



## Damaged Heart

*S.C. Wynne*

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Cory Johnson was just twenty when he fled Bayville, following his father's suicide. Estranged from his abusive mother, he's made a new life for himself as a successful lawyer in Los Angeles.

When Cory's mother dies he grudgingly returns to his hometown to handle the estate. Rhys Tucker owns the construction company that is going to renovate Cory's childhood home. But Cory is unaware that Rhys has harbored a crush on him since they were in high school. When Cory comes home Rhys takes that opportunity to get close to Cory. Or at least try to.

Their physical chemistry is undeniable, but will Cory ever be able to have a real relationship with Rhys after being so emotionally scarred by his past? Can a heart as damaged as Cory's every really come home?

## Damaged Heart Details

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## From Reader Review Damaged Heart for online ebook

### Candice says

First off, Cory is an ass. Is there a reason? Yes, but he is a jerk a lot of time and that is just who he is. For some, they may not enjoy this book for that reason. We get a bits and pieces of why he is so emotionally damaged throughout the book, but it is very frustrating a lot of times with how he treats Rhys. Rhys doesn't deserve it most of the time and he is a very understanding man, sometimes too understanding. Why he puts up with it I don't really know except to say that his heart wants what it wants and no matter how Cory is, he is willing to be there and provide him love and understanding. The one thing that really made this story for me was Cory knew how he acted, knew he was an emotional wreck, but felt bad about it and wanted to change. He was slow to realize it and thank goodness for Rhys' patience because in the end he was slowly learning how to open his heart to Rhy and try to achieve some happiness in his life.

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### Alina says

I liked this book. I don't mind asshole characters, if their behaviour's properly explained and here I was totally onboard with Cory's reasons. Rhys was great and understanding and for one I absolutely loved his patience and it's exactly what Cory needed and I'm happy together they managed to overcome Cory's issues.

My only niggle is that at times I thought the story was a little too long and drawn out. The thing is I've just read Guard My Body and I was left desperately wanting to see more of the guys and here I sometimes wished for more action or more plot to move the story forward. Still I enjoyed it!

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### SheReadsALot says

#### A Hearts On Fire Review

**3.25 Hearts**--Told in first POV, "Damaged Heart" is a novella about damaged man, Cory, who had psychologically abusive parents. It was the lead factor into why he has a chip on his shoulder the size of Earth, Mars and Jupiter combined (with room to spare) now as a criminal lawyer. Cory is like a robot, not feeling, just ice and circuitry. Cory goes back to his hometown of Bayville due to his hoarder mother's passing and selling of his childhood home. There he meets Rhys, the sexy, lovable contractor and the two begin a weird hooking up/ relationship thing that works for Cory.

This story is good...enough. But I couldn't pinpoint all its faults on why it was barely above okay for me. I stared at quotes & my notes and couldn't figure out why it wasn't better.

The writing is decent. The characters were...okay, Cory more fleshed out than Rhys. The plot? Hmm...it could've been tightened up here and there. An example, the realtor back and forth that came to a head around Thanksgiving. For someone who came across as a decisive person, Cory sure did drag out the inevitable.

And I think one of the main things that stuck in my craw was Rhys' unending well of patience and love (no L word was declared) for Cory. He was almost in doormat territory. Cory was mean, emotionally draining and

cruel (at times) and Rhys just smiled and took it. Maybe if I was able to get into Rhys' head I could see what the hell he saw in Cory because I didn't get it. Cory barely warmed up at the end and the last bit was rushed anyway.

For Cory and Rhys' relationship to be believable to me, I'd need to see the time it takes Cory to thaw. I don't expect it to be fully but he's a psychiatrist' wet dream/nightmare.

Cory had no redeemable factors. I feel bad for anyone who suffered through years of emotional abuse. But this guy...he's not worth it. And Rhys is going to be chipped away from the mental warfare Cory will plague him throughout their "relationship" until he barely recognizes his self. Why sign up for emotional turmoil? And the part that got me was Rhys KNEW this and still did it anyway. I think Rhys was motivated to even pursue Cory because he had a crush on him in high school and fifteen years of not seeing him made it for total wish fulfillment now.

