



Inland Empire

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Nicky and Brandon are back, and this time they're on Brandon's turf. Nicky's still on disability when he comes to Riverside to visit Brandon and pick up his 'Querida' from the Bakersfield's impound lot. Brandon loves having Nicky around, but at the same time, he's worried someone might find out that Nicky's more than just a friend. When Nicky becomes involved with the Task Force Brandon's on, the tension ratchets higher as Brandon's paranoia about being outed increases. Will his inability to step out of the closet mean the end of his relationship with Nicky? Or will the danger of the case they're on make it all a moot point? Find out in this exciting sequel to Cheating Chance.

Inland Empire Details

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Author : James Buchanan

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From Reader Review Inland Empire for online ebook

Pamela Su says

A stellar sequel to Cheating Chance.

Without technical jargon and explanations bogging down the story, Inland Empire is a superior story to the previous book in the series. There are a lot more opportunities and less distractions to see the relationship between Brandon and Nick.

The focus of this story is on their romance with the Vice investigation just adding flavor. It was interesting to see how Brandon tries to maintain his relationship with Nick and still remain in the closet. It would have been so easy to demonize Brandon but I didn't see that happening in this story.

Yes, I can see that his actions are pretty horrible in some situations in the book. Still, we can see how it isn't all that easy for Brandon to release his fears of being out publicly.

There was so much in this story that drew me in. I quite look forward to reading the next book.

R * A Reader Obsessed * says

3.5 Stars

Ah, the saga of closeted cop Brandon and out & proud Nevada Gaming Agent Nick continues. Better in execution, still a little rough around the edges, the predicted *drama-lama* surrounding these two was definitely kicked up a notch. Um. Make that several notches.

This was like getting your meal super sized at the drive-thru. Extra large smut please, with a side order of kink and dirty talk. The guys' dynamic has changed, and my staid self surprisingly found it interesting, varied, and quite hot.

Oh. And there's a murder. It involves something about gangs and online gambling and falsified computer chips. There was some info dump that went over my head again, but it touched nicely on Brandon's job as a vice cop.

One almost forgets that this is supposed to be a romantic suspense because really this could be billed as erotica. Well... imo it does. Not that I'm complaining. There was so much man on man action that I was surprised these two could tear themselves away from each other to actually investigate and do their job. Ha ha.

In all seriousness though, this did address some topical issues that dealt mainly with the fear of coming out. It was an improvement from the the first book, and I expect more from the next and look forward to it!

BR with the girls! Thanks for the entertaining company as always!

Nichole (DirryH) says

Key points:

1. This book is full of really hot sex scenes. If that's what you're looking for, you'll love this.
2. Brandon was a total jerk, I don't know why Nicky put up with so much of his shit.
3. The cop drama/mystery aspect of this book never really came together. I couldn't tell if it was all supposed to be one case or if it was three separate cases and if it was three cases than what the hell was Nick doing consulting on the other two? He barely had reason to be on the one. And if it was one case, well, it wasn't very well crafted because I couldn't tell. Confusing at best.
4. Aside from the mystery falling flat, this was much better written than the previous book, *Cheating Chance*. This book was not weighed down by irrelevant detail. The exposition was organic and pertinent.
5. Lots of spelling errors and misplaced punctuation.

Sofia says

I still like the premise that this story is built on and the writing worked much better than the first in the series.

BR 8th July 15 with the gang

Ami says

3.5 stars

Although there are several times I want to kick Brandon's ass for being a jerk (he is so deep in the closet and so paranoid that he hurts Nicky's feelings!), but I admit that it might be what's real. Life is not always pretty, sometimes the consequences of one's coming out can result in something bad. So it's hard for me to accept Brandon's attitude but I understand. I actually enjoy this complicated relationship between them. Brandon is not an easy character to understand; he can be submissive when he is with Nicky but acts like an Alpha when he is out. He lives in two worlds -- and by the end of the novel, I appreciate the journey that the two of them go through.

