



Checking Him Out

Debbie McGowan

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Engineer Sol Brooks is a happily married man, so people keep telling him. He and Elise have been in Boston for eight years, he loves her, and she loves him. They've got a great apartment that's kept its value, they're both up for promotion, and he can hook up with any guy he likes - all the sex he wants, so long as it's of the "no strings" variety. And that's all fine and dandy...until a chance meeting at the checkout.

Also available: Checking Him Out For the Holidays - a festive short for Hanukkah/Christmas

Dear Author,

When I met the love of my new life (his words not mine... ass), I was simply waiting in the checkout line. I might have been caught up in a conversation with my best friend/wife of X amount of years about something, I can't remember at the moment. So anyway, we were distracted and didn't notice that the line had moved. So after maybe 30 seconds, or a minute at the most (I'm pretty sure it wasn't that long), Mr. Impatient, with an accent like that character on The Originals (not that I watch that show at my age), got our attention in the rudest way in my opinion, or in my wife's heart-of-a-ho opinion, the kindest way possible for our insensitive asses. I'm pretty sure his accent, mixed with his damn charm, got him out of more trouble than it should. We had a rough start, but we had quiet moments when we weren't all over each other or fighting, in and out of bed. Anyway, I would love a story about our first year.

Photo Description:

Photo shows a ruggedly handsome, olive-skinned guy in his early to mid-thirties, with thick, short dark hair, deep dark eyes, broad angular features and heavy stubble on his lip and chin. He's wearing a suit jacket over an open-necked hoodie, dark hair visible on the bared V of his chest. His eyes are narrowed and looking straight into the camera; his index finger is pressed to his thick ruddy lips in mischievous, sultry warning.

This story was written as a part of the M/M Romance Group's "**Love's Landscapes**" event. Group members were asked to write a story prompt inspired by a photo of their choice. Authors of the group selected a photo and prompt that spoke to them and wrote a short story.

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The M/M Romance Group strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Checking Him Out Details

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From Reader Review Checking Him Out for online ebook

Renée says

This was a surprise gem. I really loved the story. Would've been closer to 5 stars if we would've gotten some better communication from the MCs. It really jumped around in places. Awesome for a free read!

Erika says

I'm not quite sure what to rate this story, so for now I'm giving it a solid 3 stars because, even though I didn't particularly like any of the main characters, the story was well written and it followed the prompt. However, there were quite a few things that bothered me about this one, like:

- the bitchy wife that gives you an excuse to cheat (to clarify, I don't have a thing against cheating in fiction at all, I just hate the bitchy wife trope)
- too much crying... like, a LOT of crying
- a major Woobie with a *ton* of issues
- actual physical running away from people and problems, (view spoiler)
- a deep closet that was (view spoiler)
- did I mention the crying? (view spoiler)

Despite all that, I ended up needing to know what happens at the end and, as mentioned, the prompt was followed to the T.

Ariana says

I'm not sure what I expected after I read the blurb. All I can say is that what I got by far succeeded what I might have expected. :) If that makes sense.

The choice of title is brilliant, as are the MCs.

I didn't realize at the beginning how lost and torn Sol was, but as soon as Adam appears on the scene, and Sol keeps hijacking his chance of happiness you start wondering what is going on. It becomes clear soon enough that some kind of dark secret is holding him back big time. The author does a stellar job unravelling his story slowly, keeping the reader in suspense while aching for Sol at the same time. His back story tore my heart a little bit apart, and I was grateful to Debbie McGowan she decided to put it back together again at the end.

I also really enjoyed Adam. Big, strong, gorgeous, (im)patient, and with his heart on his sleeve, he is everything Sol could have wished for, but he proves that he is even more. I love how Adam stands by Sol, how he supports him, whatever. Yes, of course he has moments where Sol's behaviour rocks his confidence in their relationship, but who would have felt different? But it is loyalty, his love and patience that carry Sol through in the end.

