those two couldn't keep their hands off each other and had sex pretty much whenever the need struck them.

There isn't much angst, but the difference between the expectation those two had when it came to their relationship created enough intensity to keep things interesting. Sean wants something serious from Austin, and he doesn't fail to let Austin know. Even though Austin is still hung up on Vinnie, he can't help but start to see how much better Sean is, how much more alike they are. Austin isn't used to being wanted but has always dreamed about it, so little by little he starts to see Sean for who he really is... a devoted, dedicated man, who always makes Austin feel wanted and feel certain he's got Sean's attention at all times.

I would've really liked to have Sean's POV as well (the story is told in Austin POV only), but I appreciate how well written and powerful Sean's character is. He is easy to understand and connect with, and his personality comes through loud and clear. The dialog was so well written, at times I felt like I was seeing things through Sean's pov, especially during their first camping trip. You see, Austin NEEDS that first cup of coffee at the beginning of each day, only coffee makes him poop. Austin knows nothing about pooping in nature, so when told he needs to dig his own hole, he's horrified. For Austin, digging his own poop hole is akin to digging his own grave, at least that's what I got from the whole thing. That's some seriously hilarious

shit (no pun intended) you don't want to skip on.

This was awesome, and I almost wanted to give it 5 stars, but it wasn't quite there. I wanted it to be longer and maybe see some resolution between Vinnie and Austin. I know we'll probably get that in the next book, but I'm not good at waiting. Great book!

Morgan Skye says

This is the 6th book in the series, but it can absolutely be a standalone!

Austin and Vinny are best-friends-with-benefits. Only Austin really wishes it was more than that. In fact, he's pining. But Vinny isn't responsive and Austin figures some day he's gotta do something about that.

Meanwhile, Austin meets Sean. Sean is a ginger! who models for one of Austin's classes. He can't keep his eyes and then his hands and then his mind off of Sean once he actually sees the guy.

Sean is everything Vinny isn't – and at first that freaks Austin out – but – over time – he realizes that might just be a good thing.

**

I fell in love with this series in book one and Amy Jo Cousins hasn't disappointed me yet! I think this is my second favorite in the series – but really – it's a close second to book one.

Austin is a GREAT character and what I love about the writing is how well Amy Jo shows us the progression in his head from “Sean's a fuck buddy” to “Sean is something important”. It's very well done and oh so sexy!

I was very glad to see the communication in this book was open and honest and never the central theme. Yes, Vinny and Austin could have talked to one another more, but I totally understood that Vinny and Austin's history sort of precluded that from being a viable option. Sean only knew the “more adult” version of Austin so he could be a different guy. Someone Vinny never really knew.

Vinny's absence from the story was important because as a reader I didn't want to be attached to him through Austin (especially since the next book is about Vinny and a new guy!) so I was grateful that his part in this story was small.

The smexy times were plentiful but not overwhelming and though I wish we got to see them later in life – post graduation – I know that the HFN is solid and will lead to a HEA eventually.

(My favorite scene is when Sean makes Austin art supplies when they are out camping... Swoooooon!)
4.5 of 5 stars

Audio

Cooper North has narrated this entire series and he does so masterfully! I think he sets just the right tone for the age of the MCs as well as the emotions. He gives everyone unique voices and it's always easy to know

who is speaking. (Which is hard given how many secondary characters there are in this series!) I think he really adds to the overall enjoyment of the experience and his narration is highly recommended!

5 of 5 stars

Overall 5 of 5 stars

Wendy says

This was a nice short and steamy read. I haven't read any other books in this series, so this can be read as a stand alone.

Austin is an art student in college and has been pining for his best friend Vinnie for 6 years. Vinnie however only wants to get it on once a month, and he usually has to be drunk or tipsy. So you can imagine that Austin is a bit frustrated. He has been in love with Vinnie for so long, and waiting for the man to come to his senses really starting to annoy him. Also...he's horny

So when Austin is in his drawing class, he gets a hard on for the naked man modelling for them. Apparently he's not alone in his attraction, because the model, Sean, approaches him after class and they have a very steamy get together right there. They exchange numbers and go for a repeat. Austin however makes it very clear that this is just about sex and that he's hung up on another man.

Weeks pass and these guys are hanging out a lot, while also screwing each others brains out. Austin is aware that Sean might be hoping for more, but he just can't seem let go of Vinnie.

How long will Sean be willing to stay with Austin and when will Austin get his head out of his ass ...

