



Bliss

Lisa Henry , Heidi Belleau

Download now

Read Online ➔

Bliss

Lisa Henry , Heidi Belleau

Bliss Lisa Henry , Heidi Belleau

They're always happy.

Rory James has worked hard all his life to become a citizen of the idyllic city-state of Beulah. Like every other kid born in the neighboring country of Tophet, he's heard the stories: No crime or pollution. A house and food for everyone. It's perfect, and Rory is finally getting a piece of it.

So is Tate Patterson. He's from Tophet, too, but he's not a legal immigrant; he snuck in as a thief. A city without crime seems like an easy score, until he crashes into Rory during a getaway and is arrested for assaulting a citizen. Instead of jail, Tate is enrolled in Beulah's Rehabilitation through Restitution program. By living with and serving his victim for seven years, Tate will learn the human face of his crimes.

If it seems too good to be true, that's because it is. Tate is fitted with a behavior-modifying chip that leaves him unable to disobey orders—any orders, no matter how dehumanizing. Worse, the chip prevents him from telling Rory, the one man in all of Beulah who might care about him, the truth: in a country without prisons, Tate is locked inside his own mind.

Bliss Details

Date : Published August 18th 2014 by Riptide Publishing

ISBN : 9781626491397

Author : Lisa Henry , Heidi Belleau

Format : Paperback 230 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Science Fiction, Dystopia, Dark, Sociology, Abuse

 [Download Bliss ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Bliss ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Bliss Lisa Henry , Heidi Belleau

From Reader Review Bliss for online ebook

Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

Beulah...

“Protectionist. Elistist. Creepy perfect. A lot of people said a lot of sneering things about Beulah. But Beulah was also safe.”

First things first, I'm taking out Mr. Lowell. And I'm going to make it look like an accident. It's a kindness really. What he deserves is for me to shove him off a cliff into a pit of naked, writhing, horny and sadistic women. Hmmm... on second thought.

I digress.

Let's talk about this book. **THIS BOOK**. ARGH! Anything that elicits homicidal tendencies, anxiety AND laughter from me deserves a read. **BUT**, heed the warning, people. If non-con isn't your thing... you'd best skedaddle.

But in Beulah, everything was different. Everything was simpler and more complicated at the same time.

Have you ever had a pot of really beautiful flowers that you had to move for whatever reason and when you picked up the pot there were slugs and creepy crawlers underneath? That's Beulah. It's lovely at first glance, but take a closer look and **EEEEEEEE**. I kept picturing Pleasantville in my head and that's what made it not just regular “yuck” creepy but *WHAT-IN-HOLY-FUCK* creepy. There are so many things that are soooooo right about Beulah, but this whole system of “rezzing” someone is twisted, abhorrent and corrupt, tainting the whole community.

Basically, if you are accused of a crime, just accused, you're for all intents and purposes railroaded into seven years of servitude and chipped to make you “like” it, need it even and if you don't provide that service with gusto, glee and zeal there will be pain, excruciating, mind-numbing pain that you'll do anything to assuage, debased and humiliating things. Wanna know what the alternative is? Lifetime servitude. Oh, you can choose a trial but there's a 99.9% chance you'll lose and get life. So, you take the seven, right? Problem is there's still a part of you, the real you, in there that's locked away in a glass cage, screaming, crying and silent. Good times. *shudders*

Bliss is an emotional roller-coaster. If we're friends on Goodreads, my status updates will confirm as much. I spent a good deal of it reading it with my hands on or near my head in some way-peeking through fingers, clenched fists, biting a nail, on top of my head. It was a work out. It **might** even count as a work out? Yes? Never mind, rhetorical question. Aside from all my feels, there are some truly compelling insights on

government corruption and the oftentimes cruel nature of humans given the right set of circumstances.

“If you can’t trust what the government says now, how can you trust anything they’ve ever said?”

*coughs*NSA*coughs*

Tate, Rory and Aaron have been through a war together and forged those sorts of bonds that will last a lifetime. Of this I have no doubt; however, the focus of *Bliss* is Tate and Rory, though Aaron made for a charming secondary character. Tate and Rory’s relationship development was gradual. Let’s face it, it developed under some rather unusual circumstances. There were times when I felt “it” and times when I leaned more toward the friends side of the spectrum. I think it could’ve done with little more progression. At the end of the day, they were fleshed out well and their individual personalities shown through which is what I like best about these authors; they individualize their characters, give them their own voice, sometimes they are humorous, sometimes pensive and sometimes they’ll break your heart, usually all of the above. **That’s** what makes me continue to read their writez.

