



These Battered Hands

Laurel Ulen Curtis

Download now

Read Online ➔

These Battered Hands

Laurel Ulen Curtis

These Battered Hands Laurel Ulen Curtis

Callie

Blood, sweat, hard work, and a disconcerting *lack* of tears—my entire life—was meant to culminate in a flourish of glory and significance.

I'd thought I'd always known exactly what that meant.

But I'd had the timing wrong by about three minutes.

I knew now.

This moment *wasn't* everything. The one person I found myself wanting more than anything during it was.

Nik

One preconceived notion can haunt you for the entirety of your life.

I thought I owed it to myself and to everyone who'd ever backed me to do what was expected. What was right. What I was *supposed to do*.

But nothing is forbidden in love. Not circumstances or propriety or the denial of the object of said affection.

I knew now.

This was it.

If I wanted it, I had to take it.

This gymnastics love story is more than grips, rips, and battered hands.

For Calia Nickleson and Nikolai Bagrov, *it was everything*.

These Battered Hands Details

Date :

ISBN :

Author : Laurel Ulen Curtis

Format :

Genre : Romance, Sports and Games, Sports, Contemporary Romance, New Adult, Sports Romance

 [Download These Battered Hands ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online These Battered Hands ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online These Battered Hands Laurel Ulen Curtis

From Reader Review These Battered Hands for online ebook

Anne OK says

These Battered Hands, from a new-to-me author, was something different in an invigorating and positive way. This may be my very first romance with gymnastics at the forefront. I can't remember ever reading one before. The characters were awe-inspiring and the storyline definitely kept me in its clutches.

I love watching the Olympics and the gymnastic events have always been a favorite. This author gives readers a front row view of the hard work, pressures, and dedication it takes to master such a grueling sport. Callie, our female lead, is an older and already twice honored Olympian. Her whole life has been filled by her sport and she wants another go at an Olympic medal. At twenty-six the rigors of the sport have taken toll on her body and spirit, and another round of success may be beyond her endurance. Scarred and worn, Callie has lost the passion and her performance is routinely repetitious – uninspired.

When Nik shows up out of the blue to coach her, things begin to change, but will it be for the better? He is suffering loss and pain in his own life and grasps at the chance for change for himself when Callie's father hired him to work with his daughter. There's an immediate spark between the new coach and his trainee. As they work together, Callie's heart begins to open up to feelings and emotions she's closed off for so many years. Not only is Nik her coach, but he becomes her best friend and so much more. Nik is a really positive force – one who will earn your respect and admiration.

The romantic relationship between them is quite intense. There's witty banter to keep the mood fun and light at times, and there is the explosive desire between two lonely and shattered people – fulfilling all those "feels" that we romantics demand. Both Nik and Callie are strong and courageous individuals – but together they are a powerfully dynamic duo.

From the beautiful cover to the very last word, this book was truly outstanding and uniquely pleasing to this reader.

NiCoLeTa E. says

*****4,5 battered stars from me*****

What a wonderfull and emotional story was that!!!

I have read too many story with all kind of athlets, but none of them was for gymnasts!!!

This world and all these efforts and the sacrifices that a gymnast have to made to succeed amazed me.

I was always fascinating by the gymnast's trials and Olympic games when i was younger and i loved to watched them on TV...

But with this book, i dive inside their world. I went behind the lights and the front play...

And I found out what it takes to got yourself in this position...

What you have to forget and give away... and that's your own life.

You have to forget yourself and you have to give up your life for an utter cause.

For your sport. For the competition... For the winning...

Only if you look in your battered hands after all your efforts, you can see your lost dreams and the opportunities that were passing you by...

Our heroine, Callie was one of those athletes. She was 26 years old and she was about to join her third Olympics games... She already had won two silver medals in the previous Olympics and this time she is determined to earn the golden...

Everyone thought that she was too old for this effort, but she wanted to prove them all wrong.

Her father, who owns the gym that she is practicing, hired her a new coach to make her better than she was before.

And then, Callie started to realise that there was life beyond this gym that she was spending all her time. But she still fought her urge and she verbally attacked to her new coach...

They were provoking each other all the goddamn time and this was so sweet!!!

