



Drifting Sands

C.J. Baty

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As he approaches his fortieth birthday, Justin Warfield feels alone, drifting like the sand that blows along the beach near his family's hotel. He has done exactly as his father wanted. Married the right girl and carried on the family tradition of running the Warfield Hotel. On paper things seem perfect, but happiness hasn't been a part of his life for a very long time.

Marcus Drummond once spent a summer with his best friend Peter at the Warfield Hotel and fell hard for Peter's much older brother. Five years later he's back, and this time hopes that Justin will see him as more than his kid brother's friend.

Sparks fly when the two meet again, but there are a few things standing in their way. The closet that Justin has himself buried in and someone on a killing spree, dumping bodies on the Warfield beach . . . victims that indicate Justin may be involved in some way.

Drifting Sands Details

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Author : C.J. Baty

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From Reader Review Drifting Sands for online ebook

Sarah says

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

This is a hard book to rate. There are a lot of interesting elements to this book that I enjoyed and the characters are likeable but the story needs a little polishing. Please don't take this to mean the writing was bad because it wasn't. For me, the story just needs a better layout.

First, the villains are no secret. Everyone who is trouble blatantly shows it. Yes, there are some circumstances that are unknown, but it doesn't negate the fact that they are the wrong doers. Then there is Justin. My goodness, he's been pushed around all his life and when he is finally able to be set free he's too scared to take the chance. I understand that he is scared but if he was that scared then he should stay in his marriage. (This will make more sense when you read the book). I'm not sure about Justin and Marcus' past. A lot of things were vaguely mentioned and many elements of the story and their relationship were left unexplored.

Justin's brother Peter is great. His devotion to both his brother and friend is great. He brings out the best in Justin and Marcus. Justin's growth in the book was good to watch. He is a more confident man in the end than what he started out to be.

Warning though, this book is a To Be Continued. Some things are solved but there is a lot left unsettled. I did enjoy the book and became invested in the character enough to definitely want to read the second installment of this series.

This is my first book by this author and I will definitely read more of their books.

Stacey Jo says

I received a copy of this book from the Don't Buy My Love program from the M/M Romance Group on Goodreads for an honest review.

Justin Warfield is closeted and has been trapped in a fifteen year, loveless marriage due to his inability to stand up to his father. The bitterness between Justin and his soon-to-be-ex is heated. He has the love and support of his younger brother Peter who knows he's gay and accepts him. Peter has come back to claim his part of the ownership of the Warfield Hotel and now that he has, Justin can finally end his marriage. Peter's best friend, Marcus who once had a crush on Justin, has come back with Peter and is hoping to rekindle things with Justin. An even bigger problem is, the dead bodies of Justin's ex-lovers keep showing up near the hotel. Things don't look good for Justin and the Chief of Police is not a nice character.

This is a good story if you want drama filled with nasty characters. It is a mystery but the bad guys are very much in your face which makes it feel a little simplistic at times. It's good, I just wish there were more red herrings to make me feel thrown off the trail. I would have liked to have known a bit more about Justin and Marcus in the past.

While there is some sex, it's more a mystery-thriller with a little romance to go with it, so those who like their M/M on the lighter side, this will appeal to them. The mystery is not resolved by the end and the story

ends on a bit of a cliffhanger. There are still a number of loose ends yet to be tied up and the reader is set up for the continued story in book two. If you want your story to end neat and tidy, you might wait for book two to be completed and read these back to back. This was an enjoyable read with likable characters (even the nasty ones), with good writing. I just wasn't expecting the open ending so be prepared and keep your eyes peeled for the sequel.

Ali says

I received this book in exchange for an honest review.

Justin is very attracted to Marcus, however he was forced into a marriage when he was younger and is unable to get out of it until after his brother turns 26. When Justin's ex-lovers wind up being murdered near his hotel he wants to keep Marcus at arm's length to protect him. The romance was a back seat to the mystery in the story. I definitely want to read the next one to see what happens next and if Marcus and Justin's story will continue.

Aimee says

I received this book in exchange for a fair and honest review.

This is the first book I have read by author C.J. Baty. It will not be the last. Drifting Sands was a very enjoyable read. I love a good mystery and when it comes mixed in with m/m romance, all the better. We have a mystery set at the family owned Warfield resort in coastal South Carolina. People are dying and it looks like Justin Warfield is responsible. What follows is a story of bigotry, lust, obsession and a whole lot of crazy. While the main plot of the tale finishes up, there is another mystery that is not. This book will just keep you guessing and definitely looking forward to the next installment. I highly recommend this book.