“This kissing shit is nice, but it’s for schoolgirls.”

There are two things that I’m still puzzled over. Why did Tate punch Rory in the first place? This just never gels cohesively for me. The rationale seems flimsy. The worldbuilding of the world outside Beulah could’ve been developed better. I’m not asking for loads of expansion, maybe a paragraph or two to tell me why the outside world is such a seemingly dystopian society whilst Beulah is such a “utopia”? How did this happen? Does Tophet comprise the entire outside world or are there other communities, sectors, countries?

Bliss isn’t for everyone, and I won’t hold it against you if you pass. It does have a generally hopeful message and no cliffhanger! I’ve been waiting for *Bliss* for what feels like FOR-EV-VER and I wasn’t disappointed. So, if non-con doesn’t squick you out or you like Belleau and/or Henry, you’ll enjoy *Bliss*.

Reviewed for

Luis says

[Tate and Rory's relationship was built when Tate was still chipped - mind controlled. Tate says that some of the feelings in that span of time

Adam says

3.5 stars

This review may contain spoilers!

I've got a case of the disappoints. Not because Bliss was bad. It was quite a good book and I enjoyed it a lot. But it could have been so much better.

Bliss is about Rory and Tate, two newcomers to the most magical place in the world (i.e. the city-state of Beulah). Both of our MCs have different reasons for why they're there, but they come to Beulah to better their lives. In comparison to the rest of the world, Beulah has a functioning government, a peaceful and progressive society and, most notably, an extremely low crime rate. Beulah also has a justice system in which no prisons exist. Instead, wrong-doers, known as 'rezzies,' become indentured to their victims, known as 'sponsors,' for a period of seven years, so that they learn that their crimes have a human cost. But this supposedly-perfect system hides a sinister plot, something which the vast majority of Beulah citizens know nothing about.

When Rory and Tate meet, they become part of Beulah's justice system. Tate is arrested for stealing and assaulting Rory, and so becomes indentured to Rory. In the process, he has a chip implanted, ostensibly to make sure that any violent tendencies are suppressed. In reality, this chip makes him unable to deny any order he is given, and modifies his brain in to thinking that he actually *wants* to serve others.

Rory is oblivious to this, though he does at times feel that things aren't as they seem. One thing which sets off warning bells for Rory is that everyone he meets expects that he'll have sex with Tate. Rory is told repeatedly that rezzies and sponsors often engage in sexual relationships, supposedly because of such close proximity for seven years. In reality, the chip forces rezzies to feel that they have to sexually cater to their sponsors, and also denies them any chance to say no.

One person who pushes Rory to have sex with Tate is Jericho Lowell, who will henceforth be known as 'Dipshit.' Dipshit is Rory's boss, and a high-ranking justice in Beulah, and therefore closely involved in the rezzie/sponsor system. Dipshit is creepy as fuck, and doesn't know how to keep his hands to himself, especially around his younger male interns. Dipshit convinces Rory that rezzies like to have sex with their sponsors, particularly rough abusive sex. Rory isn't entirely convinced, but the power-dynamics of Dipshit being his boss corner him into some very unpleasant situations that involve himself, Dipshit, Rory and Dipshit's rezzie.

I had significant issues with Rory and Tate's relationship post-chip. It's never made clear how Tate, who was a macho straight guy, suddenly accepts that he's attracted to a man. Is it just because of the chip screwing with his mind, or because of Stockholm syndrome? Another thing which I didn't like was how simple the solution to Beulah's corrupt justice system was (view spoiler)

I also had issues with Tate's back-story and how it comes full-circle at the end. (view spoiler) To me, it just seemed like an easy way to provide the 2 MCs with a cookie-cutter MM romance ending(view spoiler). Given that this was, until near the end, a dark dystopian story with very little sunshine, it was off-putting to see such a generic MM conclusion just attached at the end like an afterthought.

So those were my issues with the book. But I would still recommend this for anyone who wants to read

something dark and MM. The characters are great. Even Dipshit, who can go jump off a cliff, was very well-written. The setup was intriguing and very different from anything else I've read. And the romance, while it definitely needed work, wasn't so bad that it was unbelievable. With a bit more fleshing out, this would easily have been 4 stars.

P.S. Dipshit (Lowell) can go fuck himself. With a cactus. Twice.

Nina says

Torn apart and impressed?

More like mildly annoyed, mildly horrified and mildly disappointed. Everything is very mild around here.

