



## **A Better Man**

*Jaime Reese*

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Matthew Doner is starting over. After a five-year prison term that alters every aspect of his life, he receives a bequest from his aunt with the stipulation that he use the money to make things right. Breaking free of the long-standing role he's played and inspired by the few who support him, he decides to create a safe place where people like him can find purpose and start a new life.

Julian Capeletti likes challenges. He is confident, brash, stubborn, and just what Matt needs. Desperate for work after a downturn of luck, he accepts the job to renovate Matt's crumbling building.

Over the course of a year, romance simmers between them as they restore the house. But there's a bigger renovation that must take place in their hearts. To become better men, they need to learn to trust each other even with secrets and painful memories they fear may rip them apart.

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NOTE: 2nd edition is revised and expanded.

## **A Better Man Details**

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Author : Jaime Reese

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# From Reader Review A Better Man for online ebook

Heather C says

Original Review: July 22, 2012

4.5 Stars

**This was such a sweet book...so sweet that it bordered on being *too* sappy, but it was just what I was in the mood for today.** Julian and Matt are one of the most adorable couples I've read in a while. Both have past ghosts and dark secrets; it's about second chances and finding that one person who believes in you unconditionally. **These men touched my heart.**

My only complaint is the huge time jumps so close to the beginning of the story. I felt like a lot of the initial attraction between Matt and Julian was told and not shown, but by the end I totally felt the love between them. I loved the characters and the story too much to let it greatly affect my rating, hence the 4.5 stars rounded up to 5. Its a perfect "feel good" book.

I'm really looking forward to more books in this series. More troubled men getting that second chance at life. **So is it safe for me to say that Cameron's story is next?**

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Review of 2nd edition and reread: January 25, 2014

Anyone who really knows me, knows that I hardly *ever* reread a book. To this day I can clearly remember when I first read and loved the original version of Matt and Julian's story...I even purchased it and read it *on* the first release date (my bestie Ang and I read it together!). So, for the last year and a half I've been patiently waiting for the second book in this series to come out. Then I found out it was being revised and re-rereleased by one of the original coauthors, Jaime Reese...and guess what! I didn't even think twice about rereading it!! (Imagine Nikyta's surprise) That should tell you how much I loved this book!

After spending five years in prison for a white-collar crime, Matt Doner's dream is to build a halfway house to help those men in need of reestablishing themselves into society. The problem: nobody wants to help him with the dilapidated building he is trying to bring back to life; that is until cocky Julian Capeletti walks through the door looking for a "Boner" needing a "handyman" (hehe). Julian comes from a rough life and there's something about Julian that tells Matt he is the perfect one for the job.

There's some goooooood sexual tension as Matt and Julian work closely together on the house each day, trying to keep their relationship strictly professional. Of course that not gonna happen! Then there's a few secrets neither man is ready to share...it causes a few problems, but, honestly, this story is more *sweet* than *angst*. Eh, all the angst really revolves around the crazy mother storyline, poor Matt. Matt and Julian are such likable characters, how could anyone NOT cheer for their HEA. Thank *goodness* they totally get it!

So, as I said before, this is a rerelease with some revisions. I was even high-fiving myself when I recognized some of the additional scenes and the one big significant change. I definitely think the little changes have enhanced the story from the original version. I get to know Matt and J a bit better and can better see how the

fell for each other. The story still covers the span of a year so some of the months are a little brief, but over all, this version has more “meat” of their relationship.

It's *still* a perfect “feel good” book.

Now that I'm all refreshed after the reread, I can sit back (again) and wait for Cam's book. It's past time for his second chance. *I'm ready!*

**4.5 Stars**

**Reviewed for The Blogger Girls**

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**V says**

I LOVE THIS BOOK!!!!!!!

Perfection from page one, stunning, lovely, sensual, there it so many good things about this story.

Note to the authors: please, please write a sequel ASAP. Some authors take 1-2 years to write a sequel, you wouldn't do that to us,would you?

