



Tracefinder: Contact

Kaje Harper

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What could an undercover cop and a drug lord's pet psychic have in common?

Brian Kerr has spent years hiding behind a facade of mental slowness. His brother and sister got all three of them off the streets and into a cushy life, under the protection of a dangerous criminal. But to keep that safety, Brian has to use his Finding talent to track down the boss's enemies. Although he pretends not to know what he's really doing, each Find takes its toll, and he's trapped in a life he hates, losing touch with his true self.

Nick Rugo's job is to protect and serve the people of Minneapolis as an undercover cop. He isn't closeted, but he isn't out at work, and there's a wild, angry side to him that he's managed to keep hidden until now. When he's assigned to bring Brian's boss to justice, he intends to use anything and anyone it takes to do that.

Nick initially sees Brian as a pawn to be played in his case, but he keeps getting glimpses of a different man behind the slow, simpleminded mask. As the two men get to know each other, it becomes clear they share secrets, some of which might get them both killed.

Tracefinder: Contact Details

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From Reader Review Tracefinder: Contact for online ebook

Tully Vincent says

An usual contemporary with a paranormal twist and flawed characters of a rather different type. This one set itself apart from most that I've read and stuck in my head (in a good way). Each and every character is interesting, multi-layered, and well-drawn, the pacing moved well, and there were even well-handled animal characters which is always a plus for me. This story unfolds slowly, but didn't take long to see that if you love broken boys, this series promises to be a find indeed.

Not high on the heat meter and even the romance element is on the milder side, but that seems fitting given the characters in this story. Nick Rugo and Brian Kerr are worlds apart in many ways, but they share difficult childhoods that have left them trying hold themselves together by whatever means they can. Nick often deals by lashing out in physical violence such as bar fights, while Brian deals by hiding within himself behind the persona of a simpleton called Bry. But is Bry real or did Brian create him as a cover? Even Brian himself seems confused on that point.

The author rather leaves us guessing as to exactly what's wrong with Brian (view spoiler) And I actually loved that. It kept me thinking and guessing and trying to piece things out.

In the end, I decided that regardless of how slow Brian might be, one thing is for sure, he's far from stupid. His intelligence shines though to me in many ways. Devising an intricate ruse/cover (or even playing into it) and keeping it up over the long haul wouldn't have been easy. I loved how sometimes Brian's true intelligence would slip out in the things he said, and how adept he was at covering them up with quick thinking and acting. Also Brian certainly seemed to have a handle on good/bad and right/wrong—he continuously makes insightful and succinct judgments about those around him and his insights into the motivations of others showed a high degree of intuitiveness.

I applaud the author for tackling this rather different type of romance. At first I had a hard time seeing how these two could forge a relationship that would believably complement each other without being woefully uneven, without one being more of a caregiver. By the end of the book, the author had me believably seeing how these two men complemented each other, how each had needs that the other met, and that they were if not equal, at least moving towards it. I felt the sexy bits were skillfully handled and fitting for this couple.

Brian's siblings, Lori and Damon, are also nuanced characters with complicated motivations that make them far from black/white, bad/good. I'm glad this will be a series because there are so many questions still in my mind, so many things I'd love to explore and learn about all of them.

Jane says

The following review was originally posted on my book blog The Book Challengers.

Oh my! I thought that I would try the sample and see if it would be something I could enjoy... and all of a sudden I discovered that I had already purchased the book and I was already halfway through with it and it was soooo interesting and I adored Brian and Nick!!!!

The mystery or suspense part of the story kept me on my toes (or on the edge of my seat) and I love it when

that happens. I hate books where I guess the entire plot in the first couple of chapters and while parts of it (e.g. Nick and Brian falling for each other) was a bit predictable, the journey there was not predictable in the slightest. At least I didn't predict it at first glance.

Sure, Brian isn't your usual m/m hero - he's a bit soft on the outside and bit loony on the inside, but he's also incredibly sweet and adorable and I love him. <3 He has had to face things his own way for years and he has a lot to learn and do, but his heart is in the right place and did I already tell you that I adore him?