I really enjoyed this one and there were parts that were so funny I almost peed my pants. I do however have some issues with this story. I just got so sick and tired of Austin thinking about Vinnie every other page. This to me was really irritating. I understand that he had a thing for his best friend, but did it have to be mentioned so freaking often ??

Also, I had no idea who Vinnie really was. I don't know if there was more about the two of them in previous books, but Vinnie was almost non-existent in this one. So I had no idea about what their relationship really entailed. They didn't seem like very best friends to me. I don't think they were even talking to each other much...This was all a bit weird and confusing to be. I think I would have liked it better, if there was more about Vinnie and Austin's relationship and past together. Vinnie was being painted as the bad guy here and I just wasn't convinced that that was justified.

An ok read for me and I will definitely read the next book, because I want to know who Vinnie really is. 3,5

stars from me ;)

Erika says

Ok this book (novella?) was really friggin' cute, and I say this as someone who has not read books 2-5. I'll let you know now that you don't need to read those if you haven't already, because the story stands on its own.

This one's about Austin, a curly haired artist who's got some form of ADHD. The only thing that calms his brain down and allows him to focus is his art and, he comes to find out, Sean, the red headed geologist.

Here's the thing though: Austin is pretty into his old friend (and now college roommate) Vinnie, who doesn't reallllly seem to reciprocate those feelings. So instead of sitting around pining for Vinnie, Austin decides to hook up with mountain man Sean (who's had his eye on Vinnie for about a year now)... but only the one time. Next thing he knows, Austin, who always forgets his phone places, has started keeping his phone with him at all times so he can cyber stalk this Sean guy. Umm... In a not creepy way, of course.

One hook up turns into another. And then another, and another, until they're pretty much boyfriends. Except Austin has made it clear from the beginning that he's not looking for anything serious because of that whole Vinnie thing. Sean says he's ok with this, but is he? Is he really?

You'll find out, won't you?

What I found super refreshing about this story was that it wasn't clear right from the outset that these two guys would end up married with kids, like it is in so many other romance novels. I especially liked that it had a really great HFN ending instead of the ever popular Really Big Gay Wedding (and what a welcome change that is!) . I also enjoyed that they talked and acted like somewhat more mature college guys, and not like 40 year olds with mortgages and their own kids to worry about.

Because of this, nothing about the story or their relationship felt forced; it just flowed. The sex was hot and plentiful but not overly abundant, and even The Big Misunderstanding felt realistic and not overwrought.

So yeah, I liked it. I liked it a lot, and I think you will too.

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Maria Rose says

This standalone romance focuses on Austin, a secondary character in the previous Bend or Break series books, and a member of the rowing team. He's got a friends with benefits relationship with Vincent going on, but it's getting pretty stale, as while Austin has had stronger feelings for Vincent, he seems to have been waiting forever for Vincent to return those feelings. While in limbo on that front, he meets Sean, a model in

one of his art classes. Sean is the opposite of any guy Austin's ever been attracted to before, the kind of guy who thinks a weekend roughing it away from the city is heavenly. They've got very different backgrounds, with Austin having grown up in a wealthy but cold family unlike Sean's poorer affectionate one. Will Austin give a relationship with Sean a chance to flourish or keep holding out for Vincent to consider him as a more than just a friend?

I really enjoyed this story! If you're worried about cheating or a three way triangle, you don't need to be, as from the start of the story Austin and Vincent are already in limbo with their friendship (and sometime sexual relationship). While Austin's had stronger feelings for Vincent, he's been waiting forever for Vincent to return them, and is finally realizing that maybe it's never going to happen. It's in this mode that he meets Sean, posing nude for an art class, and experiences a first for him - being turned on by the model (how embarrassing!). But when Sean indicates that he returns that attraction, they share some smoking hot sex. Austin is withholding himself though, not willing to commit fully to a relationship, unlike Sean who is all in from the start. I loved that Sean was comfortable expressing his feelings for Austin and made it clear that he was interested in something more than just a fling. And I liked that he forces Austin out of his comfort zone, bringing him on his outdoor camping trips and sharing his love of nature (this makes for some very funny scenes, by the way). They are definitely opposites, but both have wonderful qualities to bring to the table. While Austin sometimes comes across as having an entitlement chip on his shoulder, Sean is quick to bring him back to earth. As expected the scenes with the rowing team and the camaraderie of the guys make for lots of laughs even amidst the emotional drama of Austin having to decide whether he will give up waiting for Vincent for the man who wants him in the here and now. 4.5 stars for this sexy and entertaining story.

