



Giving It Up

Amber Lin

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Allie prowls the club for a man who will use her hard and then ditch her. Hey, it's not rape if she wants it. Instead she finds Colin, who looks tough but treats her tenderly, despite her protests.

He tempts her, but kindness and a few mindblowing orgasms aren't enough to put her back together again. Two years ago her best friend betrayed her in the worst possible way; she'd be stupid to trust a man again. Especially one like Colin, whose criminal past threatens them both.

When her rapist returns, Allie must fight for the man she loves—and her life—hoping her newfound power will be enough to save them all.

Giving It Up Details

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From Reader Review Giving It Up for online ebook

KatLynne says

Giving It Up is not your regular sweet romance, and I liked that. It is a gripping tale with real life characters who are dealing with major issues. This is the story of Allie Winters and her journey from being a victim of rape to becoming a survivor. It is a story of healing and of hope as she learns to trust again.

Allie believes she is damaged goods. Suffering from the horrific nightmare of betrayal from someone she knew, trusted and loved, each day is a struggle. The only good thing to have come from that dreadful night is her two year old daughter, Bailey.

I found myself absorbed as the book slowly unfolds giving glimpses of Allie's ordeal and the extent of the damage left behind. She has severe trust issues along with no self worth. The book is laced throughout with the shadows of a pain so deep from a soul that is broken. At times, it is gripping in its despair.

*>Hurt me, hurt me, hurt me. Make me hurt, cry, bleed. Make my outside match my inside. Help me get it out, **because I can't cry on my own.***"

Using sex as a way to cope, one night each month she prowls the clubs, trolling, looking for a man who will give it to her quick, hard and then be done. She's not looking for a partner. This night is about "dirty, emotionless sex," a place where she can go somewhere else in her mind and escape her misery.

I thought the author did a really good job portraying some of the damaging effects of rape. While each person may react differently, there are many common factors left in its wake...fear, humiliation, shame, unworthiness, trust issues and despair are among a few. (view spoiler)

How fortunate for Allie that on one of her trolling expeditions she meets Colin. He looks the part, all strong and tough, but with tenderness and gentleness he shows Allie what real sex is supposed to be like. In one night *he gives her back a small piece of something she had lost!* And though he'd like to see her again, she knows there can never be more. She's far too damaged to pursue any type relationship! But deep down, she wants to. She yearns to be normal again! Soon Allie finds herself in need of a rescuer and takes Colin up on his offer to help. And so begins her journey out of darkness.

Colin quickly won a piece of my heart. This big, strong man knowing Allie's flaws still wanted her in his life. There's no doubt he wants to protect and provide for both Allie and Bailey. In many ways he was her "knight." I admired his courage as he pursues a relationship with a woman fighting demons from her past. It wasn't easy and was fraught with pain and yet, he sticks with her.

..(Allie's thoughts)... What had I done? I couldn't face him." A tear slid down my face. That wasn't strange. My face was wet – I'd been crying before we even started. But this one came from near my ear and slid down to my nose. It wasn't mine. Wow, this strong man has a vulnerable side when it comes to Allie.

Amber Lin has done a very good job with her debut novel giving us a love story that is different from the traditional. It is stark and somber with a cast of characters that are unusual. Colin's past involved illegal activity and soon it will bring danger upon them all. Allie's best friend, Shelly, is a prostitute and one of the most compassionate and caring persons I've read. Her unselfishness and unconditional love for her friend "wowed" me. And there is a mystery that kept me invested until the very end along with a twist that I didn't see coming.

While I really enjoyed this book there were a few things I wished were different. I wanted more information about the hero, his feelings and thoughts. I wanted to know Colin better. I realize he is the "strong, silent type" but I would have liked to have more dialogue between these two. The chemistry was there but I felt it would have been much deeper if there had been more communication.

Still, this is a well written love story that I very much enjoyed. I was so glad to find Allie in a better place and on her way to healing. But more than that I was glad to see Colin get the happiness he so deserved! I was intrigued with Allie's friend Shelly; A prostitute that has fallen in love with a Detective! That should be an interesting story and one I'm looking forward to reading!

Thanks to my GR friends Steffi, KarLyn and Jill and their wonderful reviews that led me to this one:~)

My thanks to *the author, Amber Lin* for providing me with a copy of this eBook in exchange for an honest review.

Stacia (the 2010 club) says

Another lazy weekend review because I have a serious lack of motivation to write tonight. Blame it on the alcohol.

