



Semblance

Chris E. Saros

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Drake isn't looking for justice. He's not interested in doing what's right. He's after one thing and one thing only: revenge. That means taking down the Boredega drug cartel—and the shadowy, seemingly invincible man who heads it—even if he goes down with them.

Drake plans to destroy the cartel from within, and he uses his nightclub, Semblance, as a front for money laundering and drug trafficking. He's sacrificed almost everything to complete his mission, and just as he's getting close, he's derailed by flirtatious bartender Scotty, who offers Drake a glimpse of the happiness he's missed by pursuing a personal vendetta. Scotty might be irresistible, but Drake has come too far to turn back now. He'll have to find a way to keep Scotty safe, fend off persistent prostitute Natasha, feed tips to the authorities, and edge his way closer to the upper echelon of the cartel, where he can finally strike. He'll need to do it all while keeping his intentions covert—and he's not the only one at Semblance with secrets.

Semblance Details

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Author : Chris E. Saros

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From Reader Review *Semblance* for online ebook

Donna says

4.5 STARS

Wow, is this actually the author's first published work? I totally enjoyed this book, and I'm willing to get on my knees and beg for a sequel. I'm always impressed when a new author can write such a smooth flowing story, a story that grips you tight even while it has you dreading what might happen next. If a blurb mentions the word cartel, I want blood and death and drugs and violence and torture and I want a lot of it. I need my bad guys to be bad, and I need my good guys to be...well, I like it if they're a bit bad too. *Semblance* delivered just what I wanted, and left me desperate for more.

We begin the story with Drake, owner of nightclub *Semblance*, already involved in the world of the Boredega cartel. The infamous cartel uses the club's backrooms to sell their drugs and if you venture further down the corridors, there are secret, soundproofed rooms where they "interrogate" those that have transgressed against them. Since Drake was a child, his sole focus in life has been the destruction of the cartel and the bloodthirsty man behind it. He figures they'll probably kill him in the end, but he intends on taking them down with him. Besides, it's not like he has anything else to live for. Until sexy-as-hell bartender, Scotty, worms his way into Drake's bed, and his heart. Cue the awww...

The relationship between Drake and Scotty was the only element of the tale that kept this from being a five star read. And I think this is probably a personal opinion, but heck, no one would ever accuse me of being shy with my opinions. Like I mentioned, cartel = dark, and while the overall plot was blessedly shadowy, the love story here was a touch too shiny bright. Drake and Scotty have known each other for a while before the story starts, so I guess you can't call it insta-love but once they hook up they fall pretty fast. I think our main men just came off as a little too trusting and impetuous considering the position they were both in.

The author so successfully presented Drake as a character deserving of our support, despite his less than upstanding actions, that I got teary several times when it seemed like his quest for revenge wouldn't succeed. And the ending, that final scene between Drake and Scotty, I'm pretty sure I'm going to need my heart checked by a doctor because it may have stopped beating there for a few minutes. Actually, the ending was fabulously, thrillingly, heartbreaking...and I guess that's all I can really say about that.

While the ending isn't a cliffhanger exactly, I'm going to be so disappointed if the story ends here. Even with different main characters if necessary, but PLEASE Ms. Saros, I need to know what happens next!

Reviewed for Love Bytes Reviews

<http://lovebytesreviews.com/2018/02/2...>

JustJen "Miss Conduct" says

Review by The Blogger Girls.

This is one of those stories where you have no idea how the MC's can possibly find a way to be together in the end. Drake is a man set on revenge for the loss of his family and has basically dedicated his life to seeing that through. At this point, he is running a club that is utilized by the cartel he wishes to take down. The same cartel the cops have not yet been able to get close enough to the leader, and when anyone tries, they are found and eliminated, including Drake's father and the rest of his family.

In the meantime, he uses outside people to work in his club, including bartender hottie, Scotty. I loved Scotty. He was sweet and funny and just exactly what Drake needed to see past the tunnel vision vengeance road he has been on. Maybe he is enough to give Drake something else to live for.

But, before that can happen, things come to a head with the cartel and Drake ends up in trouble. I won't say any more about it so as not to give too much away. Suffice to say there are a few twists and turns, though some are pretty predictable. Regardless, it was exciting and edgy, and I loved how the story all came together, from Drake's family to how it all plays out. There are still some unanswered questions at the end that I felt needed some closure, but all in all, it was a great story. I will definitely be looking for more from this author in the future.

Lou~•Powerless Over 1-Click~• says

4.5 Stars

Ivy says

Full review at :

<https://optimumm.blog/2018/02/28/semblance-by-chris-e-saros/>

Drake is the owner of Semblance, a bar that serves as a front for money laundering for the Boredega's cartel. Drake has one and unique goal in his life, take down the cartel and kill the head, Boredega himself. He doesn't have a hobby, friends, or family; he only wants revenge. But when Scotty, his bartender, shows him a glimpse of what a life with a significant other can be, Drake wants to believe that he could have a life, but first, he needs to end the cartel, even if it means losing the only man he ever loved, and his life.

The book was good.

Drake is a tortured man. He's lonely and only lives with the goal to avenge his family. He's completely focused on this task, and forgets to live. I felt sad for him because he's like a ghost among the living, and he broke my heart.

Scotty is sweet, strong and smart. He wants Drake and refuses to be pushed away. I like Scotty, even if I've suspected there was more about him than what we saw, until the end, I liked him a lot.

