



## The Devil's Trill Sonata

*Matthew J. Metzger*

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## **The Devil's Trill Sonata** Matthew J. Metzger

Three years after that first meeting in a theatre storeroom, Jayden Phillips and Darren Peace are separating for the first time, trading in school for the trappings of adult life. Jayden has achieved his dream of a place at Cambridge University; Darren has achieved his own of escaping the Cold War of home and tasting true independence for the first time.

A hundred miles apart and embarking on two very different paths, Jayden feels it is inevitable that time and distance will slowly pull them apart. School relationships, after all, don't last. Darren disagrees -- at first. Love is all they need, and they have weathered harder storms than chasing dreams.

That is until the separation, and the encroaching influence of Jayden's new friends, begins to take its toll on Darren's mental state. Alone, he descends in a rapid downward spiral that is finally arrested by one night and a drastic course of action. In the wake of a single unanswered phone call, Jayden learns that time and distance have the power to do much more than break a relationship.

The dream is over -- and the reality is far, far worse.

## **The Devil's Trill Sonata Details**

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Author : Matthew J. Metzger

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## From Reader Review The Devil's Trill Sonata for online ebook

### Nicole Mitchell says

This book has taken me 7 months to read (the topic it covers is one that has a profound effect on me, so I had to stop for a while), but it was worth it.

Darren is having realy trouble with his depression, and it's documented so painfully and clearly - it's clear that the author know what they're talking about when it comes to depression.

It tackles tough topics, can you stay together as a young couple? How do you manage a long distance relationship? What do you do when the darkness looms heavily and you feel like there's no one that can understand or help you through it?

It's important to remember here, a big thing about depression isn't that you're not alone, but that sometimes, to the sufferer, it's nigh on impossible to think that way, because ultimately, even with friends and family around you, you do have to fight the big battle on your own, because it's \*inside your head\*.

I love Jayden, really, I do. I don't know what I would have done in his position - he's a young kid, and he's trying to be practical with this relationship, knowing that sometimes you need to make sacrifices now, in order to live the dream later. I certainly agreed with him wanting to attend Cambridge, and glad that he didn't throw away that chance at a good future for love.

His choice in friends whilst at uni though, was less than stellar. I Thought Leah was awesome, Jonathan, forgivable (if a douche in one scene), but I wanted to slap Ella with such a passion! That's the great thing about this book and this author though, there are characters that you can't stand, and characters with flaws, and that makes them real.

I was welling up by page 115, and crying by page 190. I cried through the rest of the book - and I so very rarely have a book or a movie invoke such a reaction in me.

There was an appearance by the dynamic duo, Ethan and Paul, who are brilliant for providing a bit of comic relief in what is an emotionally heavy book. They are my favourite side characters, and would have an awesome spinoff story!

Special mention has to go to Rachel, Darren's friend in this book. She's funny, witty, and has her own issues, but more importantly, she cares about Darren and understands to a degree wihat he's dealing with. There's a little surprise twist to her that I'm not going to mention here but it's nice to see an author covering such a wide range of issues with young people and sexuality for a change.

This book is a must read for both teens and adults alike.

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### Baba says

4 stars.\*\*\*\*Review completed March 6, 2014

*He wanted this, to stand under scalding hot spray and just hang on. Jayden hugged him like he'd never let go, and swayed them to imaginary music, and Darren was content to go with the flow, stroking water off Jayden's neck and shoulders and pressing lingering, open-mouthed kisses into wet skin as Jayden played with his hair. Eventually, Jayden found his mouth again and stole what little air remained in the tiny bathroom, letting Darren relearn the shape of his tongue and teeth and jaw, massaging both hands briefly into Darren's soaked curls before dropping one hand between them and pushing him back into the tiles.*

*He was bound to this: the swell and chorus of thirty, forty instruments in perfect harmony, and the terrible fall as the pitch plummeted. He was tied to the high, terrible shriek of lonely violins, and the deep boom of a threatening horn, like the tide rushing to claim the crying cliffs. His heart picked up, hammering in time to the crashes and bangs of waves on the shore, and his ear strained towards the low note, almost unheard under all the chaos, that whispered for calm in the eye of the storm.*

The Devil's Trill Sonata is about making choices. Wrong and right choices. It's about friends. Fake and true friends. It's about influence and adjustment. How much do you bend to fit in? It's about distance. A distance that complicates love. At the same time, however, remoteness can strengthen the bond of love when you're willing to recognize and overcome the problems and barriers caused by a physical distance. This story is also about the scary simplicity of drifting back into darkness...

