



It Takes Two to Tumble

Cat Sebastian

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Some of Ben Sedgwick's favorite things:

- Helping his poor parishioners
- Baby animals
- Shamelessly flirting with the handsome Captain Phillip Dacre

After an unconventional upbringing, Ben is perfectly content with the quiet, predictable life of a country vicar, free of strife or turmoil. When he's asked to look after an absent naval captain's three wild children, he reluctantly agrees, but instantly falls for the hellions. And when their stern but gloriously handsome father arrives, Ben is tempted in ways that make him doubt everything.

Some of Phillip Dacre's favorite things:

- His ship
- People doing precisely as they're told
- Touching the irresistible vicar at every opportunity

Phillip can't wait to leave England's shores and be back on his ship, away from the grief that haunts him. But his children have driven off a succession of governesses and tutors and he must set things right. The unexpected presence of the cheerful, adorable vicar sets his world on its head and now he can't seem to live without Ben's winning smiles or devastating kisses.

In the midst of runaway children, a plot to blackmail Ben's family, and torturous nights of pleasure, Ben and Phillip must decide if a safe life is worth losing the one thing that makes them come alive.

It Takes Two to Tumble Details

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From Reader Review It Takes Two to Tumble for online ebook

Chris says

Ohhhh swoon ! Loved this book and I have decided I'm a Cat fan - I have enjoyed all of her books so far and have found a new joy for historical romance. This was sweet, beautifully written and had me totally hooked. Ben, the local vicar, found himself the guardian of three unruly children. By using unique strategies, he won the love and respect of the children and began to make a positive change in their lives. Phillip, their father arrives home after two years at sea and is a virtual stranger in their lives. Ben realizes Phillip actually needs him more than the children. This is a story of friendship, courage and love ... with lots of warmth thrown in for good measure. It's was great !!

Richard Derus says

Real Rating: 4.25* of five

What a pleasure to escape into a late Regency world where two men grab their happiness instead of allowing the world to order them around. I think this happened, then as now, more often than They thought/think it does.

Several things got under my saddle and rubbed me wrong, but as they were reasonably minor and mostly ignorable, I flowed on past them with mere surface ripples in the stream of my enjoyment.

This mixing metaphors thing is fun. I'm gonna do it more often.

See my notes for details of the writing events I felt were notable. Some just lovely phrase-making. I'm becoming a Sebastianista. Thanks Heather. *HEAAAAAAATHEEEEEEEERRRRRRRRRR* y u make me spend my spondulix

Eugenia says

Fun read with a sexy vicar!

I liked it. I enjoyed it. There was some nice UST. Great writing by Cat Sebastian. It made me want to eat gooseberry pie.

But it wasn't my favorite work of hers. She's still a pre-order author for me. And I think she's a great stepping stone into MM land for MF romance readers.

I'm looking forward to the next book in the series, which I'm assuming will be about foppish Hartley Sedgwick. He seems like fun!

Christelle says

3.5 stars* What a lovely historical love romance between Philipp, a naval captain spending most of his time at sea and Ben, a young and unusual but enthusiastic vicar.

Cat's writing style and the characters she brings to life work very well for me : I cannot help but feel for them and love their inner thoughts and dialogs and how they deal with life and their growing love feelings. And the angst is never OTT, just a realistic level due to the historical settings.

And in this book, not only did I enjoy the growing feelings between Philipp, stiff but fair and so lonely, and Ben, so loving, patient and smiling, but also the family aspect with these lively kids in need of affection and the hints about dyslexia and the tenants' difficulties.

My niggles : it was too much insta as everything happens in the frame of a few weeks. A longer and more detailed build up (for Ben and the kids, for Philipp and the kids, for Ben and Philipp, for Alice,...) and epilogue, and a few more pages would have sit very well for me...just sayin'...

Bring on book 2, dear Cat : I will be there.

~◊~Doxni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~◊~ says

~4.5~

It Takes Two to Tumble is a delightful historical romance, not particularly angst (which is a plus for me) but terribly romantic, brimming with Ben's good nature and easy smiles and Phillip's grumpy ways that mask a lonely heart. The story ends with a HEA (realistic for the time and place, but no less sweet because of it).

