

Ruth Madison

(W)hole



Whole

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"A young man wanting to be whole; a young woman certain she can never be. A uniquely conflicted love-suspenseful, provocative and deeply moving."

-Shelley Berman Elizabeth Foster is a young woman with a promising future. She has a perfect family in a nice neighborhood and she is getting ready to graduate from high school and begin her life. The only problem is a dark secret that she has kept hidden all her life. No one would ever guess that the quiet and shy girl has a rare sexuality. She is only attracted to men with physical disabilities.

When she meets the paraplegic man of her dreams she tries to keep him from finding out the truth about her interest, but she can't lie to him forever.

Stewart Masterson was once a champion surfer until he lost the use of his legs. He came to Massachusetts to leave behind his past. He is making a new life for himself when he meets Elizabeth. Together they begin a terrifying journey of self-discovery.

Will Elizabeth and Stewart learn to accept the broken parts in themselves and each other? Will they be able to re-define what it means to be whole or will fear and guilt drive them apart?

Whole Details

Date : Published April 1st 2009 by iUniverse.com

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Author : Ruth Madison

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From Reader Review Whole for online ebook

Chie Alemán says

Review is for the second edition.

Ruth Madison has returned to her debut novel, making some tweaks and filling out the story so that we now get alternate chapters between the two main characters. Although the pacing is off at times, it makes for a stronger, more cohesive piece than the original. The subject matter: a young woman dealing with her attraction to disability, gives a different perspective, and the characters are intriguing and sympathetic. This unique coming-of-age story is a worthwhile read, especially for anyone curious about the “devotee” label.

Read full review on my blog: <http://chiealeman.com/?p=117>

Talltree says

Bit weirded out tbh. I felt the same way after reading my first bdsm romance. But enjoyed the book too. The h has a condition or fetish that I've only recently heard of and pursues the H who has lost the use of his legs. I like that she was the pursuer, that she went after what she wanted, even though she seemed the shy type but also that she wasn't the stalkerific type and left him alone when he broke it off.

H was an ex playboy surfer who is now a college student while h is in the last year of high school and a wannabe photographer.

Both the H and h came off as very three dimensional and the way they interacted I really could see the connection developing between them, they had fun and it was sweet.

There was a separation in between and quite a few chapters had the H, h spending time apart which i didn't like.

I liked the ending and how the H/h found their way back together, they were good for each other and both characters showed growth in the book.

Rebecca says

Not the best written book in terms of the prose, but interesting characters. Kindle formatting is terrible.

The prose is a little under-developed, and I kind of felt in general like I was wanting more: more detail (i.e., when Elizabeth is working in her dark room) and more from the characters.

Still offers an interesting perspective you don't normally see, and the characters feel genuine.

Michelle says

(Review originally published at Red Adept Reviews.)

I purchased (W)hole, by Ruth Madison, after seeing a discussion about disabled heroes on an Amazon discussion board.

Overall: 2 ½ stars

Plot/Storyline: 3 ½ stars

I knew going in, based on the description, that the heroine is what is called a "devotee," meaning she has a specific attraction to men who are wheelchair bound or physically impaired in some way. While I don't share this particular fascination, I don't think I need to share it in order to enjoy the book. I also enjoy a romance that is more Beauty and The Beast (with the Beast being anyone society labels different and fears without reason) than Cinderella. Love is predicated on more than prom king or queen looks and attraction that is about more than the bluest eye. So, while I realized going in that I was not the ideal reader, I felt I'd be open to the story.

The plot was fine, really, but the execution felt a little flat. The devotee angle didn't bother me, and it added an extra dimension. However, there were a couple uncomfortable moments. For instance, Elizabeth and Stewart go on a date, and she touched her foot to his foot, knowing he was unaware that she is touching him, and seeming to be excited by it. I can't say that I was comfortable with this, because I think a person has the right to know if you're making physical contact.

The other uncomfortable moment was more of a mixed bag for me. She realizes that she doesn't regret his accident, doesn't wish it didn't happen, because it's what makes him attractive to her. I understand that logically - the heart (and choice parts) wants what the heart (and choice other parts) wants, but it was still one of the few moments that stopped me short. I'm not taking anything away from the rating for his, however, because I think it's an honest feeling this character had, and a brave thing to write.

I acknowledge that, while I think I'm a good audience for this, I'm not the perfect reader, and that this might be an important book for other people to read and know that they're not alone. I know that at some point, past the half-way mark, I began to skim more, because my interest wasn't being sustained.

When I think of plot and storyline, I think of how I would summarize the story for someone who hadn't read it. When I do that with (W)hole, I think it sounds like an interesting story, and so the rest falls to the other categories.

Characters: 2 ¾ stars

I think that the author does a pretty good job explaining Elizabeth to the reader. I like her, I get how she swoons over Long John Silver the way some of us swoon over ... (Michelle pauses to consider the name she will type. It is not an unpleasant way to spend some time) ...Tim McGraw in a cowboy hat and a pair of tight jeans, I want her to be happy. However, when I say that I like her, it's a mild "like," with a period at the end, not an exclamation point. She is a good person, and so I'm on her side. I don't passionately root for her though, and I don't passionately root for the hero either - although I like him too. I should care about both of them a lot - she's had to keep her true self a secret, he's obviously suffered adversity.