Nik was a world class gymnast himself, but after a tragic loss he decided to retired and when the opportunity appeared to be the coach of this famous gymnast, he caught it!!!

He wanted to make her the best, but he didn't count to fall for her... hard. And to be caught in this awkward situation of a coach-athlete relationship...

As the time is passing Nik is trying to break through Callie's walls...

"Being strong doesn't mean you can't be soft. Working hard to meet your goals doesn't mean you can't live. And living a certain way your entire life doesn't mean you can't ever change. Life is fluid. The only way to run yourself ashore is to not follow the change and contour of the curves."

Callie was a fully isolated person...

A lonely person who didn't know about affectionating feelings...

Feelings that frighten her and that she tried so hard to resist...

"I couldn't figure out what he had switched on in me, where he found the secret key hidden after it spent so many years collecting undisturbed dust. But proximity left me with no choice but to face it, embracing it a little more each day as all of the previously solitary hours of my days filled with him."

I just wondered if i was at all prepared to handle it. I had no real ruler against which to measure my feelings and reactions or the way he felt about me. I didn't know how to navigate what was appropriate and what wasn't or if any of it even mattered."

I just knew i couldn't stop even if i wanted to."

And when the walls was wrecked down, Callie became an other person than she used to be, but what this would cost her???

She fought so hard for the Olympic trials and Nik is a distraction for her.

Can she throw away everything that she worked for??? Is Nik worth it???

Or she had to sacrifice Nik for her goals???

I liked this story... and i liked very much the characters.

I liked the fact that i saw how is the life of a gymnast and what you have to sacrifice for succeeding your goals.

I liked Callie's tranformation. In her 26 years she didn't know anything else from practice in a gym. I liked

the fact that with Nik's help she discovered a new self and found out new things that was worthy to fight for....

As for Nik, what can i say????

He was so kind, so understanding, so patient, so determined young man.

He and Callie were like twin souls.

He was the only one that he could feel her in a deeper level.

He was compassionate and he was trying to show her that there is more than that to life...

I liked their tumbling nights together!!! They seemed so exciting!!!

Also i would like to reffer to Callie's father...

In the begin i misunderstood his intentions and i thought that he was the one who wanted Callie to relax and to live her life more carefree, but as i found out next he was the one that he had made all the damage to her and i didn't liked that fact.

I really disliked him and near to the end i wanted to harm him... badly!!!

I can not tell you more, but i had to tell it out loud because it was pressuring my insides...

Last, i want to tell that i really liked that every chapter of this book was from another POV (Callie's or Nik's) and i liked that every last sentence of the chapter was the first word from the next chapter... That was amazing!!!

Great job, Mrs. Laurel Ulen Curtis!!!

*****ARC kindly provided via NetGalley for the exchange of an honest review*****

Red Cheeks Reads says

'The Coach and the The Career. Two things destined to go together.'

I love Laurel's books. She could pretty much write anything and I would jump at the chance to get my hands on it. But to me, her writing is special. She is the kind of smart writer that you have to pay close attention to when reading. If you do not, you may miss something important or an epic one-liner. Her romance is not the easy beach reading kind. It is the kind that you get immersed in. That you fall in love with. That breaks your heart and then puts it back together. I just love it. Her writing is quirky and hilarious and heart warming.

'It'd all gone wrong from the start, the spit that sealed our first handshake seeming to swear me into an alternate universe.'

Oh God, I do love a forbidden romance and this most definitely is one. Callie is an "old gymnast" with a couple of Olympics under her belt but she feels like she still has something to prove. Nik is her HOT new coach, stupid hair and all. Callie and Nik fall into a fast romantic relationship that they have to keep hidden and Callie finds herself questioning what exactly her dreams and goals are and if this relationship with Nik is worth the risk. Does she even want to do this anymore? Why is she still competing? What does she want out of all of this?

'He tasted like sin and chocolate and the forbidden dream of a stronger-minded woman.'

Then you have Nik, who finds himself completely smitten and willing to do anything to keep Callie and support her dreams. Nik is the very sweetest of book boyfriends. He really made my heart melt. He is the MOST supportive and wants Callie to have love and her career. Seriously, this man was amazing.

'I watched her come alive in front of millions of people, I felt it in my chest, in my connection. Right in the heart of my pride and love.'