I rarely find myself dreading the next pages of a book, but during the first fourth of this novel I was in a state of barely controlled tension and profound disquiet. (Basically I was running from this via 1D fanfic, yes, *fine*.) So it started very well - I was freaked out as fuck, and I'm pretty sure that's the intended effect. But then I realised that Rory was such a passive dweeb I was never going to be able to like him, and we all know what it means when you don't like one of the main characters in a book.

I don't normally read non-con (not because I then have nightmares about it, but simply because I don't see the appeal), but by the time I realised this was going to be so rapey I was already hooked. That being said, I expected to be way more traumatised than I was by the end of the experience. And yet, look at me now. I'm fine. I'm pissed, but I'm fine.

So if you're interested, don't be deterred by the non-con aspect. I'm pretty hard to shake, but I'm also not used to this sort of thing. I mean, there's a giant plug and torn assholes and forced blowjobs and whatnot, but even though you know that deep down it's non-consensual, and even though it kind of shows, it doesn't completely *feel* like it.

However, you might view some scenes as bloodcurdling, careless viciousness, which I can't deny they are, and in that case you will be traumatised. Just be careful to know what you're getting into before you do get into it. I have very good mental blocking mechanisms - you might not.

My problem, as I said, is something else - something I haven't seen a reviewer mention yet. My problem is Rory.

Oh, he's not unkind. He's far from cruel. He's actually a pretty nice guy, all things considered. I mean, how mean can a guy who was completely traumatised by a punch to the face really be?

It's just - holy Christ, he's such a *pussy*. (I am aware of all the possible sexist connotations of using this word as a slur, and I don't give a shit.)

I get that he was probably tired of problems, tired of caring and worrying and being afraid, but *he should have cared*, he should have worried, and he should have been at the very least a little *wary*. He shouldn't have been so blindly trusting. He should have tried to understand, instead of cowering in a corner and trying to convince himself that *it's all good*.

I really only need one sentence to describe this twat in all his glory.

Something wasn't right here, but Rory pushed it to the back of his mind.

This is one of a couple dozen variations on this theme, and it's essentially Rory's standard MO for most of the book.

Only when it gets too much – when the wrongness starts to haunt his every waking minute – only *then* does

he finally begin to ask himself some obvious questions. And it still takes him a couple centuries to make the most obvious connection in the history of ever. (Biggest DUH moment of history and also winner of the YOU DON'T SAY award of 2014, hands down.)

And at this point, I have to ask myself: how isn't everyone feeling the need to go ballistic on this guy's ass? Is it just me? How could I possibly like someone like him, and believe he deserves love and happiness? I mean, I'm not saying he doesn't. But he kinda doesn't.

If he'd been someone else - someone with morals and balls, for instance - the story would have gone in a completely different direction and developed much more quickly than it did, so the authors probably would have had to work on the plot a little more. And what reader is ever going to complain about a meatier storyline? (I can't use the word meaty without snorting since I started reading gay erotica. It's a thing now.) And maybe then I could have believed the senseless, saccharine HEA that everyone and their grandma is (understandably) bitching about.

There's no love here. Let's make this very clear. No one loves anyone, because Tate's personality is suppressed, and Rory doesn't *have* a personality to begin with. So that "We're not done" romantics are creaming themselves over is just a nice way to introduce a stuck-on stereotypical ending that will appease the masses, because change doesn't happen that quickly, and both Tate and Rory will need months of therapy before they'll be able to even think about sex again.

On that topic, the sex didn't do a thing for me, not only because of the blatant lack of consent (with complete consciousness and control of oneself obviously being a prerequisite of said consent), which I imagine was supposed to create internal conflict in the reader (because hot but wrong but hot), but also because of the amount of thinking and talking and exclamation marks going on during the action. Also, there's a sort of cold depravity in ignoring your partner's sounds of pain during sex, even if he says he likes it, Rory, my boy. Man the fuck up and ask him about it before you go on impaling him on your dick, yeah? Or don't, as the case may be.

One last thing: HOW DOES THE CHIP WORK, GODDAMMIT. (The lack of a question mark is deliberate. This is not supposed to sound like a question - it's supposed to sound like an insult to your mother.)

No one even *wonders*. Are Beulah and Tophet populated entirely by *sheep*? Oh, and since we're talking about that - where did Tophet and Beulah even come from? How was this aseptic, blissful little enclave created? Why is Tophet such a bleak, filthy place, morally and materially speaking?

World building and background are a thing, I promise. Give 'em a shot.