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**Emma Sea says**

This lost its footing and slipped over the edge of the too-much-sap cliff. You know how critics of the m/m genre say the MCs are women written as men? Well this is that kind of book. Not that women all behave like this; just that the stereotype holds true here. I don't know anyone IRL who would act like this, regardless of gender identity. The level of "Love you", "No, love you more" makes me itchy and unsettled.

Actually all stereotypes hold true in this book. Workaholic dad, phobic mother, abusive dad . . . everyone is a cardboard cutout. There's no sense that this is real life. There is the potential for an interesting secondary female character, but then she only gets two tiny scenes and about 10 lines total.

The kissing descriptions were lovely. Yay for kissing!

Overall just a very average book for me, sorry.

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**Trisha Harrington says**

**Oh my God, this book was fantastic!**

By far one of the sweetest books I have ever read. I have never read a book like it before and I was glad I tried it. A Better man has everything I love in the base of a romance and even more. It has passion and sweet moments, with amazing characters to top it all off. From the first page I was gripped and have never felt so connected to a story. This is about the love that Matt and Julian share, and the two of them dealing with the demons from their pasts. And the two of them coming together and standing side by side.

Julian, was an amazing character. He was just sweet, funny, witty and caring. He was not perfect. His flaws were shown and they were explained which was nice. I loved the glimpses we were told about his past. I felt so sorry for him when he told Matt everything. The reveal of his middle name melted my heart, I almost cried for him. Julian, I believe should have won an award for being such a great guy. I would love to have a man like him as my boyfriend. If I'm honest he was my favourite.

### **A boner looking for a handyman...**

Matt, was a character that grew on me after he started lusting after Julian. Before that I could not connect with him at all. Once the real Matt came out, I was smitten. Not only was he caring and loving, but when he got nervous he was adorable. His past was what helped me to love him the most, but his love for J was another bonus in my eyes. It was hard not to love him, he was just what Julian needed. And Julian was what he needed.

### **Its Doner, D-O-N-E-R, Doner**

### **J and Matt!**

I laughed, I cried and I swooned while reading this book. Its lovely to read a book about tough men that can be kittens when they are in love. I have to say its a must read for me. I would love to read more from these two, maybe a short story. A wedding? Babies? Yes, I'm a sap, but I don't just want new characters, I want more of these two and the marriage and babies is just a suggestion. More cute/hot scenes would be appreciated too. And, I have read it about ten times and counting.

### **Highly recommend this!!!**

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~☆~Dœni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~☆~ says

I love Julian and Matt, and can't wait to read more books in this series.

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### **Dia says**

3,25 stars

This is my first book by this author. It started pretty good and I actually enjoyed it, but at one point it became unexpectedly sweet. It's not something I've enjoyed lately. When both main characters are super reserved and keep their distance for months, but they use the L word all of the sudden, well I kind of rolled my eyes.

Their back stories are very sad, but I've enjoyed how it all fell into place in the end. A little unbelievable, but that's OK. Wish in real life some parents could wake up sooner rather than later and try to save their relationships with their kids. Even if they were absent most of their lives.

So overall it was a nice story and it kept my interest. I've read it in one sitting and can't wait to read the next books. Looking at all those high ratings, I'd say I'll need to read them soon.

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## Bev says

I LOVE YOU MORE!!!

What a fabulous story this was! Matt and J were a lovely couple and thoroughly deserved to ride off into the sunset. After the childhood that both men had had, I was amazed that they were as well-adjusted as they undoubtedly were. Can't say I was that keen on Alex, but who knows, maybe marriage to Lindy will turn him around and help him to grow up. Matt & Alex's father Mitch has at last 'grown a pair' and will hopefully no longer be a complete doormat for his hateful bitch of a wife, and Sam, well, Sam was the kind of friend and mentor that everyone deserves to have! 4.5 stars.

★★edit Jan 2014. Re-read in anticipation of the sequel which comes out in the Spring. Just as sweet as before, although having said that it's a little 'vanilla' for my reading tastes nowadays. Loved Julian's character just as much as before, Matt did grow on me this time around, I still hated Matt's complete horror of a mother and could not understand how his father puts up with her BUT that may change when he cuts down on his hours and has to spend more time in her company....possibly!! All in all, a really nice gentle read with 2 MC's you wouldn't mind taking home to meet your mother!!★★

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## Ingie says

*Written January 19, 2015*

**3.3 Stars - Nice and tender !!**

*A Better Man* is a year-long M/M romance about a house and two damaged men. It has been waiting here unread since last February. My expectations were big.