"Benedict. God. I don't want to let you down. You deserve so much better."

Ben silenced [Phillip] with a lazy kiss.

"Don't you dare tell me I don't deserve this. Don't you dare."

I loved both men and all the secondary characters. I wanted to hate on Ben's betrothed, Alice, but I couldn't; she was witty and spirited, and I adored her.

Ben's dad was also a great character, much more perceptive and kind than Ben gave him credit for. I don't think he was the best father to his boys, mind you, but he was . . . well, enlightened, a true free spirit.

Phillip's children, the wild ragamuffins that they were, made the story. I loved Ned, Jamie, and Peg. And the dog too, of course!

I'm a big fan of the enemies-to-lovers trope, and while Ben and Phillip are not quite enemies, they aren't friends either. The attraction comes before the friendship, and their chemistry is combustible.

"This is all new to me. I'm in a new world without a map or a chart, but you're my compass, Ben, and I know we'll find a way."

I so enjoy Cat Sebastian's writing. She writes wonderful dialogue and always does her research (her books feel historically accurate, at least to this non-historian).

I cannot wait for Hartley's book coming next! I'm intrigued by his droll sense of humour and generous heart (however much he tries to hide it).

Caz says

I've given this a B+ at AAR, so that's 4.5 stars

It Takes Two to Tumble is the first book in a new series from Cat Sebastian entitled *Seducing the Sedgwicks*, which features a group of siblings who had a most unconventional, bohemian upbringing in a household comprising their father, his wife, his mistress and various itinerant hangers-on. This first instalment features the eldest son, Benedict, the vicar of the parish of St. Aelred's in Cumberland, a deeply compassionate, kind, sensitive man who yearns for the 'normal' life he never had while growing up. The arrival at nearby Barton Hall of gruff, authoritarian naval captain Philip Dacre sees Benedict gradually coming to the realisation that perhaps he needs to re-define exactly what 'normal' means to him, in this touching, beautifully written, character-driven romance from the pen of Cat Sebastian.

Benedict Sedgwick is content with his lot. He is very well-liked by his parishioners, he has a secure living, and he is looking forward to marrying Alice Crawford, a young woman he has known since his youth and whom he regards as his best friend. For many years, the Crawfords:

... were his second family, had been from the time Ben realized that his own family was decidedly inadequate, and what was worse, not normal. The Crawfords had been fantastically normal: there was a sensible number of parents (two), a reasonable number of children (one) and, best of all, the desired number of those artistic hangers-on who seemed to colonize his father's home (zero).

Alice and her parents were thus Ben's refuge from the chaos and unpredictability of his own home when he was growing up. He cares greatly for them all, although while he loves Alice, he isn't IN love with her... yet many couples marry without love, and his and Alice's friendship is, surely, a strong basis for a lasting marriage. He firmly suppresses that little niggle at the back of his brain that tells him he is drawn to men rather than women; not that he's ashamed of his preferences, it's just he's never really allowed his desires to take shape beyond that nebulous admission of a truth he has learned to suppress in order to pursue his goal of living an unexceptional, ordinary life.

Philip Dacre, a captain in the Royal Navy, has spent the majority of his life at sea and has carved himself a successful career. But his childhood memories are tainted by his struggles with a learning difficulty and the feelings of inadequacy that rarely bother him aboard ship resurface at the prospect of returning home – something he has managed to avoid as often as possible.

He is also still grieving the death, just over a year before, of a fellow officer he very obviously loved; and while he misses his late wife, Caroline (who died a couple of years earlier while Philip was at sea), it's clear that theirs was a marriage of mutual convenience. This is the first time Philip has been home since her death,

and he's completely adrift; he has seen his children only rarely since they were born (his eldest son is thirteen, the twins are nine) and he has no idea how to interact with them. All he really knows of them is from the reports he has received from his sister telling him that they are uncontrollable, unruly hellions who terrorise the neighbourhood and have run off countless governesses.