Nick is more like your usual hero - the good guy who does everything in his power to do the right thing. He's somewhat ordinary, but at the same time he's anything but ordinary as it would seem that he's the only one who can really click with Brian (or his second persona Bry).

There is no "hey, I just met you and this is crazy but I'm already halfway in love with you and I think we should get married". Instead, you get the slowest of slowburns in existence and, frankly, I adore Kaje Harper just for that even though the story with the guys continues (and I hate stories where one couple's story can't be told in one book). And I bet that there will be a lot of angst for all the problems Brian has to face, for all the lies Nick has had to tell Brian.. and I really want to find out what's going to happen next!

Mtsnow13 says

I have always been a fan of Kaje's, and I have read most all of her work. Most of this author's stories always make me feel deeply in one way or another. When we were offered the opportunity to review a newer premise of hers, including paranormal aspects, I jumped at the chance!

Honestly, though, my first impressions of both Nick and Brian were a bit distant at first. This story is like a slow reveal, with us getting to know layers of each character at a pace that felt extremely lackadaisical. At first, with his love for the adrenaline rush of searching out an all out knock-down, drag-out bar fight at least once every three weeks, Nick was not someone I in any way felt drawn to. He almost came off as a bully or immature kid in a grown man's body. But, eventually I started to like him as we were privy to his thought processes and his reasoning for going after his adrenaline rush.

Brian or 'Bry' on the other hand, well, I didn't feel like we got to know him barely at all during this first installment in this series. We didn't get to see as many of his POV excerpts as we did Nick, and with his 'simple' mannerisms, it was a bit hard to tell how much depth the real Brian had, especially as he seemed to question himself or disassociate so very often from his 'other' personality. But, when we get his back story, well, it starts to make sense.

Because of the undercover aspect of 'NOK-Nick' as well as us just getting to only see tiny bits of Brians 'gift', I don't feel like I got a chance to feel any real spark or attraction between these two main characters. I'm sure, with Bry being learning disabled (but is he really?), it had to be a sensitive aspect for the author to try to figure out what was okay, and what was not with an officer of the law and a 'special' person, especially as it was hard to tell if 'Bry' actually knew and was culpable for his part in crimes that are followed thru due to information he provides with his 'gift'.

Overall this first installment had a 'grey' or almost industrial feeling to me, with quite a bit of hopeless reaction to events rather than a positive energy. I didn't really feel any physical attraction between these two, but more of an attraction of convenience, opportunity, and loneliness. But, with that being said, and me being very familiar with Kaje's other stories, I know she has a lot more to come, and that we will be pulled into a ride that we won't forget as more gets revealed to us!

I am hoping for more growth and depth to the personalities of both these main characters in future installments of this series, as the ending left me just barely hanging in there for hope for their future. It really didn't even feel like an HFN, but more an introduction to a possibility for a future.

I do recommend this series, as I believe in Kaje as an author to have a bigger picture in mind, and her stories always end up being worth digging into, showing us some fascinating aspects of the human condition, even if it's hard to know where her stories will go when you begin the journey she lays out for us. This is an especially good series for those that don't want or need that 'insta-love' aspect, but that want a story with a more gritty, realistic, and positive journey to the end goal of a 'real' love story.

Note: I will say, if you are deterred by the number of pages, don't be, as while I was reading I didn't realize it was this long!

4.5 of 5 stars

Susan says

I have changed my rating from 3 stars to 4 stars, because after writing my review I've come to the conclusion that this is a story that needs a lot of words, so the fact that the romance is a slow one, felt real and I just need to be more patient and wait for the next book.

Warning: This book is part of a series and NOTHING is resolved at the end of this (long) book.