Giving It Up - Tally :

First 25% - 4 stars

Middle 50% - 2 stars

Last 25% - 3 stars

For whatever reason, I was expecting some seriously dark erotica with this book, just based off the description. This read more like a contemporary romance with a bit of something else - what it was, I couldn't tell you. Suspense would not be the right word. Mystery would be pushing it.

It was as if the movie *Pretty Woman* and the book *Crow's Row* had a dis-functional baby. I think. Except I wasn't raging and wanting to punch all of the book characters in the face like I was while reading CR. So because of that, I had to give this book a slightly better rating.

The premise started off interesting to me. I like seeing damaged characters dragged back from the abyss. Allie was looking to cope with her previous sexual assault by allowing men to assault her on her own terms. Okay, I get that. Along comes Colin, who doesn't want to hurt her. Okay, I get that.

An extremely short time later, they move in together.

WAIT...what?!?

Yep. And she has a kid. But...we (this is implied) have to accept that this is an okay situation *because* she had no other options and her life was in danger.

Wanna know what would have made this story 100 times more plausible? One short little mention of "a few months later," or something to that extent. We didn't actually have to watch their relationship develop, but I would have felt a little better about the whole situation if I had known that they had been casually dating (Colin could have still remained a mystery, whatever) for at least a slight amount of time before the shit hit

the fan.

So, okay. They move in together. And a whole lot of boring happens for a while. Some awkward sex scenes happen. The douchebag ex comes back, Allie justifies his behavior in her head (while still managing to be afraid of him - that's called a red flag, honey), and the douchebag boss is sent away (really, this chick seems to attract the wrong crowd all around).

Then the end part happens. We find out Colin is not completely truthful about some stuff, and more awkward sex scenes happen.

You know what? The more I think about it, the more I realize that I should be leaning toward a 2.5 star...the book wasn't bad but it felt somehow not quite sketched out cohesively in parts. I never got a real handle on who Colin was as a person. I get that he had things to hide but he seemed quite cold for most of the book, and not in that "hurting hero you want to help," kind of way.

So, yeah...2.5 stars. I'll round up because I did like parts of the story. I just wish that there had been more for me to feel, whether it was anger, happiness, turmoil...something...I really don't know what.

How did my lazy review end up becoming as long as the others I put more effort into?

Rhonda says

Over the past couple of years, I have had the pleasure of making some great author contacts and recently Amber Lin was one of them. I was very excited to be given the opportunity to read and review this novel. As I had hoped, Lin did not disappoint!! She brought a dark edgy element to her story, and I have discovered within the past year that I like reading this type of story, I love it when an author can get my emotions flowing! I think Lin has done an excellent job with her story and giving her characters life.

Giving It Up is a first person narrative of Allie Winters who at a young age was a victim of rape, a betrayal of her best friend that also left her with a child. One of the saddest parts of her story is that it's not the only time her trust is violated. This was such an emotional journey into the mind and heart of a young lady that after two years still hasn't come to terms with what happened to her. Allie thinks she is in control of her life, but really she's letting the events of her past control her. She of course still harbors the self blame, and is on a path of self destruction until the night she encounters Colin, who on a night of a random sexual encounters she craves, gives her the experience she's never had. This night setting in motion the events that will change Allie's future.

Colin owns his own restaurant and has plenty going for him, Allie wonders why he would even want her, a damaged single parent with deep issues. But Colin has secrets and a past of his own. He has shady business dealings with his brother Philip which land directly at Allie's doorstep. Although Colin is a man of few words, I can really relate to him because he reminds me a lot of my husband. Colin is there for Allie when her rapist / daughter's father shows up. Allie is afraid he will try to take her daughter from her, so she turns to Colin for help, which Colin is more than happy to give. I thought Colin was very sweet toward Allie's two year old daughter, but their happy little bubble is short lived when more secrets, lies and betrayal come to the surface. There were times I was a little frustrated at Allie and Colin's lack of communication, but that is part

of what makes the story.

I don't want to give up too many details here, but I will say that the secondary cast of characters were wonderful, from Shelly who is Allie's best friend, and also Philip who is Colin's brother. I was also very excited to learn that these two will be getting a story, and I'm very much looking forward to them especially Philip! I also have to give a shout out to Linda, their neighbor. For all her quirkiness she turned into a bit of a mother figure for Allie.