Both Ben and Philip have risen beyond their difficult childhoods, but have been shaped by them nonetheless, Ben learning early on that the only person he could depend upon was himself, and Philip that the best way to avoid disappointing those around him was to avoid them altogether. He's the dark to Ben's light, his taciturn, brooding presence a strong contrast to Ben's sunnier open-heartedness, and I enjoyed watching Philip gradually – and sometimes rather begrudgingly – fall under the other man's spell. Both are strongly written, three dimensional characters, but Ben is the star of the show and I loved him to bits. This is a man whose faith really is love and for whom doing actual good – visiting the sick, helping those in need and shepherding stray sheep – is every bit as important as sermonising from his pulpit. It is probably something of a stretch to believe that a man of the cloth at this point in time could accept his sexuality without a crisis of conscience, but I'm choosing to believe that there were open-minded, enlightened men like Ben in existence – and given his upbringing, perhaps it's understandable that he would be more progressive than not.

As is obvious from the references to 'favourite things' in the book blurb, there's a bit of a *Sound of Music* vibe going on here, what with the stern sea captain, the warm-hearted vicar and a bunch of unruly and rather neglected children who need to be loved. I smiled at that little homage, but there's a lot more going on beneath the surface – possibly a little too much at times. My biggest reservation is to do with the speed at which the romance develops; Ben and Philip go from dislike to attraction to acting on that attraction before the half-way point of the book, and the pivotal point (Philip makes an offhand comment to Ben regarding his affections for 'his' lieutenant while inebriated) seems rather unsubtle, although there's no question that the build-up – all those longing, heated glances, and accidental and not-so-accidental touches – is done very well indeed. The chemistry between the couple and their sheer likeability go a long way towards downplaying that particular problem, but I can't deny that the author has tried to cram too much into her story by including several under-developed sub-plots and overly contrived solutions to them. Philip's children, for instance, are quickly rehabilitated, and the problem of Ben's engagement to Alice is very easily and conveniently dealt with.

The ending is a little too pat as well, but in spite of all those things, I enjoyed the book a lot. The writing is warm, intelligent and engaging, and the two protagonists are so compelling and – ultimately – charming, that it's impossible not to be captivated by them and their story. **It Takes Two to Tumble** has a number of flaws, but I found myself so drawn in by the writing and characterisation that it was easy for me to see past them and enjoy the book regardless. It may not quite reach the standards of *The Soldier's Scoundrel* or *The Ruin of a Rake*, but it's a lovely read and still a head and shoulders above so many of the other historical romances currently on offer.

Anne Boleyn's Ghost says

Many reviews have noted *The Sound of Music* parallels in *It Takes Two to Tumble*. For me, that was a very good thing.

Because I realize now (as opposed to when I first saw the movie as a six-year old) that Captain Von Trapp could GET it.

And while I ordinarily wouldn't associate "sexy" and "vicar", I have seen *Grantchester*. And...well...

Cat Sebastian gifted us with a **light and bright romance** in *It Takes Two to Tumble*. And again, that is a very good thing! Although my reading preferences often steer me toward angst stories, I don't want to read angst stories all the time. I can't. Readers need sweet treats, too, and Sebastian cooked up a particularly delicious one here.

The story follows a severe sea captain rediscovering life and love thanks to the spirited vicar minding his children. Phillip and Ben are reluctantly but instantly drawn to one another, each sensing that the other can give him what he wants and needs. While the romance is not without complications, it was refreshingly devoid of shame and self-recrimination. It was also refreshingly straightforward. They confide in and comfort one another. Their passion is tender but not muted. And it wouldn't be a Cat Sebastian novel without **humor, vividly drawn characters, and sweetness that deftly avoids the saccharine**.

I highly recommend this book, and I'm looking forward to the next in the series!

Read for SBTB January - March 2018 Quarterly Challenge: a book that is first in a series.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

Price drop to \$0.99 at Amazon US, 2/26/18

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

"This is all very interesting," Alton Sedgwick said, stroking his beard. "Very interesting indeed."

"No it isn't, Father," Ben said firmly. "Commonplace domestic drama, absolutely not something I'm going to find in one of your poems next year."

"Do you read my poetry?" the older man asked.

"Of course I do, if only to see what slander you've committed. And I will not find anything titled 'The Reluctant Sailor' or something to that effect."