This is a well written novel that flows smoothly and relatively quickly, with a perfectly rendered atmosphere and intriguing side characters. But it's the kind of imperfect story that you can't fix, because you'd have to rip it apart and start all over again from the same brilliant initial idea to get something closer to a believable romance or a solid dystopia. Or both, but that's ~~Manna Francis~~ ambitious.

Huh. I guess my annoyance wasn't so mild after all.

? BookAddict 🖋️ La Crimson Femme says

Clockwork Orange meets Stepford Wives with a m/m twist. Ms. Henry is a favourite author of mine. She writes out of the box. When she teams up with Ms. Belleau, magic happens. In Beulah, the population is blissfully ignorant of how their humanitarian rehabilitation works. The guiding principle of Beulah is to take ownership of one's mistakes and make a correction. Those who go through this program demonstrate their

remorse for committing a crime and after they do their time to make it up to the person they transgressed against, all is forgiven. This lovely city-state contains no crime and everyone lives in similar homes so there are no haves and have nots. There isn't even any poverty with hunger. Is this utopia or what? Jaded readers like me won't believe in this mythical place. It all falls apart when crime from an outsider is committed.

Tate Patterson commits a simple assault crime. His punishment is seven year serving the person he hurt, Rory James. Rory is from the same outside city as Tate - Tophet. Rory doesn't understand how this restitution works and he's not too interested in these "Rezzies". Why would anyone want a rezzie who hurt them to be under foot all the time? Mr. Lowell, Rory's boss, and a person of influence in Beulah, will show Rory the ropes. Ropes are literally involved.

Rezzies are treated as sex slaves by many "owners". They have no free will and they must do whatever their owner orders. In addition, they must always present a happy façade - hence Bliss. The way rezzies are controlled is a bit of far-fetched sci-fi with a perverted flavour. When a group of people are able to control another through mind-control, what kind of inhuman acts could occur? How much abuse could occur? Ms. Henry and Ms. Belleau pen a love piece of corruption through dehumanization. Surprisingly, they only add a couple of darker sexual torture scenes. For the most part, they gloss over the depravities and tease a deviant reader with possible sexual violations behind closed doors. For those who enjoy the darker sexual slavery themes, this is one to whet the appetite. It's a bit of foreplay which a reader may yearn for edited taboo scenes. Perhaps the duo authors will grace devoted fans with the torments of Aaron and Tate in an outtakes novella.

What I really enjoyed about this story is the debate between right and wrong. The theory behind the rehabilitation is excellent. There are no jails and people aren't wasting money to support criminals who will not be able to re-enter into society as productive members. Instead, this program helps people to learn their lesson and pay their time. What is problematic is the execution of it. The risk of abuse is so high that it's a concept which will never work. Because there will always be a group of individuals who will use it for their own selfish desires and satisfactions. Where is the argument then? What is the cost of this kind of abuse? When one weighs it against the community as a whole, perhaps it is allowable. Because if jails are used instead, what will happen to these criminals? What other impacts will there be to the society? Will there be more crime? Will there be more poverty? The society as a whole seems to take a step back when the rehabilitation system is examined.

This story may be predictable, but it still reads smooth and sexy. The non-con sex is delicious. The characters, Tate and Rory are well designed. The world building is just right to set the mood. The evil villain in this story is devilish good and makes it an erotic read. My only wish is for more sexual violations. A bit more medical kink scenes would kick up the sexual heat. Still, the authors did an excellent job in their balance of sex and plot. If they added as much debauchery as I'd prefer, this story may end up as a porn without a plot. Instead, this is a provocative tale of how the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Recommended for kinky m/m readers who enjoy speculative fiction with sexual slavery.

**provided by NetGalley*

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

2.5 stars

Warning to all readers: This book is hard non-con, no two ways about it. If you have a problem with rape and sexual slavery, put the book down and back away slowly.

Now, going into this book I knew that this would push my boundaries. And it did. This was my first real non-con story and, even though I found it really hard to read at times, I was sort of fascinated by it in the way that some people are fascinated by horror movies. I also have to admit that I found this book to be smoking hot at times, and I sort of loved/loathed those scenes.

I think the strengths of this story are in the non-con and creepy nature of the dysopian world. If you are into non-con then this just might be a great story for you. I thought that the world that these two authors created was atmospheric and chilling. I loved that about this story, and honestly, I couldn't put this book down all day.

But where this book totally belly-flops is the romance.