What a fabulously told sports romance with plenty of angst. This one was also quite sexy and I really do enjoy the way that Laurel does sex scenes. They are always so romantic but they somehow manage to still keep the steam, the kind of steam that makes your face just a little too hot and uncomfortable. She does a slow burn so well. I cannot wait for more from her.

"Just stuff for your battered hands."

~Amie

Norah Una Sumner says

3,5 stars

I absolutely love watching Gymnastics and I was so excited to read this book. The characters were great-I loved both Nik and Callie and their relationship. The first half of the book was really interesting and captivating but the second half was a bit too slow paced and over-descriptive for my taste. Unfortunately, I didn't like the writing so I couldn't really connect with Callie even though I liked her. The ending was done in a way that I hadn't exactly expected but I did enjoy it. I love how the last word of one chapter is the first word from the next chapter. This book could've been done a lot better but I liked it nevertheless.

Lina's Reviews ♡????????♡??Book Blog?? ♡????????♡ says

Emotional and raw. Callie's story will fill you with awe and hope. Loved it.

Callie is an athlete. Besides her career, nothing moves her...Until Nik comes into her life. As her new coach, he is determined to help her get even better at her craft. Callie will fight him but ultimately, she will see that he is good for her. Her life will be altered. Choices will have to be made. Will their love win?

The writing was amazing. The characters real and complex. They were filled with bravery and strength. Loved them.

Do not miss this unique story of love and determination.

4 Stars

I received an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Donna ~ The Romance Cover says

These Battered Hands by Laurel Ulen Curtis

3.5 stars!!

“And you never truly missed something until it was...Gone.”

This was a sports romance with a difference and it was a difference that I loved. I haven't yet read a book centred around the life of Olympic gymnasts and I loved delving around into the lives of these athletes. The pressure that they put on themselves as well as pressure from their peers and family is huge and add to that the stereotypical ideals of age, build, diet and so on there is so much external interference it is a wonder any gymnast can concentrate at all.

“...but the toxic thoughts that haunted her weren't her own. They were the seeds planted there by everyone else who put her out in the fucking boat destined for the big show and left her to drift.”

Callie is a twenty-six year old gymnast and already has two Olympics under her belt. She has always placed well but never good enough. She knows that this will be her last Olympics what with most competitors being ten years her junior so she is going all out to make her mark this time around...but first she needs to qualify.

Gymnastics is in Callie's blood, her father owns a gymnastics gym so she has free reign to train whenever she wants, her father has kind of been the pushy parent and seems to dictate everything surrounding her career, she still lives at home too so she has no way of separating herself from his overbearing ways. However, he does seem to come good with one idea and that is the employment of a new gym coach. Callie's father is of the opinion that as he is a professional gymnast and is around the same age as Callie that she will take notice and maybe even listen...but first meetings are not that great.

I loved Nik, he was a broken soul but he was a demon tumbler. He had strength, he had passion but most of all he had experience and he had a huge heart. Neither Nik nor Callie had ever had romantic interests what with their careers dictating their romantic interludes so when they actually connect it is a shock to both of them.

“The bad boy's long gone, and the hopelessly devoted version has taken his place.”

Callie was extremely stubborn and closed off, she kept herself to herself and didn't have friends, she didn't even talk to fellow gymnasts, she was lonely, but it was self inflicted. In order to succeed she had made many sacrifices and it was Nik that showed her that that needn't be the case. These two were chalk and cheese but they were so well suited. They both needed someone and their paths crossed at just the right time. The brought each other to life.

“I was telling it...As us.”

I loved the writing style and the fact that the last word in each chapter hooked you into the first word of the next chapter was unique and had me guessing the word from chapter to chapter. The story flowed really well and it was a real page turner for me. With dual point of views it did go some way to building that character

connection but for me something was lacking. I didn't feel as if I really got to know them as individuals. I would have loved for more back story. I also felt the ending was a tad rushed, with so much happening towards the end I felt it needed a little more fleshing out. Even taking that into account, I really enjoyed their story.

"I learned to love those battered hands, but I learned to love you better."

I will also never be able to look at Second Skin Spray the same again without thinking of these two, purple glitter and battered hands.

www.theromancecover.com

?★?Claudia?★? says

ARC kindly provided by the author in exchange of an honest review!