Alton Sedgwick shook his head disapprovingly. "That's a very poor title, Benedict."

Along the years, it came to my attention that **I had a soft spot for unconventional characters in historical romance novels**, and I'll say this : if you're like me and cannot help but laugh whenever you read Tessa Dare's novels, **you should read this**.

I don't know what I expected when I ordered *It Takes Two to Tumble* - to be honest, it felt like a gamble of sort, but what's new, really, given the genre? I'll never understand why historical romances always get such non-assuming covers and titles (yes, I'm being nice with my choice of word) but this one is a gem, that's for sure : what can I say, it seems that I cannot resist...

- ◆ **hilarious dialogues** - and monologues, really ;
- ◆ **endearing main characters** (including a grumpy sailor who has dyslexia, an adorable vicar whose father is an unrepentant epicurean as well as a poet, and a trio of lovable hellions - sorry, *kids*) ;
- ◆ great pacing,

... and, finally,

- ◆ **a romance I root for.**

Moreover, I thought that Cat Sebastian did a great job at handling the obstacles in their relationship : there's nothing that annoys me more than obviously manufactured and useless hardships, but it wasn't the case here : on the contrary, **it felt genuine** and oh so understandable, especially in this area of time.

Also Phillip is basically me on Mondays -

"Oh, for heaven's sake. Was everyone determined to be gracious and charming when all Phillip wanted was scowl?"

And really, if atheist me can handle a vicar as a main character, then I can't see how you wouldn't. Well, even if I had our venerable poet on my side, lol.

"For all you know I sneak into haylofts with women all the time," he said, trying to lighten the conversation.

"Do you?" his father said with a skeptically raised eyebrow.

"Of course not. I'm a clergyman."

"That's a subject for another day." Alton Sedgwick did not have much use for the Church of England."

Oh, well, perhaps It Takes Two to Tumble was weird, but it was *my* kind of weird, and it was so fucking *sweet* (THE DUCKS!), I couldn't be happier to have given it a chance. Now I cannot wait to read Hartley's story (tell me it's coming next, PLEASE).

Hollis says

He was used to commanding dozens of men in clockwork precision. Surely he could make a couple of children -- his own children, at that -- fall in line.

You know it was a great read when it takes you almost ten swipes to get to the top of your list of notes in order to compile quotes for a review.

If Sedgwick was determined to stay, then Phillip had no choice but to let him stay. Having the vicar thrown bodily from the house would set a ludicrous example for the children.

So, I don't know if the author intended it or if my brain just made random (and completely fanciful) connections but IT TAKES TWO TO TUMBLE kind of gave me shades of *The Sound of Music*. Without the Germans and the twelve children, though. Or the singing. Or the clothing made of drapery. And about a

million other relevant points. But the mischievous children, the out of touch father, the charming delightful younger person with ties to the church who is able to connect with them and help them learn in creative if non-traditional ways, who simultaneously manages to slip in under the skin (and into the bed!) of his pseudo-employer and fall in love..? Well, that sounds *Sound of Music*-y to me. Or just the makings of a great story. Which was this.

He couldn't be serious and stern with a man who had ducklings in his hair, or who talked to baby birds like they were guests at a tea party, or who seemed to dearly want Phillip to smile.

Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings.. these are a few of my faaavouuuurite thiiings.. uh, ahem. Anyway.

The vicar seemed to have his own personal ray of sunshine following him about, casting light in his path and drawing people to him, while Phillip was ever under a storm cloud.

Sebastian's writing is such a delight for me. I mentioned before that her writing is like a warm blanket and I honestly don't think I'll ever find a truer description of it. With clever characters with problems both great and small, she gives us couples that often come from complete opposite sides of class or experience or profession and deftly entangles their lives in ways that feel natural and so right without the scenarios ever feeling manufactured. The stories have depth and emotional resonance to them, there are challenges to overcome, of course, but ultimately the overall experience is so full of light and love that you feel good from beginning to end.

"For all you know I sneak into haylofts with women all the time."

"Do you?"

"Of course not. I'm a clergyman."

"That's a subject for another day."

