



Sweet Cider

Barbara Morgenroth

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When 15 year old Neal Marchal finds her neighbor murdered, she knows who did it. The why is the secret the family has been keeping forever. While Paul took an interest in Neal's musical education and taught her how to play the fiddle, he took her fatherless stepbrother, Joe, under his wing and all that implies. Joe's rage has always been barely beneath the surface and years ago, he pushed Neal under a tractor as a warning. The reminder to never reveal the secret is her limp.

While Joe was gone for five years, Neal made music a private and central part of her life. Now she has an opportunity to sing and perform but the threat remains even if Joe is a thousand miles away. Neal finds refuge in the family of the young man who wants her to join his band. It's like a dream to live with people who love each other. Neal blossoms. She has everything to live for—music, performing and a growing affection for the young man who pulled her to safety.

Then Joe comes home. Neal knows it's just a matter of time because she told. Joe's going to finish what he started 8 years ago. But this time Neal vows the outcome will be different.

Sweet Cider Details

Date :

ISBN :

Author : Barbara Morgenroth

Format :

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Romance

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From Reader Review Sweet Cider for online ebook

Raven Reviewer says

Neal Marchal has led a troubled existence ever since her dad died. She's begun to rebuild her life and escape her crazy life with her stepmother and stepfamily. She has done her best to be invisible but it did not stop her from being a witness. To what? She'll never tell. Or will she?

What struck me first about this book is the main character Neal. Neal drew me in right away, though I didn't care for her name. A common piece of writing advice says writers should write in at least one flaw for their characters, to make them seem more believable, more real. The author did a superb job in this. Neal's limp made her weak and strong. Her fears were real and at times she was afraid and untrusting to a fault. I was captivated by her immediately. I am not sure how that happened because character-building usually takes time. Not in this book, though. I read and kept reading because I cared about what happened to her from the very first page. Well done!

Curiously, I found myself breaking away from reading this book to look up songs on YouTube. (That was a first for me.) I really wanted to hear the music in this book. (I am disappointed I do not have a playlist from the author, but hope to remedy that soon. If I do, I will post it.) I imagined scenes unfolding at times as in Walk the Line, not that I was picturing Joaquin Phoenix or Reese Witherspoon. I guess I got caught up in it all. Looking back though, I could definitely see this being made into a movie.

The ending was quite curt. The book is the first in a trilogy. However, if the first chapter of the second book had not been included, the end of this book would have indeed been too abrupt.

This book is for young adult readers. It does not contain any sex and is not gory or violent. Any violence is recounted as a second-hand story. There are no mythical creatures, but there is a monster. Abuse exists within Neal's stepfamily. It leaves a bad taste, as it should. This is the teenaged version of Sleeping With The Enemy. The author conveyed the paralyzing fear that comes from emotional, psychological, and physical abuse very well. I mention this as a warning to readers. If this hits close to home or you simply cannot handle someone else's story of abuse, maybe skip this book. If you are unaware of what living in an abusive situation may be like, maybe you should pick this one up. Stories like this one need to be told and they need to be read. As a mother myself, I am reminded what a large part of someone else's life I am and what an awesome, fragile responsibility that is.

No bad apples here. This book was an easy, fast read. I don't say that often about books. I started this book and before I realized it, I was halfway done. Seriously. I am a slow reader but I read this in no time at all - one day. That really says something about the way it was written. I am not talking about grammar or word usage. I mean the method the author used to weave the story worked extremely well. This is my first read by this author but without hesitation I would read another book written by her.

Indeed, I am looking forward to burning the midnight oil with the second book in this series, Burning Daylight.