Genre says

Inland Empire begins a few weeks after the end of *Cheating Chance*. Nicky is coming to the end of his disability leave, but takes a little holiday time so that he can visit Brandon and pick up his beloved hearse from the impound now that it's been released as evidence. Whilst staying with Brandon word gets around that Nicky's a computer geek and he gets drafted into helping with a case involving Vietnamese gangs who are running gambling and prostitution rackets. This means that Nicky's invading Brandon's work which sends Brandon into a tense panic. Nicky's so obviously gay and Brandon fears that his supposed friendship with Nicky will lead to him being outed at work.

Whereas *Cheating Chance* seemed to have an equal amount of focus on the mystery and the relationship plot lines, this sequel mainly concentrates on the two men and how they cope with Brandon being in the closet. The mystery is there primarily to provide a reason for Nicky staying longer in California and getting involved in the vice department where Brandon works. Having said that I found the mystery to be interesting and unusual: It gave me a few insights into the role of a vice cop and also what sort of planning and preparation goes into setting up a 'sting'. The mystery also enables us to meet characters such as Ray, an ex-lover of Brandon and give an overall understanding of the running of a police department and the types of men that Brandon works with.

The main part of the story focuses on Brandon and Nicky. Their relationship continues to develop throughout the book and once again there are various scenes where the men explore their love of sexual rope-play. These kept the sex scenes fresh and interesting as well as being quite informative. I sometimes found it difficult to picture in my head exactly what position Nicky had tied Brandon into, but that didn't really impact on my overall enjoyment of the sex scenes.

Alongside the sex is the emotional journey that these men are taking with one another. Aside from his marriage, Brandon has not been in a serious long term relationship and he finds it difficult to express his feelings for Nicky. It doesn't help that Brandon is constantly looking over his shoulder to see whether anyone is looking at them when they are together. In fact Brandon spends most of this book in a state of nervous tension, especially when Nicky begins to work in his department. He lives in constant fear that he is going to be outed and then be subject to scorn, ridicule or even worse violence amongst his work colleagues. It doesn't help when several of them start making comments about Nicky being 'a bit light-footed'.

Brandon's attitude puts a lot of pressure on the relationship between the two men. Nicky has been out of the closet for years and doesn't want to go back. He feels humiliated that Brandon is ashamed of them and their relationship. It doesn't help that Brandon is completely clueless about how to act as a couple anyway, leading at one point to a hilarious conversation between Brandon and his work partner, the very straight Weaver, where Weaver has to explain to Brandon exactly why he's messed up over Nicky's birthday.

*Brandon jammed his hands into his pockets and stared at the toes of his boots. "I f***ked up."*

*"You f***ked up so big you'll be lucky if you get any for the next six months." Weaver agreed as he folded his arms over his chest. "Take it from a guy who's been married for fifteen years. If it was a gal, diamonds might buy your way to forgiveness."*

Things only start getting worse for the pair as Brandon's increasing paranoia lead to him trying to force Nicky back into the closet. In some ways I had sympathy for both characters. Brandon knows the sort of grief he will come into if he lets it be known that he is gay, but Nicky doesn't want to hide his sexuality and nor does he feel that he should, as he tells Brandon:

"I'm not going to be forced into the closet because of your fear. Nobody's going to think you're gay, just because you've got a gay friend."

This push and pull in the relationship between Brandon and Nicky was absolutely fascinating and as Nicky's impatience with Brandon and his fears grew, so did mine. Having said that, I was hoping throughout the whole novel that they would be able to work through their problems and find that HEA that seemed so far away for a lot of the time.

Overall this was a gripping read. The mystery worked well in the way that it intertwined with the romance

plot and I found myself identifying with both Nicky and Brandon as they struggled to overcome the difficulties in their relationship. Once again James Buchanan has delivered the goods in terms of a tightly written mystery with sympathetic characters and I would highly recommend that you read *Inland Empire* which gets a grade of 'Excellent'.

Taintedskyee (Books Books&More Books) says

BR Here

Thanks, my lovely friends, for a lovely BR you all made the book entertaining.

This one is better than the first, but I can't give it more than 3 stars, sorry.

I was looking forward to read story which was tagged in a Mystery or suspense genre but when the mystery part falls flat and doesn't really balance properly with other aspects of the story that story is not well written for me.

It was an okay read. The author concentrated more on Brandon and Nicky's relationship in this story. The Suspense was not good. Brandon was as usual Jerk, but I like him. He did take some baby steps towards getting the proverbial stick out of his ass and by the end embraced Nicky.