Things I liked:

- I really liked Brian. I also liked that he acted as Bry so many years, he wasn't sure who was the real him anymore. No instant cure for him. That felt real. Brian went through so much, he needed therapy. No magical healing by dick here.
- I liked how Nick was with Brian. He genuinely cared about him.
- The Tracefinder thing was really cool, I wish there was more of that in this book.

Things I liked less:

- The relationship between Nick and Brian was just getting started. There wasn't a lot of romance in this book (don't read this book if you want a lot of smut).
- I don't know if I really liked Nick. I'm not quite sure why actually. He's not your standard hero. He is a cop, but he also a human being. Perhaps I'm just too used to the cop being the one true hero in stories?
- The lies. Yes, Nick meant well, but I foresee massive amounts of angst in the future.

Overall I am very intrigued and will definitely read the rest of the series, but this book in itself didn't blow me away.

It could be I am changing my rating after I read the rest, because sometimes you can't just rate a book alone when it's part of a series.

Jilrene ♥ says

I'm writing a review for Gay.Guy.Reading and Friends. I'll add a link when it's available.

4 solid stars

I received a free copy of this book from the author in exchange for an honest review.

ETA: link to my review Gay.Guy.Reading and Friends

I just bought book 2! I'm such a slacker. ;)

Miriam says

This was a bit angstier than I prefer in a romance, although I appreciate that Harper makes her protagonists grapple realistically with the ethical quandaries of their positions as, respectively, an undercover investigator and a decent person who is working for a criminal. Definitely prefer this approach to the cop-out ones where the problematic elements are glossed over. I did start wondering around 80% how the complex situation could be resolved happily, and the answer is that it isn't really, the book just ends, so that was disappointing, but overall I enjoyed the read and I liked the characters. Would read more* by this author.

*I really thought I had read something of KH's years ago and liked it, but I don't see any plot descriptions that match my recollection. Conflating with some other author with the same initials, possibly.

Ami says

It has been a couple of days since I finished this, I still don't really have a lot to write about it, other than yes I loved this. So you might have to read other MORE helpful reviews :)

All I know, Kaje Harper was able to engage me into the life of Nick and Bryan in 141k words (yes, 400+ pages), without feeling that the story needed to be trim down. It is not something that all authors can achieve, in my opinion, especially in romance genre. ALTHOUGH, I'm a little unsure about calling this installment a romance based on the plot as well as the ending. Maybe a suspense with romantic element?

Anyway, I feel that every scene is important for Nick and Bryan's as characters and in their further relationship development. I am now waiting patiently for the next book, to see what Kaje Harper will bring me next.

Sunne says

Kaje Harper is an autobuy author for me.

I was thrilled to see that she has released a new book, the blurb sounded promising and the idea interesting. Now...what a book!!

Both main characters are flawed, not perfect. Their interaction isn't always smooth. Nick is a cop with a temper, he needs to get into fights from time to time. Brian iswell, he's Bry more often than he wants to be.

In the beginning I wondered how these two very different characters would work together, what Nick could even see in Brian and vice versa - but as always, Kaje Harper made it work.

A very important topic for me in books is if I can understand the characters motivation, why they are doing what they are doing. Kaje Harper definitely set her goal high by letting a cop "fall in love" with a mentally challenged person (Brian has his issues) - and she surpassed it.

The story is thrilling, I couldn't put it down, the cast of side characters is well done.

The book is the first in a series to come - it doesn't end with a cliffhanger (thank you Kaje, I hate those) but with a HFN. They are in a good place at the end of this story but I really can't wait to read more.

Baba says

2 boring stars. DNF @40%.

Due to personal reasons, I no longer review books that get less than three stars from me. In order that I can remember *why* a book didn't work out for me, I've decided to file them accordingly. Meaning, I had to extend my shelves substantially.

Pre-reading Tracefinder:

Oh yeah. So going to read this one. The blurb sounds promising. Besides, I've enjoyed quite a few of her other books in the past.

I might be a little bit excited...