For more reviews like this one, please visit: <http://ravenreviewer.tumblr.com>

Penelope Bartotto says

Morgenroth presents something new to the Young Adult Genre that is refreshing... reality. Marketed as "Mature Young Adult" I hope this does not scare the older teens from this title, there is a story here that is not oft told. There is no fairy tale ending in this story, but an ending that allows you to breathe and accept what has happened. Morgenroth developed a character that is more than just a girl, she is a fighter, even if she doesn't realize it. Trapped in a life that is horrible, Neal resigns herself to nothingness. She perfects the art of hiding in plain sight. She is what most teens are... dealing with a wretched self image. Like far too many teens Neal has developed this image based on the adults around her. Welcome to reality, a dysfunctional family! As a product of a dysfunctional home, I can totally feel Neal's emotional pain. The plot is very good, there is just one tiny rough patch that nagged at me... initially it was hard to determine the POV (point of view) of the narrator and then we lose time in an abrupt jump from the act that sets the tone of the drama. Once, I grasped the POV by the reigns though, I was bitten by the tartness of Neal's character, the sweetness of the Lambert family, or the bitterness of the Kent family. The music aspect of this story is sadly not shared with the person in the teaser for the book, and I think that is a pity. Music is an essential piece that is the puzzle of Neal Marchal. Morgenroth taunted me with the apple now, and I look forward to picking into book two in the series very soon.

Ctrl, Alt Books! says

Bad Apple starts off with Neal walking in to find Paul's corpse lying in a pool of blood. Neal's reaction seems kind of detached, as if the reality of her friend's murder hadn't struck her yet. Paul had taught Neal how to play the fiddle, which she used as an escape from her awful home life with the Kents. Steve Lambert is the cop who interviews Neal about the murder and she doesn't reveal much of anything to him, afraid that if she tells what she knows, she will find herself in the same position as Paul.

A while after the interview, Truly, Steve's son meets Neal and asks her to sing for him. Steve told Truly that Neal had a beautiful voice and he just had to hear it for himself. He asks Neal to be the lead singer of his band and she was hesitant at first, mainly because he was not used to being the center of attention. The Kents had always treated her like she was unimportant and didn't exist. Eventually she accepts Truly and the practice together, along with the other band mates.

One night after practice Neal comes home to find Joe drinking with Toby, Neal's stepsister and Joe's actual sister. At that moment, fear rushes through Neal and she knows she is in danger. After what happened to Neal years ago, she knows she needs to get away from Joe. She calls Truly and end up living with him and his parents. The Lambert's take in Neal with no problem at all and they consider her family. While living with them, Truly and Neal perform with their band and the feedback they receive is much beyond their expectations. During the show, Shannon, Neal's stepsister finds her and is glad that she got away from Kent mountain. Shannon is also trying to escape from the Kent house and it is then that tragedy strikes again.

I don't want to give away too much, but the ending is filled with excitement and danger. This book starts off really strong and you can't help but continue to read it. During the middle it is more building up the band and the murder mystery part of the book kind of dulls down. Then it picks back up again, around chapter 11, I believe is when Joe shows up again. Once Joe showed up, there wasn't a dull moment and I kept reading until, suddenly, the book ended.

Luckily, I got a little preview into the second book and I can't wait to continue to see what happens next. Thank you Barbara Morgenroth for giving me the opportunity to read and review your book. I look forward to continuing the series! I hope I get the pleasure of reviewing your other works.

3/5 Crescents

~Layna

Jess says

I can't remember when I found this book but since I found it has been sitting on my reader. Well, some days ago I decided to give it a try and what a nice surprise to find how much I liked reading Bad Apple. Bad Apple is the story of a girl, Neal who has learned to make herself invisible for the sake of self-preservation. She ended in a dysfunctional family that took everything from her. This cycle ends when she gets to know a boy, Truly who is a music genius and his family offers something completely different to her.

Truly and Neal are an interesting pair. We can see how they find each other thru music. They communicate with songs continuously and without the music Bad Apple wouldn't be the same. Barbara Morgenroth intertwined lyrics neatly in the narrative. Music made this book refreshing to me even though it discusses the impact a dysfunctional family has had in the life of the characters in the story. When Neal and Truly get together to make music, Neal's life changes. She finds stability for the first time and it is good to see her becoming a new person.

Bad Apple offers me many things that can be highlighted to support why this book is worth reading. So, here is my list of things that make this book a must read:

oSmart character building.

oInteresting setting and chain of events.

oMusical element is well used. Makes the characters approachable.

oNarrative is fluid.

oCouldn't stop reading.

I see opportunities for improvement as well. I cannot marry two things with the story in Bad Apple:

oTitle and cover

oThe ending

The story just stopped! Then the book gives a preview of Chapter 1 of Burning Daylight (Bad Apple #2) which to me should have been the last chapter of the first book. It doesn't make sense as the beginning of the second book when the ending of the first one is lacking the cohesiveness that chapter could have brought to Bad Apple.