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**Matthew Doner is starting over after some years in prison.** He has a dream and receives a bequest (a legacy) from an old aunt with the stipulation that he use the money to *make things right....* again. Matt use the money to buy an old house, a house which needs to be renovated from the ground. He wants to make a future *Halfway House*:

”It's a place of second chance. Sometimes, when people get out of prison, they have a hard time getting back on their feet, whether it be money, family, or whatever the reason. We want it to be welcoming, like a home should be so they feel comfortable enough to take that chance and take charge of their life.”

Matt isn't at all a handyman type and hires a qualified construction worker to do the job for him.

**Julian Capeletti is in urgent need of a new construction job,** or any work for money actually, so he

accepts the job for a quite low pay. To make it possible to make it, on that money and he himself in just a year, Julian has to move in. From that day are they both living and working together in the unfinished house.

**Here starts an very slowly growing** friends-, and later lovers, relationship. There were some touching sweet moments but I —and Julian— had to be patient.

‘He needed some blazing neon sign from Matt before he'd even consider making another move. If Matt needed time, Julian would gladly give him however much he needed, if being with Matt was the prize.’

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**This book more or less had everything but still** I really missed "that" special feeling. Something, I'm not sure what, was kind of missing for me.

These main characters, Matt and Julian, are two lovely, easy to like men. Their life-stories are quite heartbreaking (I felt for them). The storyline, the plot, and the disposition with these short chapters and focus on interesting events during a year, was nicely done. There were also some thrilling, but maybe too melodramatic, secret family drama to add an very angstic feeling to it all.

**I should probably have been more stunned** and felt more. But I'm sorry to say, I didn't.

‘He should apologize and remove his hand, but Matt's face was like a magnet. Their eyes met then Matt closed his eyes and leaned into Julian's hand. Julian's chest tightened. He slowly moved his thumb back and forth, caressing Matt's cheek. His heartbeat sped up, heat rose through his body, and it was damn near impossible to swallow past the lump in his throat’

*A Better Man* ended up as a sweet read I enjoyed partly but it didn't give me any bigger desire to continue this series or look for more books by this author. I don't want to complain, I can see why a lot of friends loved it, but maybe was it just the wrong week for me. (view spoiler)

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A slow build relationship with two hurt souls that didn't mark the bull's-eye in my heart. I'm a bit surprised actually. This tale should fit perfect for a romantic girl like me.

**I LIKE - these main characters**

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„• \* ° \*!Gwendolyn!°\*\*★°\*\*★ says

*A 4 Star Pure Romance.*

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## **Better Man. Re-read 7/7/17**

Julian & Matt

This book starts off *Sloooow* .....is it worth the slowness?

**Yes!**

*THERE IS STRENGTH LOVE & DEVOTION EMBEDDED IN THIS BOOK I LOVE YOU....AND HOPE...HOPE OF A SECOND CHANCE.*

*Gosh, if you are looking for a PURE romance than this book may be for you.*

*I was looking for that, and this was perfect for me.*

*"I LOVE YOU MORE" ...AWESOME!*

### ***The Book-***

*There is a slow tender heartbreaking start, but the romance was worth the wait it felt pure. From strangers in need to friends to lovers. And these guys make for an adorable read.*

### ***The symbolism....***

*The leather band he wear's on wrist means something, whoever did the cover art, listened to the words of the bookend made that one piece mean something. It was beautiful.*

### ***The pure romance within...***

*Both guys have their own inner struggles but, the way this was written proves that to broken parts fit better together. It was a soulmate type of journey. These guys just clicked into each other's lives seamlessly.*