Shari says

I Won a copy on Goodreads.

so good wanted to smack Caroline... Marcus and Justin so good together. Couldn't put it down once I started it.

Julia Rist says

I got a free copy of this book in exchange of a review, through the Don't Buy My Love reading group.

The story is an interesting whodunit, well-written and well-paced. It does not end up neatly, with all the loose ends tied up, but it seems that is part of a series, so some carry over is to be expected.

I am only giving it three stars, though, because there are too many cliches on which the plot is expected to

hinge.

In this day and age, being "outed" is not that big of a deal, particularly for someone like Justin, who owns his own business and has no family other than his brother, who already knows. Maybe a more complex situation would have created some leverage, but I did not feel the urgency. The character of the cop, vengeful and homophobic, also felt clichéd.

But my main pet peeve was that the villain's actions are explained as being due to mental illness. They could have been explained in many other ways: jealousy, envy, spite, greed, a broken heart, etc. Instead, the author went with one specific mental illness, which I thought was rather stigmatizing. Even so, I could have respected the choice if it wasn't that the symptoms for that disorder are nothing like what the character exhibits.

So, in the end...good writing, interesting plot, but characters' motivations fall flat.

Annery says

3.25 Hearts for books 1 & 2 as a whole

Readers should be forewarned that the first two books in this series have to be read/reviewed together if you're hoping for any kind resolution to the "mystery" or semblance of a satisfying romance. I use the word mystery only in the loosest of terms.

When I spotted these up for review my heart did a little pitter patter. Romance & mystery are my jam, my cup of tea, and my catnip. This was none of those.

The Warfield Hotel is one of those idyllic southern hotels in Beaufort, S.C. and you may be getting ready to book a room but refrain from the impulse. Not because dead bodies are showing up on the beach but because there's more campy drama in and around this town than in whole seasons of many daytime or nighttime soaps, no mystery, and if you stop at the first book, an unsatisfying romance.

Justin Warfield is still gorgeous at 40 and counting the days until he can be free from the unhappy marriage that was foisted on him. He knew he was gay but bended to his father's will and got married however this didn't prevent him from having a couple of affairs or even belonging to one of those fabled sex clubs that exist in every other romance book. Things happen. In spite of the ongoing infidelities, which I'm not really bothered about, Justin is a good, honorable and stand up guy but I'd also say dim. He's a good brother, friend, and employer. He's getting ready to celebrate his brother Peter's 25th birthday which also brings Peter into his inheritance of half of the hotel easing Justin's divorce from his wife Caroline. Peter brings along his friend Marcus who's had the hots for Justin since he first started visiting The Warfield with Peter during school breaks. Now at 26 he's hoping that Justin will see him as a man and that something can develop between them. What ensues is craziness.

I don't know how much is too much to give away for those who may love this kind of drama so I'll be as oblique as possible. The bodies of men who have a connection to Justin start appearing near the hotel. Someone is either trying to frame Justin or kill him. Marcus is a budding P.I. but he does very little investigating and as far as the reader is concerned none is needed. We know who the villain is and frankly it's shocking that Justin, Peter, and Marcus don't. There are a couple of secret babies, affairs, some recent and some from the past, crazy soon to be exes, a couple of close calls for Justin, extreme homophobia from one character, and more. So much more. All of this just in the first book! If you have a high tolerance for

faux drama you'll be happy until the last two chapters kick you in the ovaries because though the reader knows what's happened the MCs don't and like salt on a wound they're not together when the book ends. Weirdly that's the only thing that makes sense. By the end Justin is not emotionally stable enough to embark on a relationship. A note of honesty.

Lori says

I have a confession to make. This book has been on my review TBR pile for a while. I started it and then put it down. Started again and once more put it to one side... it took me a while to get into... but I think this was definitely a me thing. Sometimes I have to be in the right mood for a certain type of book. When I picked this up a third time, I couldn't put it down. Honestly, I loved it and can't wait to read the next in the series.

The Warfield Hotel and general setting of this story is as much part of the cast as any other character. CJ Baty has written a wonderful murder mystery in this setting. The thing is... I'm not sure it's solved yet. Sure, there was a conclusion, it seems wrapped up, but I'm really not convinced. And I LOVE this. I want more - but not in that horrible cliffhanger way where I felt I've only been fed half a story in order to line an authors pocket (I know that's not how it works, but we've all read those books which really are only half a book, none of the story solved until the second instalment. It's made me hate cliffhangers!).

Justin is not perfect, he tries hard, but he makes mistakes. His father's influence over his life - even though he's long gone - made me frustrated. I could understand (some) of Justin's reasoning, he was trying to keep what he loved. His brother, the hotel - and TBH, his father sounds like a completely manipulative bastard. The thing is, I felt Caroline ended up as a victim. While she could be seen as a hateful character, I have to admit I felt more than a little sorry for her.