Note: a copy of this story was provided by the publisher via NetGalley for review.

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

~4.25~

This one's a WIN! It's light on the angst and high on the sweetness & steam.

Austin may be all wrapped up in his long-time friend Vinnie, but that doesn't stop him from ogling the hot ginger model in his figure drawing class. It doesn't help that Sean is naked, or that Austin can't stop looking at his dick.

It's immediately obvious that Sean wants more from the relationship than Austin, who insists he's not looking for anything serious. Never mind that Austin can't go three days without seeing Sean, and that every time they get together they burn up the sheets.

Austin's used to practically begging Vinnie for sex, but Sean loves getting down and dirty. **For the first time, Austin gets what it's like to have a man's attention focused on him.**

There's a scene during their first camping trip together when Austin insists he can't drink coffee and then admits WHY, which is reminiscent of my first camping trip with my college boyfriend. Total LOL material right there.

Austin almost mucks the whole thing up by holding on to the idea of Vinnie. He's lucky Sean is so forgiving. And he really is. **Sean is an awesome MC: secure with himself, patient, easygoing, and a god in bed.**

We get only Austin's POV, but Sean is a fully sketched character.

Austin and Vinnie talk things through, and Vinnie is hurt that Austin's moved on, but Austin can't worry about that anymore. He has a real boyfriend now, a boyfriend who takes him camping, brings him food, encourages his art, and gives him mind-blowing orgasms.

"I'm not with you for the sex, Sean ... not only for the sex, although it's definitely the best I've ever had in my entire life. By far ... You make me see things differently. And I'm different with you. Because you make me feel safe. And wanted"

Sean cleared his throat. "That's good then. Really good. I'm glad to hear it. Because I want you like whoa. Always."

The guys get good at communicating and resolving conflict, which bodes well for any relationship. I consider the ending a tentative HEA. All the love for the epilogue.

Feelz galore, baby!

.Lili. says

Love Me Like a Rock was a real delight to read and Sean:

And you have been inducted into my Book Boyfriend Hall of Fame. I loved EVERY. SINGLE. THING. ABOUT. HIM. Patient, funny, loving, caring, and a dirty mouth to boot. Oh, and he's a redhead. I think Amy Jo Cousins wrote him with me in mind. For real. Well, that's my story, and I'm sticking to it.

Anyhoo, back to business. Love Me Like a Rock is book six of the Bend or Break series. We finally get Austin's story. Austin and Vinnie have been wrapped in this weird friends with benefits relationship except that it's all on Vinnie's terms. Austin has been wanting more for a long time and is getting tired of being just an afterthought to his best friend. After a nude sitting for art class, Austin hooks up with the model and figures it'll be a one-time thing except he keeps going back for more.

My highlights:

-Sean. ^^^Look back to the beginning. I don't think I have to elaborate.

-Austin. He was such a great narrator, and I loved being in his head. I believe the author did an excellent job developing his character.

-This book had a great steady pace. It just flowed. I started last night thinking to just read a couple of chapters and ended up reading the whole thing. Unputdownable

-Sexy times. For me, this was Amy Jo's steamiest book and it was sweet and dirty.

-As far as relationship development- this is a slam dunk!

-I also enjoyed the feel good vibe of the story. I felt like I was wrapped up in my warmest softest warm

blanket.

-The end. I know these guys are in it for the long haul and will do what it takes to make it work.

Do I have anything negative to report? NOPE.

Can it be read as a standalone? Yes. I read this one out of order, and I didn't feel lost.

I have to give this charming, fun, sexy, enjoyable story 5 Stars. I often re-read favorite books, and this one will be added to my Comfort/I Need a Pick Me Up List. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

This review is cross-posted at Gay Book Reviews.

Amy Cousins says

The bickering between roommates and BFFs Austin and Vinnie was one of my favorite parts of writing **LEVEL HANDS**. And the tweets and emails and messages started coming pretty much immediately: "When do we get a book about *those* two?"

Well, they're coming, but not exactly the way everyone anticipated...

LOVE ME LIKE A ROCK tells Austin's story, **HARD CANDY** tells Vinnie's story, and **BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE** is the duology containing both novellas (and the latter will be available in paperback too for those of you who have a collection going!).

Sneak peeks and giveaways of all three books will be happening in my newsletter over the summer. Sign up at <http://eepurl.com/YdVW1> if you want in on that goodness!

Vallie says

Hmm... Austin and Sean. Good combo, sweet chemistry, loads of dirty talk, and overall enjoyable couple to read about. The story didn't make a huge impression, but it is a nice easy read well worth an afternoon.