This story was heartbreaking, and dark, and very emotional. It was suspenseful, and erotic, and best of all it was the journey of a young woman coming to terms with what happened to her and finally gaining some control over her life. I was very moved when she finally opened up about her experiences, and started to believe in herself and her worth. I'm definitely looking forward to more from Amber Lin.

Available now at: <http://www.loose-id.com/Giving-It-Up...>

Vikki ~ *squee* lite ~ says

This book....these characters...gezz

You know how sometimes it's hard to connect to the characters? Well, there were times I wished I didn't feel so connected to the ones in this one. Allie and Colin were about as messed up and damaged characters as I've ever seen.

For my friends that love charters with more demons than hope - who pull themselves through the mud to get their HEA - this one is for you. Fabulous.

Full review to come.

Lucy Felthouse says

Article first published as eBook Review: *Giving It Up* by Amber Lin on Blogcritics.

Giving it Up is a novel which touches on many genres; erotica, romance, crime, thriller, and probably others I haven't thought of. It deals with dark, very real issues and is a damn good read.

The main character, Allie, is seriously damaged - even by her own admission. She prowls clubs looking for men who will use her hard and then ditch her. An incident with her best male friend two years ago has seriously warped her attitude to sex, and this is her way of trying to deal with it. Unfortunately, she can't just forget about it and move on, because she has a daughter - the only good thing to come from that terrible night.

One night in the club, she meets Colin. He certainly looks the part, but she quickly realises that although he looks like a tough guy, he isn't the sort to treat her the way she needs him to. Somehow, though, the two of them forge a connection. Despite Allie's issues, and the fact that Colin also has a shady past, they find ways to make each other happy. And when Allie's past suddenly catches up with her - she relies on and trusts Colin more than she thought she could ever do with a man again.

Just as Allie thinks there's a chance she can be happy, Colin's past catches up to him, and suddenly Allie must be the strong one in the relationship. Can they pull through all their issues and make it work, or are the two of them just too damaged to function as a couple?

Overall, I thought this was a seriously good read. As I said before, it deals with very dark issues, but it's done in a sensitive, realistic way. The book is well-written, keeps you guessing, has you on the edge of your seat, and throws in plenty of surprises. I found it really engaging, and was rooting for Allie and Colin throughout. So if you're looking for an action-packed read and don't mind darker elements mixed in amongst your sex and romance, then you should definitely check out *Giving it Up*.

Tiya Rosa says

First of all, I'd like to say that I wanted to love this book. The premise is unique and twisted enough that it promised to be an interesting read. And the start held such promise I couldn't wait to get done with work so I could totally get into it. Alas, the great part was short lived and I had to wade through about 250 pages of intense dislike with everyone involved except for the adorable little girl and the old woman next door.

Allie is a scarred and damaged young woman who was raped by her best friend resulting in a daughter, about whom the best friend knew nothing cause he skipped town soon as he was done forcing himself on Allie. As a result of all these drama, Allie couldn't handle intimacy well and felt that if she was going to get forced into sex, it might as well be in her terms, so she trolls a club once a month for rough anonymous sex - the kind she doesn't really enjoy. Which begs the question of why bother, I mean she could have just, you know, NOT have sex, but I don't claim to be in her shoes and I respect people's ways of dealing with their traumas.

Now enter tall and brooding Colin who finds something in Allie worth giving her a mindblowing orgasm about. He then proceeds to win her over, their pasts catch up with them, and we are treated to how irritating continued exposure to Allie's first person narrative is.

The book started out fine. Actually, it was sad and gut wrenching and erotic all at the same time. I didn't know Allie then and I felt for her. I didn't pretend to understand her need for the once a month trolling, but I was very interested in how it was going to play out. I liked the first person narrative at that point since Allie's voice was both strong and resigned and it was a great combination when she was describing her drive to just get wham bammed.

I also adored Colin in the beginning. In fact, he was hovering on imaginary boyfriend territory when he sang Stairway to Heaven to get Allie's kid to sleep.

Then the book went on and both Allie and Colin turn out to be horrible people. Well, prolly not horrible as much as extremely unlikable and not ones you'd like to root for.

First off, Allie has been raising her kid all by herself for two years and she suddenly decides she couldn't handle the issues coming her way (view spoiler) without moving in with Colin and using his connections to help her. There wasn't even a token resistance since the guy was not the one who offered. She was the one who talked to Colin - the guy she broke up with prior to her needing his help because he got violent with someone who roughed her up. She wanted nothing to do with him then because she didn't want his violent nature anywhere near her kid. But now that she needs his money, it's okay to move her daughter to his house and live with him and his "violent" nature. This is why when Colin's sister insinuated that Allie was nothing but a gold digging user, I couldn't help thinking, "you might be on to something there, Colin's sister."