When it comes down to it, I'm a romance reader. I'll happily read other genres, but if a book is billed as a romance, I expect a believable romance. **This book was one of the most unbelievable GFY romances that I have ever read.** I would have been thrilled, in fact, if this book didn't end with a romance. Up until 80%, I was sort of digging this book and I started praying that this ended with a bittersweet or HFN ending. But no. I refuse, REFUSE to believe that Rory and Tate created any sort of a romantic connection between them. Everything that they had was built on lies and those issues don't just magically disappear.

I could talk about this book for days, but I'll leave you with this. **Read this book if you like non-con sex or are interested in really dark dystopian stories, but absolutely don't read this if you want a romance you can believe in.**

Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Natasha says

YUP.

Can't wait to read this one.

Remember that episode of Seinfeld where Jerry and George pitch a show to NBC called Jerry and it's about a judge sentencing a man to become Jerry's butler and do whatever he wants?

Kazza says

Beulah is definitely -

Two guys, Rory and Tate, both want into clean, green, crime free Beulah for the same reasons, but in

different ways. One to be an EA to Beulah's Justice Chief, Jericho Lowell, and the other to steal from a town that has no prisons. But it runs deeper than just that. Both are from Tophet, a poor, polluted, crime ridden town but have taken a different path in life. Both men want a better life and their lives are about to collide in a harsh and life-altering way in Beulah.

There is a lot of frustration in this book. To me, having your mind, your free will taken away is horrifying - and this book takes you right in there. You are in Tate's chipped mind.

Seeing how Rory is thinking and how he inadvertently throws curve balls Tate's way without even realising it, all while you are reading and pulling your hair, making you yell, *"NO! Don't do that, don't trust him... Wake up and smell the roses. GAH!!*

There is a romance here, but, for me, that is not the book's strongest suit. The emotion and behaviour is - it certainly elicited strong emotions from me. There are social statements in the narrative, including how easy it is to pick a mark and how easy it is to believe the beautiful lie.

If non-con and rape are triggers, do not read Bliss.

(view spoiler)

Bliss is a thought provoking book. It is dark and it seems so very possible - given human nature and behaviour. A couple of niggles, but I don't wish to spoil the book so I'll put them on the blog.

Full review, treat it as spoilerish - <http://ontopdownunderbookreviews.com/...>

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

2.5 stars

There were too many philosophical inconsistencies in this book. The scope of the "punishment" chip, which bends people to others' control and stunts their will, wasn't fully disclosed. The setting wasn't fleshed out enough to be believable, and when "judgement" came, it was too simplistic: the fall of a man and court trials don't bring justice to a society.

While I appreciate the deep ideas bandied about, they never fully gelled. I could have forgiven that, but the romance in this book felt forced. Tate falls for Rory when Tate is under the influence of the chip. Tate isn't gay; he finds sucking cock distasteful, yet he falls in love with Rory while chipped and that love/attraction somehow continues once the chip is removed.

I love HEAs; they are practically a requirement for me to enjoy a story, but this one felt forced. Perhaps too much was crammed in here? I was fine with Rory and Tate being together; I could believe in their love even. But did we really need (view spoiler)

Of course, this was well written. Henry and Belleau are experienced authors. The premise was interesting, but the characters felt one dimensional, and the story tried too hard for my taste.

Lola says

DNFed at 37% *because I believe a book that brings you to a state of boredom every time you're picking it up does not deserve to be entirely read.*

Have you read the blurb? Have you realized that this is a dystopian M/M romance, yet? Let me repeat that, **a dystopian M/M romance story.**

I knew it was too good to be true.

Over 150 reviews that I've written on Goodreads, there is only one DNFed book that I have reviewed *in detail*, this one aside. It's called Poison. I usually don't review those, but I really had to put every feeling I had about it in a review. I now feel the same way for this Bliss book.

You see, it in fact started very promising with Tate hurting Rory and having to see a lawyer about it. Some guys took him and implanted a chip inside his skin for him to become a 'normal' citizen of Beulah (*what's with the name? It sounds as if someone is vomiting*) which has a negligible percentage of criminality.

Why? Because that chip those guys implanted in Tate's skin makes him a slave. He's obliged to answer to anyone's wishes and, if he doesn't cooperate, well the feeling of not obeying actually destroys him from the inside. Creepy.

As I said, it started out very good and interesting. But then the Tate we all met at the beginning became a marionette and it was so weird and uncomfortable to watch him do all of the things people are asking him to.

Also, he kept apologizing and apologizing and apologizing again and again and again. He looked freaking pathetic ALL THE TIME and I was tired of his 'new personality' even though, yes, it's the chip's fault.

