



# Meatworks

*Jordan Castillo Price*

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## **Meatworks** Jordan Castillo Price

Desmond Poole is damaged in more ways than one. If he was an underachiever before, he's entirely useless now that he's lost his right hand. He spends his time drowning his sorrows in vodka while he deliberately blows off the training that would help him master his new prosthetic. Social Services seems determined to try and stop him from wallowing in his own filth, so he's forced to attend an amputee support group. He expects nothing more than stale cookies, tepid decaf and a bunch of self-pitying sob stories, so he's blindsided when a fellow amputee catches his eye.

Corey Steiner is a hot young rudeboy who works his robotic limb like an extension of his own body, and he's smitten by Desmond's crusty punk rock charm from the get-go. Unfortunately, Desmond hasn't quite severed ties with his ex-boyfriend, and Corey isn't known for his maturity or patience.

Meatworks is set in a bleak near-future where cell phone and personal computer technologies never developed. In their place, robotics flourished. Now robots run everything from cars to coffee pots. Taking the guesswork out of menial tasks was intended to create leisure time, but instead robots have made society dependent and passive.

Desmond loathes robots and goes out of his way to avoid them. But can he survive without the robotic arm strapped to the end of his stump?

## **Meatworks Details**

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Author : Jordan Castillo Price

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## From Reader Review Meatworks for online ebook

### Christina says

I have mixed feelings on how to rate this. The characterization and world-building is 5-star, but the first half moved a little too slow for me, so I'm bumping it to a 4/4.5 star. Did this take away from my love for Des? HELL NO!

This world is set in the future where robotics play a big part of everyday life. Don't let the sci-fi/futurism scare you, because JCP created a realistic story set in a dark and gritty world. Everything from the descriptive setting to the authentic characters sucked me right in. I could picture everything, from the abandoned warehouses to the riverside flea market. She painted a bleak yet vivid picture.

Let's get to Desmond Poole. He lost his arm in an accident and now he is drowning in self-pity. Not an attractive quality, I must say. He's a character that many people will dislike. He's depressed and he's drinking himself to an early death. He's rude, emotionally-stunted, constantly brushes off his responsibility, and hurts the people he cares about. He wants nothing to do with learning how to use his prosthetic arm and only cares about getting another bottle or another pack of cigarettes. Basically, he's a major fuck-up. You can't blame his attitude on losing his arm because he was just as messed up before the accident.

For the most part I loved his voice. One minute I wanted to shake him and yell "get off your ass and grow up" and the next he had me laughing or got me all misty-eyed.

He's also in love with two men. Hi ex-boyfriend Jim, the social worker who is constantly getting him out of trouble and wants to save him from himself, and Corey - the lazy new boyfriend who's an expert at using his prosthetic arm and helps Des try to beat the system. The book doesn't focus on some messy love triangle or the romance, but it's these relationships that have an impact on Des, both negatively and positively.

Even with his multitude of flaws, there were flashes of hope for Des. JCP made me care for him. I needed him to pull through. Des starts to become aware of his own screw-ups, past and present. It's not a big "Aha" moment, but it occurs slowly. He begins to realize that he can have more, he can become more. He faces his past and his relationship with Jim and Corey. He finally takes some responsibility and makes decisions. He knows things won't be perfect, but that's not what he strives for. He's taking small steps and that's ok with him, and me :) It's not a transformation, but it's progress and he's finally moving in the right direction and that's what I loved most about this. His story was believable.

So, yes Des is a screw-up, but I still love him.

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### Julio Genao says

**eminently excellent.**

once in a while JCP writes these characters who read like the kind of dudes who look like they smell bad. but her effortless talent for layering relatable and poignant details with the appalling consequences of their (usually hilarious) character flaws is unmatched in MM.

recommended.

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## Susan says

Truth be told this book won't be for everyone. It's not your typical M/M fare. If you're expecting a traditional romance, you won't get it here. It's not happy and sweet. It's honestly unlike anything I've read before. **And I loved it...FIERCELY.**

Your experience with Meatworks lies solely on how you take to Desmond Poole. Desmond is not a hero. Heck he's not even an anti-hero. He's, when you line up the facts on paper, a total loser.

He grew up with nowhere friends in a nowhere job with a nowhere dad and eventually led to his right hand being...nowhere. In an incident he barely remembers, he lost his appendage and thus became a "gimp"...with a robotic prosthetic.

