



Bitter Remedy

Conor Fitzgerald

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Commissario Alec Blume, on leave for health problems, fleeing his partner Caterina and their newborn daughter, retreats to a villa somewhere in central Italy, where he enrolls in a natural remedies class conducted by a young woman named Silvana.

But rather than finding comfort, Blume becomes increasingly ill—and ill at ease—in his new environment, and immediately makes an enemy of Niki, Silvana's ambiguous fiancé. Then a Romanian girl who works in Niki's nightclub comes to Blume and asks for his help in finding her disappeared friend, Alina. And Blume, isolated and sick, unadvisedly delves into the dark histories of the people around him.

Bitter Remedy Details

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Author : Conor Fitzgerald

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From Reader Review Bitter Remedy for online ebook

Claire says

I received Bitter Remedy as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

Ill and estranged from the mother of his child, Commissario Alec Blume finds himself in the midst of another criminal case. Battling against his own feelings and body, he must buckle down to find the mystery behind the disappearance of Alina, a Romanian prostitute working for Niki, the fiance of Silvana, at whose villa Blume is staying. The mystery deepens as new personalities emerge and unexpected connections between the various characters are revealed, leading to the case's final resolution.

Joining this series in media res, I did have to play catch-up, and I think it would definitely have helped had I read at least some of the previous novels. That said, I always enjoy when a detective is flawed, and Blume is definitely that, especially in his personal life. It's natural that while you can be brilliant in one aspect of life, you can be completely inept in another, and many mystery novels forget this in an effort to make their protagonist a sort of Mary Sue. A lively narrative that brings two storylines together into a satisfying conclusion.

Pat Malon says

The book was ok for me.....however; I thought the character Alec Blume less than convincing. He seemed weak (in every sense of the word, especially physically between his drug addiction and illness?)

Jan says

This book was very disjointed, didn't make a lot of sense. I also really did not like the main character's self medicating habit. I remember liking the earlier books in this series, but don't think I will read any more.

Ned Frederick says

I was put off by this book's disturbing vignettes of sex slavery. These parts were hard to read. I was tempted to skip some of those chapters, but felt it might diminish my empathy for the young women at the core of the book who are trapped in this world but manage to find a way out. The story of these women alternates with the grumpy, over-medicated and often humorous Alec Blume's inner dialog. I miss the late Michael Dibdin's character Aurelio Zen, and find some of the same genial quirks in Blume. Blume's meandering ways and some wonderful local characters made this read worthwhile albeit not on a level with Fitzgerald's other Alec Blume books. In the end, I found this book too unsettling and disjointed.

Marie says

More than three; less than four. Held my attention completely at the end though so easy to put down earlier. The author is excellent at description and almost poetic at times with his prose.

Helen says

Having enjoyed previous visits to Rome with Commissario Alec Blume I looked forward to this new story featuring the inspector. Sadly I was very disappointed. I rarely give poor reviews but I found this story ponderous, lacking a gripping central theme and extremely irritating in its depiction of his long drawn out illness/hypochondria and bad humour. I didn't engage with any of the characters and ultimately found the denouement disappointing. Probably made worse by reading it after the superb and delicately nuanced latest Le Carre! Only two stars for this one.

Christina Kelly says

RECEIVED THIS BOOK FREE FROM GOODREADS. QUITE ENJOYED IT AND WAS NOT EXPECTING THE TWIST AT THE END

susan murray says

Really enjoying this book detective Blume goes on a break but end taking I'll and is asked by an unsavoury character to look for someone. It is really two tales that will immerge into one as time goes by . Two girls think they are on their way to Italy sadly end up in a prostetution racket where you do as your told or get beaten up they are separated but hope to get together and escape. Blume seems to find trouble he stumbles upon modern from past and present has is own girl trouble plus car trouble. Very likeable character think addicted to prescription drugs likes his drink a little to much amd poke his nose in where not wanted which gets him into danger. Good story well written enjoyed from beginning to end kept you wondering what can happen next .