And Allie had so many TSTL moments I felt she should change her name or something. She went behind Colin's back and met her baby daddy where she then proceeded to ask him to withdraw any claims to their daughter. Her rapist agreed because he's not a total mustache twirling evil asshole (kudos to Lin for fleshing Jacob out) and went on to give her the money he was supposed to use in hiring a lawyer for their daughter's needs. Allie's next move is then to hide the money (Why hide it? It's money for her daughter, for Pete's sake) and her physically meeting her daughter's father (again, why hide it?) from Colin. She hid the money in his house. Next to a cop's calling card. The one who's investigating Colin's brother's mob activities. As you can tell, things went over well. No misunderstanding at all.

And don't get me started on how horrible Allie is as a best friend. Just - I can't even.

And Colin? He bought out Allie's bakeshop boss's mob debts and told him he didn't have to pay it as long as he closed his business so Allie wouldn't have a job anymore. And you know what Allie did when she found out? Nothing. Because she said she was dependent on him now. She had no job and a baby and the shit with the bakery's done so there was no point in actually making an effort to be out of this guy's manipulative control. Our heroine, ladies and gentlemen.

Another thing that got on my nerves was Allie's narrative voice. I've always had low expectations when it comes to first person books since only an outstanding character can actually pull it off. Think Holden Caulfield or Al Fletcher in *Muscling Through*. Alas, Allie is no Al Fletcher. She just couldn't stop TELLING me stuff. Not describing the actions and noting details, but actually INFORMING me of people's intentions or feelings. If she's not doing it outright, her observational notes are so blatant I felt like she was hitting me over the head with it.

Dammit. I wanted to love this book. I thought the dark part was in Allie's journey to not think sex has to be about power and feeling dirty. I was expecting some serious uncomfortable sexual situations with random men and Colin and things getting painful before Allie finally dealt with her issues. But the sexual hang up that this book was based on didn't get discussed or elaborated enough. Allie suddenly had no need for random and rough sex with strangers after meeting Colin, and her getting over her sexual baggage passed through the pages like an afterthought.

I have no problem with dark. I embraced Clarice Starling finding her HEA in *Lecter*, for Pete's sake. Don't tell my sister, but I wasn't horrified with the idea. Was kinda rooting for it and all.

Giving It Up is not dark. Not in a way that it could have been. If it had only embraced its potential and run away with it, it could have worked better. If Allie was not the one narrating, it definitely would have been an improvement. As it is, however, I felt like it was only about an immature broken woman who needs therapy and a support group -- not a manipulative boyfriend and an enabler friend -- and a man who has commitment and personal space and family issues he should deal with as well.

I'm giving two stars instead of one 'cause I was really in love with the potential of the story as well as a bit of the execution (view spoiler)- up until Allie sold herself short and started making my ears bleed with her constant need to TELL me stuff.

ARC provided by Amber Lin in exchange for an honest review

Annabel Joseph says

I'm glad I read this book. As a former rape victim I often seek out romance stories about characters dealing

with the aftermath, and authors don't always get the emotion right, at least for me. Ms. Lin got it so "right" that I was bawling by the second page.

This book isn't only about Allie getting over her past, however. It's about her looking to her future and "finding her consent", a beautiful concept that also sent me scrambling for the tissues. I'll remember that scene for a long time. I don't want to make anyone who's suffered rape avoid this book for fear of triggers and crying, though. There may be triggers and you may cry, but you will find your struggle respectfully represented too.

As to some reviewers who ask "Why don't they just talk to each other?"--there is no talk more vicious than a rape victim's talk to herself, as Allie did in parts of this book. A lot of victims stop talking to those they love because the words aren't there or they come out wrong, or they are just afraid. I loved that over the course of the book, we got to see Allie heal from that kind of mute distress.

BUT the five stars aren't even for THAT. The five stars are because, in addition to this real, very affecting story of a rape survivor, we also get a well-written suspense plot that I could not guess at, which kept me reading to figure out WTF was going on. Yes, I agree there was a lot of inner dialogue at parts, but the suspense aspect and my interest in the characters' emotional journey kept me reading and I was glad I did.