He's a vodka-holic, he can't keep a job, he's struggling coming to grips with his handicap, he's grouchy, he's needy, he's inappropriate, he's unpredictable, he's a terrible communicator, he's lazy, he's self-destructive.

He's in love with two men (possibly three) and can't figure out if either is great or awful for him. The relationships are complicated and his feelings are conflicted. He doesn't always know what he wants or who he wants. He is clueless to what he needs.

**There is absolutely no reason why I should like Desmond Poole. I LOVE DESMOND POOLE.**

He is I-don't-give-a-fuck cool. And yet he does give a fuck.

And those glimpses of need, vulnerability, and desire drew me to him. I didn't root for him to suddenly embrace his handicap, become a contributing member of society, and find his HEA with one of his love options. I just wanted him to be ok. Aiming low? No...it's just...this book isn't a fairy tale.

It's a 1st person account of Desmond just trying to figure his shit out. Not a whole lot *happens* from page to page...but it *feels* monumental none the less. It's not tale-telling. It's character growth. It's not action-packed. It's realizations small and sometimes unspoken even.

It's hard to categorize this book. It's got a touch of the sci-fi futuristic in it but it reads like a contemporary novel. It's dark and gritty and yet the dry humor cracked me up. It's got these romantic moments and hot sex but I didn't care who he picked at the end.

Being inside Desmond's head was a total trip and a ride I'm so glad to have taken. I wish I could stay in there forever.

And the writing? PHENOMENAL. A new side to JCP and it's so so good.

Easily one of the best books of the year in my opinion...READ IT!

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## Santino Hassell says

5 stars and a new favorite for me.

I don't know what it is about JCP's characters that cause me to make all of these text-to-self connections (Vic and now Desmond) while reading, but they do. But me seeing many shades of myself in Desmond (anyone who knows me will likely be able to attest to this) is not the only reason I loved this book.

Despite being set in an alternate reality where robotics are part of daily life for most of society, it reads real. I can visualize where these guys live, the warehouse where Desmond lost his arm, (imagery confirmed in the About the Book section) and even his rank apartment with all of those discarded yellow envelopes from Social Services. I can see and understand how Desmond transitioned from a juvenile delinquent with a somewhat dysfunctional family to a heavy-drinking blue collar guy who can't fully forget the "friends" he grew up, and finally to the guy we meet. The guy who is like *well fuuuuuck this*, and stops trying to be functional after becoming a "gimp".

The thing about being a functional adult is that it only works insofar as you actually believe you are one. You could do all the things you're supposed to do (finish school, get a job, get your own place), but if you're still convinced that deep down you're NOT that way... it's really easy to toss that whole functional thing out the window once everything goes awry, and your life is irrevocably changed. Like losing your arm. Or finding out you have cancer. Annd I'm text-to-selfing again. Sorry.

So, I've seen people say there is romance in this book and some people say there isn't, but I think there is. Just not the kind you may be accustomed to reading. Is it a romance in the sense that Corey rides in like a white knight and saves Desmond from himself with the right words (and the right cock), and shows him how to be a functioning human? No. And that would be unrealistic and my love for this book would have plummeted. That's not how it goes in real life.

But it is a romance in the sense that Desmond has a difficult and intense connection with two men in this book, and the threads of those relationships are fully intertwined with his character development arc. No one saves anyone else (even though his lovable, well-meaning, self-righteous, and somewhat condescending ex thinks he can save Desmond from himself and goes about it in all the wro...text-to-selfing again), and for Desmond to be shown the light by another person would prevent him from actually growing as a character. He had to identify his own problems and try to rise above them on his own before he can possibly have a working relationship with another human being.

This book may not be for everyone because it IS gritty, somewhat dark (but also hilarious), and has a romance element that you may not be used to. It also focuses on the down-and-out folks on government assistance and the derelicts of questionable moral fiber that most books tend to ignore or cast aside. So if you like your LGBT fiction PC and tidy, you might have a hard time. But the writing is so good and watching Desmond figure things out is so awesome that I think you should give it a shot despite your comfort level.