### ***The storyline....***

*Second chances. Whispering notes of prison life, ex-cons, life and death cause and effect. This story pulled me right in. I do not like prison stories, but I ironically this one worked. Because I loved the pure romance touch mixed in with the realization of life ...shi\* happens ^\_^ . But, it's how one deals with it, that matters. This book places key people/characters strategically in the pathway of the person in need. But, it was always up to that person to see them.*

*I think what made this read more special than the first read was the writers site. She lets you me the characters. She gives a bio-*

### **Matthew "Matt" Doner**

*Birth Name: Matthew Collings-Lloyd*

*Height: 5'10"*

*Age: 29 (at end of book 1, 2nd ed.)*

*DOB: July 1984*



*Eyes: Blue*

*Hair: Brown*

*Education: graduated magna cum laude in both accounting and finance*

*Occupation: Owner of Halfway House*

*Personality/Characteristics: Compassionate. Dedicated. Independent.*

*What do you like most about Julian? "The way he makes me feel. J gives me a sense of peace."*

*Belief: "Everyone deserves a second chance."*

*Charge: embezzlement and insider trading*

*Time served: 5 years*

### **Julian M. Capeletti**

*Birth name: I go by Julian M. Capeletti. That's all you need to know.*

*Height: 6'3"*

*Age: 32*

*DOB: Nov. 1981*

*Eyes: Green*

*Hair: What hair? If it grew out, it would be dark brown*

*Origins: A mix of Brazilian, Italian, German and American – translation: "I'm a mutt."*

*Occupation: Contractor*

*Personality/Characteristics: Direct. Extremely private. Loyal.*

*What do you like most about Matt? "Everything. He just gets me."*

*Belief: "Everything happens for a reason." By the way, you ask too many damn questions. I'm outta here...*

*On her site this is done for each book, I loved this touch and decided to buy all the books AFTER the second, and AFTER checking out the extras on her site- Here is her site, check it out its fun.*

*<http://jaimereese.com/meet-the-charac...>*

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## **Wendy says**

I have re-read this series many times and it has become one of my favorite mm-series. Though this first book is not my favorite, so far that title belongs to book 3, I still enjoyed reading it very much. After reading the other books in this series (they all focuss on a different couple), I got to know Matt and Julian even better, which made me enjoy re-reading this one even more.

Matt has spend 5 years in prison, for a crime he himself did not commit. He decided to take the fall for it, because he wanted to cover for his brother.

Now that he's out, he wants to build a half-way house for people just like him. Getting help fixing up the old building he wants to use is not as easy though.

Enter Julian Capeletti, handyman. He answers the add in the paper, to help restore the old building. Julian seems to be kind of cold, but that's because he has his own horrible past to deal with.

Slowly these two men start opening up to each other.....This is a slow burn romance. You won't find any insta-love in this one, but you will find a lot of sexual tension...

I just wish the steamy scenes would have been a bit more detailed, but hey....that's just me ;)

**This review is posted on Wendy's Wycked Words**

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### **Sheziss says**

This book is very cute. But it's too much. I felt I was forced to love the MCs and as such, I was compelled to resist to their charms. I honestly had a hard time finishing the book. First I thought my slowness was because my brain was catching up on some sleep after long weeks of studying for my exams or the fact I got hooked to a TV series. But then I began reading another book after finishing this one and I couldn't put it down so I stayed the wee hours with the lights on till my eyelids were too heavy to lift. Even more: that book made me feel warm in the belly whereas A Better Man couldn't even start a fire. So in the end it was the book's fault, not mine.

The main problem is that the characters were too perfect for me. Their lives are too perfect dramas. I felt for them instantly. Well, not really. I liked their interactions, I liked the "I love you"/"I love you more" sequences, I liked the premise. But something failed in the developing of it all. There were clear dots but the lines to join them all didn't draw the picture I expected.

Matt was the perfect brother, and of course, he says he's the (view spoiler) when in fact he (view spoiler). Of course that awakes Julian's sympathy, and everybody else's, in the process, except mine. Was it necessary for Matt to be such a martyr? I don't say there are not people out there who would willingly take the place of a loved one and even prefer it that way but here it was too superficial and artificial that after (view spoiler) there is no spitefulness (or hate) for all the lost years. I felt disappointment when there is no conflict (at all) between the brothers after all that had happened. Only honorable feeling. Nothing of what the human being shows now and then. And Julian is the (view spoiler) boy who is alone in the world after (view spoiler). He

needs to be petted and Matt is the one who has to do it. Cheesy as hell.