Yay

I really enjoyed Nick and Brandon's fight and making up after.

Lots of squirm-inducing hot scenes between Nicky and Brandon.

(view spoiler)

Rosa, really says

Okay, I read this 18 years ago (that's July) and can't remember shit.

The sex was super hot and Brandon was a major dick who needed to get his head out of his ass (seriously, I sympathize, but come on) and then less of a dick. So that was good.

I'm not overwhelmed with love for this series like I am for Buchanan's Deputy Joe series but I'm still looking forward to seeing what happens to Nick and Brandon in the last book, All or Nothing.

Oh and thank you to my BR buddies!

Jason Bradley says

The only part of this book that kinda ticked me was when Nicky got pissy over Brandon busting prostitutes and kept it going. During that part, the rating was falling but the rest was so good that it made up for it. :)

Otila says

3.5

I liked this one a lot more than the first one. The writing was better and so was the sex.

The sex sometimes got in the way of the story but it was super hot. So that's not really a complaint, just an observation.

Melissa says

Nick and Brandon are back for more in book 2. It takes up after Nick has mostly recovered from his injuries from book 1. They are together in California and Nick is helping out on a case. They have some really hawt motorcycle sex! And some angst with Brandon's ex....arguments....fighting....near break ups. More Rope Play....yummmy!!

The mystery was not that interesting, but I loved the continuation of Nicky and Brandon.

Nikyta *Miss Forgetful* says

I definitely liked this one better than the first one, Cheating Chance. For one, Brandon doesn't do any hanky panky with chicks like he did in the last one. I mean, he's still kind of an asshole but at least he kept his paws to himself. Nicky is still the same, goth and lovable. I want to marry him. *sigh* If only he was real. :/- I still don't think Brandon deserves Nicky but by the end of the book, Brandon showed that he does love Nicky enough to prove it.

This one was definitely filled with suspense and I was left hanging on the edge of my seat a few times wondering what was going to happen next. I was captivated throughout the whole book even when I wanted to kill Brandon for hurting Nicky.

However, while the sex was hot there was just a bit too much of it for my liking. But oh, baby, was it HAWT! Nicky and Brandon's fondness for ropes and knots had me panting for more of those scenes... while I kind of just skipped the others. Lol.

Besides that, I really loved this one. I wished we saw Brandon go through experiencing what his co-workers thought of him being gay after finding out when Brandon just wouldn't let go of Nicky and almost squeezed him to death because he was so relieved. I will forever remember that moment, it was probably one of the

sweetest I've read. But it was a totally aww moment when he finally just gave up and outed himself when he thought Nicky was hurt.

Overall, Brandon and Nicky, while frustrating at times, are definitely one of my favorite couples. I absolutely recommend reading this series.

?♥? Cocky™ Michaelle ☙♥? says

4.2 Stars

I hate this cover, but the book was so damned good I'll forgive the shoddy Photoshop. It was hella angst, though, with Brandon's paranoia of being outed & as such lashing out at Nicky unnecessarily...but they worked it out in the end. And, after that flashback to when Brandon was a rookie, I can sort of see why he would be worried, so I cut him a bit of slack. (So did Nicky.)

The case wasn't as interesting this time around (just typical Vice shit) and that's okay since it really only provided the vehicle to move the relationship plot forward. Still, loved Roberta. LOVED her. And I loved that Brandon treated her with the respect she deserved. (Reminded me of Cooper on Southland with the wig incident.) (Fuck, I miss that show.)

And OMFG the rope scenes. JFC, they were so erotic, so sensual. So well-described that I have plenty of images to add to the mental spank bank for future use, yanno? I loved being in Brandon's head for those because, hello, sensory overload. Thank you!

Edited to add: Oh shit, I forgot about the scene where they have hot, so hot, OMG hot sex on the motorcycle. While it's running. *fans self*

So, yeah, definitely gonna read the next one.

Sarah says

Cheating Chance was such an enjoyable read and I've been waiting ages for Inland Empire, the 2nd installment in the series. Unfortunately I'm not much one for serialized books, I just don't have the patience! The wait was worth it though and if anything this volume was even better than the first.