Oh, and I loved the hero. He was an honest representation of a guy...wanting to help, but not always knowing how. Sometimes I get tired of the uber-perfect, expressive, nurturing hero who magically knows exactly what the heroine needs and provides it as soon as she needs it. Sometimes I want a guy who's a little more conflicted and imperfect, who IS TRYING ANYWAY. Somehow that's almost more attractive/endearing.

I feel like this review is a little garbled. I think my brain felt a little garbled and wrung out after I read this book, but I was left satisfied as well. Giving It Up is original, affecting, emotionally draining, but well worth reading if you are brave enough to go along for the ride.

Lori says

I have to say that I am floored by this book... yes it's a little more on the darker side than I'm used to but the story itself is amazing. Allie is a beautiful girl who definitely has some issues and it's heart breaking to see everything she went through, but she's tough, and that strength is very admirable.

Full Review...

<http://lorisbookblog.blogspot.com/201...>

Terri ♥ (aka Mrs. Christian Grey) says

Quick review:

Cover: Fitting

Rating: NC-17

Steaminess: Scorcher

Thumbs Up: 4.5

Overall: It made me think of a song. Criminal by B.Spears

Characters: Well done

Plot: A hard topic but an interesting way in which it was approached.

Page Turner: Yes

Series Cont.? Yes

Recommend: Yes

Book Boyfriend: Colin

SUMMARY (50 words or less)

The opening lines of the book will capture your attention. Trying not to remember the blurb, I went in cold. I came out the other side all hot and bothered. This storm of a story took me by surprise and I was caught in the tail spin of its worldwind.

To see my full review and yummy pic, check out my blog post below.

<http://mybookboyfriend.blogspot.com/2...>

Sharon ∞ is an emotional book junkie ∞ says

****3.5 - 4 stars****

Allie's been through some rough things and she's come to believe that sex...and love can only be hurtful. So once a month, she sets out to look for that type of sex but this time she comes upon Colin. He looks the part...he just isn't. But what he is is just what Allie needs.

This story and everyone in it has a lot of secrets and it keeps you constantly guessing what's going on. We gradually get to know things in pieces but it had me always on my guard. It doesn't help that Allie does some dumb things. She seems pretty street smart especially with what all she went through and with having a best friend who is a prostitute but then she goes and lets a man she doesn't even know around her toddler. And that's just the beginning.

My heart did go out for Allie though with all that she went through and with being a single parent and not having much money. I just wished she had gotten to know Colin better before things started happening.

Colin was interesting. You never quite get to know if he's a good guy or a bad guy. He reminded me (just a teeny tiny bit) of Terrible from the Downside Ghosts series. I liked getting to know what happened with him but we just didn't get to know much. (I really wanted to know more about what happened to him as a kid.)

You could just tell that Philip was trouble! and what was up with his face? That was never explained and what he did to Shelly wasn't either. I would like to have known more about what happened to him and Rose in their childhood as well.

I thought Shelly was great and what happened to her totally took me by surprise especially with who. I was dying to find out some more information and searched the author's website. I was happy to find out she is currently working on Shelly's story and she is hoping it will be out next year. (She's also thinking about doing Rose's story as a novella and Philip's story for the 3rd book) Yay!! It will be nice to get some answers...so many things were left undone. I think that will take care of the major players but I'm hoping that we get some more story about Jacob.

Overall, an interesting story and while it does deal with rape, it's not too detailed although there is definitely some violence. I think it was harder coming to terms with Allie's need to be hurt.

Cover Talk: I like the dark gritty feeling it portrays but I don't really see Allie as having her nails done. And I picture Colin as much better looking!

Favorite quote:

♥ "I'm a sucker for that laugh."

Gitte TotallyBookedBlog says

Giving It Up is unlike any book I have read in a long while. It's dark with 'stripped to the core' raw emotions. It's not pretty but it's honest and it's REAL! It's so well written that you feel like you are watching this story as it's playing out, which considering the content is quite an emotional, scary and thought provoking ride!!

This story is about Allie and Colin. Allie (22) is a single Mum, her daughter being the end result of her rape by a very close friend. She is so emotionally damaged by this experience that once a month she visits a rough club to find a man who for that night only will hurt her in the way she was by her friend. This is in order to validate the rape as her choice for that one night only. To her this initiation makes her feel in control...it is given back to her by the man. *Pretty messed up.*

Allie broke my heart, the things she went through and the trauma she had to endure..well to see her journey in this book was not only heart breaking but emotionally moving at the same time because her strength and persistence to feel love and be loved, her endurance - all of it so real and human. I wanted her and her daughter to find the safety and love that they truly deserved!