Ulysses Dietz says

Tracefinder: Contact
(Tracefinder Book 1)
By Kaje Harper

Five stars

Kaje Harper works hard to elevate the m/m genre above the quotidian. She doesn't dodge the appeal of classic m/m tropes (tough guy cop, fragile wounded boy-man), but she handles them with care and subtlety. Moreover, she digs deep into the hearts and souls of her characters, so that you really know them. She loves her characters, and makes us love them, too.

"Tracefinder: Contact" has all sorts of things that might displease the m/m reader. First, there's the relative lack of sex (really, very little, and what there is, is not heavy duty). But I loved this aspect of the book, and even more because what does happen is shattering, emotionally and physically, for both characters. Secondly, there's no HEA here. However, the ending is warm and satisfied me fully—because I know it's the first of a series. Some people might say it's not romantic enough, but I found it intensely romantic. The biggest issue is the power difference between the two MCs—the cop, Nick Rugo, and the "special" guy, Brian Kerr. Nick is deceitful from the start—he meets Brian as part of a police deep undercover assignment. He manipulates Brian to serve his purposes as a policeman. This, of course, is exactly the tension that makes the book so morally complex.

The core of the book's success for me (and five stars is rare in my review world) is Nick and Brian. The perspective shifts smoothly between the two men, and we see how they view each other as well as how their minds work. The fact that both men are gay and self-accepting is important. None of the moral dilemmas here stem from sexual identity. Brian is the more troubling character, because it's not clear what his issues are other than severe dyslexia and his paranormal ability to Find. I would maintain, however, that all the ambiguity as to Brian's mental state is only suggestive, rather than diagnostic. Brian surely has psychological issues, but so does Nick, with his underlying need to strike out and fight. I felt that I understood both men pretty deeply by the end. Indeed, I think Harper is clever enough so that only the reader really understands Brian. Moreover, I think Brian understands Nick better than Nick understands Brian. The discomfort created by Nick's deception is mitigated, for me at least, by the pains Nick takes to protect Brian and to minimize it. Nick's essential good nature—which is clear from the start, but brought into higher relief as we learn more and more of his past story—is the reason I never felt he was really betraying Brian. The tension between his duty as a police officer and his moral obligations to an innocent young man were palpable; but Harper makes it pretty clear that the cut-and-dried viewpoint of the police is far from perfect in a situation as complex as the one Nick faces with Brian.

Is Brian criminal, or a victim of criminals? Is he defenseless, or does this damaged young man have more agency than we (and Nick) see at first? Similarly, we can't just dismiss Nick as a user, because from the very beginning his affection for and treatment of Brian make it clear that he sees Brian as a person first, and a means to an end second. Which, of course, is the problem.

I've purposely avoided any plot details except for Brian's Finding gift. This bit of paranormal magic is woven throughout the story, and becomes a powerful motivating force for both Brian and Nick. Harper handles Brian's supernatural ability so clinically, describing it so much in terms of how it affects him physically, that we almost forget we're dealing with something paranormal. Brian's power ties him to Nick so strongly because both men understand both the danger and the potential of it.

I can't wait for book 2 to appear. Without being a cliffhanger, the ending left some big questions to be

answered. But Harper left me with such a strong sense of these two men that I am not troubled. I

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

3.5 stars

It is no secret that **I adore Kaje Harper**. I've read **12** of her books, and my average rating for her stuff is ridiculously high. She is always in my top 10 list of favorite authors. I say this time and time again, but Kaje Harper just writes the kind of stuff that I love to read!

I admire so much about Kaje Harper's writing, if I can gush for a second. First of all, she is always challenging herself to write in new genres. She isn't a one trick pony. Kaje can write the pants off a contemporary, a paranormal, a romantic suspense, a historical; you name it and she can write it. The other thing that Kaje does so well is write sloooooow burn. If you like to wait for your MCs to get together, Kaje is the author for you!