**Tears...**

Guiseppe Tartini's Devil's Trill Sonata

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7rxl5...>

The Devil's Trill Sonata is set three years after Vivaldi in the Dark ended. While Jayden is mighty excited to live his dream at Cambridge University, Darren seems to be a little less spurred. Jayden going to Cambridge means they will have to endure a physical separation for the next three years. Instead of taking the path to an academic career, Darren prefers a nine-to-five job. He's going to start training as a crime scene examiner in Southampton. Thus far Darren could always count on Jayden being there for him and with him whenever another bad day struck him. Will Darren be strong enough to weather out their separation or will his depression draw him in a black hole again?

***"Jayden, I'm bisexual. What do you want me to do, become a hermit?"***

***"Hang out with lesbians," Jayden replied promptly.***

***"...I suppose I asked for that."***

This installment begins innocent enough; from piano to a strong crescendo, so to speak. It's comparable to a faint drizzle that turns into rain pattering at your window and then slowly yet steadily the rain grows stronger until a dark storm threatens to drown you. I must repeat myself, Matthew has a neat way to brighten a 'dark' story with snarky banter and humor. Whilst reading The Devil's Trill Sonata I've had enough time to get used to the prospect of a painful climax because the laughter and fun join hands with the angst and drama. I think the build-up was very well done and considering the dark theme, a certain level of drama is a necessity and that's perfectly fine by me.

I don't want to nag but I have one major complaint. There were way too many words written in *italic*; it was pretty distracting. In my opinion authors should use it as sparingly as possible because the effect of *italic* type tends to get lost when overused. Just go by the rule **less is more**.

Both Jayden and Darren can rely once again on Jayden's loving and supportive parents as well as Darren's older half-brother. Of course the two jesters Ethan and Paul make more than a little cameo and a few other characters are introduced in this story. The Devil's Trill Sonata sucked me in right from the start and never let go. Sure, a couple scenes tested my level of frustration and I had to question the choices they made.

\*points finger at Jayden\* Yet at the same time I had to cut the guys some slack considering how very young they are. Engaging writing and storytelling and an interesting cast of characters made for a very good and satisfying reading experience. All in all an emotional ride that dealt with plenty of uncertainties. A story also that might tug at your heartstrings in the end, and I'm looking forward to reading Jayden and Darren's story arc in **Rhapsody on a Theme** which should be released coming May.

**Steam:** very low ~~but sex is overrated anyway~~. Still, I'd love to read an erotic romance novel written by the talented Matthew J. Metzger because I'm convinced he'd deliver. Whatever he'll decide to write in the future, I feel confident that we can expect great things from Matthew. He's definitely an author to watch out for.

Recommended read.

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<http://baba.booklikes.com>

## Mark says

**Absence makes the heart grow fonder or out of sight out of mind? Jayden and Darren have to find this one out for themselves and their relationship is put to the test due to new locations, new beginnings and new friends.**

School is over and Jayden and Darren have to part ways. Jayden is off to Cambridge University to start his studies after winning his scholarship and Darren has gone to Southampton to start his job training in the police as a crime scene investigator. This rips them apart but then as we know when school is finished then real life takes over and it isn't always easy. The book describes perfectly the trials and tribulations of dealing with a long distance relationship. Jayden wonders whether the relationship will last and Darren hopes beyond all hope that Jayden will stay with him. I just loved the way that Matthew treats this subject with a good amount of reality and that even they are both now adults, they are still very impressionable and changes start to take place as they try to adapt to their new surroundings and not to mention the new friends. Here again

the people Jayden is making friends with are totally different to the ones Darren is making. To be honest Darren never finds it very easy to make friends anyway and only has one, Rachel, the junior school teacher who lives in the bedsit opposite his.