Ugh. So maybe I did figure out the issues.

The story ends HFN-ish. (I can't really say Cory is a HEA kinda guy) It felt barely resolved. You have a closed off man who remains fairly closed throughout the entire story. Usually, that is like manna for me but I couldn't get into Cory. He was a right bastard no matter how much Rhys was written to discuss Cory's winning qualities - Cory didn't really display them so I didn't care. And first person POV usually works for me but I wasn't into Cory or his perspective. Sometimes he made me laugh but he was not endearing to say the least. And I pitied Rhys. I just don't understand why *they* happened...this plot wasn't odd, it just...\*waves hands\* \*sighs\*

This is my second S.C. Wynne story, maybe we're not a match. \*shrugs\* I like the premises but the execution...always leaves me wanting more from the story.

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## **KC says**

Damaged Heart is quite different from other stories by S.C. Wynne. It's not a light, fun romance. It's still a romance and it does have some light-hearted, sweet, funny, endearing moments. But overall it's a serious story about Cory, whose disfunctional parents have traumatized him to such extent that he's retreated inside an impenetrable shell where emotion cannot hurt him. And then there's Rhys, who's had a crush on Cory ever since moving to Cory's town, and who remembers Cory being kind to him when no one else was. They meet again after 15 years and Rhys is now the one with all the kindness and patience while Cory cannot help his aloof reactions, always retreating into a false sense of safety.

The story struck a chord with me, especially how past events shape certain emotions and how we perceive the world as a result. Some things never heal, but if we're lucky enough, we find kind people who can help us deal with memories and hurts, help us focus on and appreciate the good. There's sadness permeating this story, but there's hope too. The story left me thinking about Cory and Rhys. I'd like to hear more from them in the future.

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## **HereAndNow says**

Such a charming bitter sweet story with interesting characters and great character (Cory) development. The only thing missing is an epilogue, but I loved the ending anyway. Absolutely worth reading.

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### **Aniko says**

4.25 stars.

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### **Juxian says**

It's a weird book. I liked it very much but I don't really know why. I normally dislike characters who behave like jerks. And here one character is an unrelenting jerk (and I loved him!) - and the other one is like a puppy who gets kicked over and over again and still comes for more. I mean I disliked Ash in 'Glitterland' so much, and Cory is as much a jerk as he is, and has just as much justification for his behavior, and I felt so protective about Cory and desperately wanted Rhys not to give up on him. (I'm not comparing books here, I'm just talking about a character-as-a-person). Maybe it's specific ways this assholeishness is manifested in. The way Cory tells his story - almost clinical one, without self-pity, without expecting anything from anyone - it was breaking my heart and made me feel so close to him. I also loved that the author wasn't offering any magic healing for his problems. Every bit of change that happened to Cory was hard-won. He was not losing control because Rhys was so sexy - he was fighting with his own control to be able to open at least a little. And I don't think I've ever been so happy with a HFN ending - instead of HEA. I thought, when reading, that if in the end of the story (view spoiler)

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### **Dreamer80 says**

I absolutely loved this book.  
There is lot of pain in Cory's past and you can really see how mental abuse can really destroy your soul.  
Thanks to Rhys' smile, love and stubbornness, Cory will find a way try to open his heart to him.  
This is really touched my soul.