The first in her new series, *Seducing the Sedgwicks*, features a broody sea Captain with a learning disability, a somewhat radical young vicar who had a very scandalous upbringing, and a host of supporting characters I absolutely adored (Hartley's story has to be next.. right? right!). Even the 'villain' isn't a villain and instead just a tragic young man in a lot of pain with a tendency to be lead astray (I hope we haven't seen the last of Easterbrook). With one of the leads being a man of the cloth, Sebastian could've spent a lot of time debating the merits of religion vs loving outside the lines as dictated by the church and/or God, had her characters caught up in shame and guilt and uncertainty, but instead that never became the default or the focus. It was obviously a point of discussion, it had to be, but it was handled so well and never overwhelmed what was truly at the heart of this love story.

"I won't have any part of your sin, Sedgwick."

"You can leave it to me to decide what I think a sin is. Everybody's a damned theologian on this topic. I'm so tired of it. If we can all agree that eating pork and shaving aren't sinful, I don't see why we can't extend that same grace to men like us."

Sebastian never fails to include representation and diversity in her stories and as I briefly mentioned above this one is no exception. I love how naturally she includes these elements to her plots and how her characters never feel like props or caricatures or that their personality is nothing more than what hinders them. It's part of them but doesn't make up the whole of them. It's the same as in life. Too often, however, fiction doesn't show that; but this author always does. It is only one of the many things I love about losing myself in her words.

"I'm in a new world without a map or a chart, but you're my compass, Ben, and I know we'll find a way."

If you're looking for sweetness; first second and third chances at love; ducklings, dogs and delightful children; dialogue about what one deserves, disability, and deliciously described dalliances, you'll want to read this book. If you haven't read anything by this author yet, number one, what are you still waiting for, number two, you have three books to read until this one comes out, so hop to it. As always : I recommend.

4.25 "was everyone determined to be gracious and charming when all Phillip wanted to do was scowl?" stars

** I received an ARC from Edelweiss and the publisher (thank you!) in exchange for an honest review. **

Erica Chilson says

I received a copy of this title to read and review for Wicked Reads

5 Stars

It Takes Two to Tumble is the first installment in the Seducing the Sedgwicks series. The novel was a wonderfully paced, forbidden, historical romance on several levels, between a ship captain and a vicar.

Ben Sedgwick has the perfect personality to be a vicar. Calm. Compassionate. Charitable. The only issue is that his sexual nature is not only a crime, but also against church doctrine. What was refreshing about Ben was how he didn't bleed guilt or shame- he understood himself, and didn't hesitate to reach out and take what he wanted. Ben had surprising strength and authority for a man with a server soul.

Captain Phillip Dacre's ship has came in... sending the grieving man back to the land he knows so well, but it's filled with strangers. The widower doesn't know his children, only coming home every few years for a month or two, before returning back to sea. Phillip's people, and those surrounding the area, don't welcome him home with much fanfare.

Dacre's three children run wild without anyone rearing them- just in time for their father to come home, Ben is called to stop the mischievous children's scourge across the countryside. Ben moves into Dacre's home, and the kids take to his style of child-minding.

Ben and Phillip have a physical connection at-first-sight, but it's mixed with the tension of the era and their circumstance. Ben is slightly afraid of Dacre, his reputation proceeding him. Dacre sees Ben as an interloper, interfering with his children, making so they don't bond with him. After head butting, which lends a love-hate vibe to the novel, they come to an understanding.

It Take two to Tumble was paced to always keep my interests, from page one to the end. The interactions and exchanges between the two heroes of the tale were entertaining. The forbidden romance was angsty due to their circumstance, but refreshingly no-holds-barred by the men. The between-the-sheets action was smoldering yet intimate.

There are a few other side romances happening beneath the surface, by side characters who will never get their own novels, as well as seeding the series for future installments. The side characters were entertaining,

humorous and understanding, or intriguing. Ben's father in particular was a kooky man (as narrated by Ben) but he was a favorite of mine.

I was pleased to see the struggle of dyslexia, and how Ben found inventive ways to teach Jamie, and how this helped Phillip in turn. The HEA not only resolved their issues, it also fit their personalities perfectly.