The development of the characters, particularly Brandon, made for compulsive reading and had me up till 2am. I had bags under my eyes! But the book doesn't just have well developed characters and angst conflict, there was some really great police procedural writing too, which had me totally hooked.

The sex in the book was so good. SO GOOD. Lovely rope work, even lovelier frottage and the BDSM aspects were hawt. I'm not usually one for talking during sex in a book, but there was something about the way this was written that floated my boat. Nicky and Brandon are incredibly sexy in all their tattooed, dirty boy goodness and I liked it much.

Lauraadriana says

3.5 Stars

I think I'll do **One Big Review** when I finish the last book for this series. I'm still loving it for sure, but this one dwindled for me a bit in certain parts. I was not too sure what they were going for with the crime/mystery part of the plot.

Nicky and Brandon are still **MADE OF SEX**, so hot and such great moments.

Nicky is such a fabulous character , open and just **IN LOVE**, so willing to fight to get his happy ending with Brandon.

Brandon is still as stubborn scared little shit, hot, sexy, subbish, yummy delicious little shit that is. Oh how he irritates me! I love him too though, because despite his asshole ways, he is **SO IN LOVE** with his Nicky.

My favorite part of this book? Roberta the drag queen she ROCKS THE FUCKING HOUSE! Man I love her!...She needs her own book DAMMIT!

On to number three, I better get my happy ending for these two...Just saying.

AliciaJ says

This one just didn't hold my interest like the first one. Brandon was a total shithead, paranoid freak, which made it really really hard to feel any drip of sympathy for him. I did love the hooker though. *She* was awesome. Anyway, at least I can put this one in my **read** column now. Whoopee.

DaisyGirl says

4.0 Stars

Wow. And, we're back for more hair-pulling arggggh! from my fast-becoming-fave tortured couple. In this sequel to Cheating Chance, Nicky is on Brandon's turf. Still on disability and in town to pick up Querida, Nicky gets corralled into helping the Task Force Brandon is on. Once again, things heat up - in and out of bed - but this time, Brandon's paranoia hits a new high.

These guys ... *shakes head* ... drive me **NUTS!** And, I love it. How sick is that? I liked this sequel because even though Brandon was often a sandwich short of a picnic, I felt that I got to know him better. And, I liked what I saw. I don't know if I can aptly convey the irony of that. In book two, Brandon was unbearable at times and I wanted Nicky to leave his sorry ass more times than I can count. But, nonetheless, I fell in love with Brandon in this book. Maybe I'm the one that needs some counseling and pharmacological help.

The mystery was meh; the ending was a little titillating; the overall story ... *grins* ... winnah!

Bottom line: I'm lovin' these nut jobs.

Ingela says

Written july 15, 2015

3 1/2 Stars - Nothing is perfect but nevertheless most often interesting ... like here

Book #2

I finished and liked but didn't love the first part Cheating Chance (3.5 stars) in this three books series 'Taking the Odds' just a week or two ago. I'm not sure I should have started this second part already if it wasn't for the buddyread with a bunch of James Buchanan liking girls.

Hesitant and unsure ... just like the hero here

There are things to say, things needed to discuss, things to be heartwarming happy about. I'm not sure what I think or what I like right now. Anyway, this second part gets both lovely beautiful roses and uncomfortable dreary thistles from me.

Imagine a gay kinky Goth and a tattooed horny closeted LA cop-dude. It must be smexy yummy and fun. Or?

Nick O'Malley is the agent for the '*Nevada Gaming Commission*', who test slots and video poker machines too investigate allegations of cheatings. A openly gay guy with the black 'Goth' look and (weekend) lifestyle.

Brandon Carr is the '*Riverside PD*' closeted 'vice' cop with a lot of tattoos, a tough biker boy look and a *Harley* MC.

These two get to know each other a weekend evening at the big Goth convention, *Convergence 11*, in *San Diego*. Then they started a kinky, struggling and quite stormy relationship. There were action, villains and a murder case and we were left with them in a quite good place for the future.

“Why can't you just leave it where it's good?”

Cupping Brandon's chin in his hand, Nicky looked deep into Brandon's eyes. “Because I think we deserve wonderful.”