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## Kaje Harper says

This is interesting as a character study, more than it is romantic. Desmond is a somewhat difficult character to like. He lost his right hand in an accident he can't really remember, and since then he has drifted in a fog of pain and self-pity. He's repelled by the prosthetic arm he's been given, and has made no real attempt to learn to use it. This makes day to day living difficult, as he's reduced to doing everything with his non-dominant "meatworks" hand, and using the prosthetic as little more than an extension of his arm. He wanders through his days in a haze of alcohol and regret. His social worker is a man who was once his boyfriend, but even Jim's personal touch in letters and arrangements to help him can't break him out of his lethargy.

When the disability payments he lives on threaten to run dry, Desmond is forced to attend an amputees' support meeting. There he meets Corey, who is young, vibrant, much more comfortable with his own prosthetic arm. Corey is also interested in Desmond, at least on a physical level. Although Desmond has never gotten around to removing the padlock he wears around his neck as a reminder of Jim, he's not averse to spending a night with Corey. And gradually he comes to have an appreciation for Corey beyond just his talents in bed.

Throughout the book, Desmond bounces back and forth between Jim and Corey. Both men offer him caring and help, even when he alienates or uses them. He's sometimes blind to their feelings, and often clueless about his own intentions. Other times he rationalizes taking the easy route, or once again falling back on Jim and his endless willingness to try to smooth Desmond's path. Desmond's distress, his alienation from his own life, and a lurking backstory are real, but both Jim (always) and Corey (sometimes) feel too good for him. Corey of course has his own flaws, a total lack of ambition that sits oddly with his otherwise dynamic personality. Perhaps the intention is for Desmond to rehabilitate him in return, but at times they both feel like wastrels who despite serious disabilities are using the system, more so in the case of Corey, three years out from his loss.

Although Desmond does grow up some in the course of the story, he never quite succeeds in becoming a romance hero. But as you near the end you do discover a reason for his waffling, his inability to let go of any person he might cling to, while failing to commit to anything. And perhaps his inability to believe in himself. A youthful imperative, and a hugely painful moment, lurking in his subconscious, have Desmond mired in his life, and make him a more understandable character.

The background of Desmond's world is lightly sketched, but there's enough to feel plausible and do the job for the plot. In this near-future SciFi, robots and scanners are part of the indoor landscape, for identification, and ostensibly to make life easier. Desmond's anxiety over scanners and unwillingness to cooperate with the identification process added a dimension to the book. I was interested in how the story worked out, but I didn't develop real affection for Desmond, at least not enough to outweigh the times I wanted to smack him. And for once with this author the sex felt more perfunctory and plot-driven than heated and emotional, perhaps because Desmond himself has a rather flat affect. So if you like SciFi and psychological tales this should interest you, but if you are reading for the romantic emotions it may not appeal as much.

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**Kat ? says**

22 days into 2015 and I think I've already read my book of the year.

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## Mel says

It's the week of discovering great new-to-me authors I think :-)))) Another winner, and so shortly after I did my first Voinov.

3 things I absolutely loved about Meatworks: the writing, the dystopian world, the protagonist(s)

Meet Des-mond Poole:

**I approached my place from the wrong side of the street, without a burger in my hand, with no wrapper to throw over the fence. Which sucked, because I was keen on seeing how long it took the neighbor's gardenbot to come out and clean up after me.**

This just makes me smile. Desmond is a lovable ass. He's a selfish, fucked-up, no-gooder and so charming despite of it. I couldn't but root for him right from the beginning.

Which makes me remember... The first chapter? OMG. It was awesome. Such a strong start to a book. It pulled me right in, with a constant smirk on my face.

Desmond fucks up. A lot. I think it is absolutely amazing how JCP wrote him, that you can still kinda love him.

The dystopian world-building was absolutely terrifying and fascinating at the same time. I especially like that the robots don't take over the world in an intelligent kinda way like you have it in your usual sci-fi thriller. No... The robots were just omnipresent. They were somehow pretty cool, but somehow you couldn't do without them, which is so scary, too.

The writing... Another first person narration. My favourite <3  
So the writing fits Desmond. It's dirty and raw and down-to-earth.

The sex is just the same... Dirty, selfish, desperate, hot.

'I miss you' has never been said more romantically, 'Prove it' has never been said more dirtily :-D Kidding. Not. I loved that scene!!!

Corey and Jim are great secondary characters. They both play a role and I like how everything played out. I get it. I do. It just fit.