Colin, well he was a dark horse. He didn't have a voice as such in this story. However, this is where I think Amber Lin is a bit of a writing genius because yes he didn't have much of a voice - he was silent but his character presence was immense purely through his actions. He came across strong, protective, controlling and frankly kind of crazy at times. He is without doubt a very damaged character; hugely flawed, however his tenderness comes through by his behaviour and the fact that he gives Allie what she needs although hating it speaks louder than words!

I feel that to write anything more will too easily reveal spoilers and I believe that this story should be read without preconceptions.

I want to thank Amber Lin for sending me the ARC of her book and I can honestly say that I cannot wait to read more of her work!

Anastasia ? says

Just received an ARC courtesy of Amber Lin!

Review to come...

Post will be up shortly:

<http://somanymorebookssolittletimebookgro...>

~ Becs ~ says

Wow, this book really stunned me!

This is contemporary romance but it has a raw, gritty feel to it. There's no sugary romance here – it's edgy, thoughtful, challenging.

Allie is a young single mother. She was betrayed in the most awful way by her best friend when he raped her and then disappeared, leaving her pregnant and alone. She has in fact been let down by just about everyone who should have been there for her – only her friend Shelly stands by her and she has a good share of demons of her own.

Allie is emotionally damaged – every bad thing a rape victim hopes that society won't think about her, Allie thinks about herself. Consequently, she trawls clubs once a month looking for rough sex, for a man to hurt her as if consenting to this will somehow make the rape not seem quite so bad in her mind. She thinks she's taking back control, giving consent which she rightfully feels was denied her before.

One night, she picks up Colin in a club. She wants him to f*ck her in the alley behind the club but he takes her to a nice motel. Quickly, he shows her he has the strength to do what she wants but he doesn't do it. He treats her with reverence and a beautiful tenderness and makes love to her instead of f*cking her. Allie can't cope with this and, despite this being her first pleasurable sexual encounter, she runs. They do, however, start to build a relationship.

Colin – how I loved him. He's strong, silent, taciturn, saying very little but communicating much. It's obvious how much he cares for Allie but he's so reticent, very little of it is vocalised but he's also over-protective, controlling and he is a very deeply flawed character and is involved in criminal activity that will eventually threaten Allie's safety. Allie's lack of self-esteem is emotionally destructive to their relationship and there's a moment when Colin's tears mingled with Allie's and I confess I cried with them.

With his care and protection, Allie is on a journey of self-discovery from emotionally destroyed rape victim to a strong, empowered woman who will stop at nothing to protect the man she has come to love. Her growth throughout the novel is tangible and the strength of the story.

The narrative is strangely atmospheric – even though it is written from Allie's POV in the past tense, it has an eerie 'present tense' kind of feel to it. It feels almost otherworldly and I definitely lost myself reading this – stayed up way too late to finish it because I simply just could not put it down. I always know when I'm reading something special when I find myself transported to another world in my head and reality just slips away and this really was that special.

It's an incredibly accomplished debut by Amber Lin (which sounds like Ann Boleyn in my head) and I very much hope that she will write Shelly and Rose's stories.

So don't expect hearts and flowers, expect damaged characters, gritty reality and a raw edge.

5 big and shiny stars

I was lucky enough to receive an ARC from the author in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Baba says

2.5 stars.

My mind took up a chant. Hurt me, hurt me, hurt me. Make me hurt, cry, bleed. Make my outside match my inside. Help me get it out, because I can't cry on my own.

After reading my review I was not so sure anymore if I should post it. You will notice it's rather negative but that's the way I feel about this story/characters. Then again, I am a strong believer in honesty. That's what you get when you read my reviews. I will outline what I liked and what I disliked. Moreover, everyone is entitled to their opinion, after all.

For a brief synopsis please read the blurb. Well, let's get down to business. I like dark erotic romance, however, I have several issues with *Giving It Up*.

What I liked

Bailey. The little girl is cute and I got this feeling been there done that. Admittedly, I don't have any daughters but my boys did similar things when they were toddlers. Seriously, I think the scenes involving Bailey are realistic and well done. The writing. It was definitely good enough to keep me interested throughout the whole book. Further, I totally dig the author's idea—erotic elements combined with some suspense, and damaged characters. There was a lot of potential here but IMO the execution failed.