Austin is hung up on his best friend Vinnie who he's been sleeping with for years, **only** after Vinnie submits a paper and **only** after they've gotten drunk –Vinnie's unspoken rules. Austin wants more and expects them to eventually make it official, but things aren't looking up in that regard. During a drawing session with a nude model, Austin gets the hots for ginger muscle man, Sean. Sean is a graduate geology student who has been attracted to Austin for over a year and has been looking for an opportunity to meet him. Well, let's just say a lot more than drawing happened during that session.

They started hooking up very frequently, seeing as they were both ridiculously hot for each other. Austin laid

the rules from the get go –no strings, and cruised along just fine, all the while hoping Vinnie will notice and miss him. Fat chance of that happening. **There was a hilarious and sexy camping trip, marathon sex sessions at Sean's dorm room, and the feelz crept up for Austin without him realising.** From constantly thinking about Vinnie while with Sean –even during sex scenes in the beginning, *how annoying!*- Austin started feeling more for Sean and realising that they were sort of boyfriends already. Austin always felt neglected by Vinnie and having Sean's undivided, laser-focused attention was quite the thrill. But when Sean realised just how much thoughts of Vinnie were still affecting Austin, he delivered an ultimatum. Yes, silly misunderstanding, but they made up and all was well.

The book was pretty successful in bringing these characters to life, even if Sean was a little too perfect. I loved how self-confident he was and how patient with Austin. And Austin finally realised how much happier he was in an actual relationship and pursued it properly. The sex scenes were hot, the dirty-talk hit all the right buttons, and the cuddling scenes were super sweet.

Points taken for not enough dialogue – *I was tired of being in Austin's head for so long* , especially when his running commentary interrupted the few pieces of dialogue we got. *The plot was okay but the ending felt a bit anti-climactic* –I just didn't think the misunderstanding towards the end was enough to create some tension.

Overall a quick and enjoyable read. Recommend!

ARC was provided by the author in exchange for an honest review. See this review at Gay Book Reviews.

***J* Too Many Books Too Little Time says**

4.5 Stars!

Dear Book,

This is only the second book in the series I've read. And I really only read it because my homie, Lili, said I would like it. She was right. I loved it.

I don't even know how to explain it. The writing was engaging, it sucked me in from the get go. It read super quick, or maybe I just didn't want to put it down.

There was good steam. And believe it or not, I loved all of Austin's inner thoughts. Except when they were about Vinnie. Every time his name came up....

There was the potential for drama when it came to Vinnie, and I am so glad to say that it was handled to my liking. So yes, this one was low angst and drama.

Definitely recommend this one! Thanks again for looking out for me Lili!

? Todd says

This one left me not sure exactly what to think.

Did I **like** the book? Sure.

Did it leave me feeling that there were *enough* **interactions** between Austin and Vinnie? Uhhh, **no**.

It felt like Austin and Vinnie said **barely 100 words** to one another *on-page* for the entire book. I needed to be *shown* more about why I should care more about what they had, or could have possibly had, to make this story work fully work for me.

So did I *love* the book as a whole? **Ehhh**.

I did really like **Austin**, a lot. And I kinda loved **Sean**, but he was written as **nearly the perfect guy**, which felt a bit too '*wrapped up with a bow*' for me. Sorry, that's just how I felt.

Austin:

The one thing that I felt out of place regarding Sean was what he said **after** the big reconciliation scene. I'm not sure if "*Sean's Big Fuck Up*" was really necessary, as what he said seemed **so out of place** when compared to his previous pursual of Austin. That part felt a bit contrived to me.

Sean:

The story was **extremely sex-centric**, as they essentially started out being a **no strings attached, repeating hook up**, before the actual feels came into play for Austin. (*The feelings were there the entire time for Sean, kept simmering just below the surface.*)

But when things started getting more serious, ***that*** was when I actually began enjoying the book more. I just wish it had happened a bit sooner.

As the book ends, with a nice epilogue, **Austin and Sean have a strong HFN**, with *hopes of an HEA*, if they put in the required effort.

Although this one wasn't all out love for me, I'd still rate it at around **3.25 stars**.

I'll be reading **Vinnie's book** next, so I'm curious to see how he changes after seeing his '*one that got away*' happily in love with someone else and reevaluating his priorities and level of control that his parents have over the way that he lives his life.

My ARC copy of the book was provided by the publishers through NetGalley in exchange for a fair, unbiased review.