I think I know them and understand them, but I don't feel for them. I didn't feel invested in their relationship. I read the end and thought, "Well, that's good." Because, you know, they're good people.

I understood that she was quite attracted to him, because the author wrote that it was so, but I didn't feel chemistry between the characters. We're told a number of times, that she likes him for more than his paraplegia, but I never felt a true draw between them, not even when he begins to accept her - I'll call it a fetish, since the author does so a number of times. He's the first guy in a wheelchair she got close to, the first man she got close to, and she's the first young woman to show interest since his accident.

Elizabeth is deceptive about her interest in Stewart's disability, but I have to say I see it as an understandable

thing, and most people wouldn't have the courage to reveal that, particularly not a shy girl in her first romance.

I don't fault him his reaction either. Perhaps this is where these characters seemed most real for me.

Writing Style: 2 stars

This is the great stumbling block for me. When I question why I didn't care more, why I wasn't invested, it all comes back to the language not moving me, the words not drawing me closer to the characters. I'd read a sentence here and there and feel something, the seed of interest or enthusiasm, but none of it germinated. The language felt repetitious.

For example: "She looked at him with such trusting eyes, so clear and unclouded, with a trust that he knew he couldn't live up to."

While I didn't feel the passion, I felt the passion in the author. This is clearly a very important theme for her. And perhaps that's one of the problems - I felt like she was so busy sending out a beacon to other devotees, so busy trying to make the reader understand, that it felt a bit like an Afterschool Special, if it could be rated PG 13.

Editing/Formatting: 2 1/4 stars

Formatting was off, with paragraphs aligning wrong, correcting, and then repeating the pattern. Punctuation, particularly concerning dialogue, was also problematic. Assorted other errors. While none of the issues were major, they were ubiquitous. Any way that I look at this, I have to label it beneath professional standards, even though the issues would be easily remedied, because it was constantly undermining my experience. (If I had to guess on the wonky formatting, single line paragraphs seemed to set it off, making everything justify too far to the right for a number of paragraphs, and then re-align.)

Beverly Diehl says

Elizabeth is a devotee, a person who is sexually attracted to people with disabilities.

Disclaimer: I've "met" the author online, and have interviewed her for my blog.

This is her debut novel, and it shows. There's too much telling rather than showing, the dialogue is often stilted or cliché, and my version had enough typos and formatting errors to distract me from reading.

It's also hard to decide where to shelve this. Elizabeth, the character, is 18; the language used is very young, BUT the scenes where Elizabeth is either fantasizing about or having sex with Stewart, her love interest, are extremely erotic and well-written. The issue of Elizabeth's deep feelings of shame for her fetish/perversity is also well-portrayed.

For all its flaws, it's a very interesting look at a romantic mix of people, able-bodied and disabled, that aren't often portrayed in any kind of novel, let alone as a couple. I love that Stewart is not portrayed as a heroic martyr, making the best of the fragments of his shattered life. Yes, he has issues, and problems, and is somewhat creeped out when he finds that his new girlfriend likes him in part BECAUSE OF, not despite, his disability, but as a character, he is (W)hole.

Cheryl says

This was an interesting story. About a girl who is turned on my mens disabilities and a guy who was a champion surfer who now had 2 paralyzed legs. They both have to come to terms with there "disability". I enjoyed it because it was different than any other romance story I have read. It also gives a view point from the disabled person. I think there is a sequel and i would like to find it and read the "rest of the story".

Christy Stewart says

In my quest to read and judge every book with disabled characters I came across Ruth Madison's (W)hole. I didn't read the reviews or description, wanting nothing to influence my opinion of the book but I expected the usual (although the usual means all 3 other romance novels featuring disabled characters); a watered down experience of disability and then critical acclaim of how "brave" the author is for writing such a book. This was not the case.

The leading man is paraplegic from a sporting accident, as per usual in this genre, but the real story is about the leading lady who has a fetish toward disabled men. I know very little about the devotee community and so I was immediately sucked in to the story, excited to see how it was portrayed.

Elizabeth, our heroine is a normal teenager with all the usual concerns such homosapiens have but she is burdened with the undeniable fact she is attracted to men with disabilities. She is ashamed to the point where she abuses herself to purge the desire. She is frightened for what such a fetish means about her and her humanity, taking sexual joy in another's suffering.

On top of this, Stewart, our leading man, is not bitter NOR is he inspirational. For those of you who don't know...expecting someone with a disability to be sad and bitter is just as offensive and dehumanizing as expecting them to be saints who's goal in life is to inspire you. Instead of either stereotype, Stewart is a normal young man with all the usual concerns such homosapiens have but he is in a wheelchair. This is enough to bring a tear of appreciation to my eye but Madison goes a step further to be honest in what having disabilities means. In one romantic scene Elizabeth goes for yet another base to be stopped by a catheter. If that isn't the home run of taking the responsibility as an author to portray a true human experience I don't know what is.