The book and the plot were good, but a little bit too long. Sometimes, I had the feeling it turned in circle, and

that I'd read the same thing again and again. But there's a good twist at the end, and it hooked me. The end isn't a happy ending, and even if it frustrated me, it was clearly coherent with the story and the plot, and I can only admit that the author wrote a good end for them in their situation.

It's 3 OptimuMM for me.

***The ARC was provided by DSP Publication . My review is an honest opinion of the book ***

The Novel Approach Reviews says

~ 3.5 Stars ~

Drake Clane is a man out for revenge against the Boredega cartel. He's the owner of Semblance, a bar where the back rooms are used not only to deal drugs—but death. Drake is also a man who carries the weight of guilt and disappointment in himself, and it's driving him to alcoholism.

Scotty Harden has been working the bar since he was hired by Drake. Scotty is sweet and flirty with Drake, but that's as far as things have gone. When Drake is faced with the deaths that evolve with trying to get deeper into the cartel, he turns to booze. Scotty always serves him, knowing when to cut Drake off, and is very concerned about his welfare. Feeling that Drake drinks too much, Scotty decides to come to Drake's rescue, and drives him home. Things get a little steamy between Scotty and Drake, but Drake has to be careful—he's Scotty's boss; plus, he doesn't want to bring anyone into the dark side of his life. Drake has to keep the mission against the cartel his first priority. He can't afford to put more lives in danger, not to mention he's still dealing with the guilt of losing his family.

As the relationship grows, Drake starts to trust Scotty and reveals the truth about himself. But not all goes smoothly between them. When the cartel catches up with Drake, he looks to Scotty as his betrayer.

This was my first time reading Chris E. Saros, and Semblance was a fairly good read. The pace and writing are good, and the plot isn't too complicated but definitely has grit—lots of action, danger and violence, and it does get bloody. I liked both Drake and Scotty. I thought they were good, solid characters and their chemistry really meshed well. There's a secondary group of evil characters who are up to no good from the start.

At the end, I wondered if this is headed towards a sequel. The situation with the cartel still seems to be questionable, and there's not a solid HEA. I would be interested to see if Scotty and Drake have a future together and am definitely going to watch out for this author again.

Reviewed by Maryann for The Novel Approach

Joyfully Jay says

A Joyfully Jay review.

4.75 stars

Semblance was a gritty, action-packed book that rarely gives the reader a chance to take a breath. The writing is crisp and strong and captured my interest from the opening chapter. One of the biggest things I enjoyed about this book was the realism of it. I'm not talking about the plot, because that's borderline absurd, but rather the violence and bloody nature of the characters and their actions. Drake tries to be the good guy here and for the most part he is, but he's caught in a gory business and his horrified response to it feels believable and relatable. When I read a book about the mafia or drug cartels, I expect violence and too often the author sugar coats things or tries to soften the truth of it. But with Semblance, we see the cost of dealing with the bad guys and the blood comes fast and furious. This might not be for everyone, but it made the book for me. It gave the characters purpose and their experiences were laden with risk and anticipation as a result. Also the violence never felt gratuitous to me and I felt there was intent to the actions on the page.

As I said, the plot or at least part of it, comes off as rather silly and in any other book it could have caused a problem. But thanks to all that realistic violence and the engaging characters, I could quickly forget about the why and how of Drake came to be a part of the Bordega cartel. Instead, it's almost impossible not become absorbed in the story and the life and death stakes on the table for Drake and Scotty. There is a section of Semblance that seems to stumble ever so slightly and it occurs about two thirds of the way through. The action grinds to a halt and the characters don't really fit into the background anymore. I think it's supposed to be the calm before the storm, but it instead it feels somewhat forced and a little uneven. It isn't enough to derail the book and reads as little more than a blip. It just happened to be a small section that failed to integrate itself with the rest of the narrative.

Read Sue's review in its entirety here.

Natalie says

This seems to be a debut novel for the author and I'm impressed by the original premise, plot and the kick-butt action and suspense! Semblance is a nightclub owned by Drake, providing a fairly dark, gritty setting as a front for criminal activities. Drake has spent years focused on vengeance against a dangerous cartel, acting as a solo undercover operative with single-minded purpose. He's gotten his hands dirty a few times but does try to do the right thing when he can. Being the club owner, he's held himself back from pursuing Scott, flirting back and forth for months, until finally, his resistance fails. Afterwards, realizing the potential danger, he pushes Scott away again. As circumstances in the club worsen, they're drawn together once more when Drake's world implodes.

Written in third person, the story unfolds entirely from Drakes POV, until the epilogue. I suppose some parts of the plot could be called predictable but it plays out differently than I might have expected. There's not a huge cast of characters so it's a surprise to find who's been flying under the radar. The pace is fast-moving, once the opening chapters set the scene and put the characters in place. The steam is moderate but I'd like to have seen just a little more of the previous interactions between Scott and Drake. A few plot threads were left dangling, with incomplete answers to who was ultimately behind the criminal enterprise.

I was not thrilled with the ending contained in the epilogue, which was unexpected in its execution. There isn't an HEA and to me, just barely qualifies as an HFN. I think a sequel is called for, to give a chance to see Scott and Drake as an actual couple, but there's no hints yet. I would nonetheless recommend this one strongly for the engaging plot and compelling suspense.

An ARC was provided by the author, publisher or promotional service and I have chosen to publish a fair and honest review for Jessie G Books Reviews blog