I highly recommend to fans of MM romance, and look forward to the next in the series.

Bubu says

I'll make this short and sweet, since my last two reviews were a little long-winded. Well, I'll try.

It Takes Two to Tumble is the story of sea captain, Philip Dacre, and the vicar, Benedict Sedgwick, who grudgingly agree to work together to stop Philip's three children from running roughshod, which they have been doing ever since their mother's death.

It's a character driven story that flows easily and which I found engrossing. Philip is in a seemingly perpetual state of anger, while Ben is a mild-mannered vicar who tries to achieve the sort of stability that he missed growing up. His parents were quite the libertines and thought their five boys should simply grow up feeling free. That lead to a sort of chaos that Ben tries to avoid at all cost.

Until he meets Philip and all his suppressed feelings towards men come to the surface. Philip, who knows which way he leans to and who, on his voyages gave freely into his homosexuality, is still reeling from the death of his lieutenant who was also his lover. His anger stems not only from the fact, that, with the death of his wife, he needs to sort out his children until he's due back to his ship in two months, but also from the inability to grieve freely for the man he loved.

Ben is trying to make Philip understand that the children need a father who listens and doesn't command them like he commands his men on his ship. At the same time, he tries to give Philip moral support and makes it clear that, even though a clergyman, he doesn't judge him. Philip, on the other hand, is tired of meaningless sex, but also knows that with the life he lives as a sea captain of the British admiralty, he can't bind himself emotionally.

What complicates matters is that Ben is betrothed to his best friend Alice, but he pretty quickly acknowledges the growing sexual attraction between him and Philip. That the Church of England condemns homosexuality - well, it is the Regency Era - also prompts him to question his vocation under the rigid rules. His feelings for Philip feel natural, and yet he finds himself between a rock and a hard place.

It Takes Two to Tumble is by now means perfect, and I could be nit-picking at all the irregularities, the neatness of the ending and how the sub plot surrounding the children is handled, as I did with **A Duke in Shining Armor**.

But I won't. At the end of the day, I enjoyed their journey very much; could relate to their fears and worries.

Most importantly, however, I believed in their romance. The decisions and sacrifices on both sides are not easily brushed under the carpet, despite the neat ending. **It Takes Two to Tumble** is not as good as **The Soldier's Scoundrel**, which I will have to reread as I want to continue with the series and it's been a while since I read it.

But I've had fun, felt the angst and the happiness for them both at the end of the book. And that's all that matters to me.

Kaje Harper says

This was sweet and engaging. Ben is a clergyman whose flock includes the orphaned children of sea captain Phillip Dacre at the local manor. The children are running wild after their mother's death, having successfully driven off several tutors. Ben is cajoled by the locals into moving into the manor to exert some kind of control over them, until their father returns. Because Ben is intelligent, calm, unconventional, and imaginative, he's able to focus on only the things that really matter, and to divert the children's mischief rather than trying to forbid it. They're beginning to get along well together when Phillip Dacre returns home.

Phillip would much rather be back on his ship, where he runs a fair but autocratic command, than in the home where he passed a miserable childhood, and where his wife died, and his children seem to be running wild. His attitude is not improved by the presence of an unfairly mellow, intrusive, and attractive young vicar. Phillip had planned to see his children safely settled under someone else's care and schooling, and then head back to his beloved ship. But nothing is going to be that easy.

The parallels to *The Sound of Music* are clearly deliberate, as shown by the blurb, although this Captain only has three children (who sometimes seem like seven.) But this is very much an original story, without the looming external enemy, and with the presence of Ben's fiancée, Ben's scandalous father, and a romance that no nun would sing happily about.

Ben grew up in a household where romance was allowed to triumph over social mores. His desire to be a vicar stems not from a deep religiosity, but from a desire for order, security, and a drive to help others. This means that he doesn't suffer the guilt and religious pangs of conscience that most gay vicars of that era would. In some ways, it makes the development of the relationship too easy. I wanted Ben's commitment to his position to have a deeper impact on his attitudes. But it gives him the sunny optimism that lets him be a good foil to Phillip.