Even the mother was the perfect bitch. Too Disney-worldly for me. Why is it more evident when a woman is a bad person and we barely notice when the man is the one? Food for thought for a later occasion. Anyway, if there is a bitch in the movie, then her husband is a wimp. But of course the wimp one dares to confront Mrs. Bennet in the most crucial moment. And that way he's forgiven for the passivity during the whole children' lives. "You have been a bad father but hey, after this scene you are awesome, so let's follow the yellow brick road". I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.

The brother and his fiancée and Sam and... Jeez. All of them were nice! TOO nice. It was very claustrophobic here. I wanted to throw a pinch of reality here and there to make it all more believable or at least less harakiri-inducing. I felt I was swimming in cotton candy while I was being sung a fairy tale (no pun intended).

The positive part: I liked it wasn't love at first sight and a let's-have sex just after they meet. Unfortunately nothing of this held my attention for long. Sometimes I even was bored. The book goes throughout a year: from June to June, closing the circle in 4 seasons to see glimpses of them together during several days each month. Matt is decided to built a halfway house for prisoners with no support when they finally get out of jail, and Julian is the one he employees to reform the house. I have to think very hard to remember if I had read a plot like this one and nothing occurred to me. So congratulations for the originality.

After reading this I come to the conclusion this book it not for me. And although I don't precisely dislike the author, it was a big disappointment.

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## **Ami says**

This is a really good romance that check-mark the things I like to read from the genre. The story happens for a year, highlighting the important events in Matt and Julian's road to relationship. It has a wonderful build-up, some lovely and sweet scenes, and the heartwarming HEA.

Julian is a contractor that is out of job and behind his rent when he decides to answer Matt's ad for handyman. While Matt is an ex-convict, sentenced for five-years term after a white collar crime (that is not completely his own fault). The sexual tension is strong but the men don't quickly act on it. I love how this is being played out. One particular thing that leads to the first kiss is kinda cute, IMHO.

While the "I love you" comes early (I think it's about half-mark), but there are enough sub-plots to be told before the end. It involves Matt's still in the closet from his parents and his mother being a cold b\*tch. So the relationship progresses, even after the "I love you" part. My favorite scene will be their Valentine's Day, where Matt's gift to Julian is so significant, I feel my heart squeezed for the beauty of it.

I am really happy to know that there will be more stories coming from The Halfway House. I'd love to see the house with new residents coming as well as getting update on Matt and his "J".

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## **Macky says**

First review written November 2012:

The nicest thing about this story was the love between the two main guys, it grew between them gently and tenderly and by doing so forged a true connection that weathered every obstacle thrown at them including both their past histories and Matt's obnoxious mother. In most stories these would normally cause the requisite 'separation' that generally is the fallout in a lot of m/m novels when the you know what hits the fan to fill out the angst quota, but in this case it actually brings them closer together, there are moments of conflict but Julian never reacts how Matt expects, his support is unwavering and I never once doubted them not making their love and Matt's dreams for his halfway house work. Its seeing how it all comes together that makes the story and these two lovely men burrow their way into your heart. A lovely story that may not have the excitement factor but will leave you feeling that true love does exist and will warm a lot of hearts. A small cast of characters who make up a big hearted book. Lovely.

Edit. 1/2/14

I have to be totally honest, its quite a while since I read this the first time in 2012 so I'm hard pressed to be able to say exactly where all the re-writes have been added unless I read both copies alongside each other ( I could because I've still got the original! ) but I do know that I enjoyed this just as much again, if not more, and it definitely felt more fleshed out, especially around Matt and his bitch of a mother and I'm sure there was more Matt and Julian time. I love Matt and Julian as a couple, I love the chemistry they share and I love how, as I've said before, they support each other through whatever conflict they come across without getting all stubborn and overly dramatic. They both have baggage but they get through it together. And I also have a fondness for Matt's good friend Sam. I still have the other version, it was a keeper then so now I've got this one with added extras, its definitely not going anywhere. I think this is a really lovely story and its one I'll come back to to again. Special thanks to Jaime for giving me the chance to read this again. Still a five star read for me.