I liked the dynamics between Marcus and Justin. I can't wait to see how it moves on between them. It wasn't a sweet romance - I wouldn't have believed it if it was. It was hot and cold and horny and subdued. Frustrating at times - and sometimes Justin annoyed me. Sometimes I wanted to shake him. Sometimes his decisions pissed me off no end. Then other times I felt so bad for him. I ached for him to have the easy settled - open - life he craved.

Marcus was unendingly patient, I felt. I'd like to know more about him. He's nobody's fool, smart and savvy, his attraction to Justin wasn't sickeningly sweet. It was real, and I wanted for him to get an HEA so much!

Before I go, I just want to mention Moses. Now he seems a really hateful character. One of those with absolutely nothing to like about him - and yet he intrigues me. I feel there's more if we just get to dig deeper - he's part of the reason I want book 2 so much.

This book is well worth reading, I'm just sorry it took me so long to get into it. Like I said, I honestly believe this was me and not the story! Recommended.

*A copy of this book was given in exchange for an honest review.
Previously at BMBR.*

Sarah says

This is an exciting murder mystery that I devoured in a single sitting.

Justin manages his family's beachfront hotel in South Carolina. Aside from a messy divorce, things are going well until the bodies of his former lovers start appearing on his beach. Justin quickly finds himself the prime suspect in a murder investigation as he and his friends attempt to protect themselves and find the real killer.

Southern politics, a nasty and soon-to-be-ex wife and an escalating killer come together in an engaging, fast paced book. The characters are well drawn and complex enough to support a full series. The setting is gorgeous and the story is coloured with just a hint of Southern Gothic. More James Patterson than Kindle Alexander, I'm not too sure why this book has been described as a m/m romance. Justin has a love interest, there is some sex, but the mystery and suspense elements are the story's focus.

One warning to readers though, this is the first installment in a series and neither the mystery or the romance is sealed with a HEA by the end. Personally, I hate cliffhanger endings. I like my books to finish! I feel a little cheated. The series is compelling enough that I will read the next book, but it's frustrating that I have to wait for book two to find out whodunnit.

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Inked Reads says

FourStars

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I was given this in return for an honest review by Inked Rainbow Reads.

Sarah

ThreeandHalfStars

This story had a lot of mystery, some hot sex and some hateful characters. While I could understand Justin wanting to finally be rid of his crazy wife and out of his forced marriage, I felt plopped in the middle of this

story.

You have Justin who runs the family business, the back story of why he runs the business and why he married Caroline. But, I felt like it was missing a huge piece of his past - because you are given hints of him meeting and having a scene with Marcus, but nothing more than a flash and Marcus' hurt feelings.

Then you have Marcus who is there to investigate in to these strange murders, but who is also there to see Justin again. But, then he just drifts and as a reader, I was left wondering where he had gone in the story.

While the story did include mystery, it was not a difficult one to piece together. The story leaves off in a very odd place too, because the characters are scattered. There is no real ending and that was frustrating. There is some completion of the murders in the end, but there is a huge hole in the story and while Baty does set up the next installment well, I felt there was no completion of the first installment in order to really do the second justice. I guess I will have to wait and see how the next installment brings the first together. I was given this in return for an honest review by Inked Rainbow Reads.

AvidReader

Reflection says

Exasperating

*** 2.5 stars rounded up to 3 stars ***

One of my pet peeves is when a book ends on a cliff hanger. I find it irksome and I feel cheated and manipulated and quite frankly disinclined to buy the next instalment unless it is exceptional.

I quite liked the story of closeted hotel owner Justin and his love interest Marcus who comes to stay at the hotel with Justin's younger brother Peter. The story has a steady pace and plentiful if fairly brief chapters.

Peter arrives to celebrate his twenty-sixth birthday and claim his share of their family hotel (currently in the custody of his sister-in-law Caroline). Justin always aware he was gay, married at the behest of their dominating father. The marriage is one of convenience that has lasted fifteen unhappy years.

Not being American I am probably unaware of some nuances and sensitivities but I was deeply surprised to find someone as closeted as Justin. It felt somewhat like stepping back into the 1980's and I had huge difficulty suspending disbelief.

This is a murder mystery, victims are regularly discovered murdered close to the hotel. Each has some connection to Justin. There are in my opinion glaring plot holes and cardboard cut out villains. The clues to their identities may just as well have been flashed out with gaudy neon signs.