The thing I didn't get was the way Sol and Elise parted. After being told that they loved each other (even if

that was in their own way) Elsie turned into the b**** of hell once Sol fell for Adam. What? She seemed quite an ok person up to that point. It was weird how hypocritical and poisonous she 'suddenly' became. They were friends and married for eight years, surely Elise would have talked things over with Sol?

Anyway, I thoroughly enjoyed the rest of the book. It was a most pleasant Sunday read.

RECOMMENDED

Kristan says

3.5 stars

This is what I felt like for two-thirds of this story:

Frustrated

If you put the cheating aside (It was in the blurb, I knew what I was getting myself into) This is still one hell of a frustrating read. It fell on the old "wife's a bitch" trope and what an effing bitch she was! Elise was hypocritical and cruel and I hated every moment she had on page.

For as much as Adam inserted himself into Solomon's life, he was quick to want to remove himself from it as well. He was so impatient at times that I wanted to pull my hair out at his reactions. Eventually he was sweet, sappy and patient in all the right moments, and it somewhat made up for his behaviour. But mostly, I still think he's an immature brat.

But Solomon, you may be the most frustrating of them all. You are the Obi Wan of deflection and avoidance. (view spoiler) You have the Poor-Little-Ol-Me disease but you refuse to do anything about it.

The last third of the book is about healing and Solomon finally getting closure and opening himself up. It was kind of lovely and sort of made up for the hair I've lost from pulling it out earlier in the story. It took pouring a lot of understanding into me getting to that point.

This story is well realised, and it certainly has the length to get from point A to B, although I'm still scratching my head as to why Adam was okay with Solomon being married. See? I'm still frustrated.

The writing was pretty good, though I felt like it lost momentum in a few parts. I think that may be due in part to the veering off to explain a certain british mannerism or lifestyle. I would have preferred to be allowed to go with the flow and assume that the knowledge presented was factual. That I needed to be told that this is how and why they do and say certain things was, for lack of a better word, frustrating. It jumbled the writing. The author could have set explanations within the story without taking us to the side lines for additional information.

The Epilogue was nice, and for me, much needed, and gets a half of a star just for that.

Edit: I just wanted to add that the author did **exactly** what was asked for in the blurb and therefore my low rating and frustration isn't so much to do with the writing but with the plot itself.

DW says

Checking Him Out was a cute and fun read. It was also free on Amazon.

I was kinda lost in the beginning but after a few chapters, I understood.

The blurb does mention that Sol is married and he is but it's more of an "arrangement". I am not one for cheating and I wasn't sure how I would feel but once I understood the background story, I was okay.

Sol had funny ways and I really struggled to like him.
He is was an okay person I guess but not my favorite.

Adam was a whole different story. I liked him very much. He was sexy, fun and spontaneous. He was good for Sol.

Sexy times were okay but it was almost as if Adam was constantly chasing Sol.

Not going to complain too much though because it was free on Amazon!!

Meep says

I don't like how bitchy the wife is portrayed. Read just past the first story post; it doesn't sound like an eyes-wide-open marriage of convenience. Women and wives don't need to be horrid in order for the gay men to be cute and/or righteous when cheating.

In fairness the story does follow the prompt exactly.

in my wife's heart-of-a-ho opinion

Yeah, this was never going to be a story for me.

Oh and UK, Britain, England - these three are not the same.
Some of us are British without being English!

Tanu Gill says

The blurb promises a fun story, if a little illicit in its beginnings, and it delivered on that promise. But what that blurb left me unprepared for was the depth of emotion I felt while reading it.

I started off with being intrigued as to what will happen next. I ended up feeling a heavy happiness, heavy in the heart, that is.

During this journey, I felt a myriad of emotions, going through fury at one infuriating character, laughter with the MCs (who were absolutely adorable), hatred towards the bad people, adjusting my view of seemingly bad people when they went through a transformation born of understanding, tears for the wrongs that had happened, and, finally, joy for the happy ending and a great epilogue.

In short, I've shed tears, laughed, been pissed off -- all of it in the best way possible. This book took me on a journey of emotions, and it's exactly what I look for in my M/Ms.