After arriving at Cambridge Jayden starts to make friends and the obvious game of trying to fit in and impress starts. All his Uni mates tell him that school relationships never last and will inevitably fizz out. Jayden is determined to stay with Darren but starts to have doubts. The only contact they have is through chatting online, Facebook, texting and Skyping. However, Darren was never the most talkative and Jayden has so much work on with his studies and exams they both find it difficult to communicate effectively. You can feel the change start to happen in Jayden as he adapts to his surroundings and effectively starts to drift away from Darren almost taking him for granted. This was obviously upsetting for me as I read but at the same time also realistic. Jayden is trying to fit into his new surroundings and Darren in the meantime is getting huge doses of reality in his job training which totally polarises them both. Jayden living in his somewhat idealistic world and Jayden being confronted with the harsh realities of life.

When Darren comes to visit Jayden in Uni they have a falling out as Jayden's new Uni friends don't accept him and see him as brash and outspoken. Darren sees how Jayden is trying to impress them by drinking wine, something he never did before and are not really good for Jayden as friends. This upsets Jayden and puts even more doubts in his mind. I remember after leaving school I joined the Royal Air Force and my best friend went to London University. When I went to visit her and her friends I remember sitting in the pub thinking to myself, "What sort of crap are they talking about, they have no idea about the real bloody world." That was probably because I was getting huge doses of reality every day in the military. So I could definitely relate to Darren on this one, seeing his boyfriend drift off into academia, changing in front of his eyes. This of course only frustrates Jayden as he thinks Darren is being disrespectful of his friends.

Darren is still fighting his depression and I felt so sorry for him. What an awful illness to have and at such a young age. Then the nemesis comes, Jayden cancels his weekend visit that Darren has been looking forward to for a long time and sets him on course for another dark encounter with his depression. Jayden has decided to go to Paris with his Uni friends, an offer from Jonathan's rich dad, and Jayden can't resist as he has never been outside of the UK before or travelled much at all. I mean who couldn't resist? Jayden's loyalties are now torn but still decides to go, but when he gets back he jumps on the next train down to Southampton. Now here I did feel like Darren was behaving very selfishly. He has rich parents and has visited these places at a young age, but Jayden has never had the opportunity. So I think it would be only right to let Jayden go and wish him a wonderful time. This is where we realise the depth of emotion that Darren has for Jayden and is in some ways dependent on him for coping with his illness. When Jayden does come to visit this leads to the first real fight between them, but they manage to sort things out and get their relationship back on track.

However, Darren sees Jayden changing more and more and subsequently his moods become darker and darker. Again it was absolutely heart wrenching to read how depression affects people and as I said in my review in the first book Vivaldi in the Dark I have now come to appreciate more what a debilitating thing this is. Darren's friend Rachel takes him to a concert after she learns that he is actually a talented musician and upon hearing the strings, this sets Darren off onto a road of despair, thoroughly believing his relationship with Jayden to be over.

At the risk of being spoilery, which I always try to avoid, but I feel I really need to mention something here. So therefore I'm going out on a limb and taking that risk.

Darren hits such a low that he takes an overdose. Now suicide attempts I guess are not what every reader is going to feel comfortable with reading, I certainly wasn't sure either to begin with. So it totally pushed my

boundaries to say the least. But all I can say is this is so beautifully written (if not a contradiction in terms) that you feel the emotional despair in Darren. This chapter was harrowing, distressing, agonizing and heart-breaking all in one, but also so sensitively and realistically written that I couldn't help but completely understand Darren in his despair and everything being accompanied literally by The Devil's Trill Sonata by Giuseppe Tartini. Once again the violin and it's music symbolising Darren's darkest emotions. If you're brave enough and fancy listening to it whilst reading this chapter then here is an excerpt below. I studied music before joining the RAF, actually I was a musician (Clarinetist) for the RAF, and I could hear this music in my head as I was reading. Good job I didn't really listen to it whilst reading this chapter otherwise I would have been reduced to an emotional wreck myself. Extremely powerful writing and using the abstract descriptive device of the music to portray the ever darkening mood, brilliant!