So, I loved Meatworks, and I recommend it. 4.5 stars.

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Buddy Read Discussion Thread

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This book counts for my following reading challenges 2015:  
- 100 books in total

- 20 books about a marginalised group
  - 20 books, trying something new
  - 20 buddy reads
- 

## **Lenore says**

My rating is all Desmond—because of what the author did with him.

I'm not very happy with how his relationship with Corey panned out, but this is Desmond's story and I'm happy with where he is at the end of the book so I'm willing to put my other issues aside.

This remains a great read by a skilled author who can create wonderfully flawed, three dimensional, multi-layered characters you can't but relate to and root for no matter how badly they've fucked up or keep fucking up. And that's no easy feat.

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## **Sofia says**

3.5 stars

Desmond is not a hero to root for. He makes me so angry, and I want to shake him and get him to do, to see. Then I read the author's note and saw that that is how he was written. As a very fallible, quite fucked up guy. And I thought of the many loved ones I have who make me angry, who take wrong decisions, whom I want to shake till kingdom come and about whom I cannot do anything except just my little bit, because it is their life and their decisions and in this world there is free will and I do not have the power to dictate and would I really want to if I could. Am I so sure of what is right and what is wrong. Am I one who always takes the right decisions, who has never fucked up, or not procrastinated, or gave up on good things, or made do with the not perfect. So no, I do not have the perfect way forward, so should I really be so angry at Desmond for not being perfect or cute in his fuck ups. It's like being angry at myself for not being perfect and I had promised myself NOT to do that anymore.

(view spoiler)

So in a way accepting Desmond is like accepting the imperfect. This leads me to another point 'what is right, perfect, good?'. JCP puts forward a world of robotics and plays with the ramifications. Progress, current fashions - not adhering to these gets you to be left on the wayside. To be considered not part of the group, in this case because you do not have a home robot, but it might as well be just any other thing really. So the eternal questions of 'How to be to be?' raises up its head. To exist should be part of the group as society dictates, do we have value outside the group. I vote yes we do, but it is a lonely road to tread.

This is not a romance which leaves you all happy, full of hope. But through writing my thoughts here I do see things which are worth of thought which might help me stop (or at least slow me) from judging people or from trotting over at the lift of an eyebrow so yes it is not a feel good read but it is a good one.



Just a quick BR with Irina.

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### **Vanessa North says**

Fucking brilliant.

Honestly, I am so glad Jordan Castillo Price writes the books she does, about characters like Desmond, in places like Riverside.

When I talk about JCP's books, I feel like I imagine an evangelist feels when moved by the spirit (or whatever, I'm not up on my religious-speak). I get so excited, so full of anticipation for someone else to read her books, to see what I see, to get that amazing connection to these...

Extremely ordinary people.

Oh, Corey the rudeboy in his Specials t-shirt and tight pants and hot-ass brogues? I'd have totally cruised him back in the day. And Desmond? With his anxiety and his PTSD and his classic car and his fondness for vodka and his love for fixing broken things and his fear of broken people? Well, let's just say I found him **HIGHLY** relatable.

This is a story about relationships--two in particular, but tangentially at least two or three more. It's also a story about technology and how it complicates our lives and our relationships. It's a story about things (and people) that break and how fixing them doesn't always go as planned. It's a story about desperation, and about longing, about holding on too long to things that are literally gone. It's also about social pressure to either shape up or get so utterly fucked up that you can't relate to society anymore. And how many of us have walked **THAT** particular tightrope? The haircut and the real job, and the making nice so your family and friends don't leave you or talk shit about you, or break your heart? And how much harder is it to walk the line when the world has been ripped out from underneath you and you're reaching for it with a stump instead of a hand?

There is so fucking much brilliance in this book, with it's moments of quiet loveliness interspersed with rage and remorse and a visceral sense that maybe Desmond doesn't have what it takes to make the world a safe space for himself, but that maybe, just maybe, he'll turn out to be stronger than he looks.

GAH.

Read it.

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### **B.A. Brock says**

The characterization of Desmond Poole in "Meatworks" by Jordan Castillo Price is some of the best protagonist work I've seen in a while.

Desmond Poole is a punk, a drunk, and a dirty asshole. He's disabled and living off the government (though not well), and his ex, Jim, is his social worker.