There is no other book like this. There are few (of any genre or subject) that are as genuine as this. You may or may not like the book but I encourage you to read it. You will not put it down without having a strong opinion of it (good or bad) and that is the greatest reward in literature.

Chloe says

This was a well-written book about a girl with a wheelchair 'fetish.' She doesn't see it as a fetish, but has always found wheelchairs attractive and sexy, the same way one might be really attracted to redheads or something.

What I really liked about the book was the more realistic aspect of it -- the girl is at first too ashamed to tell anyone about her wheelchair thing, when her friends and family find out she's dating a guy in a chair, they

kind of flip out on her, and when her wheelchair-bound boyfriend finds out about her 'fetish' he is hurt, wondering if she'd still feel the same about him if he hadn't been in an accident.

I read the whole book in a day and quite enjoyed it. Apart from the wheelchair-thing, it has a good 'high school' book vibe.

Erin says

I was intrigued by the concept of this book, and I probably wouldn't have picked it if it weren't free. But, I read it, and I like Ruth Madison's style.

You can't be too freaked out by the whole fetish thing if you read the book description first. I think I was more surprised at how much I enjoyed the book. It shocked me, saddened me, made me angry, and filled me with joy. I love books that can do all of those!

I forgot to mention, I stayed up until well past 3am to finish this book, knowing I had to be up at 7.

Nozinabook says

This book is basically about an eighteen year old trying to hide the fact she is a devotee of disabled males and how she comes to terms with all this means to her, her family, friends and disabled boyfriend. This journey takes the reader through elizabeth's romance with Stewart, an ex surfer who has made his peace with his disability and is going on with his life, on his terms. He is a great character, very strong and appealing.

I found the ending very frustrating as it left me with too many questions as to what is going to happen next but I am very relieved that there is a sequel Breathe.

There are so few books written about this subject, it is fantastic to get the opportunity to follow Elizabeth through her journey of self discovery.

Sara says

This is an interesting take on a romance, chronicling the "fetish" of the main character - she only is sexually attracted to men with physical (visually perceived) disabilities. She meets Stewart at a wedding, and is instantly capitivated by his wheelchair. As time progresses, she falls for Stewart as a person and feels guilt for her "sickness" - how will she ever admit her attraction to disabilities without losing him when she can barely admit it herself? How will she "come out of the closet" to her friends and parents?

The issue is fascinating, and explored bravely. This is something I never thought of (an attraction to disability) and I couldn't put it down.

Rebecca says

The book is very interesting. I took a human sexuality class in college, and one of the things we studied was devoteeism (the sexual attraction to those who are considered to be disabled). Having a background on the subject I think allowed me to approach the book in a different way. Had I not already known about the term I

may have had trouble with the subject matter.

What I liked about the book was that despite it being about devoteeism, Elizabeth fits with any person who has something they consider a shameful secret. You take the devoteeism out of it and put in something else that people feel embarrassed by, and you can understand her perfectly - you may even have been her at one point. I thought she was poignant and I liked reading her journey to self-acceptance. I've always been a believer in learning to like yourself first, and telling other people where they can stick it if they don't like you.

I didn't care for Stewart as much after I learned what his secret was. I think that's a part of my own personality though. To me, once I learned the truth behind why he was paralyzed and the guilt he felt because of it I found myself rolling my eyes because I thought he was being a bit unreasonable. (Edit: I should clarify and say that to me, he was being unreasonable because people would still accept him and even call him a hero. He had no reason to feel guilty, as you cannot control the actions of other people.) However, I think that is simply a part of my personality.

I didn't really like the way the prose shifted at the end, I felt a little like I was being preached at. The one thing that really bothered me though, and I've seen this echoed in another review, is when Elizabeth and Stewart go on a date and she touches him under the table. He can't feel her touching him, and this felt a bit like a violation to me. It just made me feel uncomfortable.

Otherwise though, I think its a nice book. The prose is very lovely and I loved Elizabeth's insecurities as I felt they echoed many many people today.

Amy says

A slightly different kind of love story. Boy meets girl. Girl falls in love with boy. Boy falls in love with girl. Boy is paraplegic, and girl has a fetish, so to speak, for physically disabled men. So much so, she's not even attracted to able-bodied men.

It was an interesting read. I'm interested reading the sequel, but it will not be immediately...

Amy says

I just couldn't stomach the lead's compulsion. Fetishising a disability is disturbing. If it so happened that she was attracted to Stewart (who I did really like) and happened to have a fetish for it, it might have been better. Instead she just seemed like a creeper looking to get her rocks off. Yes, I know that they fall in love, but I couldn't finish the book. It was very uncomfortable.

Melissa says

(4.5 STARS)

This was a great story I got as a freebie through Amazon for my Kindle. It's about Elizabeth a senior in high school who hides a very deep secret. I love how she overcame her secret and found love with Stewart...who I

absolutely loved!! I didn't know what to expect with this and was pleasantly surprised. I learned a lot reading this book too...I had no idea there was something out there that this young girl was suffering with...totally blew my mind. I look forward to reading more from this author; and I actually just downloaded a short story by this author "Stewart's Story" and "Breath(e)"...the sequel to (W)hole! Me is a happy camper =)