I was not comfortable with the underlying racism intentional or otherwise. I did not like the mental health elements either, which thankfully were not as crude as I initially suspected, however I remain to be convinced that it was either a realistic nor necessary plot development.

Perhaps there will be some amazing turn around in the second instalment and the reader will discover red herrings have been cleverly placed along the way. Personally speaking I would have preferred the loose ends satisfactorily tied up in the current book. It might have convinced me that this story is sufficiently well

written to enjoy a second instalment.

In conclusion, this is a gentle romance between Justin and Marcus. Since both are really close to Peter this creates an interesting dynamic. I think it might have been better to concentrate on this than to introduce murders and unsympathetic supporting characters. Unfortunately the only interesting part of the story for me - the developing relationship between Justin and Marcus was lost amongst the unlikely body count and transparent villains.

The story was enough to sustain my interest and the hope that it might become something more than pedestrian. I remain unconvinced that there will be a clever plot twist in the next instalment, I am pretty certain I already know the outcome so I'll give it a miss.

I received a complimentary copy of Drifting Sands from the author in exchange for an honest review as part of M/M Romance group's Don't Buy My Love event.

Ana says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I think it was a really well written book. I enjoy it very much. It start a little slow and that last for most of the book, but it was interesting enough and didnt become boring. The storyline was mostly a mistery but had some romance elements, it keeps the attention in both subjects.

The thing that i liked the most of the book was the development of the characters, i think all of them were very interesting. The MC Justin is a very trouble person and most of his issues are due to his inability of come on terms of who he is. He was a very frustrating character to read about because, it seems to me, he is always chosing a path in which he will suffer even if its not necesary. His brother its a more put together character who gives support and love to everyone around him, its the kind of person you want to be around. Marcus it's a not so complex character, likable, but i think he lack the ability of doing a good job in his investigation which in the end seems to be unfinished and he only focus on his feelings. I think he is one of the persons who get to suffer the most even if it's obvious he is a good guy and deserves better.

I found the story developoment very satisfying and i actually liked the ending even if it wasnt all resolved. One thing that i kind of like was that wasnt a tipical HEA and i think the story sort of need that kind of end, but also there is hope for things to be better in next book.

From this point SPOILER ALERT.

One of the characters i enjoy the most (surprisingly because i was looking for M/M) was Caroline. For a moment i felt disapointed because i tough the story would rely on a mental illness to explain the plot, but it wasn't the case for what i am very grateful. She was a really good character and could always see her as very hurt woman and understand her actions for how hurt she was and not because of her disease, i felt very sorry for the situation she was on.

Justin, as i said, i found him very frustrating, and, in a way, very selfish. He hurt so much people for his inability to accept himself as he is, and for his constant need to satisfy everyones expectations about his family's and his own reputation at expense of the hapiness of the ones in his life who truly matter. Because of that he made me angry so many times, even through i can see the pain he is going throuh and some other times i felt sorry for him and the situations his actions put him through. The fact that he didn't end up with Marcus was a bit surprising but i think it help to the plot. Also the part chief Lee play in the story, specially at the end, i found it very interesting, and make me wonder about his motives, what will keep me hook for another book.

To me it was a really good book and i'm very grateful for the opportunity of reading it.

Debfirpo says

Wonderful

What a wonderful story this is. One of the best mysteries that I've read in a long time. I could feel Justin's pain. I wanted to smack his wife. I'm so frustrated with Justin over Marcus! Just a great read.

Robyn says

Justin keeps his true lifestyle hidden from everyone out of fear of how it might affect the hotel. Marcus tempts him in ways that he's never dreamed possible and makes him yearn to break free. But someone is killing Justin's ex-lovers and he doesn't want Marcus in the line of fire and even if that means losing him forever Justin will do all he can to make sure that he's safe.

The tensions mount as the story races to the climax. Who is the killer? What is the Chief of Police hiding? Will truth and love win out over the nefarious plans of the killer?

Pick up your copy now to find out the answers! I can't wait for Book 2-Crashing Waves to come out later this year!

Lily says

An enjoyable and well written murder mystery with plenty of clues sprinkled along the way to help you guess who the culprit is. The mystery is only partially resolved by the end of the book and sets up the next stage of the story. The m/m romance plot is interwoven and told from two POV, with several hot scenes involving the two main characters. My heart went out to Justin as he struggled with his loveless marriage, his wish to remain in the closet, and his desire to protect Marcus from the would-be killer. I was surprised Justin didn't remember meeting Marcus beforehand, although a five year gap and a drunken encounter are feasible. I would have liked more scenes earlier on in the story to show the developing connection between the two lovers as they got to know each other. I am hoping for more interaction between them in book two and the answers to questions poised at the end of book one.

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