Justine says

I received this book free from the author in exchange for an honest review. I thoroughly loved this book! I felt like Barbara Morgenroth tricks the reader into thinking after the initial shock, that the book was going to be happy and go lucky and everything would be fine and dandy. This story very quickly unravels as you fall deeper into the book. There are so many secrets that slowly reveal themselves to the audience, but there are still huge ones that left me wanting more. I want this to turn into a love story and have a happy ending.

Those characters deserve it! The only issues I had with the book was the CLIFFHANGER ENDING!!!! I can't believe it ended like that. I actually yelled out loud and wanted to bang my head on the table.

I loved Neal, the "damaged girl"!! I felt a connection to her. She was always trying to hide in the shadows and not draw attention to herself, and for good reason. When's she finally received attention and "love" she didn't know how to accept it. I can't wait to learn her full story, even though I have a feeling it's going to be a sad one. I have a CRUSH on Truly!!! He is an outcast, a singer and totally drool worthy. Plus he is a great guy! I can't wait to see where there story leads.

This was a great book! I would recommend it to all older YA readers. Older ones because there are some deep topics in the book. But such an enjoyable read. I still can't believe the "terrible" (lol) ending that Barbara Morgenroth wrote. I need book two NOW!!! (Hint, hint Barbara! Lol jk) but if you need a reviewer :)

Layna says

Review originally posted on Ctrl, Alt, Books!

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~Layna

Pragya says

This is one of those books that starts slowly and you don't know where it is going. The writing style is different and you're trying to make a sense of it and then suddenly while reading, you realize the writing style is no more different. Your mind has adapted to it, the story has your attention and you're involved in it. And then you realize you're enjoying the journey the book has taken you on.

The start was slow but the book got to me later. There's humor in it but it's not the laugh out loud one, it's of a different kind. I couldn't help but compare this book to my last humor book read - *Manless in Montclair*. Wait, don't go comparing them because they don't even have 1% in common. I was just amazed to see how two books can be completely different, have distinct writing styles and a very different kind of humor and yet both of them appeal to me in their own way. Great, no? Or maybe I am just overthinking things. Oh well, back to the book.

Mind you, the book is not a humorous one. It has a serious subject on hand and deals with it really well. I liked the novel plot, the characters but what I loved most was the way this book had a hold on me - from very little in the beginning to my awe'd feelings towards the end. It just kind of stumped me.

And one of my favorite things about this book apart from the subtle humor was the way relationships were depicted- good, bad and all else, how there was no insta love kind of feelings but so much more in the making. Just wow!

Overall, I really liked this book and highly recommend it. It's only \$0.99, so best time to grab it. And if you love music like me, the book's appeal will be even more.

I look forward to the series and other books by Barbara.

Tammi says

What would you do if you had to keep a secret or risk the anger of the person you feared most? That is what happens to Neal. She knows a secret about Joe. Joe is the reason she has a limp. He pushed her under a tractor and caused her to break her leg. He told her that if she ever told his secret, he would kill her. All is good because Joe moved to New Orleans. Then one of the neighbors is found murdered.

Through the investigation, Neal meets Truly. He is the son of the detective investigating the murder. Truly is interested in Neal because she can sing well. He convinces her to be in his band as a lead singer. Neal isn't exactly comfortable by this, but for the first time in her life, she finds something that she enjoys and wants to make Truly happy. She likes his parents also.

Truly drops Neal off at home only for her to discover that Joe has returned. Neal is terrified, calls Truly on the cell phone he gave her, and he convinces her to come stay with him and his parents. What will happen between Truly and Neal? Who is responsible for the murder of the neighbor? Why did Joe return and what happens when he is there?

When I first started this book, I couldn't really get into it. So, I did what I do with all books like that, I put it away and said I would come back to it. I have done this multiple times with different books and found that when I went back to them, they were more appealing to me. It was the same with this book. I found that I got more into the book when I took more time with it. Things made more sense to me.

There were things that I found distinctive about Neal's character. The dialog with Neal is short and curt. I think this is just how she is because she isn't used to dealing with people who are interested in having a conversation with her. She also wants to please people. She doesn't want to upset them, especially the ones who make her happy. She tells Truly on more than one occasion that she doesn't want to upset or change how things are in the band and that she is willing to do things the way that they have been doing them.