This second part *Inland Empire* is more or less set in Brandon's hometown *Riverside*. The plot and story is focused on Brandon's life, work, friends etc. Nick was there to visit (and get his car) but ended up staying

some weeks to help out with a crime case. ~ An bumpy love journey started...

I like but get so irritated as well..

These 'Taking the Odds' books have a good basic storyline, interesting characters, startling hot scenes, heartbreaking moments and are in no part sticky or corny. There are also good enough crime cases. A lots of positive aspects, but also a lot of troublesome flaws.

The first one that troubles me is **the closed closet problem**. This "gay-dread" makes Brandon sometimes ridiculously frightened and insecure, and he hurt Nicks feeling badly more than once. Brandon actually act like a spoiled self-centered teenboy and it gets me both sad and angry. I want to like (admire and love) the main characters in my romances, but here in this series, it is almost more bullshit than I can stand.

On the other hand, Brandon is so damn hot, fun, diverse and very typically weak, but believable, "human" character. —A big shaky bear (scared boy) I want to hug.— Nick and Brandon's love is both grand romantic, heartbreaking tough and just addictive to follow. Pretty please dear Brandon, step out from that closed closet.

The smexy steam; kinky but very sweet bondage

I don't want to be whiny but there are also, at times, too long descriptions, too much details about (unimportant) stuff (around the crime cases), and also (in my humble opinion) way too many and sometimes just too long explicit sex-scenes. This writer write very good steaming hot kink but I just don't want, or need to know, about every single rope knot, every move / trust / lick etc.

‘Besides the sexy man circling him, the sensation of the ropes was a reward. No one other than Nicky could keep him helpless like this.’

Far too much deliciously good luxury food every day is also just tiresome commonplace food at last. ~ **I wanted more story, more relationship development**, more of these men... not just their horny thoughts and (impressive) active bedroom life. ~ To be true and fair, *Inland Empire* become a much better book with more interesting story in the second half. I smiled again. This is pretty good reading as soon these two men start to talk to each other.

I'm double, I both like a lot and don't like lots

There is a third book (All or Nothing) but to be true, I don't know if I want, has the strength and energy, to read it or not. Maybe I just ask a friend to just give me a highlight summary. Or maybe I just must meet these lovebirds one last time. Who knows?!?

I LIKE - yes I actually do

Heather C says

I'm still loving these guys!!

Ok, so those of you who didn't like Brandon in book one will probably dislike him even more in this book. I love him but he is still a huge asshole and terrified of coming out. Of course, I think if he would ever come out he wouldn't have any more reasons to be an asshole. This story is lot more about Nicky and Brandon's relationship than book one. They are pretty much together the entire time...so that means there is a lot of hot sex...rope sex...and even Harley sex! That also means there is a lot of fighting, but I personally enjoy their fighting because I know that it will always be followed by hot makeup sex. So, in between the fucking and the fighting, there are a lot of tender moments. Brandon does well at making up for his asshole-ish-ness and he is finally starting to grow up. And Nicky was just *perfect* as always!!!

Why 4 stars? Because I was not at all interested in the investigation this time. BORING!!

I will definitely continue this series because I also believe that Nicky and Brandon "deserve wonderful."

Snowtulip says

Love Nicky and Brandon!

Likes:

- 1) Nicky - He has become one of my favorite characters...he's sensitive, demanding at the appropriate times, really thinks emotions through, is hilarious...downright wonderful
- 2) Understanding a different point of view - Buchanan shows some of the difficulties that have lead to Brandon's paranoia in the dream during his earlier cop years. That scene just made me think about a different point of view and why people behave as they do. It adds perspective to behavior that I didn't get until that point. Made me more compassionate to Brandon's struggles (always a good reminder to myself not to make judgement without walking in someone's shoes).
- 3) Connection - I feel the connection throughout the book between Nicky and Brandon, it is never flat.
- 4) Secondary characters - They added a little snapshot into the world of Brandon and developed the whole ambiance.

Dislikes (well, not really much to dislike with this story):

- 1) The case they were solving - it was disconnected for me, or it could be that I was just sooooo absorbed in Nicky and Brandon's relationship that I couldn't connect the dots. I liked the direction and where the case was going, just needed it to be a little tighter.

Overall a great read with leaps and bounds of character development over the initial book in the series.