This is the story of Callia and Nik, a story of love, self-discovery and grief!

Callia Nickleson is a professional gymnast , having already been to two Olympics and preparing for the third one. Gymnastics is all she knows, all she's been doing all her life, she doesn't have a personal life, hell , she doesn't even know what that is.

She is strong, stubborn and driven but also insecure , confused and conflicted with herself.

Callia's gym is her safe place, the one place where at the end of the day when everyone has left , she can be herself and forget about everything else.

Nikolai Bagrov or Nik, is a former fellow gymnast, tumbler (I hope that's right) to be more precise, who lost his parents 6 months before he is hired by Callia's father Frank to train and coach Callia until the upcoming Olympics.

To say that he waltzes into her gym and her life and just shakes her ground is like saying the sky is blue!

He's pushing his way into her life, but he has the patience of a saint, he's kind and gives her the opportunity and space to be herself and discover who she really is as a woman, under the facade of an accomplished gymnast.

Together they are maybe one of the most beautiful couple I've read about but timing and other people makes it difficult for them to make a smooth sailing through the beginning of their relationship.

I hate the fucking guts of Frank, Callia's father , and everything he did to them , all the pain and heartache they went through because of him.

I won't say what he did but let's just say that he's a moron and a half!!!

I highly recommend this book! Laurel is one of my favorite authors and I doubt that that's going to change, i love each and everyone of her books!

Buy it => Read it , you won't be sorry!

Renata says

Estaba en un bloqueo lector (gracias *Cress*) y busqué un libro con pocas páginas pero que tenga una temática distinta y no sé, este fue el primero que vi. La verdad es que me ha gustado bastante, es un libro que se lee muy rápido y es bastante divertido y emocional en algunas partes. La cosa es que los personajes principales, Callie y Nik estaban rotos y al encontrarse empezaron a valorar la persona que realmente son y lo que realmente quieren y es bonito ver como el amor hace cosas así.

Laurel Curtis says

I can't wait for you to meet Callie and Nik! :)

Michelle says

ARC provided by author in exchange for an honest review

"Hope. It spread like an infection and tainted clean version and dedication. It made me think about, and long for, other things outside of the one thing that encapsulated my entire life."

Majestic. Laurel Ulen Curtis charms her readers in one of those most beautiful inspiring tale of hope, perseverance, and love in her newest release, **These Battered Hands**. Ms. Curtis did an amazing job with this book as she gave her readers not an ordinary sports romance but she allowed them to feel and walk through the journey of what every professional athletes have to endure. The pressure to succeed. The pressure to be the best. The pressure of fulfilling a lifelong dream built on hard word and dedication. And the pressure to have that one last shot before you can walk away from a career. Whether we realize it or not, our hands holds and tells a story of our life. And in *These Battered Hands*, Ms. Curtis tells us a story of a young woman's battered and tired hands of her last shot at a Olympic glory.

Callie Nickleson is a two time Olympic gymnast and at the age of twenty-six, she is trying to earn the spot

for her third Olympic games. She is well aware that she passed the typical normal standard for a female gymnast since she competes with young girls, whose bodies are less worn and tired. But behind her battered hands that is rough, ripped and filled with calluses, lies a woman who seeks perfection, strength, and determination to succeed. Her life has always consisted of gymnastics. And so when her father hires a new coach to help train Callie, she never expected to have such an intense connection and bond to her coach, Nikolai Bagrov. Nikolai immediately sees the spark, the drive and passion that Callie once had for the sport begins to lose its gleam. As Callie and Nikolai begin to spend more time together, she begins to see a whole new world of possibilities. Happiness begins to shine and radiate in her eyes. Love begins to beat. And so with the help of Nikolai, can she reach her dream of Olympic glory? Or will she realize that happiness and the greatest prize is having someone hold her "*battered hands*"?

"I never wanted it to end, but I also wanted more than stolen kisses and unsure rendezvous. And that kind of more was only founded on more. More communication, more understanding, and more respect."