What I disliked

The (lacking) relationship development and dialogue; the narrative

There was never enough relationship development...as in nothing at all. It's simply not good enough to have a few f*cks and then you move in. I wouldn't call it a relationship development. Admittedly, Colin wanted to protect Allie; that was the main reason for her moving in with him. Then again, Colin totally "invaded" her life and he is kind of controlling everything. Well, how can you develop a relationship when you never ever have a decent and ongoing conversation?? This may be realistic for all I care, however, I want my heroes to talk. It's the same in real life. A man who doesn't want to communicate? Game over, dude! You can't do that with me.

I know I am spoiled rotten by authors who provide great dialogue and here I found it sorely missing.

When Allie told Colin about her being raped I found myself thinking "That's all?". I mean where the hell was *his* reaction and where the hell was the rape conversation? *shrugs* Again, Colin's behavior may have been realistic for all I care, it didn't work for me though.

Further, there's just way too much narrative. **The heroine is telling me what Colin thinks, feels, etc. all the time!** Having said that, it's not really surprising at all since he's barely talking. *Mr. Taciturn personified*. I like to read first person POV but somehow along the way the male lead character got lost. I was halfway through the plot and I found myself thinking who is this mysterious hero? Do I know this guy? I was so ready for some answers and unfortunately I didn't get to know this character.

The chemistry and the sex

Sadly I didn't feel their chemistry and I never fully connected to the main protagonists. Why are they attracted to one another? I just didn't feel or see "it". She has a rough fuck but does she really want it? I mean she's not even wet when they get it on. Allie thinks she *needs* it because she is on the lookout for some self-inflicted pain and humiliation; she is damaged goods, after all. Having said that, she thinks that she is not worthy of love or affection. She doesn't like to be touched and she is not into intimacies but she can f*ck any available stranger and she *enjoys* being roughened up. Duh? I know I am not in her shoes and I don't know what's going on in a rape victim's head and I don't want to judge such a victim, however, I seriously doubt that I would dress up like a slut and have a quick and painful f*ck in a dark alley on a regular basis. Acting like a whore is her way to cope with her problems. Well, I believe that Allie needs therapy and I'm really not sure if Colin provides everything she needs in her situation. Overall, Allie comes across as a pitiable, weak and somewhat immature victim. The more I read the less I liked the characters.

Sex is fun, it's passion, it's pleasure. I don't feel that when they get it on. Even if a book is labeled as dark erotic romance I want **passion** when I read a sex scene. The term pleasure is mentioned a few times and is related to Colin, however, I didn't feel it. I disliked the sex scenes because I am not into cold and detached sex; sorry, but they were a turn-off.

The heroine

I am seriously annoyed with the heroine because she's constantly telling herself that she loves Jacob. She loves her rapist as a friend and she even defends this asshat. I mean WTF? Is this Stockholm syndrome or what? There was no such thing mentioned in the blurb, after all. We cannot gloss over the fact that rape is rape—there are no ifs and buts about that. Again, Allie is in dire need of some serious counseling! I know readers appreciated the fact that her rapist is portrayed differently. Obviously he is not the stereotypical rapist. For the life of me I cannot imagine that I would continue to love my rapist. Yes, I'm all for being open-minded; being tolerant and giving second chances. Of course I know that you have to re-integrate criminals but I would never feel the need to helping my rapist in this matter; it wouldn't be good for my peace of mind. That's the authorities' job, after all.

Allie using the term f*ck/f*cking: it's a matter of common knowledge that male characters voice it all.The.Time. But a woman constantly saying f*ck/f*cking comes across as crude and illiterate. On top of that, she is a mother for Pete's sake! Well, you can't hold it against me when I'm going to say it bugged the f*ck out of me!

Her ILY came totally out of the blue. I was like "Huh, what was that?". It was too early and didn't ring true.

The ending

It was too rushed, abrupt and didn't feel realistic. Honestly, the final 10 % of the story sealed the deal for me and I downgraded it to two stars.

All this sex and pain and love had been inevitable, almost fated. Now I was getting sappy. Maybe I did, in fact, need a good, hard fuck.

Oh, yes, there's nothing a good, hard f*ck can't cure. *rolls eyes* And Allie...you were not sappy either.