Phillip is a pessimist, still grieving the loss of his Lieutenant and lover back on his ship over a year before. He left his children to his wife's care, except for occasional brief visits, and really doesn't know much about them. He has a long way to go to become more than an outsider in their lives. But Ben has some of the keys to beginning to connect with them. And in so doing, Phillip realizes that part of him would like to connect with Ben too.

This was a fun read, and all the characters were engaging. For the era in which it is set, there was very little angst in this slow-burn gay romance. The ending is sweet and solid, (as much as any such can be in an era when sodomy was a serious crime, and discovery will be a huge and constant risk). There were some moments and phrases that didn't fit the time, place, and station of the characters (including a few Americanisms that grated on me.) This is not a book of socio-historical commentary and accuracy, but a delightful comfort read historical romance.

Anna says

I can never review these books properly because all I want to do is bounce up and down and say:

OMG READ THIS! REEEEEEEAD THIS!

Cause a happy gay vicar. A grumpy sea captain. Kids that are rounded characters and not plot devices!

DUCKLINGS ON BEN'S HEAD.

It's such a happy book. And so well-written I want to fling my laptop out the window, 'cause damn, Cat.

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

3.5 stars

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Phillip has spent most of his life at sea, as the Captain, he knows his place and is effective in managing his people. When his ship finally berths after two years, his shore leave allows him to go home for awhile, a home where letters have informed him that his wife has died and his three children are running wild.

Ben enjoys his job as the vicar; it allows him to see to everyone. When he gets tasked with taking care of the absent Captain's children, he may be in over head.

Phillip and Ben haven't been able to fully admit certain truths to themselves but as their relationship grows, they begin to become whole through each other.

Phillip hadn't planned on lustng after the vicar.

The first in a new series, the author introduces us to Phillip, the stern rigid naval captain and Ben, the affable mellow vicar. Both characters were very contained people in their own way. Phillip has dyslexia but has managed to figure out how to hide it and be effective as captain and he also carries around some melancholy which seems to be due to not being able to fully be his self. Ben had to essentially be the father to his brothers as theirs ascribed to a very bohemian philosophy that led to a lack of structure or responsibility. Both acknowledged their attraction to men but kept it in a contained box that as long as they didn't make it personal, putting real feeling in to it, they could lead "normal" lives. When they meet each other and start to develop those more emotional feelings, beyond just sexual, hard truths have to be recognized.

But comfort and ease suddenly seemed like pale and flimsy things.

I loved how Ben and Phillip's personalities played off each other. Ben's effortless charm and lightness cracked open Phillip's hard walls and helped him be at ease more, while Phillip's strength and willing to prod at Ben helped Ben release his more passionate side. They became more themselves through the other and there is nothing more romantic than that. For how much Phillip's children played a part in the story plot, I

thought they were strangely more absent from the story than warranted. We get some scenes with Phillip bonding but I never felt like I knew them; they felt like obvious plot elements instead of woven into the story. I also thought Phillip's relationship with his former Lt. McCarthy needed to be flushed out more. It started off like there was a big emotional attachment but then it seemed to be more on the physical side, not quite fully explained well enough.

"When we're together it feels right. I want to go down that path and see what's there."

"With me?" It was a hoarse whisper.

"Together."

This is my first book by this author and I was impressed with the ease of her writing flow, how secondary characters felt complete and added so much to the story, and the historical feel. This had faint whisperings of the Sound of Music to it and I could read all day of Ben taking some starch out of the Captain and Phillip igniting some fire in the vicar. There's a slow burn feel as their relationship starts off challenging, to tentative, to heated and I enjoyed how they both were, somewhat, virgins not only emotionally but physically and we got to see them explore and learn together. There's also a hot desk scene that you won't want to miss.

I missed interaction scenes with Phillip's children to get to know them better which in turn would have created more depth in Phillip's character, the middle seemed to meander a smidgen as the outer story took over more, but I delighted in Ben and Phillip's relationship. There's some bitter sweetness to the ending as Phillip and Ben don't quite get the full happily ever after they deserve due to the time period and country they live in, but they worked for and got more than most do. The author's talent with emotions will have me searching out her books from here on out.