At this point the faint of heart should probably put the book down. It's not the rest of our problems if you thought you liked it gritty but then realized that you were a pansy.

If you do stick with it, then I promise that you'll be in for a treat.

The truth is that Desmond isn't that bad-assed. Sure, he scowls, smokes, and swears for fun, but so do a lot of people.

One of my first glimpses into the real Desmond Poole was when he freaked out at Corey because he realized that there was a possibility that a robo-finger could have gone up his ass. Desmond rolled to face the wall and told Corey to leave. That's not the reaction of a bad ass. It shows him to be:

Vulnerable. Afraid. Depressed. Sporting an incredibly low self-esteem.

Later he mentions that he liked his ex to light up his cigarettes for him, and he wears a padlock around his neck belonging to said ex.

Romantic. Lonely. Likes to be cared for.

Desmond is incredibly relatable and authentic. Even though his favorite hang out is an abandoned warehouse where the shitter is broken and he does drugs and listens to loud music, he's not a complete bastard. He just thinks he is.

JCP reveals Desmond's light and dark parts with raw and bracing diction. He's broken and beautiful. "Meatworks" is like an urban-style Grimm fairy tale with a happier ending, but not too happy. It may be make believe, but don't let that fool you. It's real, and if you read this book you're going to fucking live it.

If you liked this review, check out Beth's blog:  
<http://www.bethbrockbooks.com>

And fucking love it.

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## **Karen Wellsbury says**

After GRL I was given a copy of this book, and it sat on my bookshelf until Kat said - lets read Meatworks, I still managed to slip a couple of other books in before I admitted defeat and we actually started to read it.

On one hand I'm glad that I did wait, because a lot of the buzz about it had died down, and it was wonderful to start 2015 off with such a truly good book; on the other having discovered how well JCP writes I could have been reading more of her's earlier.

When I was growing up there was bunch of guys at school who were the good bad guys, in and out of trouble, nothing really serious, charming and funny, usually drunk and/ or stoned. Sometimes I wonder what happened to them, Meatworks is about one of those guys. Desmond, frankly he's a bum who's got by on charm and wit until he loses his hand in an accident. The book is about his choices and the effects on his life over a short period of time.

JCP creates a dystopian world so cleverly, there is no...the robot wars of 1989 here, as you read the changes become apparent, cleaning done by hooverbots, scanning in and out but its so well woven into the story that you feel you know this world.

Des' journey takes him to meeting a new guy Corey, also with a prosthetic limb, at a self help group, annoying and irritating most people, including his ex, Jim, who is still involved in Des' life via starting to learn to deal with his issues.

Is it a love story - most definitely for me. Des and Corey, the anglophile rudeboy have a great chemistry. Jim, Des' ex both clouds and simplifies things - his desire to fix Des is something that I suspect so many people can relate to, as is Des' resistance to being changed.

There are no 'the magic cock turned my life around' moments here, but it is insightful, clever, humane writing at its best with characters that I really cared about.

And the Clash

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## **Xing says**

Rating: 2.5 stars

So Desmond Pool is a 33 year old man who's living with his newly acquired robotic arm after a near death experience months back. He's pretty much bumming off of disability benefits and trying to avoid the requirements set forth by his ex-boyfriend/current social worker. Unfortunately for Desmond, there's only so much he can avoid before his monthly disability check is cut off. And during one of his support group meeting, he meets a young man named Corey – a three year veteran and expert wielder with his robotic arm. The robotic arm that Desmond himself has refused to learn how to use.

Apparently, there's debate whether or not this book should be considered a romance. In my opinion, there *is* romance, though it plays second fiddle to the whole "self-discovery" component to Meatworks. And in my further opinion, the book would have been a whole lot better if it didn't even have that iota of romance. But more into that later...

So what was good about Meatworks? Even though Desmond wasn't my idea of a great character, the author does a good job of making him a compelling one. He's not a nice guy, but he's certainly someone who eventually learns to face his fears. He comes off as sarcastic a bit of a jerk at times, but he doesn't lay it too thick to the point of me disliking his personality.