Judie says

Commissario Alec Blume took leave of his job, his partner, and their newborn daughter and traveled to central Italy to attempt to regain his health. He enrolled in a natural remedies class being taught at a villa only to discover the class had been cancelled. Instead of being able to relax, however, he finds himself becoming more ill, and enters a world of secrets, confused relationships and misunderstood motives. A world of sex, drugs, alcohol, and death. Among the people he encounters is a Romanian girl who story is told simultaneously with Alec's. Her story began earlier in Romania where she and a girlfriend wound up a victims of human trafficking.

Fitzgerald has good command of the English language. One of my favorite segments is:

“The mechanic dug his hand into his pocket and produced a handkerchief that might once have been red. Its purpose now seemed to be to apply more black grease to his forehead. When he had finished applying his paratrooper’s camouflage, he said, ‘Hot this afternoon.’”

BITTER REMEDY is one of a series. Not having read the previous ones is not a problem. It’s fast moving and full of action and interesting characters. It frequently uses foreign words, mostly Italian. They are not translated and, while irritating, did not detract from the story.

I received this book from Goodreads First Reads.

Greg says

Bitter Remedy is a pretty ordinary effort at Mediterranean noir, and not a patch on the likes of Camilleri or Izzo. Chief Inspector Alec Blume has the requisite laundry list of personal faults; he has separated from his wife and has a variety of illnesses and health issues that cause him to take lots of medicines. It is these health problems that lead Blume, at the outset of the novel, to travel to a rural villa for a herbal medicine course.

That has got to be alarm bell number one. What a totally silly pretext for locating the tough guy hero at a murder scene.

The reader is already aware of the predicament of Alina, a victim that Blume knows nothing of, but he suspects something is strange is going on, which is confirmed when he is approached by Alina’s friend, Nadia.

Blume has a deep animus towards local pimp Niki, driven probably by jealousy over the herbalist Silvana. This is another thing that doesn't ring true; Blume just seems to go totally ga-ga for little reason. Not really typical of your noirish hard-bitten detective.

This novel flirts with some serious issues such as organised crime and the sex trade, but squibs these in favour of silliness and corny outcomes. Blume lacks the depth as a character to save a lightweight and predictable plot. Read Inspector Montalbano instead.

Jane Rose says

Probably never a good idea to start a series at number 5. Alec Blume seems a very sad in effectual sort of detective and all at sea as to exactly which mystery he is trying to solve. I always find it disappointing when the mystery is solved by the detective being cornered by the bad guy. Surely it should be the other way around.

Ciaran Christie says

I felt like I missed something in the growth of this character, whom I loved in the previous books, and in this one. It was only when I finished "Bitter Remedy" that I realized I hadn't read "The Memory Key", the previous book, so I feel like I missed out on a few years in the life of one of my favorite detectives. He has changed: the prescription pill popping is particularly disturbing, though interesting.

I liked the flow of the story and as usual I really like how Conor Fitzgerald throws in some really nice Italian curse words/phrases, some translated and some not. I found Alina & Nadia's backstory as told through their voices interesting enough, and the fact that the story does not end with all the loose ends tied nicely in a knot also appeals. All in all I really enjoyed it. Now I have to go back and read "The Memory Key"!

Pamela says

I like Fitzgerald's Alec Blume series. Backstory: Alec is an American living in Italy; his parents died when he was a teenager, leaving him pretty much on his own. But Alec has become rather unpleasant and obtuse in this book. Disappointing!

Dale says

The story is implausible and the Alec Blume character is annoying, though not nearly as annoying as the general preachiness of this book. The only thing that kept me reading to the end was that I wanted to see how long it would take Blume to figure out who dunnit. I assume that most readers know who the culprit is pretty early on, but Blume is distracted and oblivious.

Jackie G says

For a person who is supposed to understand the criminal mind, Blume is amazingly trusting. . .nonetheless, I enjoyed the plotting - just wish there were more character development for the main characters.