#### The Devil's Trill Sonata ~ excerpt

So back to life, back to reality. This puts Jayden in a complete flat spin and he hurries to his side. Now it's make or break time. They have a lot of talking to do and a lot of things to sort out. Once again they stay at Jayden's parent's house. Gawd, how I love Jayden's parents. These characters are also one of the best parts of this series. They are supportive, loving and realistic to both boys and provide a safe haven and solid rock of support in the storm. Even when you are a fledgling adult, it's always nice to know you can come home and enjoy the safety and comfort of family. Well in Jayden's case anyway, but they have more or less adopted Darren as son-in-law. While they are staying with Jayden's parent's, Jayden also has time to reflect on his situation. He feels maybe Cambridge wasn't what it was all cracked up to be, the reality being very different from the dream and the friends may not be quite the right choice. Darren gets to hear some hard truths from Jayden's father which results in a turn around in Darren's way of thinking and sets him on track to tackle this illness. Realising if he doesn't get to grips with it, he'll only eventually pull Jayden down with him. Will this be enough though? That is the question here. I would like to think that he loves Jayden enough to really make an effort.

So as with life, both guys leave school and for the first time face the harsh realities of the real world, putting their relationship to the real test; a make or break situation. This book ends on a HFN note and you know they still have a lot to sort out and will have to weather a lot more turmoil caused by distance and young characters being molded by different circumstances, experiences and surroundings. Again you'll be taken on an emotional ride and drawn into dark emotional depths, but then just as hard as you fall, you'll be uplifted again at the end which makes it all the more beautiful. For now all I can do is wish Darren and Jayden all the best and will meet them again in book three, Rhapsody on a Theme, to see how they are faring.

Now off to read this one ~ ~ book three is released tomorrow (18th May 2014)~ review to follow! :-)

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#### **Karen says**

After being absolutely blown away by the first book, this one was pretty disappointing, in part because the

characters changed inexplicably from the end of Vivaldi in the Dark. Darren was an excellent student who was going to become an engineer in book one, and now he is a man who cannot stand to do any more schooling and so becomes a crime scene investigator (where the heck did that come from?). Jayden also becomes much more superficial, trying to impress the people that he clearly doesn't respect or admire when he first meets them, while ignoring the more deserving people who wanted to be his friends, and I never thought he was that kind of guy in the first book.

Also, I'm not sure how truly the NHS was represented here. I'm American, and our systems are different, but we have mandatory involuntary holds placed upon people who show up in the emergency department after a nearly successful suicide attempt. I can't imagine that the English NHS doesn't have something at least similar. Darren has very severe depression, and I thought the whole approach of the two MCs here -- to ignore treating it as a medical problem when they clearly recognized that there was a chemical imbalance going on and this was not just situational -- was not just disingenuous but dangerous. And neither one of them was portrayed as stupid enough to have that attitude. So, more than a little disappointing.

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### **Dallie P says**

This book had me in tears. So amazing.

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### **F. says**

This is set 3 years after we first met Jayden and Darren in Vivaldi in the Dark. Jayden has achieved his dream and been accepted to Cambridge and Darren is a trainee crime scene investigator. Unfortunately this means that they have to live apart and with each having full timetables it is hard to find time to get together. They Skype, text and phone a lot but start to drift apart as Jayden changes to fit in with the Cambridge crowd.

Darren lets the black dog take control.

A story about growing up, making decisions and being grown-up enough to accept they weren't the right ones and to change.

Another great book by Metzger. I must now read the final and last instalment.

4.5 stars(5 for GR)

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### **Barbara says**

#### **Another fab BR with Dorota, Isabel and Tainted Skyee!**

It's one of few books, that made me cry a lot, but it was worth every tear!

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"Three years after that first meeting in a theatre storeroom, Jayden Phillips and Darren Peace are separating for the first time... "

**They knew, they believed that they loved each other enough to survive...but there was still something adrift...**

**Life** separate them, and then, **Darren** felt that all was a pathetic imitation of a

**... he lived the Devil's Trill Sonata**, and it had all fallen...

zoning out  
numbness  
lethargy

**It was the sensation of no sensation ...**

**Damnation!**

But Tartini and is damnation wrote/ owned the best music... and from music, had come **endless love!**

Love, love, love .. it! **Darren and Jayden** got a piece of my heart forever.