I loved and adored this book. *These Battered Hands* is one of those stories that instantly grips and touches your heart. Ms. Curtis allows her readers to really FEEL for her characters. Feel all the sacrifices, the hurt, the pain, the heartbreak, the pressure, and the dedication each athlete endures for their craft. What I especially loved about the book was how the author opened up each chapter with one word. That one word was a relevant introduction to the story line that added so much depth and meaning to the story. The writing in this book was written with such raw passion and intensity that Ms. Curtis really emphasized that sometimes our dreams and goals can take a new route that opens new possibilities and happiness. And maybe it's not about being embarrassed at one's battered hands but seeing the space between the fingers that fits perfectly with the person you love.

"I learned to love those battered hands, but I learned to love you better."

Review can also be found on Four Chicks Flipping Pages: <http://fourchicksflippingpages.weebly...> Laurel Ulen Curtis

Wendy's Thoughts says

4.5 Doing Something Substantial Stars * * * * 1/2

They fly through the air...defying gravity and sense...They are little rockets on earth flinging themselves at gymnastic apparatuses at the speed of light...and then if that weren't enough, they bend, tumble and land with distinction. These are Elite Gymnasts and although both sexes do these amazing feats...it is the women's events which first caught my eye and love.

I was raised to love the arts; ballet at a very young age with my older sister. It was strict and we had to behave...something which I had a bit of a struggle. I loved it and did go to class and have the opportunity to perform twice in a major production of *The Nutcracker*. But as the years went on... my desire went to other activities so I moved on before toe shoes. I mention all of this because dance, dedication and outcome are

things I have understood for most of my life. Although I may not have followed that path, I did have an understanding of it.

Which brings me to this book, **These Battered Hands by Laurel Ulen Curtis**. In my opinion, she got it right throughout this book. She took an older elite competitor, one who had accomplished much... two Olympics, medals with the team and also individually. At 26, she should have been done. The sport does not allow for the development of the body; for legs getting longer, hips and breasts... It takes a toll on every joint and at this level...there has to be a history of injuries a mile long. Add in the factor of all the up and coming newbies nipping at her heels... wanting, pining, panting for a place at the Olympics and you have a recipe fraught with insecurities, doubt, frustration and most of all heart-breaking loneliness.

This is where Callie is in her life....going for the Olympics for the third time at 26. It is in the gym where she feels safe... It is the known... the place where she knows what to do, how to do it and accomplish her goals. After all, that has been her life since a very young child. She has worked and trained; her family even created a business, the gym she is in, in order to support her dreams. Her father has managed her career, let her transition to coaching herself for the last few years and her mother has been along the sidelines supporting both of them. It should be a happy, focused, supportive team....

But that is not what Callie is feeling right now. Callie has lost her mojo, so to speak... her open heart has been shut down for years... the glory, passion and love for her sport and competing has become illusive and she'll be damned if she can wrangle it back. She has a whole which needs to be filled...and as she attempts to qualify for her third Olympics... she is at a loss.

She is alone...she has no friends to confide in... she feels the hostility around her from all the other students, young and old, every time she is there at the gym. She is aware at all times the looks and stares. Her guard is up and she is ready to train again. As she ready's her hands with the required chalk and spit ritual, she is interrupted by this guy...he is introducing himself as her new coach...

What the Hell???

He continues on mentioning her father hired him and she is having nothing of it. She has no idea of who the hell he is, although in the looks and physical department he is fine...., and tells him right off this is not going to work. She trains herself, thank you very much.

Nik assesses the situation and is not detoured. He knew once he agreed to work with the "stubborn" Calia as her father informed him, he would need to take things as they came. He had studied his new student; watched the YouTube videos of her events and interviews. He saw the talent displayed but more importantly, he saw what was missing, too....And from this first meeting up close and personal, he saw directly into her eyes and heart...saw the loneliness and loss of a life...of a life which she should be experiencing other than Gymnastics.

Nik was one of the lucky ones...Oh, at this moment, lucky would not normally apply. He just lost both his parents in a tragic accident 6 months ago. He is floundering; he has stepped away from his sport World Tumbling while he was at the top of his game. He is trying to come to grips with the fact that the two people who loved him dearly are gone.

But with all of this pain, Nik is still the lucky one for he saw first hand what parents and love is supposed to be. His parents left Russia to give Nik a life of freedom. They had nothing and their families back home were very upset in their leaving. Aunts and Uncles also didn't like how the parents raised Nik to be "all American". He would be thrust into the schools and sports of his classmates. He thrived and so did his parents. They had little financially but what was abundant was their strength in their love for each other, their devotion to Nik and their ability to guide Nik into being this man who knew of emotions, commitments

and understanding.