This book is like slow-burn on crack. In fact, **it is so slow burn that I'm not sure there is much burn there at all**. It is like a pilot light instead of a real flame. Brian and Nick are an unusual couple to say the least, if you could call them a couple at all. At the end of this book, there is **barely even a HFN**, though most of the main conflict in the story is resolved.

I found the plot for this book extremely interesting. Brian is a **complex** character, a mix of someone with some sort of psychiatric disorder and paranormal talent. I found him to be multi-layered almost to the point of being confusing for me to understand, and I think I'll enjoy getting to know him more.

Nick is also unique. I'm not sure about how I feel about his multitude of secrets and his love of getting into fights to relieve tension, and I think Kaje has a hell of a time figuring out how to resolve those issues for his character.

Brian and Nick together... that I've had to mull over. **They have chemistry and I like their pairing, but I think they have to evolve a lot more for me to visualize them as a couple**. I think I have to see them more as equals to get behind them as a pair. There is some imbalance there that I'm not comfortable with yet, and I think they need more solid ground and have some growing to do.

I really liked the plot, though romantic suspense (or suspense of any kind) usually makes me uncomfortable. **Just a warning: this book is loooooong**. Like very long. You need patience to enjoy this one. However, I found Brian's family dynamics alone to be enough to drive a lot of the story, and the action kept the pace from being painfully slow.

While this isn't close to my favorite Kaje Harper book, I think that it is a promising start to a new series. I look forward to seeing where the author takes this one because I think there is the potential there for a very powerful romance.

****Copy provided by the author in exchange for an honest review****

Mirjam says

Maybe this was wrong. Maybe they were doomed to disaster. But just maybe, before it all came crashing down, they could keep making a dent in the unfairness of the world

I am no fan of the Paranormal genre, but I did like this one. This story focuses on the actions of a crime boss with the help of the Kerr brothers. Victims of a drug addicted mother and poverty the Kerr siblings learn to rely on their older brother Damon from a early age on. With Brian's "talent" of finding people Damon succeeds to catch the attention of a crime boss, Vern, who takes them in and turns Brian's talent in a dark thing to track down disloyal employees and have Damon kill them. Vern marries their sister Lori and uses the boys in his operation and in return gives them the shelter and "easy" life they have lacked.

Catching wind of Vern's operations the police sends in officer Nick Rugo to infiltrate and gather information to bring him down. Nick, struggling with his own childhood demons and finding release in the occasional bar-fight, meets Brian. As emotions and feelings surges Nick has to cope with the decision of doing his job or saving Brian.

Having a severe form of dyslexia, Brian has been told his entire life that he is stupid and, were it not for his Finding talent, would have been dismissed all together.

The heat meter in this book is very low, but exactly enough for this story. It is not the focus of this very intriguing novel.

I am very looking forward to book 2, since I do feel there are a lot of loose ends that need to be tied-up. I would like to know if, besides the dyslexia, what is going on with Brian because KH lets you to believe he is highly intelligent.

Tina says

4,5 stars.

Loved the introducing book to Kaje's new series. Loved Brian and Nick!

Compared to Mac and Tony from Life Lessons they are a very different couple and I'm sure their still developing relationship is going to be a very challenging one.

I'm in for the ride and can't wait for the next book.

Tamika♥RBF MOOD♥ says

3.5 stars **Review @Oh my shelves Blog**

I have so many conflicted emotions on this book. It was a really good story, and that writing is the usual best from Kaje Harper. Some will read this and say it isn't as romance-y as they would want it. I'm on the minority because I'm super glad that romance kinda played in the background of the story. After I finished reading it, I was unsure of my thoughts regarding the main character's relationship. Brian Kerr is a special needs person, and it's not clear by the end what he really suffers from. Dyslexia is a sure thing, but the other terms like Schizophrenia, and Dissociative Identity Disorder is mentioned. Don't get me wrong, people with

mental illness should be able to love when, and whomever they want to. My thing was I felt like his entire life people have taken advantage of him, and the one person he opens up to takes advantage of him in my opinion. I'm not saying Nick did it to be malicious, but I was pissed that he took it there seeing as he was not being his truthful self that was needed.