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### **Kelsey's Korner Blog says**

I'm not really a YA genre lover so this was a challenge for me to read. I took on the challenge easily because the author had been recommended to me from different and reliable sources. I started off with Vivaldi In The Dark where the story begins with two fifteen year old boys dealing with the realisation they were gay. Dealing with puberty, homophobia, parental issues, bullying and depression. The series was very different to what I would normally choose to read but I found it quite intriguing and strangely pleasant considering the issues involved. There were no explicit sex scenes obviously because of the age but the feelings shone through. I felt like this would be an educational piece of literature for any young adult dealing with their sexuality.

As I progressed through the pages and onto The Devil's Trill Sonata Jayden and Darren became like family to me, watching their struggles living apart and going to college felt very real. Watching the test of time between two young lovers and wondering the outcome appealed to me. At times I was conflicted as to who was my favourite. I realised Darren topped the scales because of his suffering, although Jayden needed a medal for his commitment. This was so much more than a M/M romance. The depression that Darren suffered became the root of the story and was incredibly intense, the way the author described his episodes of depression and panic was excellent. It was heartbreakingly sad to see the suffering he lived with every day.

Rhapsody On A Theme was possibly my most favourite as the boys were men now, there was more sexual

innuendo but Matthew let the reader mostly imagine what was happening rather than describe it in every little detail. It was very classy and stylish. I like Matthew's writing style, I imagine him to write the way he speaks and loved the dialogue. He doesn't mince his words to appeal to the mass market and seems to stay true to his roots. I went in blind reading this series and I had no idea what to expect but what I got was a beautiful true love story with painful and trying experiences which touch base with everyday life. I without a doubt will read his future work.

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### **Isabel says**

BR with Dorota and Barbara, starting at 3/10/2014!!!

### **This is the story of a dream... a dream that didn't come true!**

Jayden and Darren chose different paths after school: Jayden went to Cambridge seeking his dream... and Darren left his parents's home, got a job very far away from Cambridge, keeping the dream that the distance wouldn't end their love!

Distance didn't end their beautiful love! The distance brought angst, suffering, mistrust, jealously, bad choices, bad and good friends... And most of all, the distance shown them that they can't live without each other, and sometimes, dreams don't come true and that they have to find new dreams to pursue, always by the side of the ones they really love!

This book is unforgettable... Jayden and Darren will be always with me, and I sincerely hope to read more about them!

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### **Kaje Harper says**

This book begins three years after Vivaldi in the Dark. Jayden and Darren have made it through school, and now Jayden is off to university at Cambridge. Darren, who has no patience with sitting in classrooms, is starting a course in crime scene analysis, a hundred miles away.

Everyone says high-school romances don't last. The guys are determined to prove them wrong, while secretly being afraid that it may be true. How can love, even as strong as theirs, hold fast against distance and years of changes? The space between them is not only physical, but increasingly one of experiences and expectations. Darren rents an apartment, and is preparing for a career. Jayden dives into the intense pressures of university, of books and studying, and a small circle of friends who are handy and latched onto early, and who begin to define his world.

The guys text, and chat, and sometimes Skype. But their schedules don't match up, and they get very little

actual time together. Jayden feels overwhelmed by both the academics, and the worry that he doesn't have a good grip on how to fit in. In a way, he's back to his early school days, this time not passing as straight, but passing as someone who belongs with the Cambridge crowd. And so he follows the more charismatic of his new friends, bending a little to whomever is louder or closer or more persistent. For Darren, in his new flat, new job, and new adult life, this wavering and distraction on Jayden's part combines with stresses new and old.

This is a book about two very young men. They make choices for reasons that are sometimes well thought out, but other times are based on really short-term pressures. Jayden's lack of confidence makes him vulnerable. Darren's depression saps his energy and heightens every failure. For three years they had each other to turn to, every day. Without that anchor they are drifting apart, and something has to give. As I read, I was pulled forward intensely through this story, watching things unfold, afraid for these two young men I'd come to care about in the first book.