Truly was a very good friend to Neal. He would help her overcome things like her aversion to performing on stage. His parents and he showed Neal what a family should be and that made her happy. He also helps Neal with her fears. He gave her a cell phone to use so she can contact him.

Overall, I liked this book because it made me think about what was happening. Granted, you don't have to be Einstein or a Mensa member to understand it, but there is a depth to the book that you don't normally find in YA. It is described as a "mature YA" book. I'm guessing this is because it deals with the topics of murder and abuse.

Christina M Condy says

This story starts out a bit rough. It moves along slowly, and at first I thought the Main Character was a boy named Neal. How shocked I was to find out that Neal was in fact a girl. But the story moves along quickly and you get sucked in. Neal was being interrogated by the Police for a murder and she sang a song, when she sang the song, this set into motion a chain of events that would change her life.

Neal grew up in a VERY abusive home. And she is basically rescued by Truly, a fabulous and talented Musician. I won't go into any more details because I hate spoilers. The characters in the book are interesting. From Neal and Truly on through to the family Neal and Truly grew up in.

The story itself is a good one. I enjoy how the Author brought such an aspect of reality to this story. The only negative I have to say is that at times it was difficult to follow which character was speaking, and as I stated already I didn't know Neal was a girl in the beginning so things confused me. There were a few times I had to re-read scenes because I was confused. But in spite of those factors I have to say I truly enjoyed the book and have added the next book to my TBR list to continue this story. I really want to see where Morgenroth goes with this story.

Details/Disclaimer: Review copy was provided to me in exchange for a fair and honest review. The free book held no determination on my personal review.

Natalia Heaney says

Not for me.

Though sometimes very smart, the writing style of this book is fairly difficult to read. The book is written as if someone has taken a transcript from a movie: there's hardly any indication of who is talking. Sometimes the dialogue would go back and forth for a few pages at a time before we were told which characters were involved in the conversation. It was especially unfortunate because some of the dialogue was witty and funny.

However, the way the teenagers in the story talked was unrealistic:

“People don’t always want to be the guardian for someone else’s intimacies.”

“Did it just come to you or was it by design.”

On another note, the book was far too ‘Republican’ for my liking. I’m an Australian who has lived in Europe and Asia; we haven’t done the “Guns and God” thing anywhere I’ve lived! By the time I got to the end, where women who didn’t like guns were shown as cowards, I was getting a bit furious.

Giving so many of the female characters male names didn’t help either. At the start I thought the protagonist was a guy!

The abrupt ending didn’t make a lot of sense to me, but I believe this is a series, and I suppose we have to read the next one to get more of the story.

There were some decent ideas in this book, but it was not for me.

~Mindy Lynn~ says

Bad Apple was a miss for me. I read the summary and thought it would be an interesting fast read. Unfortunately it just ended up being a mess.

I tried my best to try and stay with the erratic behavior of the writing, but instead I found myself confused and annoyed. The story is all over the place and jumps so quickly to the next subject that it was hard to follow.

The MC is an obvious tortured soul who has an awful living situation and has had a troubling past with the family she is living with. But it’s hard to relate or care for this character because of the lack of emotion and the lack of intimacy a reader usually develops with the main character. I didn’t really care for any of the other characters either. Truly annoyed me how he kept making little rude remarks about Neal’s leg. I am sure it was meant to come off as teasing, but I just found it to be insensitive and rude.

There is great potential for this story and maybe it would have been met if the story was longer and there was better world and character development. I know it’s a series and I am sure more gets explained. But it still doesn’t fix the many problems I personally had with this book. I know others really liked the book, but it just wasn’t for me. I doubt I will continue with the series.

Julia says

Bad Apple by Barbara was not at all what I expected even after reading the description and summary. It started out a little slower with a lot of details, but then one has to have the back story to any characters past right? The mystery to the story kept me turning the pages. I wanted to know what would happen next and didn't have to fight to stay awake to finish the book. For what it's worth I'd say it took me a few hours or more to read the whole story.