These two people are put together by her father with a singular purpose... to get Callie trained and able to land a place on her third Olympic team. What was not expected was for Callie to see what life she has missed, what ways she could open herself up to others around her... and most of all understand she shouldn't have to make a choice of one or the other.

There is much to love about this book. First, it is done with both POV's alternating and with the unique connector of a word from the other person's mind... leading into the new POV. It draws you in, making you think what the word is...and then causes the reading to flow and keep your focus.

These characters and their lives ring true to me. Callie represents all those girls/women I watched over the years. She has a running dialogue in her head of doubt or sensitivity or wishes which she keeps locked away and fronted as distant and unapproachable. This determined, focused life she has had... it has been ingrained...and as we know...children learn and experience from their first teachers... their parents.

Now parents of Elite Competitors of any Sport or Artistic Arena sacrifice. It is demanding and hard to encourage your sons and daughters to dedicate their lives at such a very young age. If a child shows interest and promise in something at this level, it is normal for parents to want to provide for their children. What can become a gift of love and support, though, may sometimes morph into something else...The Coaches could go too far... the financial pressures could corrupt... there are so many factors involved... so to have the type of environment Nik had with his parents... that should only be the norm...and I hope it is.

The relationship between Nik and Callie is why I read romance books...for I get to be in their heads, feel their first understanding that this is something besides a coach and his student. It is layered, fresh in how they communicate together and very honest all the way through. They are both older so these are people who should be able to be together without complications.

As I mentioned before reading, I loved all of the gymnastics I saw years ago before it took off in popularity. *Cough, Cough...*, I can remember first watching **Olga Korbut** blow everyone's mind when she performed in her first Olympics (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2NGq...>). I was a grown person but the little dancer in me was so thrilled to see this young Russian do such astounding feats as if she was dancing in the air, floating across a 4 inch Beam and leaping from Uneven Bar to Bar as if there was nothing to hold her back. The impact of this was repeated when the world met **Nadia Comaneci** (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yi_5x...) and the first perfect 10's.

Yes, there were other major athletes before these two which were dramatic, compelling and talented... But these two opened the eyes of the world, of Gymnastics to the lay person... we saw the thrill, the power and little girls all over the United States wanted to be those two stars. From these two...the resurgence of Gymnastic Teams for USA was born. I could fill a page with names and it still wouldn't touch the surface of talent.

This book brought all of those feeling rushing back to me as I read. The author has you there with the terminology, the movements and the rush. You are on the beam... you are on the floor, you are there either watching or doing and it is a thing of beauty. Oh, and you are also in love with life as you are now finding it...through Callie and Nik.

If you are a fan of Romance, Sport, and/or Life...then this should be a read for you.

Thank you for letting me wax on about this and my personal experiences in loving this sport. This is the Olympic YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/olympic/....> There you will be able to indulge in