The world building was also nicely done. It's one that's similar to our own (even making references to

current pop culture), but with its own robotic twist. Desmond's comments about the changes in robotics within the past decade is something I see myself assessing as well in our own world, which makes it all the more believable and Desmond someone we can all connect with (I mean, some kids get tablets from their school! And I certainly didn't have a smart phone to play with as a kid when I was bored sitting at a restaurant with my family. Kids are so lucky these days. Just like the kids in this book)

Fortunately, I rarely ever read a book where a character I actually like ends up with someone I actually hate. Unfortunately, it happens with Meatworks. And let me say that I absolutely hate Corey, though as a disclaimer, I'm probably more biased than most for the reasoning. I've had exposure to working in an environment where people take advantage of a system meant to help others for their own selfish greed and laziness. I also currently work in a facility where such a thing happens, and Corey is a reminder of someone who does just that. He's a young man (in his early twenties), who spends his time BUMMING it at home, doing absolutely NOTHING. He's an expert with his robotic arm and is more than capable of going back to the work force. Instead, he milks and works the disability system so he doesn't have to work, but still gets a paycheck every month. He even questions Desmond's choice to go back to work at one point, which rubbed me completely the wrong way. And yet for some reason, Desmond is all heart eyes for this young man? A young man, who in my own eyes does nothing but throws tantrums and is a lazy bum, is the love interest to our main character? Puhleeze. I would have prefer if there was absolutely no love interest here or that Desmond ended up back with his ex (though he did do some petty things himself, but at least he didn't remind me of a ten year old refusing to do his chores).

My dislike of Corey was enough to make me skip all sex scenes and scenes of intimacy between the two towards the later half of the book. Without the romance, Meatworks is more of a self-discovery book where Desmond realizes the things he has to change in his life to get it back on track. This focus of the novel wasn't bad, though there was one plot point that confused me in terms of its overall significance (I won't mention it as it's probably considered a spoiler to most).

But overall, I can't say I enjoyed this novel. While I understand that Desmond has made many bad choices in his past, his relationship to Corey was something I couldn't overlook and enjoy. However, I am probably in the minority with this opinion and advise readers to seek other reviews before deciding if this book is for you.

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## **Elsa Bravante says**

Me resulta muy complicado calificar esta historia, entran en conflicto lo que me parece como libro y lo que me gusta a mi cuando leo un libro.

Lo primero que sería oportuno decir es que para mi, en absoluto es un libro de literatura romántica. El libro es la evolución del personaje de Desmond a partir de la situación vital crítica en la que se encuentra al comenzar el libro, habiendo perdido un brazo y arrastrando un trauma por ello, con una relación acabada por sus malas decisiones y en definitiva con una desidia absoluta por seguir viviendo en un futuro distópico en el que los robots lo controlan todo, entrando peligrosamente en un rueda de autodestrucción. A lo largo de esa evolución la autora construye el personaje de una manera maravillosa, y aunque eres consciente de todas sus malas decisiones, pasadas y presentes, no puedes evitar sentir ternura hacia él y desear que todo le vaya bien. La atmósfera que rodea al libro es increíblemente opresiva, más por lo que siente el personaje que por lo que le rodea, esa amargura y desesperación se traslada cuando estás leyendo y a veces la lectura no resulta muy agradable. Pero Desmond crece, evoluciona, para ello necesitará personajes secundarios y una nueva oportunidad de tener una relación más o menos sana, tanto como es posible para alguien como él, pero

vuelvo a repetir, no es ni mucho menos esta relación el eje principal del libro, incluso lo es más su relación pasada. Realmente, ¿a quién quiere Desmond y con quién puede ser feliz?

Destacar algunos momentos de humor, he de confesar que comparto absolutamente el sentido del humor del personaje, en alguna ocasión me ha hecho soltar una carcajada.

Lo mejor del libro es el personaje principal, realmente él es el libro, lo peor la forma en que están construidas algunas de sus relaciones, queda un poco confuso, y desde luego su historia de amor muy difusa, con comportamientos que en ocasiones no me parece que vayan con el personaje.

No sé si lo recomendaría, si buscas una historia de amor, desde luego no; si buscas otro tipo de historias y estás con humor..., es una buena opción.

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## **Dev Bentham says**

Meatworks is not your standard romance. No burly saints here—rather two anti-heros stumbling toward love. They're both deeply damaged, and not just because they've each lost a hand. Gritty realism, pathos, hard-edged prose—it's all there. As Corey might say, I was gobsmacked by this story. Not for the faint of heart, this book isn't like anything else you've ever read. I recommend it as a love story for the adventurous spirit.

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