The moment of plot climax was well done. I did really wish there had been one more chapter before the epilogue. The last chapter shows us how the crisis was resolved, for now, but I'd love to have seen just a little more of that, and watched the significant decisions that were made, and the emotions gone through, in that time period. It felt a little rushed in that wrap-up. But since I immediately went back to re-read sections of the book, it has to get the full 5 stars.

I was emotionally invested in these guys. Even when I wanted to smack one of them, I believed in them, and saw their flaws as real and human, due to inexperience and anxiety and sometimes taking the easy path. The secondary characters were well done, and the writing was skillful, with moments of humor even when things got bleak. I will be waiting for the third book in this series, and will grab it as soon as it comes out. The first two are highly recommended for both adult and YA readers, with a trigger warning for depression and related emotional issues.

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### **Mummy's Naughty Corner says**

Cover :- 3 stars

Sex/steaminess :- N/A

Story line :- 5 stars

Characters :- 4 stars

Overall rating :- 4 stars

Personal rating :- 4 Stars

Book Pairing:- M/M

Did it give me a book hangover :- No although it did make me think long after I finished

Is this a review book or personal read :- Personal Read

Why I chose this book?

I've read the first and wanted to see what happens next

What I liked about this book.

- \* Very strong emotional themes used.
- \* The main characters are normal people that anyone can relate too.
- \* A gripping read from start to finish

What I didn't like about this book.

Nothing. I just thought the first was slightly better.

Would I read more from this author?

Yes

Would I recommend this book?

Yes

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### **Jennifer says**

I continued to enjoy Matthew Metzger's beautiful descriptive writing in the second book of this series. He does an incredible job of conveying what Jayden and Darren are experiencing. So much so, that it was quite sad to me to read about them being apart. I still loved both guys throughout the book, but they were each frustrating at times.

The scenes of Darren's depression continued to be harrowing, even more so than in the first book. If you never had compassion for sufferers of depression before, you certainly would after reading this book (and its predecessor Vivaldi in the Dark).

I enjoyed the introduction of Rachel, Darren's neighbor, who immediately inserted herself into his life. Jayden also met interesting characters at Oxford, although at least one of them I wanted to strangle. Ethan and Paul make small appearances – would have liked more of them. Jayden's parents were marvelous as in the first book.

Once again, the latter part of the book had me reading late to see what happened and I loved the ending. I am off now to start the third and last book in the series.

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### **Taintedskyee (Books Books&More Books) says**

*Darkness was always there in form of depression inside Darren' but became prominent when he started playing violin, in his depression and darkness entered a ray of light Jayden who could break through his numbness like no other and became a permanent part of his life.*

*After three wonderful years together they had to part ways to achieve their dreams.*

*It had been three years, and Darren believed in love. Believed in a love that had him driving nearly a hundred miles home on his own, pretending he was as cheerful as the music on the radio, pretending this separation wasn't going to be just as difficult for him as it was for Jayden. If not worse. Darren had forgotten how to cope on his own, and part of him knew—just knew—that the next bad day was going to be more than bad, and weathering the next depression storm was going to be hard on his own, when they'd always weathered the storms together.*

*As they drift apart the devil's trill stuck and Darren was consumed by its force.*

**But with Jayden and Darren**

*They were going to make it.*

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### **Manuela says**

4.5 stars

This book was a great follow up to Vivaldi in the Dark. I didn't give it 5 stars because it started maybe too slow, even though I have to admit real life caused me to read the first part of the book very slowly, which didn't help and probably made me feel like the story was more slowly moving than it actually was.

The second part of the book was definitely better. When Darren and Jayden issues started to really come out, the story became more interesting and the pacing more engaging.

I think the author did a great job in writing Darren's depression: at times, I felt suffocated by it too, which is what I guess the author wanted to achieve.

I liked the ending, especially the fact Darren (view spoiler).

About Jayden, at times I didn't like him in this book, because he seemed selfish. But I have to consider that he's still very young and he's after a dream and sometimes it's hard to let go of certain dreams you've held on to for your entire life. I really appreciated what Jayden's mom said, that sometimes dreams can change and we don't have to keep going after an old one if something better, something that makes us happier, comes along. I felt there's a good lesson in there.