all the different sports and also find Olympians and Athletes too many to mention.

~~~~ **Before Reading** ~~~~

*I have loved Gymnastics for years...*

*Think Olga, Nadia, Mary Lu...the list is endless...*

*The power, the beauty, the sacrifice...*

*Due to Nicoleta's amazing review coming across my update feed...*

*I will hopefully experience all insight and feelings athletes like them may have had if they were part of this story...*

*A gifted copy was provided by Laurel Ulen Curtis via NetGalley for an honest review.*

**For more Reviews, Free E-books and Giveaways**

---

## **Kim says**

### **4.5 stars**

Callia Nickleson has lived her whole life to achieve her goals...two Olympics were not enough so she is going for her third. But nothing seems to be enough to fill the void or what she is missing. Nikolai Bagrov waltzes into her gym...her safe zone...and shakes everything up. He is her new coach and she is not sure she wants or needs him in her personal arena. From the beginning these two have a strong reaction. She is angry, resistant, and closed off. He is pushy, confident, and loves to get under her skin. They taunt each other, they challenge each other, but they make each other come alive when they have both been withdrawn into themselves and essentially shut down.

Callie is stubborn, driven, and focused on her goals. She appears to be a smart ass and cocky, but under her tough facade is a woman with insecurities, self esteem issues, fears, and loneliness. It is easier to keep to herself rather than face rejection or deal with her issues.

Nik is outgoing and demanding, but also patient, kind and intuitive. He has his own skill set, and his own demons. He does not want attention on himself and is happy to fly under the radar.

They fight each other, she fights herself, but they have a symbiotic connection and understanding that fulfills needs that they did not even realize they had. She is the quick tempered, while he is the rational one. He challenges both her skills and her need to live her life fully. He wants to help her to pull her life into more focus and feel. She brings out his passion and sense of purpose. But their circumstances and timing are all wrong. A relationship falls under the forbidden zone and Callie is really close to the pinnacle of her career. His presence not only has the ability to further her goals by pushing her skills, but could also provide too much of a distraction. And there are many eyes watching as they train for the most important events of her life.

This is the a story of finding hope, inspiration, passion, and learning how to live a full life. It is about change and choices and what really is important. I was glad to get both points of view. I absolutely fell hard for Nik. He was the ultimate in good guy heroes with just enough edge to make him appealing. He was so thoughtful, understanding, supportive, but also charismatic, humorous, and passionate. And Callie was likable too despite her underlying issues and stubbornness. They had inner demons and flaws, but were also strong and determined. There were enough drama, challenges , and twists to keep it interesting and realistic, but was not so overly angsty that it was frustrating. I was totally invested in them as a couple and in her journey towards self actualization and her Olympic dreams.

It was engaging, funny, sweet, tension filled, and emotional. I have always loved watching the Summer Olympics especially gymnastics so the background story made it even more appealing to me. I have been in a bit of a book funk lately, and I was happy to be so easily drawn into this story and to connect with these characters so effortlessly. It was one of those reads that flows easily, makes you laugh, but at the same time makes you feel.

I was gifted a copy in exchange for an honest review.

---

## Claire Robinson says

### 3.5 - "I just want to live in this moment..." Stars.

I am a total sucker for a good sports romance, make it a different sport from your usual football and ice hockey players that seem to dominate the pages at the moment and I am even more interested. Laurel Ulen Curtis is a new author to me, and she also introduced me to a new sport, in the form of Nik and Callie's story. Gymnastics is one of those sports that I have watched, and spent most of my time thinking 'how do they do that'.

***A part of me had accepted him as someone I could trust. Someone I could relate to. Someone who might just end up knowing how I felt. I could see myself in him, at least the way I used to be... I could see the years he'd put in to get to that point, plain as day in the level of his talent, and I knew it had to be equal if not more than my own.***

I have to admit that I was interested to see if the author would manage to transfer the movements of a gymnast onto the page in a way that I as a reader without much knowledge of the subject would understand and be able to visualize, and she did it really well. I don't profess to now be an expert of all things gymnast, but I kept up with everything that Callie and Nik worked and tumbled through as the story progressed.

**"Yelling is kind of becoming our thing."**

Although in general I really enjoyed the story, I found that there were parts of it that seemed to move really slowly, the pace at the beginning was great, the meeting and clashing of athlete against coach was perfectly paced, the snark and verbal sparring entertaining, and the chemistry that built and ultimately turned into more really kept me turning the pages. But it sort of slowed from a jog to a stroll once the relationship dynamic changed between them up until around the last 40% of the book.

**"Being strong doesn't mean you can't be soft. Working hard to meet your goals doesn't mean you can't live. And living a certain way your entire life doesn't mean you can't ever change... Life is fluid."**

I will say one thing though and that is the author wasn't afraid to inject equal parts vulnerability, arrogance,