After finishing their nookie they exchange a few words and (view spoiler)

Overall verdict

I was excited to read this book but somehow I ended up disappointed. Love me some dark erotic romance but *Giving It Up* is not what I was hoping for. Come to think of it, *Giving It Up* is not so dark at all. I am

certainly a minority here. Meaning give it a go and maybe you'll love it.

ARC kindly provided by the author, Amber Lin, in exchange for an honest review.

?Karlyn P? says

In a nutshell, ***Giving it Up*** was a gripping and emotional romance that will stretch your comfort zone. If you like a dark mysterious hero as your Knight in Shining Armor, a damaged heroine who seems beyond repair, a heavy storyline with some dark moments (including the subject of rape), mixed together with some suspense and a bit of mystery, this might be for you.

This is an emotional romance story with a heavy tone and some dark graphic scenes, so I will say right now: it is not for the faint of heart or anyone looking for a light feel-good romance with a lot of gratuitous, hot steamy sex scenes.

GIU explores the troubled life of a young woman who was victimized by rape, now riddled with trust issues, and believes herself unworthy of any goodness life might offer. This is her journey from coping to healing, and introduces her to a man who will prove that not all men want to hurt women. It has a compelling heroine who you will root for, and a compassionate hero who will become her knight in shining armor.

Allie Winters is emotionally damaged, by her own admission, and uses rough sex with strangers as a coping mechanism. Once a month she ventures to a seedy bar with the singular purpose of picking up a man for rough, unapologetic sex. There is a strong self-deprecation motive involved, as she doesn't feel worthy of better. Then one night she chooses a man who treats her with tenderness, not roughness, and it almost unhinges her. Colin very much wants to see her again, but she refuses knowing that she is too damaged for someone of his caliber.

Allie is also a struggling single mom of an adorable toddler girl named Bailey, she works a low paying job in a bakery making exquisite cakes and confections, and her best friend Shelly is prostitute who will do anything to help her friend and child find peace.

Her daughter was conceived the night she was raped by a close life-long friend, and she is now facing a possible custody battle with her rapist. Her options are limited, but accusing him of rape after all these years in order to keep her daughter appears to be her only option. In a bid for their safety, she reaches out to Colin for help – who is more than willing to be there for her.

Colin is a man of mystery. We learn he is a major player in the Chicago crime scene, and works along with his older brother Phillip. He can make all of Allie's problems go away and provide her with a life of comfort, but the cost might be too high for her to accept. Cops have their eye on him, and if she's not careful they will use her against him. She finds herself wanting to trust him, but he makes decisions without consulting her, and threatens people around her who he feels mean her harm, and at times she questions just who is he? Can she trust him?

So Colin is not the typical 'good guy' romance hero, but he does have a compassionate side that readers will connect with and love. He also wants to get out of the business, go legit, and settle down to start a family.

I only wish it didn't take quite so much time to finally learn much about Colin and his motives with Allie. I

loved how he was willing to help her, but every time he did I kept asking myself: why is he doing this?? Since this story is told from her POV only, we rely on her interaction and dialogue to learn about Colin, but it left me wanting to know more.

The conversational dialogue between Colin and Allie are primarily 'surface level' chat, but rarely do their talks explore who they are, what they feel, and what they desire. The dialogue between Allie and him felt limited, and it made me wonder how much these two ever talked about anything of a serious nature. In the end we get a clear enough picture of Colin, but I would have enjoyed seeing more meaningful dialogue between these two along the way.

I enjoyed these two as a couple, and felt they truly belonged together. Once the trust issues were addressed and they finally started opening up about their feelings, I knew Allie had turned a major corner in her life for the better. It was a great moment in the book!

And while this story is an erotica tale, the sex scene are not the typical 'intermission breaks' meant to give readers some steamy relief. Instead, they are very much a part of the heroine's story and reflects the damaged person that she is. These scenes help display the struggle she deals with as she learns to cope with her past and learn to trust again. Some were very touching, while others were a bit difficult and sad to read.

Overall, ***Giving it Up*** is an emotionally-charged debut romance with a heavy subject matter. It will push readers out of their comfort zone, yet deliver a very satisfying ending. It will be a challenge to read certain parts of this story, and I admit that parts of it was a bit too dark for my taste. The heroine's constant self-deprecation was also hard to take, and even harder to understand. Her need to use sex as a coping mechanism was so sad, especially in light of the sexual violence she already endured. The ending made it all worth it, though. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed closing the book knowing Allie and Bailey were in a safe, happy place with Colin.

(NOTE: ARC copy provide by Amber Lin)