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### **ItsAboutTheBook says**

*Review can be read at It's About The Book*

When the death of his abusive mother necessitates Cory Johnson's return to his hometown of Bayville, he intends to spend as little time there as possible before returning to his life in LA where he's a successful criminal defence attorney. Bayville holds only bad memories of a traumatic childhood at the hands of his drug addicted parents. Although Cory has built a life for himself since fleeing home almost fifteen years ago, he has closed himself off emotionally as a means of surviving his parents and avoiding any connection to other people. He's experienced more than enough pain in his life already. Why risk any more?  
After speaking to the real estate agent, Cory decides the best course of action is to get the house he has inherited from his mother repaired and brought up to selling condition as fast as possible. Nothing good ever happened there and even walking through it starts to bring all those memories back to the surface. Rhys

Tucker owns the construction business Cory hires to do the work on the house. Despite Cory's attempts to maintain an impenetrable barrier between himself and everyone else, he and Rhys have a rapport that even Cory finds hard to deny, regardless of his best efforts to keep his distance. Rhys makes no bones of his interest in Cory and keeps patiently chipping away at Cory's armour. But Cory's return has caused all the memories he'd been suppressing to be dredged back up and they haunt him. Cory finds it impossible to deny the draw he feels towards Rhys, although he is adamant that anything they have will be on his terms. It's not like they can have a future anyway. Cory's life is in LA, far away from the bad memories of his hometown, and Rhys belongs in Bayville where he has built up a successful construction business.

Damaged Heart is written solely from Cory's point of view and I think the character of Cory, and his romance with Rhys suffered a little bit because of that. I struggled at times to see why Rhys was so enamoured of Cory. For much of the first half of the book there wasn't enough interaction between them to understand Rhys's attraction to such an outwardly cold and closed off character. There's the occasional little glimpse, especially in their banter, but Cory is so distant and prickly much of the time. When I did get the interaction between Cory and Rhys later that I had been wanting to see, it was cautiously sweet and funny. It was then that I started feeling invested in Cory and Rhys's romance. I would have got there a lot sooner if we'd also been given Rhys's POV to understand what he saw in Cory and why he'd held onto this crush for almost fifteen years, even with Cory's complete absence for all that time.

Cory's lack of connection and unwillingness to deal with his past is both frustrating and heartbreaking at the same time. As his backstory unfolded, I truly felt for him and wanted nothing more than to see him grow and find a way to open his heart to Rhys. It was easy to understand why he was the way he was with the experiences he'd had. Cory's progress from being so repressed to him allowing Rhys to slowly unfreeze his heart was well-paced and believable. He had come a long way by the end, but not so far that it came across as if he were miraculously cured by Rhys's love.

His loneliness, especially during the time he goes back to LA, was so poignant.

The writing is top notch. For such a closed-off, prickly character as Cory to still work his way into my heart proves that. The story was good and kept my interest the whole way through, but it could have stood to be expanded upon a little. The characters were fully developed, especially Cory since it was his POV the story is told through, but I definitely felt like I got to know Rhys as well. I would class this as a HFN, rather than a HEA and I would have liked to see more of how Cory and Rhys made their relationship work. The end felt a touch unresolved for me, by not so much that I was wondering where their future was heading, it was just a little too difficult to see how they were going to get there. Overall, it was a good read, with solid writing, engaging characters and a surprisingly tender romance given how afraid Cory is of his emotions for much of the book. Having read this book, I will definitely be seeking out more to read by this author.

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## Maame says

First book by this author and I loved it!

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## Didi says

2.5 stars

Were all lawyers as gloom doom as Cory, I wonder. Granted, he had "**THE PAST**" - ya know, the kind that messed with his head and left his heart scarred - but to be a successful attorney I assumed he had to have

basic smoochy-skill, right? Only this successful lawyer from LA resembled a catatonic numb creature. OTOH, Rhys was so candid and upfront I couldn't help to admire his bravery. Or that he didn't get tired of hearing Cory's "I'm going back to LA soon" like a broken record!

They said opposite attracts, though for the live of me I could't get what so attracted Rhys to Cory. He's so damn surly, stand-off, and not nice at all. King of Gloom Doom! At least Cory described Rhys as the classic tall, dark, gorgeous type - but Cory??? No idea if he's homely or otherwise. This, to me, was the mystery!

As much intrigued as I wanted to be with this story, I just couldn't like it. The chemistry between MCs fell flat. And it was just... Meh.

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### **Jenn C says**

Sweet sweet story!