innocence, inexperience and confidence into Callie, and where in one paragraph you want to slap her for her thoughtless comments or reactions, in the next you want to give her a long, hard hug for her feelings of vulnerability and confusion. Nik was sort of the perfect opposite for that, and where Callie had weakness he had strength, and where he had darkness Callie injected light.

**"I'm just wearing my bruises on the outside."**

Overall, a pretty enjoyable read and because of the unique subject matter, I sometimes found the sport aspects of *These Battered Hands* a little more interest grabbing than some of the relationship building between Nik and Callie. The author does have a very descriptive writing style, sometimes this can clog up a story, but Laurel managed to keep the balance between description and story development pretty level without going over the top.

I would certainly look to read more from the author after finishing *These Battered Hands* especially if the subject matter is a different and unusual as was contained in this book.

ARC generously provided via *Rock Star PR*, in exchange for the above honest review.

---

## Paige says

### 3.5 "Healed Hands" Stars

First I have to say that the cover for this is absolutely gorgeous. Really my cover love for this book was the reason I picked this one up. After finishing this story, the cover fits the story well and enhanced my connection to the story as well.

*These Battered Hands* follows Callie, a 26 year old gymnast, who is training for her third Olympics. She's quite a bit older than her peers and feels like she's an island. The last year she has struggled with feeling good enough and accomplished enough and not just in gymnastics but life as well. She has spent her whole life dedicated to the sport and has had no real life otherwise. She's still at the top of her game, but mentally she's struggling.

In steps her manager father. Six weeks before the Olympics, Nik shows up. He's been hired to coach her. From first sight there is just something about him that makes her feel comfortable and safe. Nik also feels it. Their antagonistic relationship on the mat, leads to an antagonistic relationship off it as well but for different reasons. Nik is trying to put his past behind him, but as one of the premiere tumblers in the world, he gets noticed. When Nik and Callie look beyond their sport, they soon find a connection that is undeniable, even if they should be ignoring it. As they spend time together, feelings start blossoming, limits are tested, and goals shift.

The writing in this book was phenomenal. It poetic flowing prose had me hooked. the chapter ending and the hook the next chapter was genius. The writing sold me on the connection between Nik and Callie. Going from her point of view to his, with the sentence continuation was something I haven't seen before but was perfectly used to build their relationship and help the reader feel that relationship down to my bones.

Nik and Callie's story was so sweet. Callie, a bit naive and misguided at times, was still sassy and headstrong, exactly like I like my heroines. She'd had goals her whole life and had done everything she could to make them come true. When Nik showed up, her world tilted a little bit and making the same choices she

had her whole life, doesn't seem to be the right answer anymore.

Nik was the perfect hero. Strong and dedicated, he wanted the best for Callie: not just on the mat, but also in life. He could see something in her that Callie couldn't and he worked tirelessly to bring her out of her shell. I had so many "awe" moments when these two were together leaving me with an almost constant smile in place.

The one part of the story that I struggled a bit with was feeling like I didn't quite know the characters. At times it felt like I only had a shallow understanding of who they were. It's like their story started on the first page of the book, and beyond that they never really existed. Their backstories felt a bit lacking and I think my connection to them would have been stronger had I grown to have more of a tie to them. Plus some of the complexity at the end was lost on me because it was a little rushed.

In the end though, I really enjoyed this story. I loved watching Nik and Callie together and I adored Nik. I adored the way he adored Callie, battered hands or not. My first novel by Ms. Curtis has pulled me in and it definitely won't be my last.

ARC provided by RockStarLit PR for honest review.

---

## **Ellen ♦ Book Bellas ♦ says**

### **3.5 Stars**

I have really loved reading sports romances lately and I have never read a gymnastics story so I was eager to read this book by Laurel Ulen Curtis. Nik and Callie's story is a fascinating look into the world of competitive gymnastics, and is a very fast-paced, different story. The pressure that the athletes put on themselves and the peer pressure is incredible, and the author does a great job at writing about this world.

### **"I'm just wearing my bruises on the outside."**

Callie is both strong and competitive, as well as vulnerable. I really liked her character. I absolutely loved how the author ended each chapter in a way that flowed right into the next. This unusual formula worked very well here and I must say I have never read a book that was written in this way. I also love alternative POV's and Ms. Curtis accomplished that perfectly in this book. Nik and Callie's thoughts flowed into each other from one chapter to the next, and it kept me turning the pages until the very end!

### **"I was telling it...As us."**

If you a fan of sports romance, then you will love this book. You don't have to know anything about the sport of gymnastics to enjoy this story. The author does a great job of explaining the moves and the environment of the sport. There is plenty of romance in this book, too, along with some drama that resolves itself very nicely.

Favorite quote:

### **"I learned to love those battered hands, but I learned to love you better."**

(ARC provided by the author in return for an honest review.)