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### **Lena Grey says**

The small, seemingly insignificant things we do every day—the touches, the looks, and the jokes—are important for keeping a couple tuned into one another. Without them, it's easy for distance to dull this sense of oneness; your heart starves for the intimacy it's become accustomed to and remembering hurts too much with no gratification in sight. It can be such a gradual thing that you don't even realize it until it's pulled you so far apart that you wonder if you'll ever be able to put the pieces back together again. Human nature is such that until something drastic happens, this complacency will continue. At that point, we are forced to re-evaluate our priorities and focus on how much a part of us the person is; we realize how lost we would be without them and resolve to make a change if only they will stay. Jayden and Darren of 'The Devil's Trill Sonata' by Matthew J. Metzger, are unwittingly caught in this downward spiral. The question is, what do they do about it?

Jayden has dreamed of going to Cambridge for so long, that he can't let go of that dream, whether it's what's best for him and Darren or not. Changing his plans seems like a betrayal and giving it up, unimaginable. He seriously believes that his and Darren's love will carry them through whatever barriers life may throw at them. Jayden doesn't stop to think about how important their day-to-day routine is. In his determination to make it in college, he unwittingly turns a blind eye to signals he's receiving from Darren which indicate that he's in trouble. Since Jayden is a follower, not a leader, he's trying to impress his new friends; not knowing or caring about how it might affect Darren. He never considers that, for all his rough exterior, Darren is very dependent upon Jayden. He feels that after years of being there for Darren, Jayden wants some time for himself. Jayden seriously underestimates how much Darren needs his approval and how insecure he is while they are separated. When disaster strikes, it causes Jayden to reevaluate everything in his life. He begins to see how he set Darren afloat, without oars, i.e., without coping skills, unable to properly take care of himself. His new perspective makes him more determined than ever to reestablish the special ties with Darren and work toward understanding themselves and each other better; but unless they both learn to stand on their own two feet and handle own their issues, they are doomed to fail.

Darren is a very intelligent young man who never learned to love himself. His emotionally stunted parents never showed him any affection: they give him the impression that he is unimportant, not unlike a commodity to be developed as they saw fit, with no regard for his wishes. After his attack, he couldn't complete his parents' dream for him and, although part of him was happy not to be under that pressure, he felt even more worthless in their eyes. Darren has never come to terms with his depression and it controls his life. Instead of facing reality, he stays in his self-contained cocoon, clinging to the dream that he and Jayden will be together forever, regardless. Without Jayden there as his support, he fails miserably. When it comes to being a part of society, he is woefully unprepared. Without being able to function in the real world, therefore, he gains no confidence; his sense of self-worth remains poor. Darren coasts, becoming as uninvolved as possible. Unavoidably, his illness overwhelms him because there is no one to keep the devils inside his head at bay. Jayden acts as a barrier between him and reality taking the brunt of the fallout from Darren's actions; Darren didn't have to hold himself accountable; he can become as dysfunctional as he wants, letting Jayden handle things until the storm has passed. Darren truly loves Jayden, heart and soul, but he's not as responsible as he could be in attempting to let that love grow and change the way it's bound to with Jayden at the university. Until he admits that he can't handle his depression and takes active steps to do so, nothing will change. He will remain in the clutches of his illness and, eventually, lose everything, including Jayden.

This story, as in the first book, is a continuing, intense look at a co-dependent relationship between two young men who need to learn to handle their own issues. Jayden and Darren do love each other, but they have a long way yet to go. I had to stop reading more than once because I couldn't see the page because of my tears. Obviously, I am emotionally invested with these characters and am rooting for them to succeed, even though they frustrate me with their ability not to see what's right in front of them. Jayden and Darren need to acknowledge that, unless they can stand separately, they won't be able to stand together. This book is the second in the series and it's best if they are read sequentially. The story is intense, emotional, angsty, frustrating, and beautiful. I recommend this story to anyone who wants material they have to digest, to think about. It's not light reading, but it's definitely worth the effort. Thank you, Matthew, for giving us another opportunity to visit with Jayden and Darren. I look forward to the next book in the series.

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

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