There was almost no plot at all! It was all Tate being a good slave and Rory being constantly blind about it. I can't believe he didn't have suspicions after Tate succeeding to ask for help during some moments. It's just SO unrealistic. I can't believe I lost interest so fast for this story but it just drags and drags and drags and, guess what?

The sex scene I witness was ABSOLUTELY the most boring and worst and forced one I have read about in a M/M romance so far, which says something since I've read more than 30 M/M romances. (My goal is to reach 100 by the end of the year...)

On top of all of that, I hated the narrator. He made the main characters feel as if they were teenagers who didn't know much about life and people. And, hey, the writing was so *ordinary*. English may not be my first language, but I really think I could have written this book myself with a dictionary near by.

I lost about 2 hours reading that 37% of the story and I always feel a bit pissed when reading without feeling and loving so I did lose my time and will think twice, next time, before picking another dystopian M/M romance up.

Lilia Ford says

POSSIBLY SPOILERISH

Well I won't call it perfect, since we now know where that leads, but this is a creepy, brilliant little fable that manages to be fucked up and humane and disturbing and lovely all at once. Its picture of what happens when you violate the human will is unsparing and frightening, but without the gratuitous sadism you sometimes find, which allows the hope that blooms towards the end to feel deep and earned.

I still cannot get over Tate, the way his fierce, unconquerable voice explodes into the story when it's finally set free. But the very fierceness is also what lets the full horror sink in: for what must it have taken to crush that extraordinary will, that love, that fearlessness?

And then comes the line, "you and me, we're not done," which practically made me fall out of my chair.

Bottom Line: Loved it.

Shurn says

Creepy - beautifully written - absolutely gripping!

"...You send a man to prison once and chances are he'll go there again and again. Prisons and punishments create criminals; they don't deter them. But you give him a chance to rehabilitate himself in a meaningful way and everyone wins. You do, he does, and so does society as a whole..."

Sounds good on the surface. Which is just like the town of Beulah - Perfection to the naked eye... But there's a darkness lurking in Beulah, unseen to outsiders and even the general population within...

On its face, Beulah is a Utopian society in the middle of a nation overrun with crime. The air is clean; the lawns are lush and green. There's free healthcare, education, and the citizens are friendly... Which is precisely why Rory applied for a position within the protected walls of Beulah.

RORY JAMES

It was a little... nice. Yes. Safer to go with nice than with weird. Maybe it was a cultural thing. Maybe people here were just... happier.

Rory spent his years growing up in the putrid city of Tophet – he struggled to keep safe, feed himself, and put himself through college – now all that hard work is paying off. He got himself a job in beautiful Beulah working as an assistant for Chief Justice Jericho Lowel – the perfect job, with the perfect boss, provided with the perfect little house, in the perfect town...

Rory was barely off the train when his perfect experience is ruined by a surprise punch to the face. Rory's rude welcome to the idyllic community is headline news for a town with no crime.

There hasn't been a trial in Beulah in nearly a decade. Criminals are urged to take a plea deal and agree to **"Rehabilitation through Restitution"** - the program places the criminal into the home of the person they've victimized. The victim helps to rehabilitate their fellow citizen as they perform restitution labor for a period of seven years.

Sponsors don't have to worry about living in close proximity of their "rezzy" though. All prisoners are implanted with a microchip which tracks them using GPS and ensures that they are non-violent. Sounds perfectly reasonable, right? Rory thought so too...

TATE PATTERSON

The Chip.

The chip wants to make me forget the truth. Never tell you the truth. Never make you unhappy. Never break its control. I have to lie.

Help me.

Help me.

Help me.

Tate thought that Beulah would be an easy mark – a town without crime is a town without security or prisons. He thought he could sneak in, steal enough to cover his debts, and then sneak back out. He didn't count on the random search at the train depot. He was running from the cops and tried to cause a distraction by punching the stranger standing on the platform.

Tate is given a choice: Go to trial and face a life sentence of indentured servitude if found guilty, or take the plea deal and serve seven little years in beautiful Beulah.

He didn't really have a choice when faced with the evidence piled against him. He took the plea deal and tried to prepare himself for the idea of Restitution. He wasn't counting on the chip, though...

"Just a little chip. Goes it the back of your neck and turns you into a nice boy."

The true purpose of the chip is kept secret for the residents of Beulah. It compels the prisoner to please their master in any necessary. A skull-splitting pain is the reward granted by the chip to any prisoner who fails to secure their Master's approval at all times.