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### **Natalija says**

I'm a fan of Ms. Wynne's writing and this book most certainly didn't disappoint. I can see why some people might dislike Cory, but as much as I loved Rhys and his persistence, it is Cory who will stay with me for a very long time. I guess you have to have a similar background to fully understand his character and not judge him too harsh. Luckily, I was able to relate to him on many levels, so it made it easy for me to love him and appreciate his ability to be honest about himself and what a future with someone like him meant for Rhys. Bottom line, I enjoyed *Damaged Heart* and would love to read a follow-up story.

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### **Ana\_P says**

Like a child, I picture opening her skull, unspooling her brain and sifting through it, trying to catch and pin down her thoughts.

You're probably wondering why I'm quoting Ben Affleck's character Nick from the book/movie *Gone Girl* on an m/m book review.

I just couldn't help but have that quote repeating in my head over and over whilst reading this book and wanted to unspool Rhys' brain to figure out why the fuck he is so attracted to and likes Cory so much.

Cory is an asshole, pure and simple. I understand that he had a tough childhood and that he is emotionally disturbed as a result and doesn't do well in social interactions. I feel for the guy, I really do. But that doesn't change the fact that he is, indeed, an

to those around him. He acted callous, unemotional, and plain ole rude to Rhys most of the time, and yet,

Rhys still desperately wanted him. The book is told from Cory's POV so the readers know what he is thinking but Rhys doesn't, and it just left me wondering *what* exactly Rhys saw in this cantankerous and surly lawyer from LA.

Just like Cory holds people at arms length, I felt like this book did the same to me and left me feeling frustrated because I just couldn't see the appeal Rhys had for Cory and couldn't understand the connection between the two at all.

I think the only reason that I did not DNF this book from pure exasperation was because the writing was actually really good, and the story still somehow managed to keep my attention even if I had major issues with the MCs. Also, I just really wanted to see Cory be anything less than, you guessed it, the consummate asshole. I deserved that, damn it!

And, yes, it did happen...sort of. At least in the end, Cory admitted that he likes Rhys and wants something more than casual, meaningless sex. That's something at least, right?

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## **Love Bytes Reviews says**

4.5 star review by Amber

Wow, this book was so good. So GOOD!! I'm actually surprised I liked it as much as I did. Especially since one of the main characters is such an absolute and complete jerk off.

Cory is back to his hometown of Bayville to settle his late mother's estate. It's clear right from the start that Cory holds absolutely no love for the town, his family home, or even his late mother. The realtor who is helping him recommends several contractors and this is how we meet Rhys.

Rhys has held a burning torch for Cory since high school. What's incredibly endearing about Rhys is that he never waivers from his want of Cory. Cory pushes Rhys away at every turn. He is downright mean to him and callous towards his feelings but Rhys's feelings never falter. He is constantly pushing Cory to prolong their tryst and hoping that Cory doesn't sell his childhood home so he will continue to have a reason to visit.

As Cory tells his story we learn that his mother and father were very disturbed. Their emotional abuse was extensive and Cory lives his life with severe emotional scars. Cory is very closed off. He is cold and shows no emotion whatsoever. Knowing his parents had severe mental illness he's in constant fear of it being passed on to him.

When Cory does return to L.A., for work, Cory again proves what a major jerk he is by not keeping in touch with Rhys. He lets 3 weeks go by with no contact whatsoever and needless to say Rhys is crushed. But their short time together has affected Cory; he can't stop thinking about how good Rhys is and how hot they were together.



This author has a gift for writing a character that's so unlikeable but at the same time he endears himself to you as the reader. I truly understood why Cory was the way he was, so I was constantly rooting for him to get his HEA.

Through lots of trial and tribulations Rhys and Cory come together in an explosive take it or leave it blow out. I found myself so completely enraptured and I couldn't put this book down.

A copy of this book was provided in exchange for an honest review. Please visit [www.lovebytesreviews.com](http://www.lovebytesreviews.com) to see this and many more reviews, author interviews, guestposts and giveaways!

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