Onto the story itself it was good. My kind of suspense and thriller with a little paranormal thrown into it. We start off with Nick fighting in a bar, Nick who has a mantra about himself earning his name. On the other hand, we have Nick the cop. Nick rides that fine line between his morals as a person and a cop. Reading this book, I'm kinda surprised on his morals as a cop. It doesn't seem like he cares about anyone else. In the next book, I hope we get to see more of his self and his past. Hopefully things work out. I liked the characters in the story alot. These are people that I can definitely see on screen as well. The characters are so real, and gritty. Damon and Lori are bad ass! Say what you want, and they might not care about other people but they are family and they stick together. I honestly understand why they are the way they are. Their childhood was screwed up. They survived by using what they got. As much as I despised some of Damon's actions in the story, I love him for never giving up on his brother. Loved seeing the drama surrounding some of the characters. I really enjoyed how the story came to. I was so freaking nervous about Nick & Brian. It literally was a point in the story where I cried at 72% and I don't know if that was the author's expectations, but those scenes all the way to the end had me in tears. I cried off and on, until the very last page.

I was so conflicted that I had to email Kaje Harper and ask her certain questions! She was a doll for answering them. I really love her work, and I always say this but she is a realistic writer in my opinion. Everything happening in this story you can definitely picturing it happening in a suburb somewhere, and these characters are somewhere out there in the world. Don't know what's in store for book two, but I'm ecstatic for what's more to come.

****This book was given to me in exchange for an unbiased review****

Lilia Ford says

I could not put this down, which is saying something because it is looooooong. Like 400+ pages long. But my attention, my fascination never once faded. I read till 4am and the second I finished jumped into volume 2 and read that through as well. So safe to say, I loved this. It's complicated to put a finger on why exactly I found this so compelling. While I do love paranormal, contemporary is my least favorite genre. This mostly feels like a contemporary: the paranormal is crucial to the characterization, but it exists in a totally contemporary context, meaning there is no world-building, no need for world-building.

But that connection between "paranormal" and "characterization" is the key to why this book felt so deep, so much more complex than 95% of the M/M romances out there. Everything in this book--the plot, the backstories, the genre elements like "romance" or "procedural" or "paranormal" or "thriller"--all of them are thoroughly grounded in the characterization to the point that they feel inseparable. And frankly this is one of the few books that earns its length by consistently, delicately deepening, building, refining our understanding of these characters--and their understanding of themselves.

A good example here is how Harper uses that favorite genre fixture, "the backstory." Tragic backstories are quite literally a dime a dozen in M/M, to the point that I've coined my own term of disdain, "Tragiboy," because far too often it feels like authors are loading on all this misery and wretchedness just to drum up drama and exploit our emotions. They give us plenty of appalling details but almost never any real

exploration of how these experiences shape actual, unique human beings. That is absolutely not what happens here: with Brian especially, but also with his siblings, each painful detail, each anecdote is *how* we understand: who is Brian, who is Bry, and why the fuck this happened. And the reverse is also true: every time Bry surfaces, every word out of his mouth, points back to that childhood, the relationship between these three siblings, and what each child had to do, and who they had to become, in order to survive.

The same is true of Nick's tough childhood: here that background helps us understand his many contradictions as a man and a police officer, and even more so, why he is so consistently able to "see" through Bry to Brian.

I keep coming back to the word "grounded" to explain how much deeper the characterization feels than in the usual novel--why past and present feel so inextricable. That and "earned." I'll just put a final word of praise for the sense of compassion that runs through this book, which was most evident for me in the portrayal of the relationship between the three siblings: it would have been very easy to turn Lori and Damon into caricatured villains. But again as their history emerges, what we get overwhelmingly is a sense of complexity, moral and psychological, and of the profound and irrevocable connections between siblings.

Should be clear that I was blown away by this book. Very highly recommend.