So yeah... Behavior Modification Chips + A Prisoner who desperately needs to please his Master = Some serious non-consent.

It was terrifying to see the inner-monologue of Tate as he was fighting with the chip's programming... He's struggling to remember *who he is*. He knows that he doesn't want what's happening him, but he is completely powerless to stop it.

It was somehow even creepier to see things through the POV of Rory - who has no idea that his "rezzy" has a modification chip... He's a good person who is trying to acclimate to this strange new society, and he begins to genuinely care for Tate...

Poor Tate, who is locked in his own mind, slowly losing himself to the programming of the chip.

"How did that feel? Be honest."

The words were out of his mouth before he could stop himself. "I hate it. I want more."

This is the kind of book which leaves you in a haze long after you've finished. It is certainly not for the faint of heart.

Dear readers, sometimes I tell you that a book has *certain situations* which you might find objectionable. That is not the case with this book - the *entire premise* of Bliss is carefully crafted to push you out of your comfort zone.

You already know if you can handle this book. If you're the type of person who relishes the darkness looming within the pages of a book - I recommend you rush out and buy this book immediately. You will not be disappointed!

Monique says

4.5 STARS

Two of my favourite authors and a winning combination... their writing as always is stunning and they have this ability to make their stories so much more than the sum of the words actually written on the pages. They make me ask questions of the characters, think outside the box and make my imagination work overtime and believe me, it's not pretty. I got so caught up in this world they created, my emotions became real. *And* this could be so very real... in the back of my mind, my thoughts went to Hitler a man with so much charisma, he managed to brainwash his own nation into believing in the perfect race, the perfect people, in a perfect world. In *Bliss* we also see how that charismatic power and propaganda can be a powerful tool in establishing complacency, when the population begin to believe the hype of supremacy without realising the cost to humanity in achieving a false objective.

Rehabilitation through Restitution

Right from the start you have that feeling of impending doom, where the pain starts to creep across your chest. Knowing that the realisation of perfection and exactly what lies behind it in this world will be too painful to watch. Plus the fact that these two authors very rarely write anything that doesn't rip a hole in my heart.

How seductive is the lure of perfection when you have lived in squalor. What price would you be willing to pay for that feeling of bliss. For Rory, disillusioned with life in Tophet, the corruption, crime, poverty and unrest, where everything seemed to be escalating out of his control, living in fear of the daily threat of violence. The thought of life in Belluah was a dream, a utopia, a perfect society... but we all know that when something seems too good to be true then it usually is, but Rory wants to believe in his dream so badly, he's blinded by it all.

Where Rory used his education to escape from a life of drudgery in Tophet, Tate saw it as an opportunity to take advantage of this city state with no crime. Thinking a quick job, in and out, would be the solution to all his problems and a means to start afresh... all Tate wanted was a chance at a better life. I loved Tate's voice and how the authors pulled me into his character so quickly, my heart went out to him immediately, he's not a bad person, yes, he has lived his life on the wrong side of the tracks, but he is desperate to change all of that.

I hated watching the war raging in Tate's head between his consciousness and that of the chip's programmed required behaviour, it was heart breaking. He may not be incarcerated physically but his mind is trapped and he is lost to the feelings of helplessness and frustration. His mind screaming. But of course Rory only see's and hears what the chip allows... and Tate must *please* his sponsor/master.

I initially struggled with Rory, not knowing whether he was truly oblivious or just choosing to ignore those niggles in the back of his mind or the unease he felt with Tate. Mentally justifying his actions to push away those doubts that despite, Tate's willing compliance, his pleading, want and need for Rory, that something just wasn't right! But of course we know the truth, so it makes for pretty uncomfortable reading, as does Rory's guilt and conflicted emotions when the truth will out.

I felt like Tate, the voice in my head was screaming for Rory to hear me. I was so angry at the manipulative whisperings of Lowell, god, he made my skin crawl, the egotistical bastard that he was... evil painted in perfection. Which is something else both these authors excel at, they create believable evilness and depravity in their villains, so much so, that you hate them with every fibre of your being.

“You're very beautiful. aren't you? I'd make sure you remembered your time of service for the rest of your life, even when your time was up. Your whole body would remember.”

I love a book that takes me out of my comfort zone, I actually crave dark reads that get my adrenaline racing, it makes me feel alive. I want to champion the characters I fall in love with, I want to fight their battles with them and roar at the injustice of it all. And this book is a mind fuck of epic proportions where those that are chipped have no means to express their turmoil, where every aspect of their behaviour is a lie and belies their true internal chaos... understanding the ignorance *and* the crime hurts like a bitch!