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## **Trisha Harrington says**

A Better Man is one of my favorite books of all time. I read it the first time it was released and I fell in love with both the characters and the story. I didn't know how I would feel reading it with things changed, I worried about the changes slightly but I didn't really panic. I was more excited than anything. And when I started reading this again, I soon realized that I would have no issues loving these characters again. Jaime Reese did a wonderful job adding and rewriting scenes. She didn't change the core of this story and that, I believe, is the reason this is still on my favorites list.

I really loved the characters. Matt, who did something amazing for his younger brother and almost ruined his

own life in the process, was really easy to like. He had family issues that really made him as a person and I think that was part of the reason I loved him. But J really stole my heart in this book. He was everything I love in a character and more. I loved how much he loved Matt. His past, like Matt's, wasn't easy and he had his demons, but he was always there when Matt needed him. I couldn't have picked a better pair and my love for both of them just grew as I read the book. Their relationship was fun and snarky, but sometimes serious, and I rooted for them from the beginning.

This book wasn't really angsty, but saying that, there was some drama in this. Between Matt's family (his mother, really) and the secrets he kept from J, plus J's past, it all had the potential to be really hard to read. And while I was reading I was waiting for something to go really wrong and I was overcome with dread during one of the scenes, but these guys were solid and nothing tore them apart. If anything, the troubles in their lives brought them closer together. So nothing was ever OTT or too much in this and that was something I was appreciative of.

The dialogue between the two guys made me feel all happy and mushy inside. I read romance because I love romantic scenes. But I also like having fun while I read and the banter between these guys was awesome! It was like watching two best friends fall in love. And that was another great thing. These guys became friends and then they became more. Sure, there were a couple of kisses before they became a couple. But they also fell in love before becoming an official couple and that was a huge bonus. And no matter how lovey-dovey they were, the banter never disappeared which can happen sometimes.

One of my favorite scenes is the one where they meet for the first time. It had me laughing so hard that I had tears in my eyes and I couldn't stop. Honestly, I was so glad that scene was in this book because it really made this book what it was for me. Among many other scenes, but this was the first scene that really made me think "This book is amazing!"

*"Hello? Mr. Boner?" He smiled. Gosh, this was never going to get old.*

*"It's Doner." He heard an aggravated man's voice from one of the rooms on the right.*

*"Oh, sorry, the ad read Boner." He just couldn't resist throwing that in there one more time.*

*The irritated man walked out into the hallway, stopped, and crossed his arms. "It's Doner. D-O-N-E-R.*

*Doner."*

*He could spell it any way he wanted, a-s-s-h-o-l-e was the only thing that ran through Julian's mind at that moment.*

And there was this.

*"I love you, Matt," he said then softly pressed his lips to Matt's in a tender kiss.*

*When they separated, Matt was smiling, his eyes bright with emotion. "I love you more," he responded and reached up to touch Julian. His fingers ghosted over Julian's temples and down the side of his face to his chin.*

I have always adored the "I love you" "I love you more" scene. It's another scene that really made this book what it was for me. But it was also one of those romantic scenes that made me feel so many things. It was just so very, very good, and I think it's one of those scenes you can really tell how much Matt and J love each other.

This is a must read in my opinion. And I cannot wait for the sequel!

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## Ann says

I was lucky enough to get A Better Man from Jaime Reese to read and review for the blog. I may have shamelessly begged a little too, but it worked, so whatever. I checked OMK (Old Man Kindle) and found I originally read, and loved, the first version back in November of 2012. I'd always hoped a second book would come out and so I was really excited to find out this one was being re-released and another is on the way.

Matt & Julian are great characters and I loved it just as much as I remember from the first read. Full review soon on the blog 02/07/14, then here.

Here we go . . . . .