Neal Marchal has had a rough past, growing up with secrets untold, keeping to herself most all the time. Life to her couldn't be any better than it is at any given moment. She has nothing but minimal expectations and never thinks that life could change for her. That is till the day she finds her neighbor and has to go to the police station to be questioned. The questioning is almost over when she sings a tune rather than answer in her normal talking voice, catching the officer off guard. This one tiny detail, lead to much more for Neal Marchal when Truly walks into her life.

I loved the way the characters were written, Truly made me laugh so many times with his witty comments and Neal with her come backs made it that much more real to me. Ever set of lyrics I read I had to look up and watch or listen to the video. One of my favorites though had to be the lullaby...

"The bed is too small for my tiredness
Give me a hillside with trees.
Tuck a cloud up under my chin.
Lord, blow out moon out, please.
Sing me to sleep in a cradle of dreams
So that I may slumber in peace.
Tuck a cloud down under my feet.
Lord, blow the moon out, please."
~ Barbara Morgenroth

I think the connection with this story to me was more about Neal and her way of thinking, her musical talent, and the change in her throughout the story. When one never thinks things in life will change for them, they tend to give up. I have found I really like stories that have a lesson to share within the author's writing. I would definitely recommend this book to others as it touched me. I also added Burning Daylight (Bad Apple, #2) and Rise (Bad Apple, #3) to my to be read list as soon as I finished reading Bad Apple: A Mature YA Novel.

Sheri says

Neal Marchal lives a terrifying life. Orphaned and left in the care of a stepfamily who is at best completely crazy, she tries to get by day to day unnoticed and ignored. When the day finally comes when being ignored does not work for her anymore, she leaves home and finds sanctuary with the family of a new friend, Truly. However, her life is full of tragedy and even her wonderful new life with a wonderful new family could not protect her from her past.

Neal is a great character. She is simultaneously simple and complex. It does not make sense, right? On the surface, you see a teenage girl who has been taught she is not important and does not matter. She goes through life trying to hide. Within, however, she has a great love for life and for music. She has a sharp mind and eventually learns it is okay to speak it. Though it takes some convincing to make her believe her music is good and she is beautiful, eventually she dares to begin to believe.

I think my favorite thing was how the relationships were written. There is a true array of feeling within each one – and each one is different. This was a great story of a difficult subject. The writing is clear and riddled with emotion.

MGGMMGGM says

Originally posted at The Solitary Bookworm

A death and mystery, a psychotic family and a girl right in the middle of the whole mess. Bad Apple is about a young girl named Neal and how everything in her life seems to be a distress until music and a boy named Truly changed her perspective of life. Neal is a very smart and caring girl who lives with her psychotic family who messed up her head from a very young age. Very appealing story and character and I enjoyed reading Bad Apple, but I had a few issues about it though.

First and minor issue is the name. I know that it seems weird of me and unfair to make a fuss about character names but in this case it impacted my reading. I initially thought that Neal is a guy. I've read a couple of pages before I realized that the story is pertaining to a girl.

Another is the overall emotion and tone of our main character. Neal is supposed to be frightened to death with Joe which resulted to her living with Truly's family however this wasn't resonating enough in Neal's dialogues. I just felt a lack of that he's-going-to-kill-me fear you feel when you know someone is about to get you. There are times that Neal may come off as nonchalant about it and that was off for me. In parallel though, I really did feel sad about Neal. I understood the hardship of her situation and her pain and I sympathize in her need for comfort and love.

There is no doubt that Bad Apple is mature YA. With all the branching out of genres nowadays it can be very confusing however there are distinctions. Content wise, it is indeed a notch higher (more mature in nature) compared to most YA but there is still that young love we all enjoy to gush about. Truly and Neal seems to be a good match – emotionally and mentally. Their relationship is not head over heels in love type of relationship and it was beautiful. Violence is not as graphic but it is present and dialogues are not over exaggerated to "replicate" teenage behavior. Pacing and suspense level was a hit and miss hitting a plateau in the middle of the story borderline to boring but it was still a great book.

Overall, a good story but missed a few marks in my checklist. Didn't regret reading it but left me undecided if I should read the next book.

Barb VanderWel says

I love this & I can't wait for more.

I will be also leaving a review on Goodreads @ Amazon.

And letting everyone know about it.

So i gave it a 5 Stars.