This story however is not all non-con/dub-con and physical violation., there is a very emotional and intense romance of sorts simmering in the background, underneath all those layers, and it reaches a satisfactory conclusion with a nice little epilogue, just to confirm all was right in their world. Right up to the end this was a five plus star read for me, but I felt the authors, especially these two authors, (whom I hold in high esteem, so perhaps increases my expectations of them) let me down with the ending, it all felt a little too convenient (for them) especially with how elaborately detailed the rest of the book is. I know some readers don't like overly long reads, but I feel this would have benefited from an extra couple of chapters. That being said, the true value of a book to me is whether I will remember this, will these characters, their story and experiences stay with me... then the answer to that question is an emphatic ...YES!

This is without doubt another excellent read from two very talented authors who take me to their dark and depraved worlds... and I love every minute of it!

Heidi Belleau says

Mind control non-con in squeaky clean utopia-that's-secretly-a-dystopia.

Lisa Henry and I bring out the worst (best?) in each other probably.

Onyx says

Overall WIN. *Bliss* is fantastic dystopian fiction with engaging noncon erotic elements and a lackluster romance I won't focus on. Long Review.

Or in other words, this book is deep if you read it that way. All major spoilers are tagged.

This book tells the story of the utopian Beulah, where the air is clean and energy is cheap; education is free and everyone's happy. I like to believe that Beulah started off with the best of intentions, and then people fucked it up because that is what we do. And this tipping point between the best of intent and the worst of failure is exemplified in the story of Tate, forcibly rehabilitated for a violent crime, and his seven-year sponsor Rory, a naïve new citizen clinging to his black-and-white version of morality.

Don't read this book if you don't like chilling dystopias, and the corresponding Big Ideas. As readers, we don't need the histories and details of Tophet and Beulah, because they were exaggerations, ideals...It was anarchy vs. order, corruption vs. righteousness, and we watched those models crumble apart. Neither one was ever real.

It goes without saying I loved Beulah in all its sterile, unsettling beauty. The dichotomies between what Rory saw and what truly went on were so poignant. Beulah was a society of free speech that functioned on repression. It was a place that needed to bring "new blood" into the city, but couldn't justify itself to newcomers, nor could it justify harvesting eggs and sperm from outsiders. It was place without homophobia that used gay sex to shame its citizens. It was a place with gender equity where a man could punish the object of his affection for rebuffing his advances.

And the sex. (view spoiler)

The sex was eerily, disturbingly erotic. It was chilling and hot, delicious and oh so wrong. When a person is implanted with a chip, it's impossible to relax into a love scene. And to their credit, the authors never let you forget it, either. A kiss, for example, tainted by nosebleeds. Not many authors can write a scene that makes my mouth water as I simultaneously cringe. Here? Check and check.

Minor niggle: (view spoiler)

I just want to underscore that Rory is raped here too. Maybe not physically, but mentally. (view spoiler) It's the psychological torment that made him such a sympathetic hero.

It's his shame, despite how culpable he is, that makes *Bliss* work for me, and why a book like *Strain* fell flat.

Tate's anger and Rory's shame were absent in Gormley's work, and the narrative didn't make up the difference. Tate's anger, when it's finally released, is a marvel to behold. His emotions are so raw, and his words so sharp, that you really feel the dearth of his personality in the rest of the book. It made me think of all the voices in our society we don't hear because our own metaphorical chips. Like all the great minds we never heard when slavery was a legal part of our society.

In the end though, I can't help but be amused by all the negative reviews of this book that deride the romance, and how unbelievable it is. This is literally how I feel about 95% of the books I read and why I have a shelf called 'best pairings ever' that I hardly add to. Did the ending make me roll my eyes, on multiple occasions? Of course it did; but honestly, I've learned to ignore it by now. The saccharine mush is not relevant to me. To me, the real story was never about Rory and Tate. It's about Beulah, and what it took to expose all the hypocrisy. That's what I'll remember from this book.

I'll remember Lowell talking about ideals of justice before the rot sets in.

A broken voice saying, Help me.

I'll remember the scars on their legs.

God, *"I'm so sorry for ever teasing you."*

And two rape victims holding onto each other for dear life.

So yeah, the ending was rushed and frankly, nonsensical, but the essence of this book was an erotic dystopia, which was an overwhelming success. And (view spoiler)

Kudos, Lisa, if you read this review - I'm a still your huge fan :D

And hi, Heidi, I'm a new reader.