I first read this story back in November of 2012 and fell in love the main characters Matt and Julian. Sometimes you read about two guys who just fit together like perfect puzzle pieces and they fill the empty spaces, that's what Matt and Julian are to each other. That impression really stuck with me and made this one of my favorite reads. When I found out the story had some revisions and was being re-released I contacted the author and shamelessly begged for a review copy. Hoo-RAY for me and being shameless because it was totally worth it and no here we are! Thank you Jaime.

Matt is fresh out of prison for a white collar crime and there is a WHOLE story behind all that that I'm not giving away. Matt comes from money but he did not grow up happy. His favorite aunt, the one who always accepted and supported him, has left him her estate and his only instructions are to do "something good" with what he now has. His goal is to build a halfway house for men like himself who have come out of prison with no support system and just need a solid foundation to rebuild their lives. This is no small undertaking and the dump of a house he has purchased needs a complete redo. No contractor will take the job, too much work, not enough budget, too little time. Enter Julian Capeletti, down on his luck handyman loner extraordinaire. Julian needs work and while he sees that this project is pretty overwhelming he's not one to shy away from a challenge and a tenuous partnership is formed.

Matt and Julian are attracted to each other but there are a lot of reasonable things standing in the way of the two of them connecting. They are employer/employee, Matt is afraid that Julian will be completely turned off because of his past and of course there's the whole, "is he even gay?" thing. There is an intense amount of back and forth, flirting and stepping back and dancing around all the issues in the year it takes to get the house ready for inspection and their first guest. I think that was one of the things I loved most about this story. Lordalmighty I wanted these two to do SOMETHING, but it really wouldn't have been right and the payoff? When these two finally connected? In ALL the ways? Was so worth the literary blue balls journey it took to get there. I totally believed the love between these guys, I was there through the whole struggle to get along, the tentative friendship, the real flirting (Julian says to Matt after he gets his hair cut short "Don't cut your hair so short the next time. You should keep it at least grip length." – HELLO!) and finally the honesty and true love.

Matt does have support outside of Julian in the form of Sam, whom he met while he was incarcerated. Sam is going to help Matt in any way he can to make sure the halfway house succeeds and he gets the right fit in the guests who will be living there. Julian didn't know what the relationship meant between Matt and Sam (he didn't know Matt's background at that point) and seeing how jealous he was of Sam at first and the slow

acceptance of each other was pretty cute. They're both very protective of Matt in their own way.

You know what was awful and fun? Meeting and hating Matt's mom. Good gravy that woman is a bitch. Not a good kind of bitch either, she's a she devil of the highest order with absolutely NO redeeming qualities. No awful past to be able to explain away her awful, she's pretty much the worst mother and just so very cruel to Matt. Ohhhh and that gets Julian's hackles up in the most alpha of ways. Sometimes it's fun to have a character that fuels your hate fire and this is her. The only reason she is so awful is because she just is so you can loathe her with impunity and love to hate this villain.

Matt and Julian's backgrounds couldn't be more different but they really had so much in common. Loneliness is loneliness, it doesn't matter where it comes from and for once in both their lives they belonged somewhere. They had the house and they had the comfort of each other. Each man inspires the other to be a better man and it's so sweet that they see the other as the best possible man already. I LOVE when couples have a "thing" something that is just theirs. A running joke between them is Julian's middle name, or the fact that Matt can't figure out what it is, and Julian's hatred of the nickname "Jules" that Matt's friend Sam insists on using for him. Matt comes up with a compromise and decides to just call Julian "J". Julian doesn't really do nicknames in general, but Matt gave it to him and after that, he only wants to hear Matt say "J" to him. Plus it doesn't matter which one says "I love you" the other will say "I love you more" – that's just . . . just . . . d'awwwwww! Because I saw the evolution of their relationship these little things are tender and important and not just irrelevant sweet talk.

I'm so excited to read the next installment of this series. I feel all kinds of invested in their relationship, the work they have put into the house and the goals they have set up for themselves there. The story of their first guest has me completely intrigued and I sense some seriously awesome angst heading my way when I read about him. Bring. It. On.

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