I loved this book. Such a poignant story and happy ending. :-)

Can't wait to get started on the next one by the author!

Amy Spector says

I am going to admit right upfront that I am a sucker for stories about healing, and surviving the shit that life cruelly throws at you. Real life can suck, horrible things can and do happen, and I like the idea that people can still find happiness in the aftermath of a not-so-perfect life.

I'm also going to admit that I am not normally a "tag reader", I would go as far as to say that I'm a total "tag ignorer". It is too much like *Let's watch this movie, you'll like it, Rosebud is his sled*. Why would I do that to *myself*!?

That being said, this story turned into a completely different story than I thought I had been reading. And after finishing the story, and then reading the LL story prompt, I'm even more surprised.

I loved that the author took us from a story about a closeted man in a lavender marriage being hit on in a grocery checkout, to this story of a man and his construction of half-a-life as a self-inflicted punishment for sins (both real and imagined) of his past.

The double standard of the marriage drives you a little crazy, but that is always the price of a first person POV, you don't know what is going through the mind of anyone else. But I love Sol's voice so much I wouldn't want it to change.

This is a bit of a roller coaster ride and certainly a heart-breaker but a wonderful story, indeed.

Silkeeeeeereads says

Debbie McGowan just made me take another Valium. There have been some exceptional stories this year for this event and this author has written a five star read, IMHO. Not perfect, but definitely full of emotion. Even though it's character driven the plot was outstanding. Once again, a story that will make you cry but there is an HEA. Kudos, Debbie for a wonderful book and thank you for sharing such a lovely story. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

Ofelia Gränd says

I can't believe I haven't read this story until now, it's been sitting on my E-reader since last year when it came out. I loved the roller-coaster ride this story took me on, and as always Ms. McGowan's writing is lovely.

Debbie McGowan says

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1. Download this story - it's free after all. You've nothing to lose.
2. Skip to the halfway mark - search for this line: "my own parents remained blissfully unaware that my marriage was over" - and read from there.

This really isn't a story about cheating. As the tags suggest, it's about grief and healing, but it begins with the break-up

Wart Hill says

my wife's heart-of-a-ho opinion
my wife's heart-of-a-ho opinion
heart-of-a-ho

WHAT THE EVER LOVING FUCK

I'd rather not have a side of misogyny with my M/M.

Cee Brown says

I won't lie... I thought this story was cheesy when I started reading it. I almost gave up, but then Sol did me in. And Adam had his say and I was mush..

I can relate to all Sol had to do in order to release himself and was glad Adam was man enough to take him on.

The story took a different turn than what I expected, but Lordy, I had a few LOL moments, especially Sol's

first time submitting to Adam. You just gotta read it. Miss Debbie had him say what we all think. LOL. Glad they found their happy ending, through trials and runs, hehehee (gotta read the story to understand THAT one).

Author's note: a prequel of sorts would be great.

Truuss says

5+++ big stars Jesus I was really walking slow and blindly in so much depth

In the beginning yeah great way of writing, catching, then it's starts to get even better... then I got the feeling it's brilliant and then BAM no words really speechless. There goes my best better bests. The story grabs you by the heart. From light to such a complete gripping story. Really really amazing buildup. Feelings from left to right from low to high e.v.e.r.y.w.h.e.r.e with in exact the right loading!! Amazing. Deep bow and applause.

(I really have to stop this review because I only can express in exaggerated statements)

SueBee★bring me an alpha!★ says

FREE on Amazon US today (3/20/2015)

BLURB:

Engineer Sol Brooks is a happily married man, so people keep telling him. He and Elise have been in Boston for eight years, he loves her, and she loves him. They've got a great apartment that's kept its value, they're both up for promotion, and he can hook up with any guy he likes - all the sex he wants, so long as it's of the "no strings" variety. And that's all fine and dandy...until a chance meeting at the checkout.

<http://www.amazon.com/Checking-Him-Ou...>

FREEBIES are often good for MORE than one day, I have gathered all my FREEBIES on a special shelf:

Kindle-freebies (currently over 370 books)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/list...>
